

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

Date: Thursday, 12 July 2018

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Shimkent Room - Daneshill House, Danestrete

Present: Councillors: Sarah Mead (Chair), Adam Mitchell CC (Vice-Chair), Sandra Barr, Jim Brown, Liz Harrington, John Mead, Sarah-Jane Potter and Simon Speller

Start / End Start Time: 6.00pm
Time: End Time: 7.40pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R Hearn and T Wren.

Cllr J Mead declared a personal interest in Item 4 by virtue of being a Trustee of the Stevenage Community Food Bank.

Cllr S Mead declared a personal interest in Item 4 by virtue of being a Trustee of the Stevenage Community Food Bank.

2 MINUTES - 20 JUNE 2018

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Community Select Committee held on 20 June 2018 are approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

3 RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT SCOPING DOCUMENT

The Scrutiny Officer presented the revised scoping document for the Scrutiny Review of Resident Engagement.

It was **RESOLVED** that Cllr Judi Billing CC be added to the list of potential external witnesses for the Resident Engagement Scrutiny Review.

4 THIRD SECTOR SCRUTINY REVIEW REPORT

The Assistant Director (Communities and Neighbourhoods) introduced the Third Sector Scrutiny Review Report. The Community Development Manager highlighted the context of the last review and indicated that four key priority areas had been selected for development in the 2012-2015 Voluntary Sector Strategy. It was noted that none of the priority areas of voice and representation, sustainability, harnessing corporate giving and volunteering had recorded clear evidence of progress against the objectives. Members and Officers expressed concern that the strategy did not have a clear action plan on how objectives were measured for impact and outcomes.

There was moderate evidence of progress against objectives in the priority areas. Members noted that the Stevenage Health Hub was an example of encouraging the support of innovative models in the sector. The Timeshare event held at North Hertfordshire College had raised awareness of opportunities in the voluntary sector and improved networking among volunteers. Stevenage Borough Council did not have an online volunteer organisation database.

The Community Development Manager also briefed Members on the national, Hertfordshire and Stevenage context of the voluntary community sector (VCS). It was indicated that Hertfordshire Compact had replaced Stevenage Compact. With regard to the Stevenage context, it was noted that cuts in funding from central government had created gaps in services relating to young people. Members were informed that most of the SBC grants to the third sector were historical and the tapered funding was scheduled to end in 2020.

Members acknowledged the diversity of VCS activities, interests and levels of commitment among volunteers in the Borough. Members reported a perception that the Council at times placed barriers on activities of the voluntary sector and was not always responsive to requests for assistance or suggestions from voluntary groups. The Voluntary and Community Sector 2012-2015 strategy had been superseded by a number of changes including funding cuts and as such the strategy was now out-of-date. The Council had to align its VCS strategy to community challenges and put in place measures to check the quality of service delivery by voluntary organisations. It was important that the Council maintained a good balance between respecting the independence of the VCS while ensuring that there was good value for the grants given to voluntary organisations. Members were informed that the Council was considering staff volunteering options as part of Corporate Social Responsibility.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the review of the VCS Strategy 2012-15 is noted
2. That the Voluntary and Community Sector 2012-2015 strategy not be updated but be replaced with clear and concise guidelines based on our co-operative approach
3. That a Modern Member Programme (MMP) be arranged to train Members on how to help volunteers
4. That officers use Community Select Committee as a reference group for the voluntary community sector review and the re-commissioning of the contract with the Citizens Advice Bureau
5. That future grants and other forms of assistance to the voluntary sector be linked to performance targets with an annual review
6. That the SBC website be updated to include links to national volunteering portals

5 **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

None.

6 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Not required.

7 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR