

**STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE  
MINUTES**

Date: Tuesday, 25 June 2019

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Shimkent Room, Daneshill House, Danestrete

**Present:** Councillors: Michael Downing (Chair), Adam Mitchell CC (Vice-Chair), Doug Bainbridge, Sandra Barr, Stephen Booth, Adrian Brown, Jim Brown, Teresa Callaghan, David Cullen and Loraine Rossati.

**Start / End** Start Time: 6.00pm  
**Time:** End Time: 7.04pm

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Jody Hanafin.

There were no declarations of interest.

**2 MINUTES - 28 FEBRUARY 2019**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Environment & Economy Select Committee meeting held on 28 February 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**3 MINUTES - 13 MARCH 2019**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Environment & Economy Select Committee meeting held on 13 March 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**4 TERMS OF REFERENCE**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Terms of Reference for the Select Committee, as agreed at the Annual Council meeting on 22 May 2019, be noted.

**5 WORK PROGRAMME 2019/20**

The Select Committee considered its draft Work Programme for 2019/20.

The following observations were made in respect of the Work Programme:

- Fairlands Valley Park – the review would be linked to the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy and would tie in with a broader review of Sports and Leisure opportunities in the town being conducted by the Community Select Committee. There was therefore the possibility for a joint meeting of both Select Committees

- later in the review process. Members' requested that the review include an assessment of the Park's green links to other areas of the town;
- Rail Timetable and 5<sup>th</sup> Platform Update for Stevenage Rail Station – the Chair announced that the Select Committee meeting to consider this matter would take place on 29 July 2019, at which Govia Thameslink and Network Rail representatives would provide this update. Officers were tasked with investigating the position with regard to the lift at the Station, which appeared to be non-operational for significant periods of time;
  - Emerging Transport Strategy – the finalised Strategy was currently out for consultation, was scheduled to be considered by the Executive in October 2019, and had been subject to a Portfolio Holder Advisory Group meeting involving Members of the Committee in late 2018. The Select Committee requested that it received a copy of the consultation findings when available in September 2019, prior to its submission to the Executive and noted that the Strategy would receive review by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Officers were requested to clarify in the Strategy the position with regard to bus services operating along Gunnelswood Road. It was agreed that a copy of the consultation response be circulated to Members when it was available;
  - Climate Change Strategy – the Strategy would be produced and considered by a People's Assembly before being submitted to the Executive towards the end of 2019. The Select Committee requested that it considered the Strategy prior to its submission to the Executive. Going forward, it was suggested that, during 2020/21, Executive Members should be invited to attend Select Committee meetings to answer a series of questions regarding the action taken to expedite the Strategy in their respective portfolio areas;
  - Update on Maintenance of Trees, Hedges and Shrub Beds Review – the Select Committee would receive the original review report, the Executive Member response, and an update against each of the actions;
  - Update on 2016 Business Technology Centre (BTC) Review – the contract had been retained by WENTA following a tendering exercise. Again, the Select Committee would receive the original review report, the Executive Member response, and an update against each of the actions. The possibility of a site visit to the BTC and/or holding the Select Committee meeting at the venue was also suggested; and
  - Policy Development Items (Design Guide Supplementary Planning Guidance; Parking Supplementary Planning Guidance; Review of Bring Bank Recycling Sites; Economic Development Strategy; Town Centre Parking Strategy) – these items would remain on the Work Programme, but for the various reasons outlined to Members, the Strategic Director was unable to provide firm indications as to when they would be ready for consideration by the Select Committee.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Select Committee's Work Programme for 2019/20 be updated, as outlined above.

## 6 LOCAL NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES REVIEW - SCOPING DOCUMENT

The Select Committee considered a draft scoping document for the review of the Local Neighbourhood Centres.

The following comments were made by Members in respect of the draft scoping document:

- The review should focus on issues surrounding the types of retail units, environmental maintenance, employment units, transport and parking;
- The Scrutiny Officer was requested to provide a summary document for the review, including a broad description/definition of a Neighbourhood Centre, a list of the Neighbourhood Centres in Stevenage, the number of units in each, and a description of the physical assets;
- The review should consider 3 Neighbourhood Centres of varying size and success. Suggestions included The Oval and Oaks Cross;
- The preponderance of ATM Cash Machines in Neighbourhood Centres which levied a usage charge was also mentioned, and it was agreed that this issue also be investigated as part of the review; and
- In broad terms, the review would consider the environmental/maintenance and the services on offer in the Neighbourhood Centres.

It was **RESOLVED** that the scoping document for the Local Neighbourhood Centres Review, as amended, be agreed.

## 7 **REVIEW OF LOCAL POST OFFICE SERVICES IN STEVENAGE - SCOPING DOCUMENT**

The Select Committee considered a draft scoping document for the review of Post Office Services in Stevenage.

The Chair commented that the Town Centre and Neighbourhood Post Offices with retail outlets appeared to operate on different business models, some with dedicated counters and others sharing the tills used by retail shoppers.

The Scrutiny Officer advised that two witnesses had agreed to provide evidence as part of the review, namely Mr Peter Hall (National Federation of Sub Post Offices) and Mr Chris Newbitt (Manager of Symonds Green Co-op Sub Post Office). No response had been received from the Town Centre Post Office in W H Smith. The Scrutiny Officer was asked to make contact with the Post Office operator in Waitrose in the High Street, with a view to involving them in the review; and to explore the generic Web-based services offered by the Post Office.

As with the Local Neighbourhood Centres review, the Scrutiny Officer was requested to provide a summary document for the review, including Post Office locations in the town, types of services offered, and possible comparisons with services provided in other New Towns.

The Select Committee felt that the summary document suggestion was a good idea, and hence the Scrutiny Officer was asked to prepare such documents for all future reviews.

It was **RESOLVED** that the scoping document for the review of Post Office Services in Stevenage, as amended, be agreed.

8 **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

None.

9 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Not required.

10 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

**CHAIR**