

# Public Document Pack



## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**Date: Thursday, 13 December 2018**

**Time: 6.00pm,**

**Location: Shimkent Room - Daneshill House, Danestrete**

**Contact: Lisa Jerome 01438 242203**

Members: Councillors: L Martin-Haugh (Chair), P Bibby CC (Vice-Chair), S Barr, J Brown, M Downing, J Fraser, J Hanafin, ME Gardner, L Kelly, J Mead, S Mead, A Mitchell CC, R Parker CC and S-J Potter

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## AGENDA

### PART 1

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

**2. MINUTES - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 14 NOVEMBER 2018**

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (sitting as a Select Committee) held on 14 November 2018.

Minutes attached

Pages 5 – 10

**3. MINUTES - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 26 NOVEMBER 2018**

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 26 November 2018.

Minutes attached

Pages 11 – 14

**4. PART I DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE**

To consider the following Part 1 Decisions of the Executive taken on 12 December 2018.

Executive Agenda Item

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| 2. | Minutes of the Executive – 12 December 2018                          | 5  |
| 3. | Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Select Committees | 13 |

4.	Draft Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Rent Setting and Budget Report	29
5.	Town Centre Regeneration Update	49
6.	Corporate Performance for quarter 2 2018/19	65

Notice of Decisions to follow.

PLEASE BRING YOUR AGENDA AND REPORTS FOR THE EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON 12 DECEMBER 2018.

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

None.

**6. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

To consider the following motions –

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 involve 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 consider the reasons for the following reports being in Part II and determine whether or not maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

**7. PART II MINUTES - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 26 NOVEMBER 2018**

To approve as a correct record the Part II Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 26 November 2018.

Minutes attached

**8. PART II DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE**

To consider the following Part II decisions of the Executive taken on 12 December 2018.

Executive Agenda Item	Page No.
9. Part II Minutes of the Executive – 21 November 2018	103
10. West of Stevenage Development	107

Notice of Decisions to follow.

PLEASE BRING YOUR AGENDA AND REPORTS FOR THE EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON 21 NOVEMBER 2018.

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

None.

**10. URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

To consider any Part II business accepted by the Chair as urgent.

Agenda Published 5 December 2018

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## STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

### OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - SITTING AS A SELECT COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 14 November 2018

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Autun Room - Daneshill House, Danestrete

**Present:** Councillors: Lin Martin-Haugh (Chair), Sandra Barr, Jim Brown, Michael Downing, Michelle Gardner, Lizzy Kelly, Sarah Mead, Adam Mitchell CC, Robin Parker CC and Sarah-Jane Potter

**Start / End Time:** Start Time: 6.00pm  
End Time: 8.05pm

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

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs P Bibby CC, J Fraser and J Mead.

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 2 **MINUTES**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 08 October 2018 are approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

#### 3 **REVIEW OF SBC SICKNESS MANAGEMENT**

The Chair welcomed Matthew Scrimshire, the FirstCare Business Development Manager to the meeting. The Business Development Manager had been invited to provide an update on the proposed Absence Management Contract.

FirstCare is an Absence Management Solutions provider that was established in 2004. The company has a staff compliment of about 180 and it operates from a base in Watford. FirstCare has another office in Waterloo and it also has remote working arrangements. FirstCare provides a specialised phone triage service for 120 clients including 15 local authorities. 60% of the company's clients are public sector organisations. FC works with 15 local authorities. The provider employs one doctor and nurses of Band 6 grade and above. The service provider also works with 12 NHS Trusts. The robust service had been signed off by Chelsea and Westminster NHS Foundation Trust.

The service was procured via the Watford Borough Council Procurement Framework Agreement. The Framework Agreement enables local authorities to procure the Absence Management Service without going to tender. The Agreement sets the cost of the service to £3.30 per employee per month.

The objectives of FirstCare Absence Management Solutions are to support employees, minimise absence and promote safe return to work. All initial calls to the service are handled by administration (non-clinical) staff who will direct callers/employees to relevant nurses for clinical advice.

FirstCare received about 1 million calls in 2017. One in 436 of calls received involve life-threatening conditions. The provider has handled 215 urgent calls so far this year including seven (7) unintentional overdoses, 28 suicidal ideation calls and 44 cardiac/chest pain calls. It is worth noting that 56% of red flag calls were received between 6.00pm and 9.00am. Statistics from FirstCare clients indicate that early intervention significantly contributes to reduction in sickness levels. A bus operator had reduced sickness absence following advice from FirstCare to adjust shift patterns for drivers. Data analysis had revealed a link between musculoskeletal disorders and the operator's working patterns.

The Business Development Manager informed the Committee that:

- FirstCare would be the first point of contact for officers. FirstCare non-clinical staff would record employee details and then transfer the call to a nurse. The provider's call centres operate the entire 24 hours of the day and seven days of the week (24/7).
- An email or text notification would be sent to the employee's line manager or other nominated Council officer within five minutes of the employee's first call to FirstCare.
- FirstCare would provide regular updates regarding estimated duration of absence
- Medical details will be shared only in cases of positive consent by the employee

The Committee also considered the Sickness Absence Report for the period 1 October 2017 to 30 September 2018. The report highlighted the overall trend, organisational changes, comparison with national and local absence trends, long and short term absence, cost of sickness absence, reasons for sickness absence and the support available to employees. It was reported that on average 50% of staff did not take time off for sickness.

Members were informed that:

- The Executive had been monitoring sickness levels for a long time. The introduction of the FirstCare service was part of the Council's sickness absence management strategy. SBC will still maintain control over sickness management
- The FirstCare service was aimed at delivering safe and speedy recovery
- FirstCare will facilitate holistic analysis of sickness absence and improve sickness management
- The benefits of the service will be assessed via contract monitoring procedures. Regular feedback from managers will be used for data analysis. Absence levels will be tracked at quarterly meetings of the Executive and at SLT
- SBC had opted for a one year contract with an option to extend if contract

- performance was satisfactory
- Management culture at SBC supports safe return to work. Even with the introduction of FirstCare service, managers and officers would still be expected to discuss health and safety issues during regular scheduled appraisal meetings.
- Return to Work interviews were the perfect forum for constructive discussions about health and safety issues
- The introduction of FirstCare service will not stop managers from contacting employees who are off sick
- Line Managers will still be able to use the medical suspension option
- The service was scheduled to be introduced during the final quarter of the current financial year

It was confirmed that elective procedures such as routine dental and eye checks were not included in the scope of the SBC Contract with FirstCare. However, if requested, FirstCare would provide advice on routine procedures.

With regard to mental health, Members were informed that statistics showed that 50% of employees were not comfortable discussing mental Health issues with their managers. Even though there was an increase in mental health issues, employees were not fully utilising available resources. FirstCare had specialist nurses who provided unbiased mental health support. Following the intervention of FirstCare, Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council recorded a 64% mental health absence reduction. The Chief Executive confirmed that SBC had a genuine commitment to act on mental health issues. The Council had signed the “Time to Change” pledge. By signing the “Time to Change” pledge, the Council was demonstrating a commitment to changing how staff think and act about mental health in the workplace and supporting employees who are facing these problems. Mental health champions are part of the Council’s mental health support structure. A list of trained mental health counsellors was available on request.

The Waste Operations Manager provided an updated on sickness management for one of the Stevenage Direct Services teams. Stevenage Direct Services had performed below target between October 2017 and September 2018. Members were informed that the Waste Operations team holds regular absence workshops. It was reported that 39 absence cases had been reviewed in the past year with the aim of supporting staff and identify any underlying issues. The impact of staff absence on team cohesion was highlighted at team meetings. Managers followed up on long-term absence cases. Staff returning from long-term absence were offered alternative duties and flexible working. Peak absence was recorded in the summer. During this period, operatives were supplied with extra bottles of water and shift patterns were adjusted so as to minimise exposure to extreme heat conditions.

Corporate Services and Transformation was one of the Business Units that had performed above target during the period under review. The Business Improvement Manager informed the Committee that low sickness absence levels were partly due to the management practice of giving officers as much autonomy as is possible to deliver projects. In some cases, officers opted to work from home or have a shorter working day so as to aid recovery. The Business Improvement Manager confirmed that officers were not under pressure to substitute annual leave days for sickness

absence. It was also indicated that risk assessments and reasonable adjustments were made for employees with chronic conditions and those returning from long-term absence.

Members questioned whether the introduction of a third-party absence management service could potentially put pressure on employees to return to work before full recovery or discourage employees from reporting sickness. In response to a question about raising awareness about the service, the Senior HR Officer informed the Committee that there were plans to use promotional videos and other publicity materials. There were plans to enlist the assistance of current SBC employees who had used the service at Stevenage Homes. The Executive Portfolio Holder for Resources confirmed that unions had been consulted on the engagement of a third-party absence management provider. Members sought clarification on projections for reduction in sickness absence after the engagement of FirstCare. Members were reassured that the Council had put in place a number of measures to reduce sickness absence levels over the past ten years. It was highlighted that cuts to local government funding, the salary freeze and restructuring of Council Business Units had a bearing on sickness absence figures. Members agreed that staff should be told how much they are valued. The Committee requested more details about current FirstCare clients, employee assistance programme, current SBC sickness and volunteering policies. Members also sought to interview union representatives and management officers from Customer Services and Housing Investment at a further Sickness Management review meeting.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee formulated the following recommendations:

1. That a further meeting to consider other aspects of the review be arranged
2. That management officers from Customer Services and Housing Investment be invited to the next SBC Sickness Management review meeting
3. That union representatives be invited to the further Sickness Management review meeting
4. That data collected for FirstCare's East of England clients be shared with the Committee
5. That officers clarify the projections for reduction in sickness absence after the engagement of the third-party sickness absence provider (FirstCare)
6. That the "Time to Change" pledge be circulated to Members
7. That the SBC Volunteering Policy be submitted to the Committee
8. That the current and revised Sickness Policy (when available) be submitted to the Committee
9. That details of the employee assistance programme be submitted to the Committee



4 **URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

None.

5 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Not required.

6 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

**CHAIR**

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STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Monday, 26 November 2018

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Shimkent Room - Daneshill House, Danestrete

**Present:** Councillors: Lin Martin-Haugh (Chair) (Chair), Philip Bibby CC (Vice-Chair) (Vice Chair), Sandra Barr, Jim Brown, Michael Downing, Jody Hanafin, Michelle Gardner, Lizzy Kelly, John Mead, Sarah Mead, Adam Mitchell CC, Robin Parker CC and Sarah-Jane Potter

**Start / End Time:** Start Time: 6.00pm  
End Time: 8.25pm

### 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor James Fraser.

Councillor Michael Downing declared an interest in Agenda Item 2.8 – Smart Choices, Better Places: A Transport Strategy for Stevenage as Chair of the Bus User Group in Stevenage (BUGS).

### 2 PART 1 DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE

This report had not been circulated to Members five clear days before the meeting nor had it been made available for public inspection. The Chair determined however that given the short time left before the end of the call-in period on 30 November it be considered on this occasion.

#### **Minutes – Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Select Committees**

The Committee noted the comments of the Executive.

#### **Housing Revenue Account Medium Term Financial Strategy (2018/19 – 2022/23) and Business Plan Update**

The Chief Executive gave a presentation to the Committee on the key aspects of the Housing Revenue Account 2018/19 – 2022/23.

In response to a question, the Chief Executive advised that although Government policies would change over the time, the 30 year plan was necessary from a financial modelling perspective given the need to plan for matters such as product lifecycle replacement (from decent homes works to the replacement of roofs etc.) and new housing schemes. He confirmed that this was best practice rather than a legal requirement.

A question was asked regarding the recharge costs for leaseholders as a result of the Major Refurbishment Contract (MRC) for the Flat Blocks in the Town. Officers advised that calculations were being prepared and that estimates of the recharges would be made known to the leaseholders but would be dependent on the works required to their individual flat blocks. On average the estimated recharge would be a 10<sup>th</sup> of the cost of the works. The costs of retro fitting sprinklers would not be recovered from the leaseholders.

It was noted that the Council would no longer be limited to the borrowing cap that existed now but that the Council would have to be able to finance any debt it accrued.

### **2018/19 Mid-Year Treasury Management Review**

The Chief Executive updated members on the Treasury Management activities and the effectiveness of the Treasury Management and Investment Strategy for 2018/19.

Members were pleased to note the change in the way of reporting on the level of reserves held by the Council and asked that this be used in all public documents in future as it was much clearer to understand.

In response to questions, the Chief Executive confirmed that all Investments detailed in Appendix B to the report were in Sterling. He also agreed to ask the Assistant Director (Finance and Estates) to confirm details of the Broker used by the Council and how much the Council spent on an annual basis on debt servicing the Council's portfolio.

### **Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)**

The Planning Policy Manager informed Members of the key outcomes of the public consultation on the draft SCI.

It was noted that seven responses had been received by the Council mainly with general comments. A summary of the responses were provided for Members. Minor amendments had been made to the SCI as a result of the responses in relation to rights of appeal and the Local Government Ombudsman.

Members expressed disappointment with the level of responses but it was agreed that it was difficult to raise public interest if the subject did not personally affect them.

In response to a question, officers agreed to send out individual replies to those who had responded to the consultation.

### **Community Centres Review – Direction of Travel Report**

The Community Development Manager reported on the first stage of the review of Council owned community centres operating across the Town.

Members were keen that the emphasis of the review should be to work co-operatively with the community associations.

The officer confirmed that the consultation process would be by way of public consultation with local groups of interest, roadshows and the Youth Council. 50% of the consultation events would take place in the evening to seek to engage as many local people and organisations as possible. The consultation events would be publicised in a range of ways including leaflet drops and social media. Consideration would also be given to publicising the consultation programme via the Chronicle and in the local press.

It was confirmed that the local ward Councillors would be included in any part of the review affecting their areas.

### **Smart Choices, Better Places: A Transport Strategy for Stevenage**

Members were provided with an update on progress made in preparing a Transport Strategy for Stevenage.

It was noted that there would be a change in title of the Strategy which would be agreed by the Leader and the Portfolio Holder for Economy, Enterprise and Transport.

Members were pleased that the Strategy would soon be available and hoped that the issues raised relating to the state of the roads, footpaths and underpasses and the status of cycleways would be addressed. Mobility scooter access was also an issue which would be included in the review.

It was also noted that individual responses from consultees would be responded to.

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

None.

### **4 URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

#### **Stevenage Local Plan**

The Strategic Director advised that, through previous correspondence, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) had stated that a decision would be taken in respect of the holding direction on the Stevenage Local Plan by 13 November 2018. However, as at 26 November 2018, no written response had been provided by the MHCLG and the holding direction remained in effect. Stevenage Borough Council officers had maintained regular contact with the MHCLG over recent weeks, but no decision had been formally taken on this matter by the Secretary of State.

Accordingly, a letter had been despatched to the MCHLG demanding an urgent face to face meeting with the Secretary of State to seek to positively resolve this matter. The Council had requested a response by no later than 30 November 2018 to avoid the need for more formal legal routes to be considered.

5 **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 Schedule 12A of the Act, as amended by SI 2006 No. 88.
2. That having considered the reasons for the following items 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**

This report had not been circulated to Members five clear days before the meeting nor had it been made available for public inspection. The Chair determined however that given the short time left before the end of the call-in period on 30 November 2018 it be considered on this occasion.

Members asked a number of detailed questions about the report which were answered by officers.

It was **RESOLVED** that the following Part II decisions of the Executive be noted:

- Part II Decisions of the Executive – 3 October 2018
- Business Technology Centre Management Contract 2019 – 24
- Financial Security Options 2019/20 – 2021/22

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

None.

8 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

**CHAIR**