

Public Document Pack



COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE

Date: Wednesday, 16 March 2022
Time: 6.00pm,
Location: Council Chamber
Contact: Lisa Jerome - 01438 242203
committees@stevenage.gov.uk

Members: Councillors: S Mead (Chair), M Notley (Vice-Chair), M Arceno, S Booth,
M Creasey, J Duncan, A Farquharson, L Harrington, C Parris and
S Speller

AGENDA

PART 1

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the Community Select Committee held on 30 November 2021.

Pages 3 – 8

3. REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PRE-SCRUTINY REVIEW OF THE NEW TOWNS HERITAGE CENTRE

To consider the report and recommendations of the Committee's pre-scrutiny of a New Towns Heritage Centre.

Pages 9 – 16

4. COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2022-23

To consider and agree a draft work programme for the Community Select Committee for 2022-23

Pages 17 – 22

5. URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS

To consider any Part I business accepted by the Chair as urgent

6. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

To consider the following motions:

1. That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the ground that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraphs 1 – 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as amended by Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

2. That Members consider the reasons for the following reports being in Part II and determine whether or not maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

7. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

To consider any Part II business accepted by the Chair as urgent

NOTE: Links to Part 1 Background Documents are shown on the last page of the individual report, where this is not the case they may be viewed by using the following link to agendas for Executive meetings and then opening the agenda for Wednesday, 16 March 2022 – <http://www.stevenage.gov.uk/have-your-say/council-meetings/161153/>

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Tuesday, 30 November 2021

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete

Present: Councillors: Sarah Mead (Chair), Margaret Notley (Vice-Chair) (Vice Chair), Matt Creasey, John Duncan, Alex Farquharson, Liz Harrington and Claire Parris

Start / End Time: Start Time: 06:00 pm
End Time: 07:38 pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Stephen Booth, Myla Arceno and Simon Speller.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING - 3 NOVEMBER 2021

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of Community Select Committee meeting held on Wednesday 3 November 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 NEIGHBOURHOOD WARDENS PRESENTATION

The Committee received a presentation from the Neighbourhood Wardens Team regarding their work through the pandemic. The presentation covered a range of areas and issues including Covid marshalling, food hub, vaccination centres, litter picking and hedge pruning, stewarding and anti-social behaviour. The Neighbourhood Wardens Team provided the following key updates regarding their work during the pandemic:

- The Team helped people at the food hub who were shielding or vulnerable with the delivery of their grocery shopping and other essentials. Helping up to 20 deliveries a day including weekend and bank holidays.
- The Team distributed free 850 hand sanitisers and 15,000 masks in shopping areas, churches, schools and other organisations and charities. The project was funded through Councillors' Local Community Budget.
- The Team helped at the Robertson House Vaccination Centre by directing the public at the car park to the appropriate sites for their vaccine appointments.
- During the winter phase of the pandemic 2021, the Team provided support to the Stevenage Helps phone line by directing people to charities, food banks, provided information on vaccines and organised appointments for the Citizen

Advice Bureau. The process also attracted about 20 volunteers which could be used for future community projects.

- The Team's dedicated foot patrols covered parks and open spaces, town centre and play areas to advise members of the public on how to stay safe and Covid compliant.
- After the lockdown restrictions were lifted, the Team provided support in regards to stewarding the open cinema in the Town Centre to assure members of the public on Covid safety.
- The Team supported the Dene Lane Path Clearance project in Bandle Hill, working with young offenders on litter picking and hedge pruning as part of the offenders Community Payback Scheme.
- Roebuck Wood litter picking was carried out in partnership with the year 6 students of Roebuck Junior School, and they collected 32 bags of rubbish.
- The Team installed new shrub beds and repaired old ones in Peartree and Shephall, and carried out neighbourhood garden improvement works in Martins Wood, and also helped with the grass cutting in Siddons Road Square.
- The Team organised and carried out a litter pick project in Meadway Park in partnership with Woolenwick Junior School.
- The Team planted 9 new trees in Hampson Park Orchard with the financial support from the Councillor's Local Community Budget.
- An Older People's Day was organised and provided a good opportunity for networking.
- The Team helped with tackling anti-social behaviour in partnership with other officers of the Council and the Police. The Neighbourhood Wardens worked closely with officers from Environmental Health, Planning and Enforcement, Parking Services and Community Safety.
- The Neighbourhood Wardens dealt with the fly tipping, littering, Commercial Waste, Household waste issues, dog fouling and abandoned cars and illegal parking often by polite conflict resolution tactics.
- The Team built working relationships with the stakeholders in the community, and worked in partnership with Haven First, which helped residents with their CV and interview techniques to get them back to work.
- The Team had reported over 400 environmental issues to relevant departments, and worked closely with the elected Members of the Council.

A Member commented that they hold the service in very high regard, and are delighted to see that the service is no longer dependent on New Homes Bonus funding. The service is deemed integral to SBC ambitions to connect officers, members and our neighbourhood communities together.

In response to a series question from Members, the Team provided the following answers:

- Some of the fixed term Neighbourhood Wardens were currently contracted till March 2022.
- The Neighbourhood Wardens work in partnership with the Police on matters of fly tipping and inconsiderate parking.
- The service operates 7 days a week with flexible shifts for staff.

- The Team expected to expand the scope of their projects in the future.

The Chair thanked the Neighbourhood Wardens for their hard work during the pandemic and their presentation and advised that some time ago Members had requested this session with the Neighbourhood Wardens and at the time there had been some staff turnover but the service was settled now and Members were keen to support the long term funding and move towards more fixed term contracts of the Wardens.

The Chair was concerned that the Wardens were receiving requests for their services from a wide range of agencies including internal and external partners so this need to be monitored to make sure that it was manageable.

4 **DAMP AND MOULD UPDATE & PRESENTATION**

The Investment Programme Manager provided a report in relation to damp, condensation and mould in Council properties. He advised Members that the Council was continuing to deal with the damp and mould cases during the Covid 19 pandemic. The tools that the Council had previously used for dealing with the damp and mould had been, in his opinion, too simplistic. He explained that better and improved ventilations were needed, and fans alone were not enough and that there was a need to have specialist contractors in place to carry out required works.

He advised Members that the Council had entered into a 12 month framework agreement with Quality Eradication Services Today (QEST) to deal with the damp and mould in the Council properties, and was in discussion with the QEST to carry out further works when needed as result of their work on damp and mould. Also Mouldex, a specialist ventilation and mould treatment company was brought on board, which helped reduce the cost of fans by approximately 45%. In addition QEST were now looking at providing decorating following works with 15 colour choices, and can also supply thermal wall paper with a thermal plaster material to help mitigate against future issues.

The number of enquiries received had been reduced. In November 2020 a total of 59 enquiries were received compared to November 2021 where only 28 enquires occurred. The current strategy was proving effective.

The Investment Programme Manager informed Members that his Team had developed skills and confidence to identify issues causing damp and mould in the Council's housing stocks. They also developed strong interdepartmental relationship with other teams which had helped with the access issues, supporting tenants with mental health and other vulnerabilities that had helped to resolve cases across departments.

In response to a series of questions and suggestions from Members, the Investment Programme Manager advised the Committee on the following key issues:

- The backlog had been cleared and cases were coming through but these were fewer than would be expected at this time of the year.

- He was currently working on the new electronic feedback form, which only had three questions for customers to answer.
- Any complicated case would be reviewed again after six months.
- Both QEST and Mouldex provided a weekly report for their work.
- A leaflet would also be dropped in the surrounding neighbourhoods when work is done in a particular area.

Members agreed that the leaflet should contain clear contact information for the department and also be included in the tenancy agreement. The Investment Manager would circulate the final version to Members before publication. Members agreed with the Chair, that they were keen to see red indicators shown in the report be addressed.

It was **RESOLVED**:

- That the Committee supported the current approach which was in line with the Housing Ombudsman Service Report.
- That the Committee continued to support the Team to deliver on its promise to tackle damp and mould issues by ensuring that sufficient funding was available.
- That the Committee would provide feedback on the draft Mould Leaflet for the final version.

5 **EMERGING RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE NEW TOWNS HERITAGE CENTRE**

The Committee received a report on possible recommendations for the New Towns Heritage Centre. Member agreed on the following recommendations:

- Linked to the recommendation for 'museum's without walls', contact should be made with other new towns for a joint proposal to City Design Group regarding the development of digital maps relating to a number of local authority areas to secure a better deal.
- Stevenage had a large number of Twentieth Century architecture in the Town Centre, so it should be recommended that there be an approach to the Twentieth Century Society for funding.
- The Council should approach English Heritage as part of Stevenage's Cultural Heritage linking the Fairlands Valley Farmhouse to its pre-new town's history and heritage.

The Strategic Director advised Members that the Council could explore external funding streams to help further develop its museum website presence.

It was **RESOLVED** that, with the additions and amendments made at the meeting the Committee supported the emerging recommendations.

6 **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

None.

7 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Not required.

8 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR

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Meeting: COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE

Portfolio Area: Children, Young People, Leisure and Culture

Date: 16 MARCH 2022

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PRE-SCRUTINY REVIEW INTO THE NEW TOWNS HERITAGE CENTRE

Author – Stephen Weaver Ext No.2332
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Contributors – Councillor Sarah Mead, Chair of Community Select Committee; Councillor Margaret Notley, Vice-Chair of Community Select Committee; Assistant Director, Rob Gregory

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To consider the report and recommendations of the Community Select Committee Scrutiny, looking to support the Towns Deal funding bid for a New Towns Heritage Centre in Stevenage.

2 BACKGROUND & SCRUTINY ISSUE IDENTIFIED

- 2.1 The issue of providing some pre-scrutiny work on a New Town's Heritage Centre support of the bid was agreed by the Select Committee as a scrutiny review item along with other scrutiny items when it met on 15 July 2021.

2.2 Scope and Focus of the review

- 2.2.1 The scope for the review was agreed when the Committee met on 21 September 2021 ([see Link to scoping document item 3](#)). It was agreed that the scope should include a focus on:

- How can the New Towns history be shared with local residents and with a wider audience through a successful bid and project?
- How will young people be engaged in this project through local schools? – What ways would Schools like to be engaged in this project?
- Establish where the funding for such a project would be met from and what are the bid criterias?
- How is the Council using what it currently has at the Museum e.g. the archive of audible history?
- What do residents want from a New Town's Heritage Centre?
- What is the access to Stevenage's cultural heritage, and how can it be promoted?
- Visit other leading Museums and Heritage Centres to see what is possible
- Establish what equalities and diversity measures will be considered for this project?

2.3 Process of the review

2.3.1 The Committee met on 6 occasions in total with 3 formal Committee meetings to undertake the review as follows: On 21 September 2021, 3 November 2021, 30 November 2021, and an informal session on 25 October 2021 and held 2 site visits on 15 October to Colchester and 22 October to Milton Keynes.

2.3.2 The Committee interviewed the following external witnesses:

- Bill Griffiths, Milton Keynes Museum Director
- Liz McCaffery-Payne MK Director of Development
- Shan Downer, MK Heritage and International Partnerships
- Councillor Robin Bradburn, Executive Member for Culture and Deputy Leader of Milton Keynes
- Anthony Spira, Director of Milton Keynes Gallery
- Sally Shaw MBE, Director of the Colchester Firstsite Museum & other Firstsite Museum staff

2.3.3 The Committee were supported by the following officers:

- Nick Mallinger, Arts & Cultral Development Officer
- Rob Gregory, Assistant Director, Communities and Neighbourhoods
- Jo Ward, Museum Manager/Curator

2.3.4 The Committee are indebted to all of the witnesses including the external partners for their expert opinion and for the amount of time they provided to the review process.

3 THE COMMITTEES FINDINGS

3.1 Conclusions of the Community Select Committee who carried out a piece of pre-scrutiny work on a New Towns Heritage Centre

3.1.1 From the Members notes of the two site visits on 15 & 22 October and the informal meeting of the Committee on 25 October and the formal meetings of the Committee on 21 September, 3 November and 30 November 2021 the following suggestions and observations were made by Members (*in italics*), which in turn have led to the recommendations later in the report at section 4:

3.1.2 Curation

- *Curation - Whatever we come up with has to be a mix of: aspirational, informative, inclusive, accessible and affordable to Stevenage people. It is precisely the curating, archiving and sharing of our local new town heritage, the memories and stories, that is worthy of national and international interest.*
- *Co-curating – MK Museum make use of this, but as well as getting ideas from the public they are keen to give over areas of the museum for the public to take on for a time to fill the space – this sounded like a very positive move that Stevenage Museum should look to investigate*
- *Arts Programme at MK – varied. Initially feedback was that the 3 main collections were too cutting-edge, following extensive public engagement have a more varied programme. Charge for the main exhibitions (£9.50 for adults - if it's free people*

don't value it – Free Tuesday for MK residents) and free access to café/shop and other non-exhibition areas of the building. – (Charging point discussion)

- “I think it would be an asset to have a comparable film of Stevenage showing in the new Hub.”
- Having a unique selling point/exhibition (outside of the New Towns story) could be worth considering – e.g. Mars Rover Space Exploration

3.1.3 **Community Engagement**

- Community engagement - The museum fully embraces the beautiful diversity of Colchester. The inclusivity and diversity attract the community to get involved and contribute to the shows and event. The ideas are being drawn from the community of what they want for the museum. They have events for NHS and key workers, refugee action, religious group, people with disability and private groups.
- sense of pride and ownership of the museum from the community
- Engaged with the community about what they wanted – Important

3.1.4 **Management/Governance Structure**

- Management structure - That requires a Stevenage specific partnership approach between SBC as programme lead and arch facilitator, and arts and heritage voluntary and community groups.
- Governance structure - The Chair, Cllr Sarah Mead having heard the feedback from Members and the input from John Mead and Jo Ward stated that the success of future bids will depend on the autonomy of the Heritage Centre. The Chair has suggested that the answer to this could be an Arts Board made up of stakeholders similar to the model of The Town Centre board? In this way SBC would still be a major player but the independent voice of the board would assure investors that independent voices are given equal voice? To this end an Arts and Heritage Board on the lines of the Town Centre Board with a mix of stakeholders could be supported by panels of people who are independent and have specialist arts and heritage expertise from Stevenage, Herts and/or Eastern Region. These could be project or programme specific.
- Governance Structure - The museum being its own distinct identity, supported by the Council, needed looking at in detail, as it appears that the museum has had funding bids fail due a lack of independence
- Solely reliant on volunteers. Only a few members of staff on the payroll – Yes good to have volunteers but not as dependent as MK Museum

3.1.5 **Museum without walls – Use of technology virtual museum and QR codes around the town**

- SBC should be thinking of the concept of “Museums without walls”
Narrative – & Recommendation – Stevenage should aspire to examples - Bristol Know Your Place / historyPin.co.uk / Coventry digital – This shows old maps overlaid over new maps and has various tabs and icons that when clicked on reveal local history of the place, who lived there (Blue Plaque), conservation areas, local authority planning history, audio archive of oral history, photos which the public can add their own records to so it democracies the process.
- A dedicated website for the Museum is vital
- The Chair stated that the walks/QR codes idea was excellent and officers should consider getting this started ahead of the outcome of the Towns Deal bid process to show the intent of the Council.

- *Separate funding bid for website software - Jo Ward, Stevenage Museum Curator stated that duplication of effort was a danger as many websites overlap their offer. The cost of the software was in the region of £8.5k, the Chair stated that a possible route to this could be in part bids to Members Local Community Budgets (LCBs), and suggested that Jo contact Paula Mills to enquire about the details. Other routes could be approaching large companies based in Stevenage to see if they can support this heritage project.*
- *Digital collections via a web portal - Jo Ward stated that she was interested in the examples provided by John Mead to pull together digital collections via a web portal where people can access all they need for social history in one place*
- *The pandemic showed that people want to access info and some experiences online*
- *Only 10% of a museum's physical collection can be seen at a time*
- *There are reasons why you might want to not handle documents physically due to their fragile nature*

3.1.6 **Building – design features – use of technology in the building**

- *Design features - The wall dividers that can make the room smaller or bigger according to the needs.*
- *Environmental and Energy saving - it's expensive to run with the cost of energy bills due to materials used (lighting and others) and lack of Solar Panel. This is something that was significantly highlighted for us to think and plan well.*
- *Design features - keen on the touch screen information that were in use at Colchester Castle Museum*
- *The Museum space would have to be agreed in advance with the permanent exhibit areas well thought through so that the Museum doesn't get crowded out by other uses*
- *Having a mixed use/flexible building is very useful so moveable internal walls would be very favourable*
- *Had QR codes to give information of the gallery viewing you were entering. The gallery had tablets on the wall to give further information and to provide interactivity.*
- *MK Gallery in city centre, but in my opinion not well advertised around the shopping mall where it was next to - *Signage and visual clues to where the building is and what's in it will be important*
- **MUST HAVE A CAFÉ**
- *Design features - Cinema – Both sites visited at Colchester and Milton Keynes had a cinema which provided a great Arts asset and way of making income. Both have a contract with Curzon for the cinema – varied programme including family orientated programme as well as art house. If possible would be a very good feature for Hub/New Town's Heritage Centre as this makes money and pays for other activities.*
- *Design features – Environmental Carbon Neutral Building*
- *Key feature of the new build part of the Museum will be use of digital images. The example below on the left is from Milton Keynes Museum and on the right is what a possible space image linked to Stevenage's space industry could look like:*



3.1.7 **Commercial activity/Funding/Cost point for entry**

- *Cost Entry Fee - free entry museum to encourage everyone to visit but there's a bank card tap station for donations. contactless payment/donation points.*
- *Commercial activity - events, theatre (livestream) and other activities that raised money.*
- *Commercial activity - There should be places in the building for commercial activity with a profit share with the Council. This could include small start-up linked businesses to provide spaces to sell their services such as on site catering etc. and spaces for new/young artists to display their work and sell it.*
- *Hiring out of the building at specific times could be an option for extra income if it is seen as being a desirable space for events etc. so the design/architecture needs to be very attractive as well as environmentally friendly- (make this a selling point).*
- *Should run at least at break-even "wash its face" and not rely on a large subsidy such as Firstsite has.*
- *The Community use of the building and engagement with content and activities was very good but the core activities/financial offer needs to be as secure as possible to make this possible.*
- *Funding - go directly to the big companies, and major developers, under their corporate social responsibility agendas for grants and sponsorship.*
- *Commercial activity - careful consideration of the future revenue funding options, some of this could come from commercial activity as well as private hire events and functions but she favoured the core offer to remain free with community activities supported and the option to seek support from the business community should be a recommendation to be pursued.*
- *MUST HAVE A CAFÉ.*
- *What we need is a successful Museum that provides a gallery, business incubator, cinema and café that enables us to tell the story of Stevenage.*

3.1.8 **Developing a hub and spoke approach for arts & historical heritage across the town**

- *Hub and Spoke - We should maybe adopt a hub and spokes model that makes best use of our CNM and Play Services infrastructure, i.e. in our neighbourhoods, as well as the few remaining historic structures like Fairlands Valley Farmhouse, even Rooks Nest (E.M. Forster).*

3.2 **Conclusion**

- 3.2.1 Community Select Members provided Officers involved in the New Towns Heritage Centre project with a clear steer regarding what would be in the Centre and how it

would be run and this was helpful in the construction of a well-developed Town's Deal business case.

3.3 Equalities & Diversity issues

- 3.3.1 Members stated that consultation with key characteristic groups needed to be conducted at a significantly early stage in the process to make sure that a wide cross section of Stevenage residents voices are heard before the New Towns Heritage Centre plans are finalised.

4 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 That the Community Select Committee agrees the conclusions of the report as well as the recommendations below and that these will in due course be presented to the Executive Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People, Culture and Leisure and that a response be provided from these and any other named officers and partners within two months of the publishing of this report.

4.2 **Recommendation 1 - Curation (Arts programme)/engagement with the community/ Governance structure:**

- 4.2.1 (i) That Stevenage Museum's curation should continue to be led by the expertise of the Museum Curator and engage with local residents through co-curation projects to provide a mix of: aspirational, informative, inclusive, accessible and affordable museum and arts offers to Stevenage people.
- 4.2.2 (ii) As well as a New Towns focus consideration should be given to having a unique selling point/exhibition, outside of the New Towns story, so could be worth considering – e.g. Mars Rover Space Exploration.

4.3 **Recommendation 2 - Community Engagement:**

- 4.3.1 That it is important that, whatever is offered at the Museum or any public art that is provided within the Hub, that it is accessible to the whole of the community, so engagement with all members of the local diverse community should happen to see what would they like to have included?

4.4 **Recommendation 3 - Management/Governance Structure:**

- 4.4.1 That serious consideration is given by the Executive to the New Towns Heritage Centre's governance arrangements, setting up an independent culture body to provide autonomy for the Heritage Centre made up of a mix of stakeholders, similar to the model with the Regeneration Town Centre Board, this type of independent governance body could be supported by a panel of people who are outside of the Council and have a specialist arts and heritage expertise from Stevenage, Herts and/or the Eastern Region.

4.5 **Recommendation 4 - Museum without walls – Use of technology virtual museum and QR codes around the town:**

- 4.5.1 (i) That the Executive consider, as well as a physical New Towns Heritage Centre as part of the new Civic Hub building in the regenerated Town Centre, pursuing the concept of "Museums without walls". This could include providing funding from the Towns Deal fund or Members Local Community Budgets (LCB) towards a dedicated website for the Museum that is independent of the Council's website. It was quoted

that with the existing Council website to have compressed digital photos with the current provider would cost in the region of £8.5k. This initiative could be pursued in parallel to the main Towns Deal bid/New Towns Heritage Centre, and would incorporate QR codes around the town. The “Museum without walls” concept would include a strong web presence similar to the examples shown at Bristol Know Your Place, which included digital collections via a web portal and was very interactive for users. It was suggested by the AD Communities & Neighbourhoods that a “museums without walls” bid to external funding bodies would be more likely to be successful if it was a joint bid with other New Towns, so it is recommended that it is pursued in this way.

- 4.5.2 (ii) That the Executive considers approaching the City Design Group regarding purchase of the digital maps of areas revealing history through the ages to reveal what the area/town looked like in the past, which could be linked to the joint bid above.

4.6 **Recommendation 5 - Building – design features – use of technology in the building:**

- 4.6.1 That the Executive consider as part of the New Towns Heritage Centre 21st Century design features. The building should have the highest possible environmental credentials and be a carbon neutral building and incorporate the use of technology in the building. The building should incorporate:

- Have a mixed use/flexible building with wall dividers that can make the room smaller or bigger according to the needs
- Provide touch screen information points
- Provide digital images as visitors walk through different spaces – (example provided of Mars Rover space vehicle)
- The Museum space should be agreed in advance with the permanent exhibit areas well thought through so that the Museum doesn't get crowded out by other uses
- A small seated cinema would be very desirable feature as a draw for visitors as well as an income stream. Members are aware that this would be an expensive capital outlay but could be a major asset in the future
- Lessons from the sites visited showed the value of having an on-site Café as a place for people to visit and provide a positive user experience

4.7 **Recommendation 6 - Commercial activity/Funding/Cost point for entry:**

- 4.7.1 That the Executive consider the possible Commercial activities associated with the New Towns Heritage Centre. During the site visits Members were taken with the crucial role that various commercial activities can do to support the users of the building: This could include:

- Irrespective of the whether free or not for entry, contactless payment/donation points for bank card use should be provided at various points around the building
- events, theatre (livestream) and other activities that raised money for other non – commercial activities in the Heritage Centre
- There should be places in the building for commercial activity with a profit share with the Council. This could include small start-up linked businesses to provide spaces to sell their services such as on site catering etc. and spaces for new/young artists to display their work and sell it
- Hiring out of the building at specific times could be an option for extra income

- Officers supported by Members should go directly to the big companies, and major developers, under their corporate social responsibility agendas for grants and sponsorship
- There should definitely be a Café that is either run in-house to provide income for the building or is run under a profit share by a tenant to bring in income
- Having a unique selling point/exhibition (outside of the New Towns story) could be worth considering – e.g. Mars Rover Space Exploration (linked to recommendation 5)

4.8 **Recommendation 7 - Developing a hub and spoke approach for arts & historical heritage across the town:**

- 4.8.1 That the Executive consider continuing a hub and spoke model which makes best use of our CNM and Play Services infrastructure, i.e. in our neighbourhoods which would support the main hub core offer at the New Towns Heritage Centre.

5.1 **Financial Implications**

There are no direct financial implications in this report. Any funding required for the New Towns Heritage Centre would initially be financed from the Towns Deal fund along with match funding from other sources as detailed in the [Executive report 2 February 2022](#)

With regards to the recommendation 6 ‘commercial activity’ that there should be some onsite commercial activity to help with the ongoing revenue expenditure of the site, these suggestions will be shared with the Council’s Commercial Manager for consideration. Ultimately any commercial consideration will be a matter for the Council’s Executive and any relevant governance group put in place to look after the New Towns Heritage Centre.

5.2 **Legal Implications**

There are no direct legal implications for this report.

5.3 **Equalities Implications**

The Equalities implications have been addressed within the report at paragraph 3.3.1. There are no further direct equalities implications for this report.

APPENDICES:

None

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS – Notes of the Member Site Visits:

1. [Feedback from Members following their site visits – 3 November 2021](#) see item 4
2. [Emerging recommendations for pre-scrutiny of the New Towns Heritage Centre – 30 November 2021 – see item 5](#)

Meeting COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE

Portfolio Area

Date 16 March 2022

COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE - POSSIBLE WORK PROGRAMME ITEMS BASED ON MEMBERS' SUGGESTIONS 2022-23

16 MARCH 2022

Authors Stephen Weaver | 2332

Contributors

Contact Officer Stephen Weaver | 2332

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To agree the Scrutiny Work Programme for the Select Committee for the new Municipal Year from a list of suggested possible work programme items by Members.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Scrutiny Members' feedback on ideas for improving Scrutiny (see section 4) be noted.
- 2.2 That having considered ideas put forward by individual Members, (see section 5), the Committee determines the subject matters to be added to a work programme of potential Scrutiny reviews items for 2022/23.
- 2.3 That the Portfolio Holder Advisory Group meetings to carry out policy development work identified so far for the Committee (see section 7.1) be noted.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Scrutiny Committees are asked to draft their work programme ahead of the new Municipal year in order that work may begin as soon as the Committees are appointed at Annual Council. Any outstanding and unfinished studies, where applicable, might also need to be included.
- 3.2 During February 2022 Members provided feedback on the current Scrutiny activity and on ideas for the Work Programme for the 2022/23 Municipal Year.
- 3.3 When considering what work to undertake in the coming year, Members may wish to consider if the matter in question is of a cross-cutting nature and might lend itself to being considered jointly with another Select Committee.
- 3.4 Officers have also been requested to bring to the Committee's attention, likely Portfolio Holder Advisory Group (PHAG) policy development items that the Select Committee might be requested to consider and comment on before reports there are submitted to the Executive.
- 3.5 The Committee may also consider whether specific time should be allocated for monitoring or review of recommendations of previous studies. During the summer the Committee will receive a copy of the Action Tracker for the Community Select Committee at which time the Committee can note progress on past reviews and determine whether they wish to bring back any further detailed updates on specific former review items at that time.
- 3.6 It is recognised that there is a limited dedicated officer resource for the scrutiny work of three Scrutiny Committees and therefore it is important to ensure that work plans are in place in order that the call on those resources and on each Committee's time on all its activities are prioritised and evenly spread across the year. To make best use of the resource it is suggested that each Committee chooses 1 substantive review item for the year which will be the Committee's main review, undertaken over a number of meetings. In addition the Committee could receive between 2 or 3 one-off single issue performance items and 3 to 4 Portfolio Holder Advisory Group (PHAG) meetings during the year.

4 MEMBERS' IDEAS FOR IMPROVING SCRUTINY

- 4.1 In February 2022, all Members of the Council's Scrutiny Committees were emailed a survey to gauge views of the Scrutiny work undertaken and ideas for future studies. The following summary is based on the 8 replies received from the 23 Members who are on one or more of the Council's Scrutiny Committees.
- 4.2 Members were asked to (i) comment on current scrutiny activity and (ii) identify any issues that could be addressed to improve the current arrangements and (iii) state what training needs they may have. Members provided comment and challenge around the following areas that relate to the Community Select Committee:

Survey Question 1 - Please rate the following aspects of this year's scrutiny activity:

What reviews did you take part in? SS scoring: 3 = good, 2 = okay, but and 1 = not okay really

- CSC completed its pre-scrutiny of the New Towns Heritage Centre 3 - excellent
- CSC one-off items on public health 2
- CSC neighbourhood wardens 3
- CSC damp and mould 2

Damp and Mould, hopefully the new officer will be able to get on top of it.

New Towns Heritage Centre

- New Towns Heritage - excellent - full member involvement, witnesses and positive recommendations
- Public Health - excellent targeted and specific questions to DPH established answers to FAQs, also secured offer of funding from PHE
- Neighbourhood wardens - excellent - established answers to questions about the department and garner a greater understanding of their roles
- Damp and Mould - ok update saw improvements made and established work still required - excellent preparation by presenting officer gave a greater confidence in the policy

I think that the engagement on the plans for the leisure facilities has been very good so far. I hope it continues and that members will be given the opportunity to submit ideas that will be taken seriously.

Survey Question 2 - What aspect of scrutiny could be improved to provide a better scrutiny service?

1. More **officer support for Stephen**;
 2. A clear **portfolio of methods / processes for different types of reviews**, to codify them (must be my officer background peeping through);
 3. A coherent and standard **Gap Analysis approach to major reviews** as per the Best Value reviews we did 1998 – 2010ish (happy to expand with SW and the three Chairs).
- Summary: Step 1 = Where are we? Step 2 = Where should we be? Step 3 = What are the gaps? Step 4 = So, what are we going to do about them?! Simple! 😊.

As previously discussed but never taken forward, a structural change is needed whereby the chair and vice chair of scrutiny are chosen not by the leader or Executive but by secret ballot of scrutiny members.

Also, much more involvement of non-councillors is needed, as 'expert' or ordinary witnesses and consultants, and more use of the 'public's views

More public involvement in scrutiny - publicise meetings and make it clear that the public are welcome to attend. A more timely response to recommendations

When we receive presentations, etc. I would like to be better signposted to the raw underlying data, for example in the resident survey, so I can better draw my own conclusions.

The most desirable changes would see Scrutiny resources matching its supposed importance in the Council. Unfortunately the chances of this happening are small, but we do need some respect for the integrity of our work plans. I accept the need for improvisation in recent times, but it has been very difficult to do a good job in the circumstances.

Priorities for the future. Where are we with the review of Scrutiny itself? We do need to be sure that we have the best system to make use of limited resources. I think the Council's ways of

engaging the public are still based on outmoded ideas about consultation and we could look at this and learn from better practice elsewhere, including outside local govt.
...I think it would be good to have a roadmap of all of the projects the council is working on to help us be clear on what we are going to be consulted on and when. A one page gannt chart or something similar would be really helpful showing key milestones of each, including consultation periods and when they will come to which scrutiny group
Survey Question 3 - Regarding supporting you in your Scrutiny role is there any specific training you would like for next year, and would you (occasionally) like to receive information about possible Member Scrutiny training?
I would like SW and us Members to run our own TnD. But then I would like to transform MMPs too. Too much generic stuff from the lovely LGIU, some of which we will always need! New members need full and proper support. The last few batches of new members seem very unaware of crucial aspects of their roles and of their conduct. (I partly blame social media for encouraging a verbal recklessness, with potential legal, safety and safeguarding implications.)
No, but happy to receive information about training.
A general refresher training session on the role of scrutiny, which could be useful for newer Members. Yes, I would like to receive information about possible Member training.
The recent email of You tube video of Executive meeting with video timings of specific topic was very helpful.
Watch other scrutiny work - other council practice?
Yes, information on relevant training would be useful. Particularly in obtaining and processing data. What data is available to us as Councillors? What investigative tools can we use?, call-in, freedom of information requests, access to information as Cllrs, etc., etc.

5 MEMBERS' IDEAS FOR FUTURE SCRUTINY REVIEWS

5.1 Scrutiny Members' Suggestions for Future Scrutiny Review Items

5.1.1 In response to Survey question 4 "What issues would you like to be considered for inclusion in scrutiny work programme for next year" The following issues have been raised by Members as potential Scrutiny review items:

Survey Question 4 - What issues would you like to be considered for inclusion in the (Community Select Committee) scrutiny work programme for next year? (Max 3 items)	What type of review (main, PHAG, one off performance)?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locality budgets and ward related spending: reviewing inputs from ward members. 39 members have a say in this. Comms with officers are still not as good as they good be. Some SBC links with neighbourhood groups still very clunky and appear bureaucratic and controlling. This effectively reviews progress or lack of in FTFC and CNM. Where are those blockages? • Local Community Centres / Local Committees / Residents Meetings: a review of the current mix, and a consideration of the pros and cons of Joint Local Committees, as previously operated. Then we had a problem that the usual few hogged the discussion (including members!). But the current mix is confusing. We need to see how we can engage a wider public in our local projects, programmes and spending. The background of the emergent hub and spokes model 	<p>One off 1 meeting performance review</p> <p>Possible main review</p>

for SBC investment in community infrastructure makes perfect sense. The overlong review of current community centres has passed through 4 portfolio holders, including me. And taken far too long!	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress on the Community Centre review. 	One off 1 meeting performance review
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Health and well-being of Stevenage population. To encourage more engagement from various communities and organisations in Stevenage through events and activities that are council led. Children and Young people 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> one off performance review ditto ditto
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing - specifically - is the current banding system fit for purpose in relation to available housing and demand. 	Possible main review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing services 	Possible main review

5.2 **Statutory and Standing Items**

5.2.1 Crime and Disorder Committee (Statutory Committee)

5.2.2 Public Health Meeting (Standing Item)

5.3 Members should note that whatever issues they agree to be scrutinised as a main review item would be subject to a full scoping process and subsequently a scoping document would need to be agreed by the Committee at a future meeting. Other items, which can be addressed by a briefing and discussion item, may not require a full scoping document.

5.5 Work Programme Schedule for 2022/23

5.5.1 When the Scrutiny Work Programme is agreed by the Community Select Committee, the Scrutiny Officer will, using the agreed dates for generic Select Committee meetings in the Calendar of Meetings, draw together a work programme schedule for the 2022/23 Municipal Year, including scrutiny review meetings, monitoring of previous reviews selected by Members and policy development meetings, which will be circulated to Members, and electronic diary invites will be sent to all Community Select Committee Members.

5.6. Role of the Assistant Directors and Scrutiny

5.6.1 The Assistant Directors will take a leadership role in assisting and supporting the relevant Scrutiny Committees and specific reviews that align to their area of expertise. The Assistant Directors (ADs) will support each review through its various stages, from scoping of reviews, attending Chair and Vice-Chair briefings and offering support to the Scrutiny Officer in providing written and oral evidence for reviews as well as identifying 'Critical Friends' and other review witnesses. The Assistant Directors will liaise with the relevant Executive Portfolio Holder(s) and the Senior Leadership Team (CE and Assistant CE's).

5.6.2 Strategic Director, Tom Pike from the Strategic Leadership Team has overall responsibility for the Scrutiny function, deputised by Strategic Director Richard Protheroe.

6 MONITORING REVIEW OF RECOMMENDATIONS VIA THE ACTION TRACKER

- 6.1 The Committee may consider there is a need to undertake some follow-up work on recommendations arising from previous studies. It may be considered sufficient to simply request update briefings from the relevant Heads of Service to be circulated to Members at appropriate intervals. However, if the Committee requires more detailed consideration or examination of the progress of previous recommendations, this should be factored into its work programme. To help assist Members to consider this, an updated Action Tracker document will be brought to the Committee in the summer and any additional work programme items will need to be added following that meeting.

7 PORTFOLIO HOLDER ADVISORY GROUP - POLICY DEVELOPMENT WORK FOR 2022/23

- 7.1 In line with the Council and Executive work plan, the following items have been identified for potential Policy Development to be undertaken with the relevant Portfolio Holders during the 2022/23 Municipal Year:
- Temporary Accommodation Placement and Procurement Policy, scheduled for Executive in July 2022, PHAG meeting in June 2022
 - Future Model for Community Centres, currently to be scheduled to the Executive, PHAG to be advised.
- 7.1.1 The above schedule is subject to change and may be added to. Members will be contacted with a meeting invitation closer to the PHAG meeting.
- 7.2 These meetings are private informal meetings Chaired by the relevant Executive Portfolio Holder and supported by the relevant Assistant Director.

8 IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 8.1. There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report.
- 8.1.2 A small budget of £1000 is held to support the work of the Select Committees in their research and study.

Legal Implications

- 8.2. The role of Overview and Scrutiny Committees is set out in the Local Government Act 2000. The recommendations made in this report are to facilitate the Committees to fully undertake this role.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 8.3. There are no direct Equalities and Diversity implications arising from the recommendations in this report. Specific equalities and diversity implications are considered during each scrutiny review.