

## SUMMARY OF DECISIONS -

<b>Meeting:</b>	Council
<b>Date:</b>	Wednesday, 31 July 2024
<b>Place:</b>	Council Chamber
<b>Members Present:</b>	Councillors: , Myla Arceno, Julie Ashley-Wren, Sandra Barr, Philip Bibby CC, Stephen Booth, Lloyd Briscoe, Rob Broom, Jim Brown, Nazmin Chowdhury, Richard Henry, Jackie Hollywell, Mason Humberstone, Conor McGrath, Andy McGuinness, Sarah Mead, Robin Parker CC, Claire Parris, Ellie Plater, Loraine Rossati, Graham Snell, Jeannette Thomas, Carolina Veres, Anne Wells and Tom Wren

<b>1</b>	<b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>	
	<p>The Mayor invited those present to observe a moment's silence to reflect on the tragedies this week in Southport.</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Kamal Choudhury, Forhad Chowdhury, Lin Martin-Haugh and Simon Speller, and from Lahaina Sutherland, Youth Mayor.</p>	
<b>2</b>	<b>MINUTES - ANNUAL MEETING - 22 MAY 2024</b>	
	<p>It was <b>RESOLVED</b> that the Minutes of the Annual Council Meeting held on 22 May 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.</p>	
<b>3</b>	<b>MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS</b>	
	<p>The Mayor referred to a list of seventy events he had supported since May which had been circulated at the meeting and gave a report on a number of highlights including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The 8<sup>th</sup> birthday of Stevenage Parkrun at Fairlands Valley Park;</li> </ul>	

- The NHS Charity Rainbow Run and Wollenwick's Colour Run;
- Stevenage Day;
- Town Twinning Visit;
- Two visits with the Air Ambulance charity;
- Presentations at Marriotts School;
- Covid Cobra 4<sup>th</sup> anniversary;

The Mayor also reminded Members of the Stevenage Rotary Club charity quiz on 7 September, a garden party on 29 September and the Together Awards on 26 October 2024.

4	<b>COMMUNITY PRESENTATIONS</b>	
	There were no community presentations.	
5	<b>PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS</b>	
	There were no petitions or deputations.	
6	<b>QUESTIONS FROM THE YOUTH COUNCIL</b>	
	There were no questions from the Youth Council.	

7	<b>QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC</b>	
	There were no questions from the public.	
8	<b>LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S UPDATE</b>	
	<p>The Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Stephen Booth, asked the following question:</p> <p>“What plans does the Leader of the Council have to meet with the new Labour Government and does he expect next year’s financial settlement to allow Stevenage Borough Council to avoid having to cancel essential services and delay capital projects in order to balance the budget?”</p> <p>The Leader of the Council replied that a number of contacts had been made with the new Government including a visit that morning from a senior minister at the Department of Communities and Local Government. He would give an update later in the meeting on the work that the new MP had been doing to raise the aspirations of Stevenage. He also informed the meeting that a visit from a representative of the Department of Business and Trade would take place the following week as well as regular contact with Baroness Taylor, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Department of Housing Communities and Local Government</p> <p>In relation to the financial settlement, the Leader advised that the Government had been clear in their consideration that a longer term settlement would help local authorities and it was hoped that this would be made clear in the Chancellor’s Autumn Budget.</p> <p>The Council then received updates from the relevant Cabinet Portfolio Holders on the following matters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cycle Hire Scheme;</li> </ul>	

- Co-operative Neighbourhood Management;
- Building a Better Bedwell;
- Youth Mayor and Deputy Youth Mayor 2024/25;
- Equalities;
- Stevenage Day;
- Aqua Parc;
- Stevenage Theatre wins National Award;
- Museum Exhibitions;
- Brodie Court;
- Resident Engagement Strategy;
- Green Spaces Strategy;
- Visit to Stevenage – Department of Housing, Communities and local Government.

9	<b>UPDATE FROM SCRUTINY CHAIRS</b>	
	<p>In the absence of the Chair of the Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Rob Broom, Chair of the Environment and Economy Select Committee (who was also a Member of the Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee) advised that, at its meeting held in June, the Committee had finalised its work programme as well as scrutinising the decisions of the Cabinet. Council was informed that a one-off reviews of ICT including the Council’s website, the Customer Complaints System alongside how well the</p>	

	<p>move by the Customer Services Centre to the main reception would be undertaken.</p> <p>Councillor Sarah Mead, Chair of the Community Select Committee advised that, at its meeting held in June 2023, the Committee had received a presentation on the Housing Allocations Policy and the Resident Engagement Strategy. During the coming year the Committee would be considering Equalities and Diversity, Neighbourhood Wardens, the new Leisure Contract as well as holding a Crime and Disorder and a Public Health meeting.</p> <p>The Chair of the Environment &amp; Economy Select Committee advised that the Committee had commenced its 2024/25 work and over the course of the upcoming year would be looking at the Skills Agenda, local access to returning to work, continuing its review of local bus services alongside the Council's response to the climate emergency.</p>
<b>10</b>	<p><b>SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24</b></p>
	<p>In the absence of the Chair of the Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Sarah Mead, Chair of the Community Select Committee moved that the Annual Scrutiny Report for 2023/24 be noted.</p> <p>Councillor Rob Broom seconded the report.</p> <p>It was <b>RESOLVED</b> that the work undertaken by the Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee and Select Committees during 2023/24, as set out in the report, be noted.</p>
<b>11</b>	<p><b>NOTICE OF MOTIONS</b></p>
	<p><u>Code of Conduct</u></p> <p>Councillor Phil Bibby moved a motion concerning the Code of Conduct.</p> <p>The motion was not seconded and therefore was not debated.</p>

## New Labour Government

Councillor Richard Henry moved and Councillor Sandra Barr seconded the following motion

“On 4<sup>th</sup> July, 2024, after 14 years of disastrous, draconian and divisive Conservative government, the country chose change. It chose hope. It chose Labour.

The people of Stevenage also chose Labour and, for the first time in 14 years, the Stevenage constituency will have an MP worthy of the title. Kevin Bonavia will reset the expectations of what a good local MP should be: one who works full time for Stevenage; one who works with the local authorities in his constituency, not against them; one who is accessible and accountable to local people.

We congratulate Kevin Bonavia on his election. He is one of 411 Labour MPs in the House of Commons who, with Sir Keir Starmer as Prime Minister, a talented front bench team and a clear mandate, will bring the change and stability that the people of this country want and need.

We also congratulate the former Leader of the Council, Baroness Taylor of Stevenage, on her appointment as Parliamentary Under Secretary of State in the Department of Housing, Community & Local Government.

The new Government has hit the ground running. In the King’s Speech on 17<sup>th</sup> July, the Government set out its priorities. They are ambitious and diverse priorities. In particular, those that affect Stevenage Borough Council directly include:

- A Renters’ Rights Bill that will abolish Section 21 “no-fault evictions” and empower tenants to challenge rent increases “designed to force them out by the back door”.
- Respect orders – a revamped form of Asbos – will give police powers to place restrictions on adults to tackle anti-social behaviour.
- A Planning and Infrastructure Bill to speed up the planning process and planning committees will be modernised, with

resources to do their jobs.

- A commitment to housing – including social and affordable housing.
- A devolution bill for England,
- An Employment Rights bill, recognising that Labour values workers' rights.
- Nationalisation of our railways.

The Labour Manifesto, published prior to the general election, gave commitments that a Labour Government would work collaboratively with local government. The manifesto emphasises the importance of stable funding, decision-making flexibility, and partnership with local leaders and communities to drive growth and provide essential services. The King's Speech has opened the door to that collaboration, and, in Stevenage, we warmly welcome it.

This Council resolves that:

1. We look forward to a collaborative relationship with the newly elected Labour MP and Government to meet the Council ambitions for housing, growth and regeneration, and for the benefit of the people of Stevenage.
2. The Leader of the Council writes to Kevin Bonavia, MP for Stevenage, congratulating him on his election to Parliament and that SBC looks forward to a close working relationship.
3. The Leader of the Council writes to Baroness Taylor of Stevenage upon becoming Parliamentary Under Secretary of State in the Department of Housing, Community & Local Government and wishes her every success with her new role.

Following debate, and upon being put to the vote, the motion was carried.

12	<b>QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO CHAIRS/PORTFOLIO HOLDERS</b>	
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The Council received four questions from Members to Committee Chairs/Portfolio Holders. The responses to the four questions had been published in the supplementary agenda for the meeting.

(A) Question from Councillor Robin Parker CC re: lighting in Fairlands Valley Park

Supplementary question – what is the timescale on this matter and could a regular progress report come to Members to keep them updated. In the absence of the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Performance, the Deputy Leader agreed that a written response would be sent to Councillor Parker.

(B) Question from Councillor Stephen Booth re: a four day working week for Council officers

Supplementary question – “Subject to the outcome of the research and ongoing studies would the Council be in favour of the four day week for officers?”

The Deputy Leader advised that the Council would be monitoring the outcome of the research and make a decision at the appropriate time.

(C) Question from Councillor McGuinness regarding land sales.

Supplementary question – could the Portfolio Holder outline in a bit more detail where the capital receipts were actually spent and were any of the spends ringfenced for similar programmes where the assets came from originally?

The Deputy Leader advised that the sale of land had helped to fund projects such as parks and open space schemes, vehicles and plant, fire protection works at Cavendish Road and spend on commercial and operational buildings. All information could also be found in the quarterly monitoring reports submitted to Cabinet. The majority of the £6m receipt related to the sale of the Marshgate Car Park and ringfenced for regeneration projects in the Town. Councillor Thomas agreed to send the full details in her response to Councillor McGuinness in writing.

(D) Question from Councillor Bibby concerning the use of grey belt land.

Supplementary question – in relation to green belt land in neighbouring authorities, does the Portfolio Holder expect other



	<p>authorities to build on this land and would SBC be objecting to those green belt developments.</p> <p>In the Portfolio Holder's absence, the Deputy Leader agreed to arrange for a written response to Councillor Bibby.</p>
<b>13</b>	<p><b>HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT 2024/25 AND ON-GOING COST PRESSURES</b></p>
	<p>The Council considered a report in respect of the Mid Year Treasury Management Review 2023/24, including the Prudential Indicators. It was noted that the report had been endorsed by both the Audit Committee and the Executive.</p> <p>It was moved by Councillor Jeannette Thomas, and seconded by Councillor Jackie Hollywell, that the Recommendation in the report be approved.</p> <p>In response to questions and comments by members, Councillor Thomas advised that in relation to a deposit scheme for tenants, this would be difficult due to the financial situation of the tenants. In relation to costs for professional services, due to changes of situation and unexpected circumstances such as the Covid pandemic this could fluctuate.</p> <p>Upon the motion being put to the vote, it was <b>RESOLVED:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That the request for in-year growth due to HRA 2024/25 budget pressures of £2,434,050 as detailed in paragraph 4.11.2 of the Cabinet Report at Appendix A to the Council report be approved.</li> <li>2. That an additional £400k of HRA expenditure for the remainder of 2024/25 be approved.</li> </ol>
<b>14</b>	<p><b>APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT PERSON FOR STANDARDS COMMITTEE</b></p>
	<p>The Council considered a report in respect of the extension of the term of appointment of an Independent Person for Standards in accordance with the Localism Act 2011.</p>

It was moved by Councillor Jackie Hollywell, and seconded by Councillor Myla Arceno, that the Recommendations in the report be approved.

Upon the motion being put to the vote, it was **RESOLVED**:

1. That Dr Robert Cawley's term of office as the Council's independent Person be extended for a further term of four years with effect from 5 October 2024.
2. That the Monitoring Officer be authorised to seek to recruit a second Independent Person to act as a deputy to Dr Cawley.
3. That the deputy Independent person be paid an annual allowance of £749, which is 50% of the allowance paid to the principal Independent Person.

15	<b>AUDIT COMMITTEE MINUTES</b>	
	The Minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 4 June 2024 were received.	