

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 9 March 2022

Time: 7.00pm

Place: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

Present: Councillors: Sandra Barr (Mayor), Margaret Notley (Deputy Mayor), Myla Arceno, Julie Ashley-Wren, Philip Bibby CC, Stephen Booth, Lloyd Briscoe, Rob Broom, Adrian Brown, Teresa Callaghan, Matt Creasey, Michael Downing, John Duncan, Alex Farquharson, John Gardner, Jody Hanafin, Richard Henry, Jackie Hollywell, Chris Howells, Wendy Kerby, Graham Lawrence CC, Nick Leech, Mrs Joan Lloyd, Maureen McKay, Lin Martin-Haugh, Sarah Mead, Adam Mitchell CC, Robin Parker CC, Claire Parris, Loraine Rossati, Simon Speller, Sharon Taylor OBE CC, Jeannette Thomas and Tom Wren.

Start / End Start Time: 7.00pm
Time: End Time: 11.00pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Doug Bainbridge, Andy McGuinness and Graham Snell.

Councillor Sharon Taylor declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of Items 12 (Members' Allowances Scheme 2022/23) and 13 (Pay Policy Statement 2022/23), in view of her role in the negotiations on Local Government Pay Awards as a member of the NJC Employers' Side.

2 MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Mayor announced that she had accepted:

- an additional Question from the Public in respect of bus services in the town. The question had arisen at a meeting of the Stevenage Bus Users Group held on 1 March 2022 and was submitted by Mr David Martin (Treasurer of the Group), and hence was received after the deadline date for submission of questions. The question and answer had been sent to Members on the supplementary agenda for the meeting; and
- an urgent motion from the Labour Group concerning the crisis in Ukraine. This had also been sent to Members on the supplementary agenda for the meeting. She announced that she would be taking this urgent motion first under Item 9 (Notice of Motions).

The Mayor summarised the activities that she and her consort had been involved with since the previous Council meeting in July 2021. These had included:

- the opening of two stores in the indoor market, one of which was the home for the Covid snake;
- opening the specialist Walkwell shop in the Westgate Centre;
- drawing the Christmas raffle at the Nationwide Building Society;
- filming a Christmas message (with the Leader) to residents;
- being involved in the film for Holocaust Memorial Day;
- making a film to promote Stevenage Day 2022;
- making a film to send a message celebrating the new Stevenage Special Constables' passing out ceremony;
- accompanied by Councillor Claire Parris, attending the Mayor of Hertsmere's Holocaust Memorial Day lantern parade;
- a visit to the Coptic Church cathedral in Stevenage, and being part of the contemporary martyrs' day 2022, an online event to highlight the suffering of Orthodox Christians and modern day martyrs of the Coptic Church;
- judging (with Councillor John Gardner) the green network logo competition; and judging (with the Deputy Mayor) the right up you street award, the friendliest road competition, which was won by Baddeley Close in Shephall;
- awarding the winning medals to the children of Stevenage and North Hertfordshire Schools writing competition;
- visiting Mossbury School to open the "Mossy Mile", comprising new exercise equipment;
- a visit to the new SADA refuge house in Stevenage;
- attending the Betty Game Trust annual meeting;
- a private viewing of the new art installation and exhibition titled "Out in Stevenage", imagining an LGBTQ+ history of the town;
- a preview of the new Bus Interchange facility;
- opening/launching the new North Herts College Construction Hub;
- breaking ground at Dunn Close, in readiness for the new supported housing scheme;
- hosting a fundraising Gala Ball at the Cromwell Hotel;
- the celebration of the life of her late friend and former councillor (and Mayor) Carol Latif at Harwood Park Crematorium; and
- attending the very moving tribute to the bravery of the people of the Ukraine held in the Town Square on the early evening of 4 March 2022.

3 MAIN DEBATE

There was no Main Debate.

4 PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS

There were no Petitions and Deputations.

5 QUESTIONS FROM THE YOUTH COUNCIL

The Council received three questions from the Youth Council. The responses to the three questions had been published in the supplementary agenda for the meeting.

No supplementary questions were asked by the Youth Mayor.

6 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

The Council noted that a response to the question submitted by Mr Jim Borchers regarding the recycling of waste paper by Schools had been published in the supplementary agenda for the meeting.

No supplementary question had been received.

The Council further noted that a response from Councillor Lloyd Briscoe (Executive Portfolio Holder for Economy, Enterprise & Transport) to the question submitted by Mr David Martin (from BUGS) concerning bus services in the town had also been published in the supplementary agenda for the meeting.

Mr Martin was present at the meeting, and addressed his original question to Councillor John Gardner (Executive Portfolio Holder for Environment & Regeneration).

Councillor Gardner replied that he echoed entirely the views expressed by Councillor Briscoe in his response to the original question.

7 LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S UPDATE

The Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Phil Bibby, asked the following question:

“The Council had recently issued a press release without evidence claiming that ‘people who cycle regularly live longer than those who do not, and cycling regularly to work or school has been shown to be the most effective thing an individual can do to improve health and increase longevity’. Should the Council not be giving more truthful and balanced advice, rather than propaganda?”

The Leader of the Council replied that she was not aware of the source of that information, but felt that it was unlikely that officers would make such statements without some empirical evidence to back it up. She undertook to ensure that Councillor Bibby was provided with this evidence. She also hoped that Hertfordshire County Council would continue to promote cycling as part of a healthy lifestyle and in the Climate Change ambition to achieve a net zero carbon target.

The Council then received updates from relevant Executive Portfolio Holders on the following matters:

- Health Protection Board spend;
- Household Support Fund;
- ICT work supporting Transformation;
- Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund;
- Hertfordshire County Council Support Funding;
- Loyalty Initiative Funding;
- Growth through Sustainability;
- Storm Eunice response;

- Icon Planning appeal; and
- Launch of the Council's Leisure Management Contract Procurement Process which would conclude in 2023.

In respect Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, the Leader of the Opposition noted that it would cost approximately 20,000 per unit to upgrade the whole of the SBC housing stock. He appreciated that the Council would not be able to fund this immediately and was unlikely to attract 100% grant funding, but asked if the Council would be preparing a long-term plan to tackle the issue?

The Executive Portfolio Holder for Housing, Health & Older People replied that the Council would be updating its Housing Revenue Account Business Plan in June 2022, which would include an assessment of decarbonisation costs. The Leader of the Council added that the £1.8M funding received by the Council for Wave 1 of the Decarbonisation Fund was welcome, and commented that it would be incumbent on the Government to recognise that local authorities could not upgrade the whole of their housing stock without further financial support.

8 UPDATE FROM SCRUTINY CHAIRS

The Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee advised that the Committee had met on a number of occasions in recent months, including some additional meetings to consider the Towns Fund Business Cases. The Committee had also been involved in a Portfolio Holder Advisory Group meeting on the Council's Transformation plans.

The Chair of the Community Select Committee stated that the recent work of the Committee had centred upon the proposed new Heritage Centre for the town. Difficulties had been experienced in the Committee's statutory responsibility to scrutinise crime and disorder due to data issues, although officers were working to resolve these issues. The Committee had also received an interesting presentation from the Council's Neighbourhood Wardens, as well as an update on the Your Say complaints system.

The Chair of the Environment & Economy Select Committee advised that the Committee's work had continued to focus on scrutiny of the Council's Climate Emergency plans. The Committee would be producing an interim report on this matter covering progress over the past year. As well as formal meetings, the Committee had also met informally to gather the views of Executive Members and other experts and interested parties. He would report further on the Committee's continuing work on Climate Change during the 2022/23 Civic Year.

9 NOTICE OF MOTIONS

Urgent Motion – Crisis in the Ukraine

Councillor Sharon Taylor moved and Councillor Loraine Rossati seconded the following urgent motion:

“That this Council expresses its strong solidarity and support for the people of

Ukraine and agrees that this be expressed on behalf of the Council and the people of Stevenage.

We express our solidarity and support to the Ukraine community in Stevenage and pledge assistance within our powers with their humanitarian aid efforts.

Council agrees to undertaking the following action urgently and in writing:

- To the Russian Ambassador in the UK, demanding that he requests his Government to withdraw troops from Ukraine immediately;
- To the Ukrainian Ambassador in the UK, expressing the Council's support and solidarity, and respect for his nation's sovereignty, freedom and courage; and
- To the Prime Minister of the UK, asking that all efforts are made to welcome refugees coming from Ukraine to the UK, and advise of our willingness to help settle individuals and families whose lives have so sadly and suddenly been affected by the military action in Ukraine."

Following debate, and upon being put to the vote, the motion was carried unanimously.

Bus Services in Stevenage

Councillor Lloyd Briscoe moved and Councillor Michael Downing seconded the following motion:

"Bus services in Stevenage are vital to so many of our residents providing them with a vital link to work places, shops, medical services, social & leisure activity, access to education and so much more.

That is why it is so disappointing to see a deterioration in our bus services in town with residents reporting many bus services cut at short (or no) notice meaning they have long waits for their bus. For some time now we have experienced some areas left with no bus service from early evening or no service at all.

This council is working towards our net zero carbon by 2030 target and with the county council on our Sustainable Travel Town status. A key part of this will be to encourage more use of public transport rather than private cars. Our new bus interchange is part of building an integrated public transport system. However this depends on regular, reliable, sustainable and affordable bus services.

Therefore this Council resolves:

1. To convene a bus summit with the bus operators to explore the opportunities and address the challenges of delivering better bus services
2. To lobby the county council, as transport authority, to work with us and bus operators to ensure every area of Stevenage has a bus service
3. To seek reassurance from the county council that there will be no further cuts to bus subsidies for Stevenage bus routes
4. To explore with the county council better ways of providing up to date travel information to passengers

5. To ensure we do all we can through the planning process to ensure bus routes are planned with new neighbourhoods and maximum use is made of CIL & Section 106 to incentivise bus use.
6. To encourage the County Council as the Local Transport Authority and Arriva to continue to work with SBC concerning the ZEBRA (Zero Emission Bus Regional Area) bid for Stevenage.”

The following amendment was moved by Councillor Phil Bibby and seconded by Councillor Adam Mitchell:

- 2. Delete the words ‘To lobby the County Council, as transport authority’ and amend the remainder thus ‘To work with the County Council, as Transport Authority, and bus operators to ensure every area of Stevenage has a bus service.’
- 3. Delete entirely.
- 4. Re-number 3.
- 5. re-number 4. and add ‘In addition to this, we must acknowledge that car use is unlikely to reduce in the foreseeable future, so this Council should do all it can to ensure adequate residential parking in existing neighbourhoods, new neighbourhoods and new developments.’
- 6. Re-number 5. delete and replace with ‘To fully support the County Council’s and Arriva’s ZEBRA (Zero Emission Bus Regional Area) bid for Stevenage.”

Following debate, and upon being put to the vote, this amendment was lost.

During the debate upon the substantive motion, the mover and seconder accepted a minor revision suggested by a Member to remove the word “Arriva” from point 6 and replace it with “bus operators”.

Upon the substantive motion being put to the vote, it was therefore **RESOLVED:**

1. To convene a bus summit with the bus operators to explore the opportunities and address the challenges of delivering better bus services
2. To lobby the county council, as transport authority, to work with us and bus operators to ensure every area of Stevenage has a bus service
3. To seek reassurance from the county council that there will be no further cuts to bus subsidies for Stevenage bus routes
4. To explore with the county council better ways of providing up to date travel information to passengers
5. To ensure we do all we can through the planning process to ensure bus routes are planned with new neighbourhoods and maximum use is made of CIL & Section 106 to incentivise bus use.
6. To encourage the County Council as the Local Transport Authority and bus operators to continue to work with SBC concerning the ZEBRA (Zero Emission Bus Regional Area) bid for Stevenage.

Council Meetings

The motion detailed in the agenda for the meeting was moved by Councillor Phil Bibby and seconded by Councillor Adam Mitchell.

An amendment which had been circulated to Members on the supplementary agenda for the meeting was moved by Councillor Sharon Taylor and seconded by Councillor Mrs Joan Lloyd. The mover and seconder of the original motion expressed support for this amendment.

Following debate, and upon being put to the vote, the amendment was carried.

Following further debate, and upon the substantive motion being put to the vote, it was **RESOLVED**:

“That Council notes that in the interests of democracy, it is important to continue to encourage and allow all political parties represented in Council to table motions but, to ensure all Council meetings are conducted in a timely fashion, thus facilitating the continued attention and interest of both our members and the public, there is a need to limit the time spent in debate. This can be achieved by limiting the number of motions and the time allowed for both debate and individual speakers.

Also, Council notes that the main debate has not taken place for some while, so could be regarded as no longer necessary. However, it is appreciated that members may benefit from presentations on matters of interest to the community, as appropriate and, therefore, we should provide for this in Standing Orders.

Council moves that the following amendments be made and to stand until a complete review of the Constitution has been undertaken and completed in 2022/23 and that in any case the following amendment be reviewed prior to the annual meeting in May 2023 to ensure the revised arrangements are satisfactory.

The Council therefore moves that Standing Orders be amended as follows:

15. Motions subject to notice is amended to provide that each political group is permitted to submit one written motion for debate, within a seven working day period ending on the 3rd working day prior to publication of the agenda, at any ordinary meeting of the Council.

The revised standing order 15 to read:

15. Motions subject to notice

- a. Motions under Standing Order 7 can be moved without notice.
- b. Each Political Group is permitted to submit one written motion for debate at any ordinary meeting of the Council.
- c. Written notice of any other motion must be signed by the Member or Members giving the notice.

Notice must be delivered to the Constitutional Services Manager not earlier than 10 clear working days prior to the dispatch of the agenda for the Council meeting and not later than midday on the third clear working

day prior to the despatch of the agenda for the Council meeting.

Every motion must be about something for which the Council has a responsibility or which affects the Borough.

- d. If it appears to the Constitutional Services Manager that a motion of which he/she has received notice is not in order, or is framed in improper or unbecoming language, he/she shall take the direction of the Mayor as to whether and in what form it shall be placed on the agenda, and the decision of the Mayor, after consultation with the giver of the notice, shall be final.
- e. A Member may only place one Notice of Motion on the agenda.
- f. All motions for which notice has been given will be printed on the Council agenda in the order received unless a Member giving notice stated, in writing, that he/she proposed to move it at a later meeting or has since written to withdraw it.
- g. Where a Motion relates to Council business i.e. is not Executive business or has been delegated by Council to another Committee, the matter will be considered at the meeting to which it has been submitted unless it has subsequently been withdrawn.
- h. Where the Motion relates to Executive business or has been delegated to a Committee of the Council, any Member may, without notice, move a procedural motion to the effect that the motion detailed in the agenda is to be debated at the Council meeting. Where such a procedural motion has been moved and seconded, that motion will be put to the Council without debate and with the support of a simple majority of those present determine that a motion, detailed in the agenda, be dealt with at the meeting at which it is proposed.
- i. With no such procedural motion being carried, once the motion detailed in the agenda is moved and seconded, there shall be no debate and the Motion shall stand referred to the Leader, Executive or such Committee as appropriate for consideration and decision.
- j. In the event of a motion detailed in the agenda being debated at the Council meeting (i.e. the relevant procedural motion has been carried) the normal rules of debate apply subject to the Leader, Chair of the appropriate Committee or relevant Executive Member (or her/his nominee) having the right of reply at the close of any debate, immediately before the mover of the motion.
- k. Any motion submitted under this Standing Order to change the agreed Budget and Policy Framework of the Council may be approved in principle only and will stand referred to the Leader / Executive (and subsequently considered by the Scrutiny Overview Committee) who, after considering an officer report thereon, will submit a recommendation

to the next Council meeting.

- I. Any motion submitted under this Standing Order that relates to Executive business or may be approved in principle only and will stand referred to the Leader / Executive (and subsequently considered by the Scrutiny Overview Committee) who, after considering an officer report thereon. The outcome of any such matter will be reported to next ordinary meeting of the Council.
- m. Where a motion is referred to the Executive or a Committee, the Member moving it shall, if he/she is not a Member of that body, be entitled to attend the meeting to explain her/his motion.
- n. The provisions of this Standing Order, where appropriate, apply to a Motion to remove the Leader from office.

And Standing Order 19 Rules of Debate is amended, as follows:

'Time limits for speakers during debates, unless otherwise stated elsewhere in the Standing Orders are as follows:

- Mover of a motion - six minutes
- Seconder of a motion - four minutes
- Leader of the Council - four minutes
- Leader of the Opposition - four minutes
- All other speakers - three minutes
- Right of reply - three minutes'

A new point c (v) is added:

'The time allowed to debate motions is a maximum of 1 and ½ hours (90 minutes). At the expiry of the 90 minutes allowed for debating written motions the Mayor shall end any debate in progress at that time (whether or not all motions have been debated) and move that the question now be put to the vote.

Any motion not debated within the 90 minute time limit will fall.'

The revised standing order to read:

c. Procedure

- (i) Members must refer to one another in meetings by their correct title of 'Councillor'.
- (ii) A Member can only speak about the matter under discussion or on a point of order, or in personal explanation.
- (iii) Time Limits for speakers during debates, unless otherwise stated elsewhere in these Standing Orders are as follows:

- Mover of a motion – six minutes
- Secunder of a motion – four minutes
- Leader of the Council – four minutes
- Leader of the Opposition – four minutes
- All other speakers – three minutes
- Right of reply – three minutes

(iv) A Member can only speak once on a motion except in the case of:

- Speaking once on an amendment to the motion moved by another Member;
- Moving a further amendment if the motion on which he/she last spoke has been amended;
- If her/his first speech was on an amendment moved by another Member, he/she can then speak on the original issue, whether or not the amendment on which he/she first spoke was carried;
- In exercise of a right of reply;
- On a point of order; or
- In personal explanation.

(v) The time allowed to debate motions is a maximum of 1 and ½ hours (90 minutes). At the expiry of the 90 minutes allowed for debating written motions the Mayor shall end any debate in progress at that time (whether or not all motions have been debated) and move that the question now be put to the vote.

Any motion not debated within the 90 minute time limit will fall.

The Council also moves that Standing Orders, 6 Council Meetings, is amended and 9. Main Debate is re-written, as follows:

Standing Order 6.b(viii) is amended to read:

To deal with any Community Presentation, as appropriate (Standing Order 9);

Standing Order 9 is replaced as follows:

9. Community Presentation

At any ordinary meeting of the Council there may be a presentation on a matter of interest to the community (**Community Presentation**).

- a. The subject of any Community Presentation must be agreed with the Chief Executive, and notice must be delivered to the Constitutional Services Manager, not later than midday on the tenth clear working day prior to the despatch of the agenda for the Council meeting.

- b. The Council may receive a presentation, relevant to the subject matter of the debate may be, from a Councillor, officer and or other invited person(s).
 - (i) If the presentation is from a Councillor or officer, it should last no longer than 10 minutes.
 - (ii) If another person or persons are making the presentation it should last no longer than 20 minutes.
 - (iii) Collectively no Community Presentation should last longer than 30 minutes.
- c. At the Mayor's discretion Councillors and members of the public may ask questions of those providing the, or comment on the content of the, presentation subject to a maximum time allowance for questions of 20 minutes.
- d. No Councillor or member of the public is permitted to speak for more than three minutes.
- e. No debate or vote will take place on the content of the presentation (not being a motion before Council).
- f. The presentation is not subject to any other rules of debate as provided for within this Constitution."

Housing and Direct Services Departments

Councillor Stephen Booth moved and Councillor Robin Parker seconded the following motion:

"That this Council calls for a thorough review of the housing and direct services departments to focus particularly on:

- (a) Improving the response to tenants requesting attention to repairs and other property problems.
- (b) Ensuring that all incoming calls are dealt with promptly, are recorded and tenants do not have to wait longer than 30 minutes maximum during normal working hours to speak to someone. Where this is impossible, a proper call-back system to tenants is initiated.
- (c) Maintaining a detailed register of outstanding housing maintenance works and reporting same to councillors on a weekly basis.
- (d) Ensuring that tenants are properly informed by phone, text or email when access to their properties is needed for work and visiting times are agreed.
- (e) Compensating tenants when council trade persons fail to turn up for previously agreed appointments.
- (f) Ensuring that councillors are kept informed of the initiation and progress of refurbishment and upgrade programmes, especially in the wards they represent."

The following amendment was moved by Councillor Phil Bibby and seconded by Councillor Wendy Kerby:

“(e) add after ‘tenants’, delete ‘when Council’ and replace with ‘by the contractor, if employed, or Council, if own staff used, when”

Following debate, and upon being put to the vote, this amendment was lost.

Following further debate, and upon it being put to the vote, the substantive motion was lost.

Communications

Councillor Stephen Booth moved and Councillor Robin Parker seconded the following motion:

“Calls upon Council to properly manage its Communications & Media unit and those responsible for the publication of Stevenage Chronicle and other publications from time to time issued by the Council; particularly to ensure:

- (a) That the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity published by the Department for Communities Local Government is properly observed.
- (b) Editorial oversight is under the control of an Assistant Director.
- (c) There is close attention to detail and checking of dates and other facts.
- (d) That any featured events are to take place at least 14 days ahead of general publication and circulation.
- (e) An editorial schedule of contents is published for circulation to councillors.
- (f) A schedule of dates for potential contributors including copy dates, proofing and to press is published.
- (g) That there is a balance of editorial material between wards and council groups without party political favour.
- (h) That photos are relevant and correctly captioned.”

Following debate, and upon being out to the vote, this motion was lost.

Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Policy

Councillor Robin Parker moved and Councillor Stephen Booth seconded the following motion:

“That this Council commits to considering and in due course implementing a ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) policy to apply to the Council’s financial investment counterparties.”

Following debate, and upon being out to the vote, this motion was lost.

10 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO COMMITTEE CHAIRS / PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

The Council received seven questions from Members to Committee Chairs/Portfolio Holders. The responses to the seven questions had been published in the supplementary agenda for the meeting.

(A) Question from Councillor Nick Leech re: Council recycling rates

Supplementary question – “The ONS statistics showed that the percentage of SBC waste sent to landfill over the past six years had remained at 60%. Why had this not improved?”

In reply, the Executive Portfolio Holder for Environment & Regeneration acknowledged that there was room for improvement with regard to the recycling rates. He had set out in his response to the original question some of the proposed measures for securing improvement. The Government’s review of its Waste Strategy had been postponed a number of times. One of the issues included in the Government’s consultation had related to kitchen waste – should SBC adopt a collection scheme it would increase the recycling rate by about 4.5%. There was also an onus on residents to change behaviour and increase their own recycling rates, including that secured from the Borough’s flat blocks. He would welcome a discussion with Councillor Leech and Waste Collection staff to consider the various issues going forward.

(B) Question from Councillor Julie Ashley-Wren re: repairs to SBC-owned fences

Supplementary question – “What plans were in place to deal with the 1,000+ fence repairs that were required prior to the additional 300 or so that were needed following the recent storms?”

The Executive Portfolio Holder for Housing, Health & Older People replied that fencing had been at a low level of supply nationally over the past two years, both for councils and private properties. The Council had been undertaking emergency only fencing repairs during that time. Such emergency repairs would include, for example, where the fence bordered a footpath, and would need to be repaired for security purposes. A sum of £250,000 had been allocated in the 2022/23 budget to help deal with the fencing repairs backlog.

(C) Question from Councillor Stephen Booth re: funding for the new Bus Interchange

Supplementary question – “Did the Council fail to properly scope the works, thereby allowing the contractor once on site to maximise the costs for the additional works required to complete the contract?”

The Executive Portfolio Holder for Environment & Regeneration replied that the Bus Interchange was a circa £10M project. He felt that the timelines on the hoarding which surrounded the site during the works represented good value for money, and would be re-used (and updated) on the hoardings used for other Town Centre

Regeneration Schemes. It helped to enhance the interface between the Council and the public.

(D) Question from Councillor Andy McGuinness re: impact on residents of Gresley Park development

Supplementary question (from Councillor Robin Parker in the absence of Councillor McGuinness) – “Can he receive a list of the benefits for the Borough to be derived from the Section 106 Agreement for the Gresley Park development, and has SBC complained to East Hertfordshire Council (EHC) and/or Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) and/or the site developer about alleged planning breaches concerning the development?”

The Executive Portfolio Holder for Environment & Regeneration replied that Councillor Parker had previously been provided with information concerning some of the benefits to be derived from the development, including improvements to health services, education etc. He felt it had been a very well negotiated Section 106 Agreement. If Councillor Parker felt that there were planning breaches, there was no reason why he could not report these to East Hertfordshire Council himself, copying in SBC Planning Officers, in order that they could take up the matter(s) with EHC and/or HCC Planning colleagues if they deemed it appropriate to do so.

(E) Question from Councillor Robin Parker re: traffic difficulties along Lytton Way

Supplementary question – “How will SBC communicate issues and expected problems better in future?”

The Executive Portfolio Holder for Environment & Regeneration replied by stating that a number of the Town Centre Regeneration schemes, such as the Queensway and Town Square Improvements, had been carried out with a minimum of inconvenience to the public. The Lytton Way works had caused some inconvenience, but he commented that the responsibility for the works rested with Hertfordshire County Council. Lessons had been learnt from the project, and HCC (Ringway) had advised that any future highway works on that area would be carried out during weekends.

(F) Question from Councillor Graham Snell re: hoarding around the now closed Swingate Car Park

Supplementary question (from Councillor Robin Parker in the absence of Councillor Snell) – “Can the resource on the hoardings be shared digitally so that they can be used in local schools and by other interested organisations?”

The Executive Portfolio Holder for Environment & Regeneration replied that if any schools or other organisations were interested in the content on the hoardings then every effort would be made to share this with them digitally.

(G) Question from Councillor Tom Wren re: Government Grants or funding schemes available for Major refurbishment Contract

[Note: Prior to asking his supplementary question, Councillor Tom Wren declared a non-prejudicial interest, in that he was a leaseholder of an SBC property. He considered his interest was non-prejudicial, as his question was of a general nature and was applicable to leasehold properties across the Borough.]

Supplementary question – “Although many millions of Government funding had been used to improve individual council properties nationally, no funding had been provided for flat blocks. Did SBC avoid using Government funds for the Major Refurbishment Contract to by-pass the restriction of Florrie’s Law, and therefore increase charges to leaseholders, and will the Council co-operate with a Freedom of Information request and disclose all e-mails related to the Major Refurbishment Contract which mention Florrie’s Law or access to Government funds?”

The Executive Portfolio Holder for Housing, Health & Older People replied that there had not been any Government funds available for insulation of flat blocks. The Council had only just received funding of £1.8M from the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund to undertake improved energy efficiency works to the SBC housing stock. In terms of cladding/insulation improvements post-Grenfell, she added that the Council would not be acting until the Fire Safety Bill had completed its passage through Parliament.

11 GAMBLING ACT 2005 - REVIEW OF STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

The Council considered a report in respect of a review of the Council’s Statement of Principles regarding the Gambling Act 2005.

It was moved by Councillor Jackie Hollywell, and seconded by Councillor Maureen McKay, that Recommendation 2.1 in the report be approved.

Following debate and upon the motion being put to the vote, it was **RESOLVED** that the Stevenage Borough Council Statement of Principles (Gambling Act 2005), as attached at Appendix A to the report, be adopted.

12 MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME 2022/23

The Council considered a report in respect of a proposed Members’ Allowances Scheme for 2022/23.

The Chief Executive drew attention to the addendum report and revised Scheme which had been circulated to Members on the supplementary agenda for the meeting. He advised that the revised documentation reflected the very recent NJC Pay Award agreement for a 1.75% increase in pay for 2021/22, which had not been confirmed at the time that the original report was written.

It was moved by Councillor Taylor, and seconded by Councillor Mrs Joan Lloyd, that Recommendations 2.1 and 2.2 in the addendum report be approved.

During the debate, the Leader of the Conservative Group advised that he and the members of his Group present at the meeting would be voting against the recommendations, and would not be taking the 1.75% increase in allowances.

Upon the motion being put to the vote, it was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2022/23, as set out in the revised Appendix A attached to the addendum report, be agreed.
2. That the Scheme be updated should an NJC Pay Award be agreed for 2022/23.

13 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2022/23

The Council considered a report in respect of a proposed Pay Policy Statement for 2022/23.

The Chief Executive advised that, as with the previous item, Recommendation 2.1 in the report would need to be revised to reflect the recent NJC Pay Award agreement for a 1.75% increase in pay for 2021/22, which had not been confirmed at the time the original report was written.

It was moved by Councillor Mrs Joan Lloyd, and seconded by Councillor Sharon Taylor, that a revised Recommendation 2.1 and Recommendation 2.2 set out in the report be approved.

Upon the motion being out to the vote, it was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the Pay Policy Statement set out in accordance with the Localism Act 2011 and the Local Government Transparency Code 2015, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report, and thereafter revised to take account of the recent NJC Pay Award of a 1.75% pay increase for 2021/22, be approved.
2. That the Pay Policy be placed on the Council's website and that a notice of the Policy be published in the next edition of Chronicle.

14 AUDIT COMMITTEE MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 8 February 2022 were received.

MAYOR