

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 24 July 2019

Time: 7.00pm

Place: Ibis Hotel, Stevenage

Present: Councillors: Simon Speller (Mayor), Doug Bainbridge, Sandra Barr, Philip Bibby CC, Stephen Booth, Lloyd Briscoe, Rob Broom, Adrian Brown, Jim Brown, Teresa Callaghan, Laurie Chester, Michael Downing, Alex Farquharson, John Gardner, Michelle Gardner, Jody Hanafin, Richard Henry, Jackie Hollywell, John Lloyd, Mrs Joan Lloyd, Sarah-Jane McDonough, Andy McGuinness, Maureen McKay, John Mead, Sarah Mead, Adam Mitchell CC, Margaret Notley, Robin Parker CC, Claire Parris, Loraine Rossati, Graham Snell, Sharon Taylor OBE CC, Jeannette Thomas and Tom Wren.

Start / End Start Time: 7.00pm
Time: End Time: 8.20pm

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

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Dave Cullen, Liz Harrington, Lizzy Kelly, Graham Lawrence and Lin Martin-Haugh.

There were no declarations of interest.

At this juncture, the Mayor advised that he would be taking an urgent Part II report on the Appointment of the Chief Executive as the matter could not wait until the next meeting.

2 **MINUTES - 22 MAY 2019 AND 12 JUNE 2019**

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. that the Minutes of the Annual Council meeting of 22 May 2019 are approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor subject to the following amendments;

Item 3 – paragraph 6, delete ‘similar sentiments to those expressed by the mover and seconder of the motion’.

Item 7 – Borough Council Elections 2019 – reference to ‘political parties’ in the third paragraph should be changed to ‘a political party’.

2. that the Minutes of the Special Council meeting on 12 June 2019 are approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

3 MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Mayor informed the Council that due to the change in venue for this meeting he would be showing the film made by the pupils of Woolenwick School at the next meeting as part of the presentation on the Cultural Strategy.

The Mayor then informed the meeting that since the last meeting, he had undertaken a number of engagements in the town and referred to several highlights – attending a number of school leavers' assemblies including The Leys Primary School celebrating the retirement of a Teaching Assistant after 46 years service. The Mayor also referred to his attendance at the opening of the new Costco in the Town and an upcoming Mayoral Tea where he would be empowering and engaging young people and.

At this juncture, last year's Mayor, Councillor Margaret Notley was invited to address the meeting. Cllr Notley was pleased to inform Council that the final figure for the amount raised for her Mayoral charities had increased to £15,804.24. She thanked all those who had supported the charities during her Mayoral Year.

4 MAIN DEBATE - PUBLIC HEALTH IN STEVENAGE

This item was withdrawn and would be presented to Members at a future All Member Briefing.

5 PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS

None received

6 QUESTIONS FROM THE YOUTH COUNCIL

None received.

7 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None received.

8 LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S UPDATE

The Leader of the Opposition expressed concern regarding the recent announcement that Waitrose would be closing its Stevenage Old Town store and asked the Leader of the Council whether consideration had been given to the ramifications for the Town.

In reply, the Leader of the Council agreed that she was extremely saddened to hear of the announcement of the closure and stated that it was a huge disappointment for Stevenage to lose such an established brand that had played a key role in the community over many years. She agreed that this was a real concern for residents and businesses in the Old Town.

The Leader advised Council that she had requested an urgent meeting with Waitrose to understand their plans for the future of the site and to open dialogue regarding possible options to relocate the much valued Post Office within the High Street and whether there were options to have a 'Little Waitrose' store within the Town. An update with the outcomes would be circulated to Members as soon as possible following the meeting.

The Leader advised that with 97 jobs potentially at risk, this was a time of real uncertainty for Waitrose staff and thoughts were with them at this unsettling time. Council was also informed that the Environment and Economy Select Committee would be scrutinising the provision of Post Offices within the Town as part of this year's work programme and would also take this matter forward as part of that review.

Due to the change of venue for this meeting, Council then received updates from the Leader on the following urgent items only:

- **Monkswood Way Traffic Incident** - following the serious incident on Monkswood Way on 18 July, the Leader thanked the paramedics, nursing and hospital staff who had worked hard to respond and said that the Council's thoughts were with those who had suffered injury and trauma as a result. The Leader advised that concerns had previously been raised by Councillors and residents with the Police and Herts County Council and regular contact had been made regarding enforcement of speed restrictions in the area. Council was informed that the Leader was working with the Police to consider how these events could be stopped. An interim injunction was being applied for and then a longer term solution would be worked on including making the case for additional police resourcing in Stevenage. Members expressed concern regarding the handling of the incident by the Police and agreed that the response and communication by the Police should be questioned.
- **Daneshill Building Disruption** – the Leader reported that early the previous day flooding had been identified in Daneshill House into an area within the building which housed key electrical infrastructure. As a result, a number of measures had been taken to stop the flow of water, shut down power in the location and ensure the safety of the building and those using it. Business continuity procedures had been operating during the incident. It was noted that Customer facing services were continuing to operate including the Customer Service Centre, Housing Options and Planning Advice. Operational Services such as grounds maintenance, street cleansing and waste collection had been unaffected.

Council expressed their thanks to all staff involved, in particular Beverley Densham and Paul Ryder from the Council's Facilities Team for their response to, and management of, the situation.

The Leader advised that the remainder of the updates would be circulated to Members following the meeting.

Councillor Robin Parker advised that he would defer his Motion until the next meeting of the Council.

10 **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO COMMITTEE CHAIRS / PORTFOLIO HOLDERS**

Council received five questions. The responses to the five questions were circulated at the Meeting and are appended to the minutes.

A. Question from Councillor Steven Booth

In response to a supplementary question from Cllr Booth asking for clarification regarding costs and lost working hours during the IT disruption, Cllr Broom advised that he would ensure a satisfactory response be sent to Cllr Booth.

B. Question from Councillor Robin Parker

In response to a supplementary question from Councillor Parker, the Leader of the Council advised that she would ask officers to look at the possibility of installing a traffic light timing system in the Council Chamber as soon as possible.

C. Question from Councillor Graham Snell

Councillor Snell advised he would submit his supplementary question in writing after the meeting.

D. Question from Councillor Tom Wren

In response to a supplementary question from Councillor Wren, Councillor John Gardner advised that if the funding was available the Council would plant as many replacement trees as possible. Tree felling was only used as a last resort.

E. Question from Councillor Andy McGuinness

In response to a supplementary question regarding the amount spent on food and drink for Councillors, the Leader of the Council advised that the provision of refreshments before Council meetings was a welfare issue particularly for those Members coming to meetings straight from work. This was an issue that had previously been reviewed by Scrutiny but could be looked at again if Members were of the view it would be helpful.

Answers to Questions

11 **UPDATE FROM SCRUTINY CHAIRS**

The Chair of the Community Select Committee gave an update on the work of the

Committee. She advised that the main area of work for this year for the Committee related to access to the sport and leisure provision in the Town as the Council tried to encourage access to a healthier lifestyle for residents. This scrutiny review would include a visit to Fairlands Lakes later in the summer to review the leisure provision at the lakes.

The Chair of the Environment and Economy Select Committee advised that the work programme for the Committee included a review of the Neighbourhood Centres, Post Office provision in the Town, a joint scrutiny with the Community Select Committee on Fairlands Valley Park and also ongoing monitoring of the Council resolution made recently on the climate change emergency.

It was **RESOLVED** that the updates are noted.

12 **ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT 2018/19**

The Council considered the Annual Scrutiny report which summarised the work undertaken throughout 2018/19 by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Select Committees, and which outlined the Work Programme for the three committees for 2019/20.

Scrutiny Members were thanked for their work over the year and it was agreed that the new Portfolio Holder Advisory Groups had also significantly improved the pre-scrutiny work undertaken by Members.

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED**:

1. That the work undertaken by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the Select Committees during 2018/19 is noted;
2. That Members of the three Scrutiny Committees are commended for the work undertaken during the year;
3. That the Scrutiny Officer, Stephen Weaver, be thanked for his work and support to the Scrutiny function and the Scrutiny Members.

13 **4TH QUARTER CAPITAL MONITORING REPORT 2018/19 GENERAL FUND AND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT**

Council considered a report which had previously been presented to the Executive on 10 July 2019 in relation to the 4th Quarter Capital Monitoring Report.

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that the budget of £1.5million for Registered Provider grants, in line with the reasoning in paragraph 4.3.4 of the report is approved.

14 **GAMBLING ACT 2005 - STATEMENT OF GAMBLING PRINCIPLES**

Council considered a report which had previously been presented to both the General Purposes Committee and the Executive, in relation to the Gambling Act 2005 – Statement of Gambling Principles.

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that the draft Gambling Act 2005 Statement of Principles, as attached at Appendix A to the report is adopted.

15 **AUDIT COMMITTEE MINUTES**

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Audit Committee meetings held on 19 March 2019 and 11 June 2019 are noted.

16 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

It was **RESOLVED**:

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 grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraphs 1 to 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, as amended by SI 2006 No. 88.

2. That having considered the reasons for the following item being in Part II, it be determined that maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighed the public interest in disclosure.

17 **PROCUREMENT OF A PRINCIPAL CONTRACTOR AT NORTH ROAD**

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that the General Fund Capital budgets detailed in the Part II report for the year 2020/21 to facilitate the General Fund aspect of the development is approved.

18 **APPOINTMENT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that the appointment of Mr Matthew Partridge with effect from 25 July 2019 as:

Chief Executive
Head of Paid Service
Returning Officer
Electoral Registration Officer

is approved.

CHAIR