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COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE

Date: Tuesday, 8 April 2025

Time: 6.00pm,

Location: Council Chamber

Contact: Gemma O'Donnell

committees@stevenage.gov.uk

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. COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME - 2025-26

To receive an update on the delivery of the 2024-25 Work Programme and options for consideration for the Committee's 2025-26 Work Programme.

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3. URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS

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

4. 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.

5. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

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

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✓Lead AD	AD Housing & Neighbourhoods, Kerry Clifford
Deputy	AD Building Safety & Housing Property Services, Denise Lewis
Chair	Cllr Sarah Mead
Vice-Chair	Cllr Julie Ashley-Wren

Delivery of Community Select Committee Scrutiny Work Programme 2024-25 and emerging options for 2025-26

(Including main review items, one-off meetings, statutory and standing items, review revisits and policy development items)

Scrutiny Review items 2024/25:	Strategic Director, Assistant Director, Lead Officer(s) & Portfolio Holder	Provisional meeting date(s) identified	Other details: i.e. (i) Number of meetings item can be covered in? (ii) Whether scoping required? (iii) Expectation/ style of meeting & (iv) other details	Comment by lead Assistant Director/Deputy	Chair comments & indicate if complete ✓, ongoing or not delivered ✗
<u>One- off review of the communications plan for the new Housing Allocations Policy prior to</u>	AD Housing & Neighbourhoods, Kerry Clifford, Head of Community Advice, Sarah Pateman,	Held a meeting 13 June 2024 – the meeting was in time for issues to be picked up prior to the	(i) This should be covered in a single meeting (ii) No scope required.	The Strategic Director agreed to instruct Officers to provide a report on the overview of the communications plans with the public on the new	✓

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<u>delivery of the policy in July 2024</u>	Housing Operations Manager, Tracy Jackson, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Housing, Cllr Jackie Hollywell.	policy being implemented.		Housing Allocations Policy before it is delivered in July 2024.	
<u>One-off update item on Housing Investment – Asset Management</u>	AD Building Safety and Property Services, Denise Lewis, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Housing, Cllr Jackie Hollywell.	Provisional date – <u>Wed 2 October 2024</u> (combined with Pre-scrutiny of the HRA MTFS?) delayed. Held a meeting on Thursday 28 Nov 2024	(i) This should be covered in a single meeting (ii) No scope required.	Members to receive an update on the various elements to Housing Investment including the decent homes programme, the major repairs contract and on one-off repairs.	✓
<u>One-off update item on Housing Damp & Mould</u>	AD Building Safety and Property Services, Denise Lewis, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for	Held a meeting on Thursday 28 November 2024	(i) This should be covered in a single meeting (ii) No scope required.	Members to receive an update on Damp & Mould	✓

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	Housing, Cllr Jackie Hollywell.				
<p><u>Equalities & Diversity</u> (initially a one-off meeting, but could lead to a main review)</p>	<p>AD Housing & Neighbourhoods, Kerry Clifford, SLT Lead for E&D Jonathan James, Corp Policy and Business Support Manager, Daryl Jedowski, Cabinet Member for Stronger Communities including Equalities, Cllr Conor McGrath.</p>	<p>November/December 2024 8 January 2025 ✓ 29 January 2025 ✓</p> <p><u>Update March 2025:</u> A Member briefing and written briefing note is being prepared to be shared with CSC Members on Community Cohesion.</p>	<p>(i) This would initially be covered at a single meeting, but this could lead to a number of meetings. (ii) A full scope would be required if there is a full review undertaken.</p>	<p>The Council's Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) lead be invited to a future CSC meeting to provide a PowerPoint presentation to CSC Members regarding who does what in relation to promoting Equalities and Diversity and good community cohesion. Following the presentation and liaison with the Equalities Commission Legacy Group a scope for a review could be brought back to the Committee for consideration.</p>	<p>The Chair met with lead officers for E&D (Daryl Jedowski and Jonathan James) to discuss the scope on Wed 28 Aug 2024. ✓</p> <p>Ongoing – bring the final report to CSC in 2025-26 Municipal Year</p>
<p><u>One-off update on Neighbourhood Wardens</u></p>	<p>AD Housing & Neighbourhoods Kerry Clifford, Co-</p>	<p>4 July 2024. Cancelled due to the General Election.</p>	<p>(i) This should be covered in a single meeting</p>	<p>Officers should bring a one-off update on the work of the Neighbourhood</p>	<p>✓</p>

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Page 6	operative Neighbourhood Manager, Jane Konopka, Cabinet Member Co-op Council & Neighbourhood Communities, Cllr Sandra Barr.	Held a meeting on Mon 9 September 2024	(ii) No scope required.	Wardens to the Committee.	
<u>One-off update on the new Leisure Contract performance</u>	AD Stevenage Direct Services, Steve Dupoy, Culture, Wellbeing & Leisure Services Manager, Geoff Caine, Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure & Wellbeing, Cllr Loraine Rossati and an Everyone Active Director.	Held a meeting on Mon 4 Nov 2024	(i) This should be covered in a single meeting (ii) No scope required.	Everyone Active & the Council's Health and Wellbeing Officer be invited to attend a meeting and provide an update presentation to Members.	✓

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<u>Statutory Item - Crime & Disorder Committee</u> Page 7	AD Stevenage Direct Services, Lead Officer Sarah Pateman, Portfolio Holder for Stronger Communities, Cllr Conor McGrath	Meeting scheduled for 26 March 2025 .	(i) Yes, covered in one meeting (ii) No scope required (iii) Interviews with Chair of RAG, Herts Constabulary, Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Community Safety looking at past performance of the Community Safety Action Plan and future priorities		✓
<u>Standing Item - Public Health</u>	AD Housing & Neighbourhoods, Kerry Clifford, and Health & Sports Strategy Manager, Ryan Ansell.	Jan/Feb 2025.	(i) Yes, covered in one meeting (ii) No scope required (iii) Interviews with the HCC Director of Public Health, SBC Executive Portfolio	Members indicated that they value this session with the HCC Director of Public Health and would like to focus on general health and wellbeing and	The Chair and Vice-Chair are keen for this item to be delivered. ✗ Potential for focus on in 2025-26 – see

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Page 8			Holder with responsibility for Public Health and the SD for Community. (iv) Other Members to be invited – SBC Rep on HCC Health Scrutiny Cttee.	specifically on Health Inequalities for Stevenage. The HCC Director of Public Health be invited to update Members on the newly established NHS Integrated Care Boards (replacing Clinical Commissioning Groups)	potential options for 2025-26 Work programme
<u>2025-26 Work Programme</u>		Feb/March 2025. To be arranged.	One off meeting		Scheduled for 8 April 2025

Monitoring of Previous Recommendations/Actions								
Scrutiny items: (Follow up in 2022/23)	Strategic Director, Assistant Director, Lead Officer(s) & Portfolio Holder	Provisional meeting date(s) identified	Number of meetings item can be covered in?	Expectation/ Style of meeting	Scoping details (whether full scope or simple scope required)	Other details	Comment by lead Assistant Director/ Deputy	Complete ✓ x
Action Tracker.	N/A	Held a meeting on 9 Sep 2024).	(i) <u>Covered in a single meeting</u> revisiting the previous review and seeing where we are today		N/A			✓

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Any monitoring of previous reviews will be agreed when the Committee considers the action tracker at a meeting of the Committee on 9 September 2024

Pre-Scrutiny Policy Development	Strategic Director, Assistant Director, Lead Officer(s) & Portfolio Holder	Provisional meeting date(s) identified	Number of meetings item can be covered in?	Expectation/Style of meeting	Scoping details (whether full scope or simple scope)	Other details	Complete ✓ x
<u>Housing Anti-Social Behaviour Policy</u>	AD Housing & Neighbourhoods, Kerry Clifford; Cabinet Portfolios for Housing, Cllr	Held a meeting on 28 November 2024	One	Opportunity for Cabinet Portfolio Holder to meet with officers and Scrutiny Members to discuss content and shape of	N/A		✓

Pre-Scrutiny Policy Development	Strategic Director, Assistant Director, Lead Officer(s) & Portfolio Holder	Provisional meeting date(s) identified	Number of meetings item can be covered in?	Expectation/Style of meeting	Scoping details (whether full scope or simple scope)	Other details	Complete ✓ ✗
	Jackie Hollywell and Stronger Communities, Conor McGrath.			a Policy document before it is finalised in order to shape the final outcome			
<u>Pre-Scrutiny of Community Centres</u> p 10	Strategic Director and Statutory Section 151 Officer, Clare Fletcher, (AD Housing & Neighbourhoods, Kerry Clifford) Portfolio Holder for Co-operative Council and Neighbourhoods, Cllr Sandra Barr.	To be scheduled.	To be advised but possibly conducted in one meeting.	Opportunity for Cabinet Portfolio Holder to meet with officers and Scrutiny Members to discuss content and shape of a Policy document before it is finalised in order to shape the final outcome		The Chair of the Committee to meet up with the Strategic Director and Statutory Section 151 Officer with responsibility for the Council's Finances regarding how the Committee might engage on this issue.	✗
<u>Pre-Scrutiny of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan MTFS (?)</u>	Strategic Director, Richard Protheroe, The Head of Asset Management.	October 2024.	To be advised but possibly conducted in one meeting.	Members to discuss content and shape of a Policy document before it is finalised in order to shape the final outcome.		Item deleted as it was not possible to do this in time due to pressures on the pulling together of the HRA & GF Budget.	✗

Pre-Scrutiny Policy Development	Strategic Director, Assistant Director, Lead Officer(s) & Portfolio Holder	Provisional meeting date(s) identified	Number of meetings item can be covered in?	Expectation/Style of meeting	Scoping details (whether full scope or simple scope)	Other details	Complete ✓ ✘
<u>Pre-Scrutiny Resident Engagement Strategy (replacement for HMAB)</u> Page 11	Strategic Director and Statutory Section 151 Officer, Clare Fletcher, AD Housing & Neighbourhoods, Kerry Clifford, Portfolio Holders for Co-operative Council and Neighbourhoods & Housing, Cllr Sandra Barr & Cllr Jackie Hollywell.	Held a meeting on 13 June 2024 .	To be advised but possibly conducted in one meeting.	To be agreed. A possible option would be to hold an informal meeting of CSC Members ahead of a formal Committee meeting		The Chair has said that she would like to invite some tenants to attend a session with the CSC to validate this process.	✓
<u>Pre-Scrutiny of Aids and Adaptations Policy</u>	AD Building Safety and Property Services, Denise Lewis, Andrew Garside, Head of Housing Asset Management	Held a meeting on Wednesday 5 February 2025 .	One meeting.	Opportunity for Cabinet Portfolio Holder to meet with officers and Scrutiny Members to discuss content and shape of a Policy document before it is finalised in order to shape the final outcome	N/A		✓

Potential CSC Work Programme items for 2025-26

(The Chair and Vice-Chair met with the Scrutiny Officer and the lead Assistant Director, Kerry Clifford in March to share their ideas re future CSC scrutiny work programme items as listed below)

- **Progress report on Housing Allocations** – Members hope that the process is working better with less people on the bands – this is still about managing expectations. The Chair, Cllr Sarah Mead and Vice-Chair, Cllr Julie Asley Wren both articulated the narrative that normal working class people won't get social housing and the public perception that it's not fairly allocated – Social Housing by law is allocated on need, therefore the next generation of local residents are not guaranteed or likely to be allocated social housing unless their needs are great enough to warrant it.
- **Damp and Mould** – The Chair, Cllr Sarah Mead has drawn attention to a case reported in the Comet newspaper from 25 Feb 2025 – The Scrutiny Officer has asked the Assistant Director, Building Safety and Housing Property, Denise Lewis to ask her to provide the Chair with the background to the case reported in the Comet in later February 2025. The Chair would like to follow through a case from first reporting to conclusion. There is some concern with Members regarding the 28-day turnaround of damp and mould cases. Is the Council able to meet the new legislative demands of Awaab's Law? Some anecdotal evidence from Members that tenant's miss appointments, refuse access. Also, there can be supply chain issues. In addition, there can be problems with unscrupulous solicitors encouraging their no win no fee clients to refuse access and stop paying rent due to defects in order to have a stronger legal case against Council's as the landlord.
- **Complete review of Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion in 2025-26** – The draft and then final report needs to be brought back to the Committee in 2025-26.
- **Tenant enforcement/Tenancy Audits** – The Chair would like an update on this.
- **Public Health** – a themed meeting on public health – invite HCC Director of Public Health – Bring the Healthy Stevenage Strategy with Healthy Hub. Also have a focus on diabetes & obesity crisis – ultra processed food – education piece – food preparation classes – accessible exercise. Suggestion from Julie re health monitoring patch – possible sponsorship?
- **Older People** – a themed meeting – invite Age Concern/Age UK – local focus on older people community transport – what's out there now? – Digital Exclusion
- **Pre-scrutiny of ASB** – Pre scrutiny policy development review
- **Community Centre's** – Assistant Director, Housing & Neighbourhoods, Kerry Clifford to check with the Section 151 Officer, Clare Fletcher where the Council is with this policy area
- **Pre-scrutiny of HRA Business Plan** – Ditto above the AD, Housing & Neighbourhoods and Scrutiny Officer to check with the Section 151 Officer if this is feasible and helpful?

- **Resident Engagement** - AD, Housing & Neighbourhoods, Kerry Clifford, has offered to bring an update to Community Select Members
- **Community Cohesion** – Briefing note and briefing session being drawn up by officers including the Council Resettlement Strategy

Responses from individual Community Select Committee Councillors re possible work programme items:

Cllr Jade Woods:

- Housing policy and allocations (given that this is new and we've had a fair bit of case work on it)
- Member Responsible for Complaints (given that this goes hand in hand)
- Community cohesion (we touched on this before, but it'll be good to look at in more depth given the current climate)

Cllr Lynda Guy:

- Community cohesion – Cllr Guy is receiving a number of resident enquires about refugee asylum seekers housed in local hotels and has asked for a guidance note/frequently asked questions sheet that she can use to answer questions.

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