

Appendix C

Follow up questions with the Leader and Executive Portfolio Holder for, Economy, Enterprise and Transport, Cllr Lloyd Briscoe

As part of its review of the economic impact of Covid-19 the E&E Select Committee has stated that they wish to invite the Leader and Councillor Briscoe to revisit the issues and questions touched upon when they were interviewed in January 2021. The following questions are based on the responses provided and discussion at the time:

- (i) What is the economic position of the Council now (Summer 2021) due to Covid-19?
- (ii) In terms of those who had been labelled as “low skilled” in academic qualifications but potentially “highly skilled” in other ways, what work has WENTA and the BTC been doing to address this cohort (it was identified that both WENTA and BTC would be addressing this)?
- (iii) What progress has the Community Reassurance Cell had with drawing up its action plan to address the effects of the pandemic on a number of groups including the low income, the young, people with disabilities and BAME communities?
- (iv) When the E&E Select Committee met with you in January it was acknowledged about the work that various departments at the Council such as Revenue and Benefits and Planning & Regulation, Business Support are doing in terms of business support with access to government grants and advice and the work of Environmental Health to support retail and with contact tracing, and Communities officers as Covid-19 Marshals, and various SBC officers as Vaccine Centre Marshals, not to mention all of the flexibility and work that many Members and officers are doing to tackle the pandemic and support our community. Is it possible to say how many officers are still directly engaged in front line duties supporting the Council’s response to the pandemic?
- (v) Members were concerned back in January about the potentially high numbers of redundancies that could be seen in Hertfordshire as a result of the pandemic, can you share the latest figures for redundancies now that the furlough scheme is coming to an end and how confident are you about the future direction of the local economy in Stevenage?
- (vi) In terms of supporting our local business community what can the Council and its partners do to make Stevenage a business friendly destination? And is there anything that the Council and its partners can do to help create employment?
- (vii) What lessons have been learnt about the Council's ability to respond to events like this, particularly given that there is potential for pandemics to become a recurring feature of life in the future? Are you still confident about the Council’s long term resilience to keep responding to the Covid-19 pandemic as it stretches into two years?