

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 15 December 2021

Time: 7.00pm

Place: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

Present: Councillors: Sandra Barr (Mayor), Philip Bibby CC, Stephen Booth, Lloyd Briscoe, Rob Broom, Lizzy Kelly, Graham Lawrence CC, Nick Leech, Mrs Joan Lloyd, Lin Martin-Haugh, Andy McGuinness, Adam Mitchell CC, Robin Parker CC, Simon Speller, Sharon Taylor OBE CC and Jeannette Thomas.

Start / End Time: Start Time: 6.00pm
End Time: 7.50pm

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

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Myla Arceno, Julie Ashley-Wren, Doug Bainbridge, Stephen Booth, Adrian Brown, Matt Creasey, Michael Downing, John Duncan, Alex Farquharson, John Gardner, Jody Hanafin, Liz Harrington, Richard Henry, Jackie Hollywell, Chris Howells, Wendy Kerby, Maureen McKay, Sarah Mead, Margaret Notley, Claire Parris, Loraine Rossati, Graham Snell and Tom Wren.

There were no declarations of interest.

The Chief Executive advised that all Members not in attendance at the meeting had been issued with the Zoom codes in order to be able to view both Part I and Part II sections of the meeting. He also advised that a report would be brought to the January 2022 meeting of Council to ensure that those Members' non-attendance at this meeting would not count against the 6 month attendance rule.

At this juncture, Councillor Andy McGuinness apologised to the Mayor for any inappropriate language he may have inadvertently used at the previous Council meeting.

2 **MINUTES - 13 OCTOBER 2021**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

3 **MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS**

The Mayor announced that in light of the current Covid situation, including the spread of the Omicron variant and the national threat level being increased, the meeting was being held with reduced numbers of Councillors present. The agenda

would also be varied to undertake the required business only, to shorten the meeting.

The Mayor then summarised the activities that she and her consort had been involved with since the previous Council meeting in October 2021 including:

- Meeting two elected students of round diamond school student council to discuss civic studies, national politics and local politics;
- Joining Councillor Simon Speller on the first of his 'walks and talks ' celebrating the New Town's 75th birthday, then joining other walks and talks in Monks Wood, Hampson Park and Fairlands valley;
- Celebrating the 60th anniversary of Nobel School with Councillor Sharon Taylor and Cllr Robin Parker overseeing the planting of a new oak tree to reflect the original one on their emblem;
- Attending the pride of Stevenage awards which was deemed to be a huge success by all attendees. The Mayor thanked her Mayoress Louisa Barr who had worked so hard to put together the entertainment for the evening, provided by North Star Academy, Bedwell School and Longmeadow school choir, despite the challenge posed by the pandemic.
- Attending a curry night fundraiser with the Mayor of Welwyn for the Garden House Hospice.
- Following the launch of the new Lumo railway company, travelling with Councillor Lloyd Briscoe on the inaugural journey to Edinburgh.
- Attending the Grange Rotary Club dinner, with the Deputy Mayor and consorts.
- Attending the Civic Service of the Mayor of Ware at the Church of St Mary's in Ware.
- A visit to SPACE an equipment & toy library for autistic and disabled children at Arlington Park.
- Tea in the parlour for a pride awards winner who was not able to take part in the Pride of Stevenage event.
- A visit to Hampson Park and a green space reception provided thanking Green Space volunteers for their outstanding volunteering work in the Borough.
- Being a guest of the Mayor of Dacorum at the Puddlestone Gin Distillery, with Cllr Claire Parris.
- Attending the World Forum AGM to hear the stories of elder resident Denzil, of the pioneer residents' in Bedwell.
- Halloween – Art in the park, in Hampson Park, with a wonderful display of local childrens and adults examples of art work .
- A visit to Mather Marshall in the old town who displayed the art competition 'Lest We Forget' for the Royal British Legion.
- Awarding prizes to the winners of the Litter Artwork Competition organised by the Town Centre Manager.
- Planting purple crocuses at St Vincent de Paul with the year 1 children, the Chair of the Town Rotary Club and the Red Shed, to commemorate the end of polio across the world, thanks to the world wide vaccine programme.
- The Leader and the Mayor visiting the home of ex-Councillor David Cullen, to bestow the title of Honorary Alderman of Stevenage upon him.

- The ‘topping out’ ceremony at the Chalkdene housing site in Pin Green.
- Starting the fireworks display at Fairlands valley.
- Attending Knebworth Park with Councillor Speller to set off the half marathon runners and awarding medals to the top three runners.
- Recording a message for Glaxo Smith Kline’s Christmas toy appeal.
- Cutting the ribbon at Autolist the New stem cell factory in the Town Centre.
- Attending the opening of the Golden Siam Thai restaurant in the High Street.
- The Mayor and Mayoress being invited to the Coptic Cathedral New Year, at St Margaret’s Chapel in Westminster Abbey;
- Joining the Leader of the Council and local children in the Old Town, to turn on the Christmas lights.
- Joining the Stevenage Irish Network for annual Christmas lunch.
- Celebrating the Air Cadets achievements at a ceremony with Cllr Simon Speller and ex-councillor John Lloyd.
- Officially opening the new shops at Symonds Green Neighbourhood Centre with Cllr Taylor.
- Collecting 563 toys gifted by the workers at Glaxo for children in poverty in the town.
- Visiting the workers at Cavendish Road at their annual Christmas burger bar treat.
- Joining the St Nicholas Councillors and the Great Ashby Co-operative to collect food donations for families in need.
- A visit to Mobbsbury School with Cllr Speller to talk about art in the park and the civic duties of Councillors and the Mayor.
- Going to Bandle Hill Play Centre to pack hampers for underprivileged families in need this Christmas.

The Mayor also advised that due to the increase in Covid infections she had decided to postpone the Mayor’s Christmas party this year but would be holding a replacement event in the Spring.

4 **MAIN DEBATE**

There was no main debate.

5 **PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS**

There were no petitions and deputations.

6 **QUESTIONS FROM THE YOUTH COUNCIL**

The Council received two questions from the Youth Council. The responses to the questions had been circulated.

7 **QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

There were no questions from the public.

8 **LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S UPDATE**

Councillor Bibby advised that he would decline his opportunity to raise a matter relevant to the Borough that had arisen since the last meeting due to the circumstances of this meeting.

The Leader of the Council advised that her updates would be circulated to Members after the meeting.

9 **UPDATE FROM SCRUTINY CHAIRS**

Written updates from the three Scrutiny Chairs would be circulated following the meeting.

10 **NOTICE OF MOTIONS**

The Notice of Motion submitted by the Labour Group, the Motion from the Conservative Group and the three Motions from the Liberal Democrat Group would be deferred to the next Ordinary Meeting of the Council on 9 March 2022.

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

The Council received nine questions from Members to Committee Chairs/Portfolio Holders. The responses to the questions had been circulated to all Members. Each questioner was advised to submit any supplementary questions in writing to committees@stevenage.gov.uk. Written responses would be provided in due course.

12 **QUARTER 1 AND 2 MONITORING REPORT CAPITAL (GENERAL FUND) 2021/22**

Council considered a report providing Members with an update on the Council's 2021/22 capital programme and seeking approval for the revisions to the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account capital programmes.

It was moved by Councillor Mrs Joan Lloyd, seconded by Councillor Sharon Taylor and upon being put to the vote it was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the additional General Fund budget requirements as set out in table one, para 4.1.1 of the officers report of £291k be approved;
2. That additional delegated authorities to Executive of £200k for 2021/22 as set out in paragraph 4.2.1 of the report be approved;
3. That the borrowing for the Railway Station Multi Storey Car Park of between £1.85 and £2.05 million as set out in paragraph 4.2.2 and the use of £1.45 million of the Marshgate receipt as set out in paragraph 4.2.3 of the report be approved;
4. That circa £800k of forward-funding to enable demolition of Swingate House as set out in paragraph 4.3 be approved.

13 **MID YEAR REVIEW OF TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2021/22**

Council considered a report updating Members on the Treasury Management activities in 2021/22 and reviewing the effectiveness of the 2021/22 Treasury Management and Investment Strategy including the 2021/22 prudential and treasury indicators.

It was moved by Councillor Mrs Joan Lloyd, seconded by Councillor Sharon Taylor, and following debate and upon being put to the vote, it was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the 2021/22 Treasury Management Mid-Year review be approved;
2. That the list of approved countries (with approved counterparties) for investments as set out in Appendix D of the Officers report be approved;
3. That the updated authorised and operational borrowing limits as set out in Appendix A to the report be approved.
4. That the impact of the outstanding decision set out in paragraph 4.1.4 be noted.

14 **APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL AUDITORS - OPTING IN TO THE PUBLIC SECTOR AUDIT APPOINTMENTS (PSAA) PROCESS**

Council considered a report regarding the appointment of External Auditors and opting into the Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) process.

It was moved by Councillor Teresa Callaghan, seconded by Councillor Mrs Joan Lloyd, and following debate and upon being put to the vote, it was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the Council opt into the appointing arrangements made by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) for the appointment of External Auditors covering the period April 2023 to March 2028;
2. That the Executive Director Finance (Section 151) confirms the Council's interest in undertaking the opt-in appointing process.

15 **AUDIT COMMITTEE MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 10 November 2021, were received and noted.

16 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in Paragraphs 1 – 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as amended by Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.
2. That the reasons for the following report being in Part II were accepted, and

that the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

17 **APPROVAL OF EMPLOYEE MATTER**

Council considered a report outlining an employee matter which required Council approval under S.40 Localism Act 2011 and the Council's Pay Policy Statement.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Recommendations contained in the report be approved.

MAYOR