

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MINUTES

Date: Thursday, 14 December 2017

Time: 7.00 pm

Place: Council Chamber - Council Chamber

Present: Councillors: Pam Stuart, Philip Bibby CC, Lloyd Briscoe, Jim Brown, Howard Burrell, Laurie Chester, Elaine Connolly, Michael Downing, Alex Farquharson, James Fraser, John Gardner, Michelle Gardner, Liz Harrington, Sharon Hearn, Richard Henry, Jackie Hollywell, Carol Latif, Graham Lawrence, John Lloyd, Mrs Joan Lloyd, Lin Martin-Haugh, Maureen McKay, John Mead, Sarah Mead, Adam Mitchell CC, Margaret Notley, Robin Parker CC, Ralph Raynor, Chris Saunders, Graham Snell, Simon Speller, Sharon Taylor OBE CC, Jeannette Thomas and Ann Webb JP

Start / End Time: Start Time: 7.00 pm
End Time: 8.50 pm

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Bainbridge, R Broom, J Brown, M Hurst and A McGuinness.

There were no declarations of interest.

2. MINUTES - 11 OCTOBER 2017

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Council meeting of 11 October 2017 are approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

3. MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Mayor informed the meeting that since the last meeting, the Mayoral Team had undertaken a number of engagements in the town and she referred to several highlights, including:

- a visit to the Coptic Cathedral in Stevenage for the enthronement of Bishop Angaelos as Coptic Orthodox Bishop of London;
- attending the High Sheriff's Justice Service at St Albans Abbey;
- Remembrance Service at the Bowling Green in the Old Town;
- Attending the 100th birthday celebrations of Stella Kestin;
- Going out and about with the Meals on Wheels Service;
- The Young People of the Year Awards and presenting an award at the Sports Awards;
- Attending the Big Switch On in the Town Centre.

The Mayor reminded Members of her Christmas Party on Monday 18 December and wished all a happy Christmas and peaceful New Year.

4. MAIN DEBATE - "WE ARE STEVENAGE YOUTH COUNCIL"

Council received a presentation from representatives from the Stevenage Youth Council including Santino de Freitas, Youth Mayor and Emma Chapman, Chair of the Youth Council.

Members congratulated Santino and Emma on their presentation and thanked all members of the Youth Council for their attendance and it was requested that the presentation be shared with all schools in Stevenage.

Members were pleased to note that Stevenage Borough Council was one of the few Councils in the country with an active Youth Council. Councillor Speller offered to facilitate links with the Scout and Guide groups he was involved with. Councillor Taylor stressed the importance for the County Council to involve the Stevenage Youth Council in any review undertaken on Youth provision in the County particularly in relation to mental health provision.

After a full debate, it was **RESOLVED** that this Council welcomes the participation of Stevenage Youth Council at Stevenage Borough Council meetings and supports their aspirations for improving the quality of life of young people across the town. This Council also urges Hertfordshire County Council to positively engage with young people in Stevenage and our Members / officers to inform their review of youth provision.

This review cannot result in a reduction in service to young people at a time when, perhaps more than ever before, they need advice and support to become skilled, self-sufficient, independent and responsible members of this community.

5. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS

None received

6. QUESTIONS FROM THE YOUTH COUNCIL

None received.

7. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None received.

8. LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S UPDATE

The Leader of the Opposition thanked Council Officers for the response he had received following the question he had raised at the last Council Meeting. He then enquired about the Housing Key Performance Indicators which continued to fall short of the required targets and asked how long it would take the Council to

improve the position.

In response, the Leader of the Council advised that the Executive was aware of the issues and that action was being taken to improve performance. Two new senior managers had recently joined the Council in this area and the Leader encouraged Councillor Fraser to meet with them to be briefed on how the improvements to the Service would be made.

Council then received updates on the following:

- Stevenage Business Grant Scheme
- East of England – Local Authority Challenge
- Walpole and Asquith Courts
- The Big Knock
- Health Summit
- Howard League Awards
- Community Safety Awareness
- Local Government Chronicle Awards
- Woolenwick School
- Co-Operative Neighbourhood Management Programme
- The Local Plan
- Regeneration
- Public Realm Improvements

The Leader thanked Members for their updates and requested that the Council's congratulations be recorded to the officers involved in the Local Authority Challenge who were placed second out of 22 councils taking part. Thanks were also given to Tina Benson, Town Centre Manager for her work on the Christmas Lights switch on and also bringing the Christmas market and a temporary ice rink to the Town.

9. NOTICE OF MOTIONS

Motion moved by Councillor Thomas

In moving the Motion, the Portfolio Holder for Housing Health and Older People asked that the Council's heartfelt sympathies for the victims and survivors of the Grenfell Tower tragedy be recorded. She informed the Council that a response had been received from Alok Sharma, Minister of State for Housing and Planning advising that the Government would not be funding the retro fitting of sprinklers to tower blocks as it was viewed as 'additional' safety works and not 'essential' safety works.

In seconding the Motion, the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration advised that it was important for all those in the public sector to consider the issue of saving money or saving lives. He confirmed that the Fire Service also recommended that all blocks of this type should be fitted with sprinkler systems.

An amendment was proposed by Councillor Fraser, seconded by Councillor Bibby

"That in the wake of the Grenfell Tower fire, we would want to do all we can to ensure our residents are safe and feel safe. The considerable steps we have

already taken in relation to fire safety have gone a long way towards that already but the fire service nationally continue to recommend the fitting of sprinkler systems.

The additional cost for fitting sprinkler systems, without Government support, will take much needed funds from our Housing Revenue Account which we are currently using to deliver against the urgent need for new council homes and to support our decent homes programme.

Therefore we wish to await the Grenfell Inquiry report before making any further decisions.”

Upon being put to the meeting the amendment was lost.

After a full debate, it was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED:**

That this Council requests that the Government urgently reconsider its decision not to give financial support to Stevenage Borough Council to fit sprinkler systems in our high rise flat blocks. In the wake of the Grenfell Tower fire, we would want to do all we can to ensure our residents are safe and feel safe. The considerable steps we have already taken in relation to fire safety have gone a long way towards that already but the fire service nationally continue to recommend the fitting of sprinkler systems.

The additional cost for fitting sprinkler systems, without Government support, will take much needed funds from our Housing Revenue Account which we are currently using to deliver against the urgent need for new council homes and to support our decent homes programme.

10. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO COMMITTEE CHAIRS/PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

None received.

11. 2017/2018 MID YEAR TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW

It was moved, seconded and RESOLVED:

1. That the 2017/18 Treasury Management Mid Year Review be approved.
2. That the latest approved countries for investment as listed in Appendix D to the report be approved.

12. AUDIT COMMITTEE - MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 21 September and 8 November are noted.

MAYOR