

Public Document Pack



COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE

Date: Wednesday, 8 January 2025

Time: 6.00pm,

Location: Council Chamber - Daneshill House, Danestrete

Contact:

Members: Councillors: S Mead (Chair), J Ashley-Wren (Vice-Chair), S Booth, L Brady, K Choudhury, A Elekolusi, A Gordon, L Guy, M Humberstone and J Woods

AGENDA

PART 1

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2. MINUTES - 28 NOVEMBER 2024

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the Community Select Committee held on Thursday 28 November 2024.

Pages 3 – 8

3. EQUALITIES, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION PRESENTATION

To receive a presentation on Equalities, Diversity & Inclusion to help orientate Members regarding the scrutiny review.

Pages 9 – 20

4. EQUALITIES, DIVERSITY & SOCIAL INCLUSION - SCRUTINY REVIEW SCOPING DOCUMENT

To receive and comment on the scoping document for the Equalities, Diversity & Social Inclusion scrutiny review.

Pages 21 – 26

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

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Thursday, 28 November 2024

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber - Daneshill House, Danestrete

Present: Councillors: Sarah Mead (Chair), Julie Ashley-Wren (Vice Chair), Stephen Booth, Kamal Choudhury, Alistair Gordon and Mason Humberstone

Start / End Time: Start Time: 6.00pm
End Time: 7.50pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillors Leanne Brady, Akin Elekolusi, Lynda Guy and Jade Woods.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES - 4 NOVEMBER 2024

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Community Select Committee held on 4 November 2024 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 HOUSING DAMP & MOULD UPDATE

The Committee received a presentation giving an update on the scrutiny review of Damp and Mould from the Disrepair and Damp and Mould Manager.

The Committee was advised that in relation to the performance of the service:

- a target of 20 days for all building work order requests had been established;
- For November the work order KPI performance stood at 83.64%;
- There were currently 114 active work orders related to D&M;
- The average cost per job was approximately £1,735;
- Any overdue work orders were primarily linked to roofing issues or instances where access had not been granted by the tenant.

Officers informed the Committee that to ensure that the service remained fit for purpose a review of the policy would be undertaken alongside a stock condition survey programme and the adoption of a case management approach. Further developments included air quality monitors, use of technology and alternative wall finishes.

It was noted that 100% of pre and post inspections were carried out by inhouse inspectors with 3 and 6 month follow on inspections to ensure works had been effective.

In relation to resources, Members were advised that a review of staffing resources had been completed in May 2024. The Disrepair and Damp and Mould teams had been combined and merged into a single team. Recruitment was in progress to make permanent appointments to new and agency filled roles and the procurement of support contractors was in progress.

In order to enhance responsiveness and support for tenants, staff within the Customer Service Centre (CSC) communicated daily with the D&M team. Direct line of communication had been established, including mobile contacts, to ensure immediate assistance for tenant inquiries and requests.

Officers advised that while progress in tackling D&M concerns was being made, it was believed that there was significant potential for strengthening communication and alignment with the Decent Homes Programme and the repairs team. By working collaboratively, the service would be enhanced and better outcomes achieved.

In response to a number of questions, Officers responded as follows:

- In relation to water ingress or leaks, ensuring that these repairs were managed effectively was crucial, as inadequate drying could lead to D&M issues later on. Addressing these concerns promptly would help the avoidance of complications down the line;
- Each concern was dealt with on its merits on a case by case basis and would involve Housing teams when appropriate. Officers would work closely with tenants, building relationships with them to consider options including decanting the tenant if needed;
- Complex cases would be dealt with by way of a case conference to consider the most appropriate way forward;
- On-site surveyors were reporting cases immediately following the roll-out of technology. The 20 day target to rectify the issue would then commence;

The Chair thanked the Officers for their presentation and advised that she was pleased to see the improvements to the Service.

It was **RESOLVED** that the presentation be noted.

4 **HOUSING ASSET MANAGEMENT**

The Committee received a presentation from the Head of Housing Asset Management outlining the key areas covered by the Service.

The Committee was informed that the team had developed all programmes of works using stock intelligence gathered in consultation with residents and housing management as this was key to understanding the condition of the stock.

In relation to Decent Homes, it was agreed that continued investment in the stock was key to meeting and maintaining compliance with the standard. Further consultation would be undertaken on Decent Homes 2 and a detailed communications strategy would be drawn up to ensure transparency for tenants on where their property was within the programme.

Officers reported on the current position in respect of decarbonisation and energy efficiency with 2684 properties still requiring work to meet the minimum Band C target. Over £5million funding had been secured with SBC match funding and a Warm Homes bid for 550 homes would be submitted. It was noted that to achieve net zero by 2050, £169million investment would be required.

An update was given on the current capital programme including

- Major Refurbishment Contract (MRC),
- Decent Homes,
- SHDF Wave 2 – Delivery of Energy Efficiency Measures to flat blocks and Street Properties;
- High Rise – Replacement Fire Doors (Flats and Communal);
- Fencing Programme – Planned programme of over £1million this year.

It was noted that in relation to High Rise Refurbishment Works, consultation was due to start in December and would include roofing, windows, heating, communal area decoration and re-modelling. Overall, the Investment in the existing stock over the next 5 years totalled £110 million.

In response to a question regarding the fencing programme, Officers advised that the fencing policy had been reviewed and was now more robust to avoid the constant fence replacements.

Improvements relating to the voids service were reported including the procurement of support contractors as the service moved to a hybrid delivery model. It was recognised that although there had been improvements there was still work to do within the service.

Members were advised that the Aids and Adaptations Policy was in the process of being reworked and would ensure the Council was making the best use of the properties available and consider where the aids and adaptations were most appropriate and that reasonable adjustments could be made to ensure compliance with the Equality Act.

The chair asked for clarification that there was not any change to fix term tenancies. Officers confirmed that there were currently no plans to change the existing policy. Tenants who were offered the opportunity to move to sheltered accommodation were at liberty to accept or decline the offer.

Following further consideration, it was agreed that Aids and Adaptations be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee for more targeted scrutiny.

The Chair thanked the Officers for their presentation.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the presentation be noted;
2. That a further review of the Aids and Adaptation works be brought back to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.

5 **HOUSING ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR POLICY**

The Committee received a presentation informing Members on how ASB and Hate Crime was managed within the Housing Management Department. Key areas of the draft Tenants and Leaseholders ASB policy were highlighted and the roles and resources available to assist with this process were identified alongside details of the main legislation that was used when enforcement procedures were necessary.

Officers recognised that anti-social behaviour was a priority issue for local people and that such behaviour could have a severe effect on the well-being of residents. It was noted that the Council had a duty to take action to minimise it through preventative measures, enforcement actions, and support for victims, witnesses, and staff. Support would be put in place for victims and perpetrators to try and resolve the ASB with an understanding that not everyone was aware their behaviour was impacting others.

The revised Draft Policy set out the Council's approach to ASB including how the Council would work with victims, witnesses, partners and the Police.

It was noted that as part of their Tenancy Agreement each tenant is issued with a set of tenancy conditions by which they must abide. Leaseholders were issued with a lease agreement.

Definitions of the different levels of ASB and Hate Crime were outlined for the Committee as well as enforcement, tools and powers the team and wider agencies could use.

In response to a question regarding the expectations of complainants, Members were advised that these had to be managed from an early stage as most cases took a substantial amount of time to reach a conclusion. Support would be available for all involved from the start of a case.

The Chair thanked the Officers for their presentation and for the work the Team did in this very difficult area.

It was **RESOLVED** that the presentation be noted.

6 **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

There was none.

7 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Not required.

8 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

There was none.

CHAIR

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Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI)

Community Select Committee

8th January 2024

Equality Act (2010)


Protected Characteristics



Sex



Sexual Orientation



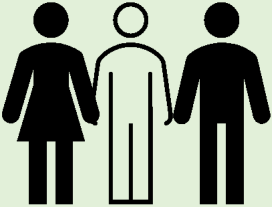
Age



Pregnancy



Gender Reassignment



Race




Religion



Marriage



Disability



Socio-Economic Status

EDI Action Plan

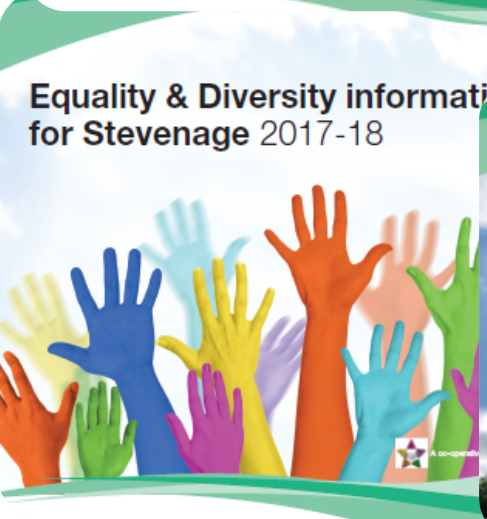
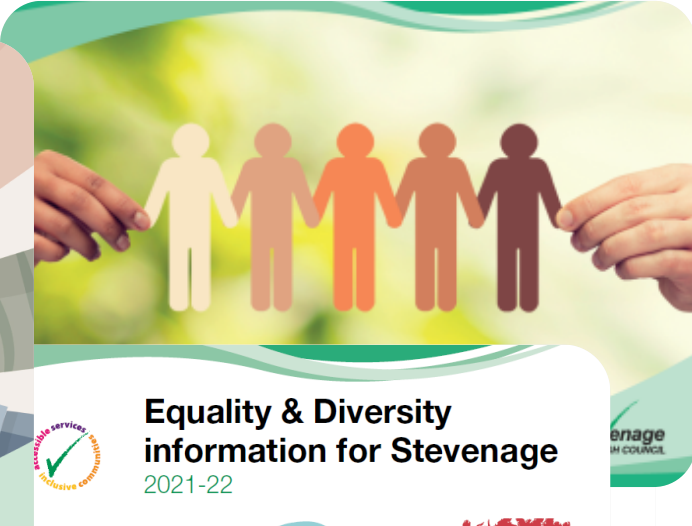
- Originally approved by Executive in July 2023
- 18 Actions across the following six objectives:

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- Renew set of actions every year
- Actions have covered the creation of the Stevenage Equalities Commission Legacy Group, the Civic Leadership Programme, improving health inequalities, EDI training, and enhancing workforce data.

Equality & Diversity Report



Equality Impact Assessments



- Received in 2024:

- Aids & Adaptations
- Community Safety
- Complaints
- Corporate Plan
- Damp & Mould
- Data Quality
- Disrepairs
- Domestic Abuse
- Fees & Charges
- Gambling & Licensing
- Indoor Market
- Pre-Purchase Graves
- Reasonable Adjustments
- Repairs Policy
- Safeguarding Adults
- Void Management Policy



EDI Groups

Officer Equality Group (OEG)

17 Members

Staff group

Chaired by Assistant Director Jonathan James

Monthly meetings

Responsible for the development and monitoring of the Council's EDI Action Plan, as well as keeping up to date with the EDI event calendar.



Equality & Diversity Governance Group (EDGG)

10 Members

Chaired by Cllr Conor McGrath

Member & staff group

Responsible for promoting the principles of the Council's EDI objectives, and ensures the aims of the EDI Strategy are achieved



- ▶ Between April 2024 and March 2025 Stevenage Equalities Commission have.
- Held its first conference at the Gordon Craig Theatre in October to coincide with Black History Month as well as Hate Crime Awareness week. Over 90 people attended the conference, and a short taster film was produced.
 - Produced marketing materials to encourage members of ethnically diverse communities to engage in the topics being focused on and provide representation at community events.
 - Looked to develop a website that will host a variety of supporting materials and opportunities for training and development.
 - Worked on securing additional external funding to drive forward recommendations and support The Commission for the next 3 years.
 - Worked with Operation Black Vote to produce a research and engagement piece for Stevenage that will develop into a Civic Leadership programme.
- ▶ In March 2025 Stevenage Equalities Commission will formalise into a multi stakeholder cooperative. This will then enable the Commission to seek out its own funding and establish itself as a community resource and advocate for members of ethnically diverse communities.



Future Engagement

Community Engagement

Plan further consultation events and gather feedback from residents, particularly from underrepresented groups.



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Celebrating EDI Successes

Showcase progress and achievements made by key individuals across the council and community



EDI Training

Ongoing training to ensure inclusive service delivery across the council.



Public Awareness Campaigns

Increase visibility of our EDI initiatives through communications and local events.





Guest Speakers



Stevenage Day 2024 & Junction 7 Creatives

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DRAFT

Template Scoping Document

Community Select Committee	
Scrutiny Review Title:	Equalities, Diversity & Social Inclusion Review
Background issues to review – rationale for scrutinising this issue:	When Members considered their work programme for the 2024-25 Municipal Year at its meeting on 29 February 2024 it was agreed to include a review item on Equalities and Diversity Social Inclusion, and this was endorsed on 13 June 2024 CSC meeting.
Is this issue covered by Corporate Plans?	Yes, it is one of the Council's Key Performance Indicators in its Corporate Performance suite.
Focus of the review: (State what the review focus will be)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the Council doing to address community cohesion in the town?• What is the Council doing to help engage all communities? <p>Other issues identified in a scoping discussion with the Chair and lead officers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are the public aware of various cultural events that separate ethnic communities hold? e.g. the Stevenage Barrio Fiesta celebrating the town's Filipino community. People from other communities may not be aware that the event island area is available and could be used for similar events. Perhaps a review might encourage other groups to come forward and put on their own events.• Previously the World Forum had arranged a diversity calendar that was promoted by former Cllr Sherma Batson which had been a good vehicle for breaking down barriers. Could be looked at with the World Forum or the Equalities Commission Legacy Group.• How does the Council celebrate and help promote the 9 Characteristic groups of the diversity Act 2010 throughout the year?• The Council's Strategic Leadership Team be asked to share how planning/regeneration affects people with disabilities as they move about the town. Recent examples to probe could be the

	<p>relocation of the bus station and changes to the Westgate Car Park as examples of challenging design for disabled people. What is movement around the town like for wheelchair users and visually impaired?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The review should address the cultural diversity with the town’s LGBTQ+ community. Junction & Creatives have been offered as an example of a good community group who offer a friendly place for LGBTQ+ people. The Council’s role is seen as to support not to lead by arranging events. This year’s Stevenage Day had a specific LGBTQ+ Pride focus. • Is there still inappropriate/derogatory language used towards disabled people or used in a pejorative way to able-bodied people in schools? • Is there still as problem with deep seated racism and what can be done to counter and challenge this? • A possible recommendation could be that there is a cultural event celebrating Stevenage diversity. • Can the information boards around the town centre be used to promote the Council’s own events and social inclusion?
<p><u>Timing issues:</u> Are there any timing constraints to when the review can be carried out?</p>	<p>None that the Scrutiny Officer is aware of, other than there are 4 formal Committee meetings in the calendar of meetings earmarked for this work. Other work may need to be carried out informally and reported back to the Committee.</p>
<p>The Committee will meet on (provide <u>dates</u> if known):</p>	<p>Dates: Day/Month/Time/Venue</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 January 2025 – CSC consider a draft scoping document and receive an officer presentation from the Corporate Policy and Research Officer, Charlotte Bott, Daryl Jedowski SBC Corporate Policy and Performance Officer on the current position with ED&I and community cohesion in the town. • 8 January 2025 - interview some of the witnesses for evidence gathering – (Errol John, Equalities Commission Legacy Group/ Kate Belinis, Stevenage World Forum / John Prebble, Junction 7 Creatives work with LGBTQ+ community Stevenage Day & Coco Brinda LGBTQ+ Pride community group

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 29 January Date 2025 continue to interview witnesses for evidence gathering. Possible witnesses to be arranged – Age - Youth Mayor & Age Concern, Disability, Mind in Mid Herts CEO Sharn Tomlinson • Date 2025 Sub-group to consider Community Cohesion – Input from local resident Kelly Davis, Police, Inspector Graham, Walsingham, Jess Warren ASB, Herts Welcome Refugees • Date 2025 - Early recommendations and outline draft report to Select Committee • Date 2025 - Final recommendations & report
<p>SBC Leads (list the Executive Portfolio Holders and SD's Heads of Service who should appear as witnesses):</p>	<p><i>Officers have suggested the following people:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Executive Portfolio Holder(s) for Stronger Communities (covering Equalities and Diversity and Community Cohesion) Cllr Conor McGrath</i> • <i>Daryl Jedowski, SBC Corporate Policy and Performance Officer and lead Equalities and Diversity Officer</i> • <i>Charlotte Bott, Corporate Policy and Research Officer</i> • <i>Gemma Maret, Neighbourhood Warden Manager</i> • <i>SBC SLT lead for Equalities and Diversity – position vacant</i> • <i>SBC SLT lead for a strategic look at the way policy affects/can help when done well the lives of disabled people – AD Planning and Regulation position vacant</i>
<p>Any other witnesses (external persons/critical friend)?:</p>	<p>To be identified by the Committee at the scoping meeting. <i>Possible options identified by officers:</i></p> <p><i>To be advised by the Corporate Policy and Performance Officer regarding representative groups from across the community but could include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Errol John, Equalities Commission Legacy Group • Kate Belinis, Chair of Stevenage World Forum & Cllr Nazmin Chowdhury • SBC Youth Mayor and Deputy Youth Mayor – HCC run Youth Council to be invited • LGBTQ+ representative group – (in scoping discussion John Prebble at Junction 7 Creatives has been recommended as a good person to talk to regarding outreach to LGBTQ+ for the area – John Recommended inviting Co-Co Rose

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age Concern – Lorna Scardifield • Disability umbrella group (<i>Juanita Prescott, Everyone Active to advise?</i>) • Stevenage Interfaith Forum – Cllr Myla Arceno lead contact
<p>Allocation of lead Members on specific individual issues/questions:</p> <p>Any other Questions Members wish to cover:</p>	<p>To be identified by the Committee at the scoping meeting.</p> <p>Members will undertake their own desktop and fact-finding research and ask questions on the following areas (list the issues to address during the interviews):</p> <p><i>To be identified</i></p>
<p>Site visits and evidence gathering in the Community</p>	<p>To be advised if this is possible to arrange for a site visit to meet relevant diverse groups in the community</p>
<p>Equalities and Diversity issues: The review will consider what the relevant equalities and diversity issues are regarding the Scrutiny subject that is being scrutinised</p>	<p>It was agreed that the review would address equalities and diversity issues directly in the review.</p> <p><u>Equalities & Diversity Issues</u> – Are there any E&D issues to consider in this review? –</p> <p>As the review is primarily focused on equalities and diversity and community cohesion this will be covered as the main focus of the review.</p>
<p>Constraints (Issues that have been highlighted at the scoping stage but are too broad/detailed to be covered by the review):</p>	<p><i>To be identified by the Committee at the scoping meeting on Nov/Dec 2024 (These issues can be captured and dealt with via other means – Briefings/email/officer action etc)</i></p>
<p>Background Documents/data that can be provided to the review</p>	<p><i>As identified by the Committee at the draft scoping meeting Nov/Dec 2024:</i></p> <p>Evidence requested:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equalities Commission Report • Equalities Commission - Community Voices Info Pack • Equalities Commission - SBC website pages • Equalities Diversity & Inclusion Action Plan 2023-24
<p>Agreed Milestones and review sign</p>	<p><i>Formal response from Executive Portfolio Holder (Executives have a Statutory requirement to respond to</i></p>

off - To be agreed by Members and officers

Scrutiny review recommendations two months after receiving a final report and recommendations of a review: **Date Executive Portfolio responses are expected** (dependent on the final report & executive portfolio response template publishing date): **DD MM YY**
Date for monitoring implementation of recommendations – final sign off (typically one year from completion of the review): DD MM YY (Close to this date the Select Committee will receive a report at a Committee meeting to agree the final sign off of the review recommendations)

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