

**STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**MINUTES**

Date: Monday, 14 June 2021

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

**Present:** Councillors: Lin Martin-Haugh (Chair), Myla Arceno, Adrian Brown, Alex Farquharson, Chris Howells, Wendy Kerby, Sarah Mead, Robin Parker CC, Claire Parris, Loraine Rossati and Simon Speller.

**Start / End** Start Time: 6:00 PM

**Time:** End Time: 7.48 PM

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

Apologies were received from Councillors Michael Downing and Philip Bibby.

There were no declarations of interest.

**2 MINUTES - 17 MARCH 2021**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Committee meeting held on Wednesday 17 March 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**3 TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Committee noted the Terms of Reference.

**4 PART I DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE**

**2. Minutes of the Executive 10 March 2021**

Noted.

**3. Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Select Committee**

Noted.

**4. Covid19 Update**

The Strategic Director (RP) advised that he provided an update on the latest Covid19 position at the Executive meeting held on Wednesday 9 March 2021. He provided the following key updates to Members.

- Epidemiology statistics were ward-related and did not indicate the socio-

economic or employment status of individuals;

- Stevenage was a little below the average for vaccination rate across Hertfordshire;
- Vaccine hesitancy; lower take up of the vaccines in some communities, linked to deprived areas;
- Hertfordshire County Council was working to set up vaccination walk- in centres without prior appointments subject to eligibility;
- Council was working on new ways of working, further information would be provided in the next Executive meeting.
- The Business Relationship Manager to provide Members with details of the status of 800 individuals who were no longer on furlough, in terms of the number of those who had return to their original jobs and the number of those who were no longer employed.

Strategic Director (RP) advised on vaccine hesitancy - low income residents were concerned about the impact of the vaccine, in case they developed symptoms and would not be able to go to work.

Members asked numerous questions and received the following comments:

- Members would be provided with a briefing note with details of relevant phone numbers of organisations offering help to those with suicidal tendencies;
- Vaccine hesitancy was considered to be a major issue; further work would be needed to tackle the issue.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Committee noted the report.

## **5. Co-operative Tenant and Resident involvement Strategy**

The Committee was briefed that the Executive considered a report in respect of a proposed new arrangement for ensuring that SBC tenants and residents have a range of opportunities to participate in the management of their homes and neighbourhoods, and building on the development of the Co-operative Neighbourhood Operating Model.

The Co-operative Neighbourhood Manager presented the report in regards to Co-operative Tenant and Resident Involvement Strategy. She informed Members on the revised participation and engagement approach for tenants and residents living in homes rented or leased from the Council. She explained that the Housing Management Advisory Board would be consulted on the new proposal by way of a workshop session. The consultation exercise would put the residents' views first.

Members discussed the new co-operative customer scrutiny model for housing function, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report on the Executive agenda.

In response to a series of questions, The Assistant Director (RG) and the Co-operative Neighbourhood Manager provided the following response:

- There would be a plan for pro-active scrutiny options to engage with residents in the wider community.
- Engagement with residents could be through contact with staff in Housing, Customer Services and Communities and Neighbourhoods teams, pop up events and Member meetings. Essential to ensure that every contact is counted as these types of participation are equally important to more formal ones.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Co-operative Tenant and Resident Strategy be noted.

## **6. Leisure Contract Work Programme**

The Committee was briefed that the Executive received a report on Leisure Contract Work Programme. Members were advised on the current arrangement that the Council had in place with the Stevenage Leisure Limited (SLL) since its formation in 1998, the current contract is due to end in 2023.

The following key updates were provided to the Committee:

- A proposed work programme to enable the Council to determine the strategic delivery of its leisure and cultural offer post March 2023;
- A number of leisure facilities are included in the current leisure contract. In respect of the project to create a new leisure and sport facility, part funded by the Town Deal, would look to bring wet and dry facilities together on one site;
- The project would look into leisure and cultural provision across the Borough to involve as many sports and arts organisations as possible in the primary stage.

Members were informed that the review into SLL would look at the variety of options available, and would provide a summary of those options to the Executive in terms of their impact on finance and service delivery. The Council would also hold a Stakeholders summit to assess future aspirations for sport and leisure in Stevenage.

It was **RESOLVED** that the progression of the Leisure Contract Work Programme be noted.

## **7. Corporate Performance – 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2020/21**

The Strategic Director (TP) presented a report in relation to the Corporate Performance. The report gave a review of the Council's priorities and themes performance for 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter of 2020/21.

The Strategic Directors (TP & CF) provided the following key updates in response to Member questions:

- Covid19 impacted the savings for the Council;
- The impact of the Brexit on the community;
- Further development of the website was planned, a Customer Testing Panel would be established;

Members raised concerns about IT infrastructure in particular the website, in response to a series of questions, the Strategic Director (TP) advised that there were a number of IT challenges, that a comprehensive upgrade plan was in place and the urgency of completing the works to provide a strong foundation. The Council's website was replaced last year, and it was now accessibility compliant. He assured Members that IT Officers were currently working on the delivery of the ICT improvement programme and an update would be provided to Members in the weeks ahead.

In response to a question from a Member regarding food inspection performance, the Strategic Director (TP) advised the Council's Environmental Health Team was at the forefront since the start of the pandemic undertaking a wide range of additional duties such as local test and trace activities and local outbreak management. As with other Councils, national guidance had been to focus on these Covid-19 related activities ahead of other core duties such as food inspections, but national guidance was now in place for all Councils to restore such services.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Corporate Performance for Quarter 4 2020/21 be noted.

## 5 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2021-22**

The Committee received a suggested Work Programme and agenda planning for the future meetings. The Work Programme was a flexible working document that was subject to change as new issues arose. Members were encouraged to suggest items to be included in the Work Programme at any time.

The Scrutiny Officer outlined the following key issues that would be discussed at the future meetings:

- IT outage incidents (to remain on the Work Programme pending the output from a proposed all Members briefing seminar).
- Resident and Tenant Survey (to be directed by the Assistant Director, Community)
- Review of the Council's Scrutiny Arrangements ( to receive the Executive Member proposal at the July meeting)
- General Fund Budget and Council Tax Setting
- Transformation Programme

The Portfolio Holder Advisory Group (PHAG) on the Corporate Procurement Strategy Review to be withdrawn from the Work Programme.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Work Programme be noted.

6 **ACTION TRACKER**

The Scrutiny Officer presented the Action Tracker to the Committee. The Action Tracker contained useful information to track the progress of items that the Committee had previously scrutinised.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Action Tracker be noted.

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

None.

8 **URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

**Government Levelling Up Fund**

The Strategic Director (TP) advised that the Government had allocated £4.8 billion nationally in respect of the Levelling up Fund. He informed Members that the Council would submit a bid by June 2021, and Officers would be working closely with the Stevenage Development Board to provide a compelling case.

The Strategic Director (TP) explained that as part of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations in 2022, the Queen would be creating a number of new cities. He advised that it would be an opportunity for the Council to put in an application for the City Status and the Executive had requested Officers identify how the bid process operates, noting the strong connections between the New Town and the Monarch's reign.

Members offered comments on the potential for an application for a city status and asked what direct benefits could be derived from such as bid. An Officer indicated further information would be needed but it was anticipated a successful bid would have a positive reputational impact rather than financial. Some Members highlighted that Stevenage had a distinct heritage, links to the Garden City movement, and different views on the size and scale of the town.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Government Levelling up Fund and the bid process for a city status be noted.

9 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

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 1-7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as amended by Local Government (Access to information) (Variation) Order 2006.

2. That Members considered the reasons for the following reports being in Part II and determined that the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighed the public interest in disclosure.

10 **PART II DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE**

**DANESTRETE ROUNDABOUT SITE DISPOSAL**

The Committee considered the resolutions of the Executive in respect of a report regarding the Danestrete Roundabout site disposal.

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

None.

12 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

**CHAIR**