

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 9 February 2022

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete

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

Start / End Time: Start Time: 6.00pm
End Time: 7.03pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Phil Bibby, Michael Downing and Claire Parris.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 PART I DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE

- 2. Towns Fund Business Case – New Towns Heritage Centre and**
- 3. Towns Fund Business Case – Sport and Leisure Hub**

The Committee noted the support of the Executive to both the Heritage Centre and the Sports and Leisure Hub Towns Fund Business Cases.

The following questions/comments were made by Members:

- In response to a question, Officers confirmed that there were 10 projects coming forward in 9 Business Cases. These would be submitted to four separate Executive meetings followed by Overview and Scrutiny Committees for approval. It was noted that there was strong support for the Business Cases from the Stevenage Development Board.
- Officers advised that the Digital Connectivity Study was not large enough to justify its own Business Case and would likely form part of the Transport Connectivity Business Case although this was yet to be confirmed.
- It was noted that in accordance with Government requirements, the MP for Stevenage had received an open invitation to attend all meetings of the Stevenage Development Board although he had not yet attended any meetings.
- In response to a question about the possible inclusion of an Aerospace exhibition in the new Museum, Officers advised that no firm details had

been confirmed regarding the scope or what exhibitions should be included in the Museum at this stage. The report did set out examples but this was not an exhaustive list. The Community Select Committee had carried out an initial piece of work around New Towns Heritage Centre, incorporating a new museum and their recommendations had been incorporated into the business case and would be involved in the final consideration of the curation and the design and profile of the Museum.

- A question was asked regarding the funding for the project. It was confirmed that £936k would be funded by the Council although discussions would be held with external stakeholders for alternative funding bids. The term 'match funding' related to the amount of funding required to deliver the project separate, and not equal to, the amount of grant funding being offered by the Government.
- Officers confirmed that there had been Member involvement in the process for both Business Cases from the relevant Portfolio Holders prior to submission to Executive. In complying with Government requirements the Leader and Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration were Members of the Development Board and the Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People, Leisure and Culture has been involved in the Leisure and Culture Theme Board considering the Heritage Centre. All Business Cases would be subject to further Member involvement.
- Members agreed the importance of the Business Cases being informed by the good policy development work of the Select Committees and noted the engagement that had taken place to help inform the Heritage Centre Business Case.
- All Business Cases would be through the approval process by 24 March 2022. It was noted that work on some of the Business Cases would start imminently but there would be others where it would be 4 to 5 years before development began.

4. Urgent Part I Business – Levelling Up White Paper

The Committee note the statement made at the Executive in relation to the Levelling Up White Paper.

The following comments were made by Members:

- It appeared that all the Levelling Up Funds from Central Government had been allocated to Towns in the North of England and Stevenage and Hertfordshire as a whole had missed out.
- Officers advised that Stevenage had secured money through the Towns Fund Deal. In terms of the Levelling Up Funding Scheme, Stevenage had been classed as a Category 3 Town (lowest priority) as a result of factors such as transport accessibility/travel to work/skills and pay levels compared to rural towns. Officers agreed to circulate to members the full category levels. It was noted that very few Category 3 Towns had been successful in securing any funding through the Levelling Up Fund. Officers advised that feedback had been sought

from the Government although there would be an opportunity to submit further Bids in Rounds 2 and 3 of the Fund.

- Members were concerned to hear that a letter of support from the local MP had not been received so could not form part of the Council's bid. Officers advised that they hoped that the MP would be supportive of future bids. Regular meetings were held between the Chief Executive and the MP and this would be discussed at these meetings.
- Members asked about other towns similar to Stevenage that had submitted bids. Officers advised that some had also received funding through the Towns Fund Scheme and further details would be made known to Members.
- In response to a question regarding Local Authority Reorganisation and whether this was a factor in receiving funding, Officers advised that the White Paper had set out a series of powers and freedoms available to Local Authorities but it was unclear as to the extent of the funding available for those authorities without an elected Mayor. Further clarification was awaited.

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

None.

4 **URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

None.

5 **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 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.

6 **PART II DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE**

6. **Leisure Management Contract – Procurement Strategy**

Members noted the Part II Decisions related to the Procurement Strategy for the Leisure Management Contract.

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

None.

8 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR