

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MINUTES

Date: Monday, 16 March 2020

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Shimkent Room, Daneshill House, Danestrete

Present: Councillors: Lin Martin-Haugh (Chair), Philip Bibby CC (Vice-Chair), Sandra Barr, Jim Brown, Laurie Chester, Michael Downing, Adam Mitchell CC, Robin Parker CC and Claire Parris.

Start / End Start Time: 6.00pm
Time: End Time: 7.25pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Michelle Gardner, Andy McGuinness, John Mead and Sarah Mead.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 12 AND 17 FEBRUARY 2020

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 12 and 17 February 2020 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

3 PART 1 DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE

The Committee considered the decisions on the following matters arising from the Executive meeting held on 11 March 2020:

Minutes of the Executive – 12 February 2020

Noted.

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny and Select Committees

Noted.

Damp and Condensation Policy

Members were pleased to note that following the Scrutiny Review on this issue, it was now clear as to the Council's responsibility as well as the onus on the tenant. It was also noted that the focus was now around managing properties and matching the appropriate tenants to those properties.

In response to a question, Officers advised that following the Business Unit Review, there were 8 tenancy advisors supported by Wardens to enforce the conditions of tenancy agreements. A review of the restructure would be undertaken in 6 months to monitor the staffing levels required.

Aids and Adaptations Service Policy

It was noted that the focus was now around managing properties and matching the appropriate tenants to those properties.

In response to a question, Officers advised that following the Business Unit Review, there were 8 tenancy advisors supported by Wardens to enforce the conditions of tenancy agreements. A review of the restructure would be undertaken in 6 months to monitor the staffing levels required.

Officers advised that other than sometimes experiencing some delay, the relationship between Stevenage Borough Council and Herts County Council was good in relation to aids and adaptation cases.

Variations of Tenancy Agreement and Conditions of Tenancy

It was noted that the reference to pets and other animals would be adapted to allow tenants to keep certain types of pets without needing to obtain permission.

In response to a question about smoking, officers advised that within the agreements, tenants were asked to refrain from smoking for two hours prior to a visit from Council officer. This provided the support for officers to rebook visits if necessary.

Officers clarified that the question relating to the sexuality of the tenant was included in the consultation questionnaire and not in the Tenancy Agreement itself.

Community Wealth Building (CWB)

A Member requested that the work undertaken in and by community centres should be linked into the work on CWB.

In relation to procurement rules, Officers clarified that each contract was agreed on an individual basis. Contract Standing Orders and refer to the inclusion of local companies but the rules around the tender assessment must be published in advance of the tender process.

Corporate Performance 2019/20 – Quarter 3

Officers advised that cases of absence due to coronavirus would be recorded separately from the generic sickness figures. Officers advised that the Council was following NJC advice regarding self-isolation and could allow staff to have the ability to work at home did require a level of trust in employees. It was acknowledged that there were groups of staff members who could not work at home due to the nature of

their jobs.

In response to a question regarding the rise in sickness figures since the introduction of the new reporting regime, Officers suggested that this could be as a result of past under reporting and recording.

In response to a question regarding recycling rates for the Town, Officers confirmed that Stevenage was similar to other urban areas but that a range of issues were being looked at as part of the waste strategy which was currently under review.

Officers agreed to look at the overall in way performance data was reported to see if it could be made clearer.

3rd Quarter Revenue Monitoring Report - General Fund and Housing Revenue Account 2019/20

In response to a question, officers confirmed that the reduction in Council Tax arrears was partly due to the late banding of new properties such as Park Place.

3rd Quarter Capital Monitoring Report - General Fund and Housing Revenue Account 2019/20

Noted.

Urgent Part I Business

Officers advised that a briefing note would be sent to all Members with an update on the current situation in respect of Coronavirus.

4 URGENT PART I DECISIONS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

None.

5 OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2020-21

The Scrutiny Officer submitted a report requesting the Committee to agree the Work Programme for the Committee for the new Municipal Year.

Following discussion it was agreed that the Council's response to the Coronavirus would be a future topic to scrutinise.

In relation to the review of the Scrutiny process, it was agreed that this would carry over to the new Municipal year as a number of committee meetings had now been cancelled due to the coronavirus situation. Officers advised that due to the exceptional circumstances the Council was having to work in it might be that committees would have to work differently in the near future.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (1) That the Council's response to the Coronavirus be a future topic to scrutinise;
- (2) That further details of what should be included in the Committee's work plan be considered at the next meeting of the Committee in the new Municipal Year.

6 **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

None.

7 **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.

8 **PART II MINUTES - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 12 FEBRUARY 2020**

Noted.

9 **PART II DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II decisions of the Executive held on 12 February 2020 be noted subject to Councillor Mitchell's name being removed from the second paragraph in Item 4.

10 **URGENT PART II DECISIONS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

None.

11 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR