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STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Tuesday, 11 November 2025

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber

Present: Councillors: Julie Ashley-Wren (Vice-Chair-In the Chair), Kamal Choudhury, Sarah Mead, Carolina Veres and Peter Wilkins

Start / End Time: Start Time: 18:00
End Time: 18:45

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ellie Plater, Leanne Brady, Akin Elekolusi, and Lynda Guy.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING - TUESDAY 16 SEPTEMBER 2025

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Community Select Committee meeting held on 16 September be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 INTERIM REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF REVIEW OF EQUALITIES DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

The Scrutiny Officer presented the recommendations from the interim report. Members suggested changes to some of the wording and additions to the report as below:

Recommendation 1 - 4.2 'Support needs to be offered for the succession of the voluntary roles in the Community', should be added to the report.

Recommendation 3 - 4.4 Wording of the recommendation should be changed to 'The voices and lived experience of the trans community are invited into the discussions and at events to help combat misconceptions and hatred'

Recommendation 4 – 4.5 It was suggested that this recommendation extend to include the local shopping areas around the town, not just the town centre.

Recommendation 5 – 4.6 The issue of digital exclusion needs to be acknowledged and describe ways it has put mitigations in place.

Recommendation 6 – 4.7 Add in to the recommendation to take forward Age Concerns offer of developing the scheme of mobility scooter hire at the Bus Interchange.

Recommendation 9 – 4.10 Members wanted something included in this recommendation about the Bus Interchange and how it could be improved to aid individuals with sight loss. It was suggested that better signage be introduced in and around the Interchange and the screens be potentially lowered and resolution improved.

Discussion took place around some of the issues in and around the Bus Interchange such as poor lighting in certain areas, and uneven pavements.

Member asked if audio announcements could also be added, e.g. when a bus is about to leave. The Scrutiny Officer explained that they would take the point away to be investigated by officers and the portfolio holder.

A question was raised about the recommendations being generalised and the officer confirmed that they are worded this way to give flexibility and avoid being too prescriptive.

The officer noted that the LGBTQ+ community were really encouraged with how they were included in local events such as Stevenage Day, having a Pride focus there, and the rainbow bench in Shephall.

Members asked why the scope of recommendation 4 only included the Town Centre and not the whole of the town. Members suggested that Councillors within each ward should be encouraged to investigate putting some accessible age friendly benches using their Local Community Budgets.

It was raised by Members that Digital Exclusion is not just an accessibility thing, does not just affect older people, and that recommendation 5 is not strong enough. SBC need to produce solutions on how to combat the problem as part of the recommendation.

Members referenced a piece of land in Manor Ward that has been restricted for sport purposes only and is not being utilised to the fullest. Officers agreed to take this point on board and provide an update on what is happening with the land and how its managed.

A question was raised on recommendation 8 about whether it was funding or support that was needed to support the external bodies like Mind In Herts. The officer clarified that they wanted better support and collaboration from SBC.

After the discussion on changes to recommendations were concluded, the Scrutiny Officer agreed to draft new wording around the revised recommendations and circulate them to the committee. Once members were happy with the revisions, a completed final report and recommendations would then be sent to the portfolio holder and the officers supporting those recommendations.

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UPDATE ON THE COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2025-26

The Scrutiny Officer went through the work programme and provided the following

updates:

Progress on the new housing allocations policy will be provided at the meeting on 13 January 2026, this has been delayed as the policy is being worked on now and it is understood that they are looking at a new low band to be included. In this meeting they will also report on the past year since the policy was implemented in terms of data and how it's gone in practice.

The item on damp and mould had been delivered, it continues to be an issue that this Committee will have an interest in and would want to look at again in the future.

Equalities and diversity were being looked at in this meeting and would be brought back in a final report to the Committee in due course.

Older people – The relevant portfolio holder for Neighbourhoods and Older People, Councillor Myla Arceno, brought their item to Council regarding age-friendly and dementia-friendly communities, which got a lot of support. Councillor Arceno had confirmed that she is keen to bring this to the Committee so that more detail can be worked on.

It is proposed to have a focus meeting on the provision for older people on 11 December 2025 which may become a bigger piece of work in a future work programme.

Officers have tried on several occasions to move forward on the community centre item; it is understood that a lot of work will need to go into this from officers with a collaborated effort required from multiple teams. This will stay on the work programme, however it will not be possible to fit it in this year.

Members commented that the community centres topic had been ongoing for many years and every community centre has a Council link Councillor. It was suggested that some of the work around this programme item be given to those Councillors to complete as it would be easier for each of them to do this, rather than someone trying to do the whole project.

The Scrutiny Officer agreed to speak to officers and get an update on when this item will be progressed.

The Scrutiny Officer explained that the Statutory Crime and Disorder committee meeting will take place in March 2026, potentially 25th. This will allow the Police and SoSafe partnership to have complied all the relevant data and Members will have an opportunity to review it.

A Member referenced that the Police Priorities meeting had not taken place recently. The officer confirmed that the next one is on 26 November 2025.

The Scrutiny Officer explained that that the standing item, Public Health, has not been delivered for a couple of years since the previous Director of Public Health at the County Council left his position within that organisation. Assurance has been provided by Kerry Clifford that we will have a focus meeting on this item, in February

2026, either the 4th or 26th and that officers were trying to get the current Director of Public Health to attend.

Members raised that data was brought to the Public Health meeting by the previous director and suggested that Councillor Gordon who is part of the HCC Health Scrutiny Committee could provide some data via a presentation.

A Member referenced that the Council currently have 39 Councillors but only 4 designated champions (Carers, Dementia, Mental Health and Armed Forces). The question was raised as to why we do not have 39 champions to cover other areas such as Young People, Public Health and the Scrutiny Officer was asked to take this away to provide a response.

The Scrutiny Officer recapped that the Committee were looking at bringing an Older People item in December 2025, progress on the Housing Allocations Policy in January 2026, Public Health in February 2026 and statutory Crime and Disorder Committee in March.

5 URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS

There was no Urgent Part I Business.

6 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.

7 URGENT PART II BUSINESS

There was no Urgent Part II Business.

CHAIR