

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Tuesday, 10 March 2020

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, Jody Hanafin and Loraine Rossati.

Start / End Start Time: 6.00pm

Time: End Time: 7.15pm

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

There were no apologies for absence and no declarations of interest.

2 **MINUTES - 11 FEBRUARY 2020**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Economy Select Committee held on 11 February 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 **ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2020-21**

The Scrutiny Officer presented a report detailing potential items for the Committee's Work Programme for the new Municipal Year.

The Chair advised that although the previous year's work programme had been affected by a number of unforeseen interruptions including the European and Parliamentary elections, the work that had been undertaken included a review of local Post Office services in Stevenage, the Stevenage Rail Station, and a number of reports back on previous scrutiny reviews.

The review of the Neighbourhood Centres had started and would continue into the new Municipal Year.

Members agreed that the environmental and economic impact of the Coronavirus and the Council's response to the situation should be considered by the Committee at a future meeting.

It was also agreed that a main topic for the Committee's work plan should be the Council's response to the Climate Change emergency with Portfolio Holders being invited to report on the work being done within their own portfolio areas. Other topics as set out below in recommendation (1) could also be looked at as individual

issues but with Climate Change as a common thread.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED**:

(1) that the items listed below be included in the 2020/2021 work programme:

- Continuation of the review of Neighbourhood Centres;
- The economic and environmental impact of Covid-19 (Coronavirus) on the Town;
- Climate Change Strategy including individual issues such as recycling, grasslands, trees, transport and parks.

(2) That the policy development work identified for the Portfolio Holder Advisory Group meetings be noted.

4 **REVIEW OF NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES - UPDATE**

The Scrutiny Officer gave an update regarding the Review of the Neighbourhood Centres following the site visits to Oaks Cross, The Oval, Symonds Green, Bedwell and St Nicholas. Photographs taken during the visits were circulated and shown at the meeting.

Members agreed that the outcomes of the Community Centre Review which was currently being undertaken by the Council would have an impact on the findings of this review.

The general consensus of Members following the unattractiveness of the centres with a lot of monotone concrete and not many green spaces to break it up. Extensive regeneration was a way off for any of the centres so any issues should be flagged up now for improvements.

The following site specific issues were raised:

Oaks Cross

- Trees had been removed from the planters and not replaced;
- Some Members had used locality budgets for neighbourhood improvements;
- Fly tipping at the rear of the commercial premises was an issue;
- Unsightly barbed wire around a storage area;
- Possible evidence of drug use in the residential area;
- The area could be enhanced by changing colours of the concrete around the centre which was all one colour and very drab;
- Half finished painting on the wall.

Symonds Green

- The area to the rear of the shops was unsightly particularly where the scaffolding was in place;
- Members were pleased to hear of the successful programme at the recently

expanded Community Centre.

St Nicholas

- Unsightly security fence probably from the 1990's;
- 2 concrete planters previously situated in the Town Centre had been purchased through a Member's LCB allocation which would be installed shortly. Clarification was sought regarding whether or not a fee should be payable for these previously used planters which were currently stored at Cavendish Road Depot to be redeployed in Neighbourhood Centres;
- A new notice board would be put up in the centre;
- The telephone box had now been removed;
- There was a dispute regarding the ownership and responsibility for the damaged wall and flagstones to the rear of the community centre which was currently being looked into;
- Officers agreed to check to see if the area was included on the replacement programme for rails and shrub beds;

The Oval

- The damaged steps were dangerous and could easily result in accidents and potential claims. There was still a dispute regarding ownership and responsibility for the repairs between SBC and HCC. Strategic Director (TP) agreed to take the matter up with the appropriate officers. Councillor Callaghan also advised she would speak to the HCC Portfolio Holder responsible for highways;
- New signage and a new mural would shortly be in place;
- The flower beds would be full of wild flowers in the summer. Cllr Callaghan as Chair of the Community Garden advised that a national charity offering crocus bulbs had been approached and that these would be planted late in the year for flowers to come up early next year.

Bedwell

- All but one of the shops were let;
- Paint was peeling on some of the railings and a deep clean was required;
- Graffiti on walls including the mural which needed updating;
- One of the cash machines charged a fee for use.

Members were keen that any lessons learnt from this review should be fed into new developments such as the Town Centre and Bragbury End.

It was **RESOLVED**:

- (i) That the individual actions noted above and those included in the Scrutiny Officer's report be picked up by officers;
- (ii) That a further report be brought back to this Committee in the new Municipal Year;
- (iii) That the Assistant Director (Housing Development) be invited to a future

meeting to report on future regeneration plans and timescales for the Neighbourhood Centres.

5 **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

None.

6 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Not required.

7 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR