

# STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

## COUNCIL MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 20 May 2020

Time: 7.00pm

Place: Virtual (via Zoom)

**Present:** The Mayor (2019/20) - Councillor Simon Speller and Councillors 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, Lizzy Kelly, Graham Lawrence, John Lloyd, Mrs Joan Lloyd, Lin Martin-Haugh, 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:      9.45pm

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Cullen, D Bainbridge and L Harrington.

There were no declarations of interest.

The Mayor welcomed Members to Stevenage's first virtual Council meeting. Councillor Simon Speller then announced the sad death of Bob Fowler, who served as a Councillor for Bedwell Ward and then St. Nicholas Ward between 1969 and 2000 and was Mayor twice, in 1977/78 and 1991/92.

Councillor Sharon Taylor led the tributes and spoke of Bob Fowler's dedication to Stevenage. He worked as a teacher in Stevenage and Hitchin. During his time as a councillor, Bob Fowler also served as Chair of the Planning Committee. After retirement, he went to live at Abbeyfield where he was popular with staff and fellow residents. Councillor Taylor described Bob Fowler as kind, thoughtful and supportive.

Bob Fowler was Councillor Joan Lloyd's deputy when she served as Mayor in 1991. In the early 1990s, Council meetings across the UK were often disrupted by demonstrations against the poll tax. Bob Fowler was very supportive during this time. Bob Fowler kept in touch with Council colleagues after retirement.

Councillor Phil Bibby expressed gratitude for Bob Fowler's service. Councillor Robin

Parker served with Bob Fowler on the Council. He also knew him from education circles. Councillor Parker described Bob Fowler as principled and passionate about local issues.

Councillor Richard Henry remembered Bob Fowler as a great mentor. Councillor Sandra Barr knew Bob Fowler as a great local councillor. Councillor Barr became a school governor after encouragement and support from Bob Fowler.

Following the tributes, Council stood and observed a minute's silence in remembrance and also to commemorate all victims of the Coronavirus pandemic.

## 2 **MINUTES - 26 FEBRUARY 2020**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 26 February 2020 are approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

At this juncture, the outgoing Mayor thanked Members and Officers who had sent messages of condolences for the loss of his mother and brother. Councillor Speller summarised a year in office that since March 2020 had been disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic. The Mayor thanked the Youth Mayor and his family for their support on physical and mental health causes. Councillor Speller thanked Shelagh Mackey and others involved in the Schools Parliament and the partnership between schools of Stevenage and Nepal. The Mayor made a promise to continue supporting climate change projects run by young people. A celebration of Stevenage early town history and the Mayoral community history programme were some of the highlights of Councillor Speller's year in office. The history programme would be part of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of Stevenage New Town in 2021.

The Mayor paid tribute to outstanding retiring officers – Mary Cormack (Borough Solicitor), Gavin Davies (Fairlands Valley Park) and Maureen Nicholson (Member Services). Councillor Speller expressed gratitude for the support offered by his Mayoral charities (Stevenage Community Trust; Stevenage and North Herts Child Contact Centres; Stevenage Haven for the Homeless; and Just Be a Child), Hertfordshire Mayors, Luton Mayor, Roy Nicholson and Andy Smith, Stevenage Scouts, Stevenage Rotarians and Stevenage Museum team. The Mayor also thanked the Mayoress, his family, his PA Tracey Frost, Deputy Mayor and Deputy Mayoress, Members and Officers of the Council for their help and support throughout the year.

On behalf of Members, the Leader of the Council thanked the outgoing Mayor for a successful year in office, and his commitment to the role and the Borough.

## 3 **ELECTION OF MAYOR**

The Mayor asked for nominations for the Office of Mayor for 2020/21.

Councillor S Taylor OBE CC nominated Councillor Jim Brown. Councillor Taylor highlighted Councillor Brown's involvement in politics from an early age and his vast knowledge of local government as an officer and a Member. Councillor Brown was passionate about cycling, road running and music. Councillor Brown was also a

School Governor.

The nomination was seconded by Councillor L Rossati.

There being no other nominations a vote was taken it was **RESOLVED** that Councillor Jim Brown be elected as a Mayor for the 2020/21 Municipal Year.

Councillor Jim Brown then made the statutory declaration of office. The Mayor announced that Penny Schenkel would be the Mayoress for 2020/21.

The Mayor thanked the outgoing Mayor and Mayoress. Councillor Brown pointed out that due to the Covid-19 emergency; he was having a rethink about his charities for the year. Consultations were in progress and details of mayoral charities would be announced soon. The Mayor announced that the theme for his mayoral year would be: "Be Healthy; Be Community; Get Moving". He pledged to support Sport Stevenage. Councillor Brown indicated that his main focus would be to support the town to get through this difficult period and then continue to help in the recovery phase.

#### 4 **ELECTION OF DEPUTY MAYOR**

The Mayor asked for nominations for the Office of Deputy Mayor for 2020/21.

Councillor Adrian Brown nominated Councillor Michelle Gardner. Councillor Brown highlighted Councillor Gardner's passion for local issues and active involvement in the multi-cultural showcase – Celebrate!!!

The nomination was seconded by Councillor Mrs J Lloyd.

There being no other nominations a vote was taken and it was **RESOLVED** that Councillor Michelle Gardner be appointed as Deputy Mayor for the 2020/21 Municipal Year.

Councillor Michelle Gardner then made the statutory declaration of acceptance of office. She announced that Councillor John Gardner would be the Deputy Mayor's Consort for the 2020/21 Municipal Year.

#### 5 **APPOINTMENT OF YOUTH MAYOR**

The outgoing Youth Mayor, William Sarenden, thanked Councillors, Officers, the Youth Council, family and friends for their support. Some of the highlights of his year were attending Remembrance Sunday and Holocaust Memorial services, formally opening The John Henry Newman School Parliament and having the opportunity to meet many other young people from different schools. William informed Members that he was marking Mental Health Awareness Week by teaming up with his predecessor, Ugonna Umunnakwe to raise funds for Mental Health Foundation. The outgoing Youth Mayor urged Members and Officers to donate to a social distancing-compliant fundraising run scheduled for 29 May 2020.

Councillor Richard Henry congratulated the outgoing Youth Mayor, William

Sarenden, for his work on mental health. He informed Members that he was proud that Stevenage had an active Youth Council. It was noted that the Youth Mayor's schedule was affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The Leader of the Council thanked the outgoing Youth Mayor. She commended the Youth Council for holding the ninth election for Youth Mayor.

Council was informed that following an election the Youth Council had nominated Alissa Nixon Crew as the 2020/2021 Youth Mayor.

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that Alissa Nixon Crew be elected as Youth Mayor for the 2020/2021 Municipal Year.

Alissa Nixon Crew then signed the declaration of acceptance of office. In her acceptance speech the Youth Mayor stated that she was thrilled to be a voice of young people of Stevenage. The new Youth Mayor informed Council that she would focus on raising environmental awareness, showcasing the work of registered young carers and assisting in ensuring that they get the support they needed. Councillor Taylor congratulated Alissa Nixon Crew and advised her to work with young people to build on the recent increase in eco-friendly activities such as cycling and walking.

#### 6 **APPOINTMENT OF LEADER AND DEPUTY LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION**

The Chief Executive advised the Council that the Leader of the Opposition would be Councillor Phil Bibby CC and that Councillor Graham Lawrence would be his deputy.

#### 7 **APPOINTMENT OF LEADERS AND DEPUTY LEADERS OF THE POLITICAL GROUPS ON THE COUNCIL**

The Chief Executive advised the Council that Councillors Sharon Taylor OBE CC, Phil Bibby CC and Robin Parker CC had been appointed as Leaders of the Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat Groups respectively. It was noted that Councillors Mrs Joan Lloyd, Graham Lawrence and Andy McGuinness would be Deputy Leaders of the Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat Groups respectively.

#### 8 **CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES**

Council considered various matters relating to the Member level decision making structure of the Council and the Council's Constitution for the forthcoming Municipal Year.

The Chief Executive referred Members to paragraph 4.6 of the report. He advised that after consulting the Mayor and obtaining his approval, the Council meeting provisionally scheduled for 3 June 2020 would not go ahead. The Chief Executive drew Members' attention to a typographical error in the footnote to recommendation 1.1 – the number of Committee places was 98, not '94' as quoted. Members were also informed that a draft calendar of meetings up to the end of September would be circulated by the end of the week. Where any meetings were not scheduled they would be convened as and when required.

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

1. That the Terms of Reference, as detailed in the appendices to this report; and the size and political composition for the following bodies that form the non-Executive Member level decision making structure of the Council be approved subject to the rules of proportionality where appropriate for 98 Committee places where applicable (relevant Committees are identified thus\*) -
  - Overview and Scrutiny Committee\* (Appendix A to the report) – 14 Members (10 Labour Group, 2 Conservative Group, 2 Liberal Democrat Group)
  - Community Select Committee\* (Appendix B to the report) – 10 Members (7 Labour Group, 2 Conservative Group, 1 Liberal Democrat Group)
  - Environment and Economy Select Committee\* (Appendix C to the report) – 11 Members (7 Labour Group, 3 Conservative Group, 1 Liberal Democrat Group)
  - Planning & Development Committee\* (Appendix D to the report) – 13 Members (8 Labour Group, 3 Conservative Group, 2 Liberal Democrat Group)
  - Licensing Committee (Appendix E to the report) – 14 Members (9 Labour Group, 3 Conservative Group, 2 Liberal Democrat Group)
  - General Purposes Committee\* (Appendix F to the report) – 14 Members (9 Labour Group, 3 Conservative Group, 2 Liberal Democrat Group)
  - Appointments Committee\* (Appendix G to the report) - 8 Members (6 Labour Group, 1 Conservative Group, 1 Liberal Democrat Group)
  - Standards Committee\* (Appendix H to the report) – 8 Members (6 Labour Group, 1 Conservative Group, 1 Liberal Democrat Group)
  - Audit Committee\* (Appendix I to the report) – 8 Members (6 Labour Group, 1 Conservative Group, 1 Liberal Democrat Group) + 1 Co-opted non-elected member
  - Statement of Accounts Committee\* (Appendix J to the report) – 8 Members (6 Labour Group, 1 Conservative Group, 1 Liberal Democrat Group)
  - Joint Consultative Committee\* (Appendix K to the report) – 4 Members (3 Labour Group, 1 Conservative Group)
2. That the composition of the Executive and the Portfolios, details of which were circulated at the meeting, be noted.

3. That the various Executive bodies appointed by the Leader, the details of which were circulated at the meeting, be noted. The relevant Terms of Reference for each body are shown at Appendix L to the report.
4. That Council approves the dates for Council meetings for the Municipal Year, as shown at paragraph 4.6 of the report and notes that a calendar of Committee meetings to the end of September 2020 will be circulated shortly to all Members.
5. That Council appoints 5 Members to the Housing Management Advisory Board (4 Majority Group, 1 Opposition Member).
6. That it be noted that the Leader has given delegated authority to all Members regarding the spend of their £2,500 Local Community Budget and for the Youth Mayor's £3,300 Youth Community Budget.
7. That the temporary amendments to the Constitution to reflect the provisions of the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panels Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 ('the Regulations'), as shown at Appendix M to the report, be approved for the period during which those Regulations remain in force.
8. That the protocol for virtual meetings, attached at Appendix N to the report, be noted.
9. That the recommended amendments to Standing Orders, as outlined in paragraphs 4.14 of the report be approved.

## 9 APPOINTMENT TO COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL

Details of the individuals nominated to serve on each Committee had been circulated prior to the meeting. The membership was to be noted and the Chairs and Vice-Chairs to be voted upon

Councillor S Taylor OBE CC moved the appointments of Chairs and Vice-Chairs. She thanked the Groups for their forbearance and agreement to keep memberships of Committees largely unchanged. She also thanked Members who had intended to stand down but had agreed to stay for one more year following the cancellation of May 2020 local elections.

Councillor Mrs J Lloyd seconded the nominations.

During the debate, the Liberal Democrats Group expressed discontent with the nominations for Vice-Chairs. It was pointed out that in recent years there had been a departure from the tradition of allocating at least one Vice-Chair position to the minor opposition party. The Leader of the Council advised that this was a matter for the Leader of the Opposition.

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

1. That the membership of Committees, together with the Chairs and Vice-Chairs, where detailed, are appointed for the 2020/21 Municipal Year as follows:

#### OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

14 Members - (10-2-2)

Councillors – L Martin-Haugh (Chair), P Bibby CC (Vice-Chair), S Barr, L Chester, M Downing, M Gardner, S-J McDonough, A McGuinness, J Mead, S Mead, A Mitchell CC, R Parker CC, C Parris, S Speller

#### COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE

10 Members - (7-2-1)

Councillors – S Mead (Chair), M Notley (Vice-Chair), S Barr, S Booth, A Brown, A Farquharson, L Harrington, J Mead, C Parris, L Rossati.

#### ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE

11 Members - (7-3-1)

\*Councillors – M Downing (Chair), A Mitchell CC (Vice-Chair), D Bainbridge, S Booth, A Brown, D Cullen, J Hanafin, L Kelly\*, M McKay, L Rossati, S Speller

#### PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

13 Members – (8-3-2)

Councillors – S Speller (Chair), M McKay (Vice-Chair), D Bainbridge, S Barr, M Gardner, J Hanafin, L Harrington, L Kelly, G Lawrence, J Lloyd, S-J McDonough, G Snell, T Wren.

#### LICENSING COMMITTEE

14 Members – (9-3-2)

Councillors – L Chester (Chair), M McKay (Vice-Chair), D Bainbridge, S Barr, M Downing, J Hanafin, L Harrington, R Henry, G Lawrence, J Lloyd, A McGuinness, L Rossati, G Snell, S Speller

#### GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

14 Members – (9-3-2)

Councillors – L Chester (Chair), M McKay (Vice-Chair), D Bainbridge, S Barr, M Downing, J Hanafin, L Harrington, R Henry, G Lawrence, J Lloyd, A McGuinness, L Rossati, G Snell, S Speller

#### APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE

8 Members – (6-1-1)

Councillors – S Taylor OBE CC (Chair), P Bibby CC, M Downing, J Gardner, R Henry, Mrs J Lloyd, R Parker CC, J Thomas.

#### STANDARDS COMMITTEE

8 Members – (6-1-1)

Councillors – Mrs J Lloyd (Chair), T Callaghan, M Downing, L Martin-Haugh, J Mead, M Notley, L Rossati, T Wren.

Independent Person who must be consulted on alleged breaches to the Code of Conduct – Dr. Robert Cawley

#### AUDIT COMMITTEE

8 Elected Members – (6-1-1) + 1 Independent Co-opted Member (G Gibbs)  
Councillors – T Callaghan (Chair), J Gardner (Vice-Chair) S Barr, S Booth,  
L Chester, D Cullen, L Kelly, G Lawrence.

#### STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

8 Members – (6-1-1)

Councillors - Mrs J Lloyd (Chair), P Bibby CC, R Broom, J Hollywell, J Mead,  
S Mead, G Snell, J Thomas.

#### JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (JCC) (EMPLOYER SIDE)

Mrs J Lloyd (Employer Side Chairman), P Bibby CC, S Taylor OBE,CC,  
J Thomas

2. That 5 Members (4 Majority Group, 1 Opposition Member) be appointed to the Housing Management Advisory Board as agreed at Minute 8, resolution 5, as follows:

Councillors L Harrington, L Kelly, J Lloyd, L Martin-Haugh, M Notley.

\* Clerical error S Barr to replace L Kelly (Environment and Economy Select Committee)

## 10 APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

Council considered the list of individuals nominated to serve on Outside Bodies which had been circulated before the meeting. The Chief Executive advised that the Council no longer appointed Members to serve on the Board of Stevenage Leisure Limited (SLL). Appointments to SLL were to be deleted from the list.

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that the following individuals are appointed to represent the Council on the various bodies detailed below for one year, unless otherwise stated:

COUNCIL FOR THE PROTECTION OF RURAL ENGLAND THE  
HERTFORDSHIRE SOCIETY - Portfolio Holder Environment and Regeneration

EAST OF ENGLAND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION - The Leader of the  
Council

EAST OF ENGLAND REGIONAL PLANNING - Portfolio Holder Environment and  
Regeneration

HCC JOINT WASTE MANAGEMENT GROUP - Portfolio Holder Environment and  
Regeneration

HERTFORDSHIRE INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING AND POLICY GROUP -

Portfolio Holder Environment and Regeneration

HERTFORDSHIRE LOCAL AUTHORITIES LEADERS GROUP - The Leader of the Council

HERTFORDSHIRE SUPPORTING PEOPLE COMMISSIONING BODY MEMBERS OVERVIEW GROUP - Portfolio Holder Housing, Health and Older People

HERTFORDSHIRE SUSTAINABILITY FORUM STEERING GROUP - Portfolio Holder Environment and Regeneration

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION - The Leader of the Council

RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY GROUP (COMMUNITY SAFETY) - Portfolio Holder Communities, Community Safety and Equalities

SOSTEVENAGE PARTNERSHIP - The Leader of the Council and Deputy Leader

STEVENAGE COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP - Portfolio Holder Communities (including Safer Communities) and Equalities

AGE CONCERN STEVENAGE - John Lloyd

BEDWELL COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION - Liz Harrington

CHELLS MANOR COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION - Andy McGuinness

CROSSROADS CARE - John Gardner

DOUGLAS DRIVE SENIOR CITIZENS ASSOCIATION - John Lloyd

HOME-START STEVENAGE - John Gardner

KADOMA LINK ASSOCIATION - Graham Snell and John Gardner

LIVING ROOM PROJECT - Jackie Hollywell

OLD STEVENAGE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION - Jim Brown

OVAL COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION - Lloyd Briscoe

PIN GREEN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION - Jeannette Thomas

SHEPHALL COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION - John Mead

ST NICHOLAS COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION - Sandra Barr

STEVENAGE CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU - Michael Downing

STEVENAGE COMMUNITY TRUST - Richard Henry and Maureen McKay

STEVENAGE CREDIT UNION LIMITED - Laurie Chester

STEVENAGE FURNITURE RECYCLING SCHEME - John Lloyd

STEVENAGE HAVEN - Rob Broom

STEVENAGE/AUTUN/INGELHEIM ASSOCIATION - Richard Henry and Simon Speller

STEVENAGE WORLD FORUM FOR ETHNIC COMMUNITIES - John Gardner

SYMONDS GREEN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION - Laurie Chester

TIMEBRIDGE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION - Jackie Hollywell

TURN THE TIDE - Lizzy Kelly

EAST OF ENGLAND LGA IMPROVEMENT AND EFFICIENCY PANEL - Richard Henry

HCC HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - Maureen McKay

LOCAL GOVERNMENT INFORMATION UNIT - Jim Brown

LUTON AIRPORT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE - John Gardner

## 11 **CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) INCIDENT MANAGEMENT REPORT**

Council considered the report to Executive on 13 May 2020 on the latest Covid-19 position, including the Council's emergency response, the financial impact of Covid-19 on the Council and a proposed approach to recovery.

Councillor Sharon Taylor OBE CC highlighted the devastating toll of Covid-19. The Leader of the Council paid tribute to those who had lost lives during the pandemic. Councillor Taylor praised officers for their timely and decisive response to the pandemic and collaborative work with national and regional partners. The Council had set up Incident Management structures. The Council had managed to keep essential services going and introduced measures to assist vulnerable residents. Councillor Taylor cited Stevenage Helps, hotel accommodation for rough sleepers, more than £11million funding support for local businesses and support for victims of domestic abuse. She expressed optimism about the Council's preparations for recovery from the pandemic. The Leader of the Council informed Members that local authorities were facing a funding gap of about £7billion due to the pandemic. She stated that Stevenage would continue to work with other local authorities to lobby for additional financial support from central government. Councillor Taylor expressed deep reservations about a recent misleading headline about Council finances in a local newspaper. The Council had raised this issue with the editor of The Comet.

Councillor J Thomas pointed out that Covid-19 had an unprecedented impact on communities. Councillor Thomas stated that the community response was a

reflection of the town's motto of "The heart of a town lies in its people".

The Leader of the opposition, Councillor Phil Bibby CC, was of the opinion that the Council's current financial challenges did not warrant the issuing of a section 114 notice. He stated that the misleading newspaper headline should have been retracted sooner to minimise anxiety among residents and SBC staff. Councillor Bibby and Councillor R Parker CC expressed gratitude for the invitation to join the Executive for weekly Covid-19 meetings. Councillor Booth expressed concerns that some Members did not receive regular updates on financial matters.

During the debate, Members agreed that the Comet newspaper headline about SBC finances was misleading and that it had caused anxiety. It was suggested that the Council makes a formal complaint about the Comet headline. Members praised the Council response to the pandemic. It was reported that some local authorities were in awe of the Stevenage response. Councillors highlighted the extraordinary efforts by SBC teams including maintenance of essential services, contacting hard-to-reach businesses to process Covid-19 support grants and going beyond central government's original recommendation of prioritising landfill waste over recyclable waste. The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Councillor Mrs Joan Lloyd, informed Council that officers were advising residents and businesses in financial difficulties to proactively contact the Council to discuss Council Tax and rent payment options.

Members commended the efforts of key workers. Members also cited teachers who had to quickly adapt to lockdown measures and continue delivering lessons and planning for future classes. Citizens Advice Stevenage was praised for quickly adjusting to the lockdown and ensuring minimal service disruption. Members acknowledged the vital role of leisure, sports and culture during the recovery phase.

In her reply, Councillor Taylor pointed out that the Council was operating within its budget prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. Unless the government compensated for Covid-19 related costs, some local authorities would consider issuing section 114 notices. Councillor Taylor advised Group Leaders to share any unrestricted Covid-19 updates with Members. She informed Council that 260 Stevenage residents had recovered from Covid-19.

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

1. That the report to Executive on 13 May 2020 be noted.
2. That the following Motion be agreed -

'That this Council formally places on record its heartfelt thanks to all those across the NHS, care workers, local councils, food retailers, transport services, all other key workers and volunteers upon whom we have become reliant to get us through these unprecedented times. They have selflessly put their own lives at risk in order to support our community through the pandemic. Some have sadly fallen victim to the virus and our heartfelt condolences go to their families and loved ones. Their sacrifice will not be forgotten.

We also wish to place on record our thanks to all of our SBC staff across the services who have faced extraordinary pressures and whose response to the Coronavirus pandemic has been quite simply amazing.

May we also thank the people of Stevenage whose response has been extraordinary, in protecting their families and communities by following government guidance, in spite of the personal sacrifice this has entailed, and in the many small acts of kindness and neighbourliness that have happened across the town.

We know that there will be no quick resolution and the impact of the pandemic will be with us for the foreseeable future. Many are still falling ill but a greater number of people are recovering thanks to the efforts of our NHS heroes. It is predicted now that we will face a deep recession which, if it happens, will further compound the suffering that many have already faced. The Council will be working with our partners to tackle this with a Recovery Task Force. And there is hope. Our brilliant scientists are working flat out to find a vaccine and we are all adapting the ways we work and interact with each other to minimise the risk of infection.

It will be tough for us all to return to 'normal', whatever that normal may look like. However the spirit of Stevenage has been clear to see in recent weeks when we have truly lived the value of our motto 'The Heart of a Town Lies in its People', and it is in that spirit that we will continue to work co-operatively with our staff, partners, businesses and, most importantly, our community to face the coming challenges positively and continue working for an 'even better' Stevenage.'

## 12 **PRESENTATION OF MEMORIAL PLAQUE TO THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION**

The Mayor, Councillor Jim Brown, announced that the Council had commissioned a plaque to present to the Royal British Legion in memory of all those who paid the ultimate sacrifice during World War II.

Councillor John Lloyd, Vice Chairman of the local branch and District Veterans Champion, accepted the memorial plaque on behalf of the Royal British Legion. Councillor Lloyd informed Members that due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the town was unable to hold a public gathering to mark VE 75 Day on 8 May 2020. Wreaths had been laid at a low key event at the War Memorial in Stevenage Old Town. A memorial bench was also unveiled as part of VE Day commemorations. Councillor Lloyd informed Members that 8 Stevenage residents had received special awards and 67 had paid the ultimate sacrifice during World War Two.

## 13 **CLAP FOR KEYWORKERS**

The Mayor introduced a collection of short videos made by SBC staff to show their appreciation both to their colleagues who have been delivering key services and to all those in the community who have risked their own health during the Covid-19 Pandemic in order to help others in the Town. At the end of the presentation, Members applauded the efforts and achievements of SBC staff and all key workers.

**CHAIR**