

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

Date: Monday, 9 September 2024

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber - Daneshill House, Danestrete

Present: Councillors: Sarah Mead (Chair), Julie Ashley-Wren (Vice-Chair), Stephen Booth, Leanne Brady, Kamal Choudhury, Akin Elekolusi, Alistair Gordon, Lynda Guy, Mason Humberstone and Jade Woods

Start / End Start Time: 6.00pm
Time: End Time: 8.08pm

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no apologies received and no declarations of interest.

2 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING - 13 JUNE 2024**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meetings of the Community Select Committee held on 13th June were agreed as a correct record.

3 **UPDATE ON THE WORK OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD WARDENS**

The Committee received a presentation updating Members on the work of the Neighbourhood Wardens providing background info on the role and the current team, designations including the differing functions between a Community Development Officer and a Neighbourhood Warden.

Officers explained that originally the Neighbourhood Wardens were “working in silos” which meant they were unable to offer cover to other areas of the town. This has since been addressed and the Neighbourhood Wardens were now able to carry out town wide projects within each other’s areas.

Officers explained the Neighbourhood Wardens role was now split into two parts and their working week divided to cover this, there was however flexibility within this dependent on the pressure from each work area.

The first area of their work was: Business as usual (BAU). This involved all the town wide areas of work including things like the town wide projects, abandoned vehicles, your say complaints, report it and fly tipping issues, assessing which of these issues were then passed on for enforcement to the Community Safety Team.

The second area of their work was their Area Based Role (ABR) which was specific for neighbourhood areas, providing support for the Community Development Officers and support for residents in an area.

BAU (Business as Usual) also included responsibilities such as resident issues, defibrillator and bleed control kit checks and upkeeps, update area noticeboards, neighbourhood centre audits, housing residents' involvement, attendance and support at corporate events, support in the town centre and the Building a Better Bedwell project and support to the community payback projects.

The Building a Better Bedwell Project was funded by the Police Crime Commissioners Office through their Safer Streets programme. Funding for the project runs until March 2025. The project covers the Tower Block area of Bedwell on Silam Road, including Harrow Court, Brent Court, and High Plash. In addition to the replacement of the doors and upgrade of CCTV in the blocks, the project has three community phases to it:

- Park-guard our evening warden and Patrol partner
- BBB Neighbourhood Wardens
- Continuous support offering cohesion and engagement with residents

Officers provided further details of the Building a Better Bedwell project. The project was created to encourage community engagement through evening and weekend patrols, improve community awareness of reporting mechanisms and processes, increase reporting of issues to statutory bodies through engagement with the community, and building Cohesive Communities. The Wardens provide provision of events, development of projects to improve wellbeing of Tower Block residents, developing a resident's association for the Tower Blocks, supporting an annual programme of community led events and maintaining relationships with communities to sustain and improve communication with statutory bodies.

Officers stated the next steps were to develop the community gardens; build up resident consultation; to support and encourage the resident to form a resident committee which would continue engagement with residents; refurbishment of the community room in Harrow Court and partnership working with the Housing Tenancy Officer.

The SPARX Charity was also formed through the Build A Better Bedwell Project to train and support volunteers from the Stevenage Community in retail. SPARK was a charity formed in the north of England to help young offenders learn about retail they sell affordable sports goods with a mobile unit which they take out to community events. All profits go back into support and sustain the project.

SPARX offers support to community projects in bedwell and facilitates an attends community events/projects in Stevenage Town centre.

Neighbourhood Warden officers presented an overview of the different role functions and specialist areas such as the Town Centre.

Members queried whether Bedwell has an advantage over other wards due to the fact Bandle Hill and Poplars does not have a doctor's surgery nor a community centre. In response to the question the officer stated the work which is carried out by the team is priority lead and that the specific work in Bedwell is short term and externally funded. Members raised whether a pop-up location could be allocated for Bandle Hill. The Officer stated they acknowledge there is a problem within the area and would investigate in greater detail.

The Committee questioned what the priorities of the next twelve months were and how the team measured effectiveness within neighbourhoods? The Officer stated the priorities were to change community meetings to model the policing priorities meeting and move to a priority-based model.

Regarding a question about addressing community cohesion, Officers said it's a challenge to measure but was produced through engagement with the public using soft skills, making sure that all interactions were not a tick box exercise. Officers take along activities to events to engage with public.

Members expressed that they would like to be involved in the work produced by the Wardens and asked what the team would like from Members? In response to the question the officers stated it would be useful for Members to attend drop-in sessions, church events, fly-tipping sites, and engage with residents at the towers.

The Chair stated that the Neighbourhood Wardens were doing an amazing job. She stated that the way they were dealing with graffiti was amazing and the work at the skate park was exceptional. The Chair suggested there was still work to do to streamline communication with Members in an efficient way with less publication of the same information in different formats, such as at walkabouts, drop-ins, online community meetings etc.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Committee noted the Update on The Work of The Neighbourhood Wardens.

4 **COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE ACTION TRACKER**

The Scrutiny Officer provided an update on the Community Select Committee Action Tracker. It was explained all relevant officers were asked to produce an update on the work at hand e.g., Housing Repairs and Housing Voids which would be updated within the action tracker and circulated to members for Oct/Nov 2024.

The Chair explained to the committee that she would like a brief update on where the Council/Regeneration section is with the New Towns Heritage Centre project? The Chair also asked for an update on Resident Engagement and to keep Members in the loop with the work into Damp and Mould. It was reiterated by the Officer to read the document and if they required any further updates to email the Scrutiny Officer.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Committee noted the Community Select Action Tracker.

5 **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

There was no urgent Part I business.

6 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

It was RESOLVED:

Not required.

7 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

There was no urgent Part II business.

CHAIR