

Public Document Pack



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: Tuesday, 11 June 2024

Time: 6.00pm,

Location: Council Chamber - Daneshill House, Danestrete

Contact: Alex Marsh (01438) 242587

committees@stevenage.gov.uk

Members: Councillors: L Martin-Haugh (Chair), R Parker CC (Vice-Chair), P Bibby CC, M Arceno, S Booth, R Broom, F Chowdhury, P Clark, L Guy, S Mead, T Plater, C Roopchand, C Veres and A Wells

AGENDA

PART 1

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 19 March 2024.

3 – 8

3. TERMS OF REFERENCE

To note the Terms of Reference as agreed at Annual Council on 22 May 2024.

9 – 10

4. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25

To consider the Committee's Work Programme for 2024/25.

11 – 16

5. PART I DECISIONS OF THE CABINET

To consider the following Part I Decisions of the Cabinet taken on 5 June 2024:

2. MINUTES - 13 MARCH 2024

3. MINUTES OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY AND SELECT COMMITTEES

4. LOCAL PLAN REVIEW AND REVISED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

5. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE - QUARTER 4 2023/24

6. URGENT PART I BUSINESS

Notice of Decisions to follow.

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

To consider any urgent Part I Decisions authorised by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

7. URGENT PART I BUSINESS

To consider any Part I business accepted by the Chair as urgent

8. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

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.

9. PART II DECISIONS OF THE CABINET

To consider the following Part II Decisions of the Cabinet taken on 5 June 2024:

8. IMPROVEMENT TO ACCESS LINKS BETWEEN OLD AND NEW TOWN

9. COUNCIL TAX AND SUNDRY DEBT WRITE OFFS GREATER THAN £10,000

Notice of Decisions to follow.

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

To consider any urgent Part II Decisions authorised by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

11. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

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

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Tuesday, 19 March 2024

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

Present: Councillors: Lin Martin-Haugh (Chair) (Chair), Philip Bibby CC (Vice-Chair) (Vice Chair), Stephen Booth, Rob Broom, Jim Brown, Forhad Chowdhury, Michael Downing, Bret Facey, Conor McGrath, Sarah Mead, Margaret Notley, Robin Parker CC and Carolina Veres

Start / End Time: Start Time: 6.00pm
End Time: 8.08pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Anne Wells.

2 MINUTES - 13 FEBRUARY 2024

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 13 February be approved as a correct record subject to the following changes:

- Item 3 (4) in relation to STEM, a Member commented that the minutes should reflect the concern that other subjects had been missed and potentially blurred academic subjects with employment routes.
- Item 5 EQIA – a Member asked that in relation to ethnicity and diversity, the minute reference to ‘other groups’ to be removed.

3 PART I DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE

The Committee considered the following Part I Decisions of the Executive taken on 13 March 2024.

- **Minutes – 7 February 2024**

The Minutes of the Executive on 7 February 2024 were **NOTED**.

- **Minutes of Overview and Scrutiny Committee & Select Committees**

The Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee & Select Committees were **NOTED**.

• **Regeneration Programme delivery update**

The Committee received the update and raised the following queries:

- Concern was expressed regarding artist impressions of new developments that could create the wrong impression. The Officer stated they would take this concern into consideration for future developments.
- Councillors accepted the need for flats in the town centre but a Member raised concerns about the perceived lack of car parking in the area. The Officer stated there was parking capacity in the town centre, the new multi storey car park at the station, the existing multi storey car park in the town centre and other car parks which always had spaces available.
- A Member commented about importance of quality and engaging public realm, underpasses artwork, public art and planting. The Officer agreed the need to create something that the people wanted to live and work in and would be working with developers to ensure this.
- It was stated that the Executive Portfolio Holder has committed that the Gordon Craig Theatre would stay in its current location unless there was a better new theatre offer in the Town. The Strategic Director suggested that the Community Select Committee could be engaged in discussions regarding what future uses there could be for the current Sports and Leisure Centre building.
- Following a request from a Member, Officers agreed that the deadline for the photography competition could be extended.
- Councillors were concerned regarding the significant dip in Stevenage pupils' attainment at Key Stage 2. This along with the Skills Strategy was a subject to be considered by the Environment and Economy Select Committee.

• **Housing Consumer Standards – Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023:**

The Committee received the report from Officers and raised the following queries:

- Councillors were concerned regarding the number of complaints that had been raised by residents.
- Members suggested that a new Housing Working Group should be established including representatives from the minority groups, which was supported by the Committee.
- Councillors queried how the Council would capture the experience of tenants. It was explained that a range of methods would be in place to listen to tenants and a summary report would be taken to the Executive on a quarterly basis and then onto Overview and Scrutiny for consideration.

- The Officer explained the new inspection regime. Once the Regulator had completed their analysis, a grade would be given to each Council or Registered Social Landlord. The inspection would be carried out including early scoping and guidance such as access to existing reports and data, a desk top exercise, risk-based inspection, and the anticipation for 2 to 3 days working with Officers and Members as the Regulator develops their report and conclusion.
- Councillors queried if the grading process will be similar to Ofsted and if it would be investigated on a regular basis. The Strategic Director stated that the introduction of the new regulations does have positive elements, aiming to ensure multiple needs were being addressed, but that there will be a time of transition to the new regime.
- The Officer explained that the first round of results would be received in July or August and officers would consult those authorities in first tranche to learn from them and this would be shared with Councillors.

• **Corporate Performance – Quarter 3 2023/24:**

The Committee received the report and raised the following queries:

- Members were informed that a review of voids had been undertaken by the Community Select Committee resulting in an improvement plan, and several steps have been taken with specialist contractors.
- It was noted that performance clinics had been held, including the Portfolio Holder for Housing, to consider complaints and challenges around repairs. Officers believed there had been improvement. Members advised that repairs were of real importance for the public, but through the work programme they would also like to look at improving complaints handling overall. Officers stated that a new complaints policy and a reasonable adjustment policy would be in place in due course.
- Officers also explained that taken in context, the number of complaints on repairs was a low number and that a new Assistant Director had been appointed to get services working together efficiently; Member feedback was always welcome.
- Councillors questioned why SBC had the lowest numbers in the area in terms of prosecutions towards fly tipping. The Officer explained that SBC worked with the perpetrators to educate and inform to try to avoid prosecution and the Strategic Director agreed to circulate a position statement regarding fly tipping. The Chair asked if it was possible to receive this update with the Minutes for the meeting.
- In relation to the percentage of success SBC had with the way fly tipping was dealt with, it was explained that repeat offenders are prosecuted but generally the approach was successful. It was stated fly tipping was a high priority and could be looked at as part of the Environment and Economy Select Committee's work programme.
- The Committee questioned whether they could see the list of void properties. The Officer stated that SBC did not publish the list as they did not want

squatters, but details of void properties were available through the choice based letting system.

- The Officer agreed to supply Members with the details of properties that were included in the Major Refurbishment Programme.
- In response to a question, officers advised that although SBC were still struggling to recruit trade persons, this was a national issue. Apprenticeships were a way forward, but consideration was needed to ensure there was continuity following the apprenticeship. The Council was also considering establishing in house workforce.

4 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2024-25**

The Scrutiny Officer presented the proposed Scrutiny Work Programme for the Committee for the new Municipal Year from a list of suggested possible work programme items by Members.

Following consideration of the replies received to a survey gauging views of Members, the following areas were identified to be included in the work programme for the Committee:

Customer Service Centre:

- The Committee supported the idea as there had been some complaints from the public following the relocation of the CSC to the Reception Area in Daneshill House.

YourSay:

- Councillors stated they were not happy with the YourSay system as the responses were quite standardised; Officers explained that a new system was being considered to deal with Member enquiries/complaints as the current system did not work as it should do.
- The new system would allow improved tracking and reporting for enquiries.

SBC Website:

- Councillors were of the view that the website was not an effective vehicle to communicate with residents.
- Members stated that the current website was not easy to navigate.
- The Committee agreed they would like this on the work programme and the Chair suggested that before the Committee considers this that Members put together a list of the issues they have with the website.

ICT:

- The Chair had suggested that ICT be included into the work programme to address problems such as upgrades to capital hardware, systems and personnel levels with a focus on value for money on ICT upgrades and how to avoid systems failures as well as cyber security. The Strategic Director stated that the details of reports that are shared with the Joint ICT Committee can be brought to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee will agree a schedule of meetings with the Scrutiny Officer to include the following work programme items for 2024-25:

- Customer Services Centre – how well has the move to one reception area gone?
- YourSay Councillors Complaints System – What will the new system provide?
- SBC Website – How user friendly is the website and is it fit for purpose?
- ICT – consider the upgrades to hardware, systems failures, personnel levels and cyber security.

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

There was none.

6 **URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

There was none.

7 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

8 **PART II DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE**

There was none.

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

There was none.

10 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

There was none.

CHAIR

This page is intentionally left blank

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1. Membership - 14 (Not to be Members of the Cabinet but to include the Chairs of the 2 Select Committees)
2. Quorum - 4
3. Terms of Reference
 - 3.1. To consider the activities of the Cabinet and to have responsibility to reconsider any executive decision that has been subject to call-in, in accordance with the provisions of the Scrutiny provisions as set out in the Council's Constitution.
 - 3.2. Responsibility for the scrutiny of all initial proposals for the development of the Council's Budget and Policy Framework in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework provisions in the Council's Constitution.
 - 3.3. To determine a Scrutiny work programme to examine the spending, policies and administration of the Council's services within the direct purview for services of a Corporate and/or Council wide nature and relationships with partners and external agencies involved with these areas, together with a timetable and method of study for each topic.
 - 3.4. To determine formal recommendations in relation to scrutiny studies undertaken for reporting to the Council, Cabinet, other Committees, Officers and / or partner agencies as appropriate.
 - 3.5. To review the Forward Plan of Key Decisions in relation to services within the direct purview for services of a corporate and/or Council wide nature, considering if it wishes to make any input to policy issues contained in the Plan and if so, how. In undertaking this work the Committee may call upon the relevant Cabinet Member and/or Assistant Director to provide a briefing or take part in discussion.
 - 3.6. That in respect of policy development of matters that fall within the remit of this Committee, to meet with the relevant Portfolio Holder to comment on individual draft policies that are scheduled to be considered to the Cabinet.
 - 3.7. To work with other Select Committees, as appropriate when considering cross-cutting scrutiny studies and policy development when both Committees have so agreed.
 - 3.8. To consider matters referred to the Committee under the procedure for the Councillor Call for Action in relation to matters

within the direct purview for services of a Corporate and/or Council wide nature.

- 3.9 In accordance with the Petitions Scheme, consider Petitions, Petition Reviews and interview Senior Council Officers (as requested by a Petition) in relation to matters within the direct purview for services of a Corporate and/or Council wide nature.
- 3.10 In conjunction with the Select Committees, responsibility for the on-going development of the Scrutiny function of the Council.
- 3.11 To report to the Cabinet, other committees or Council, as appropriate.

Lead AD	SD Tom Pike
Deputy	SD Richard Protheroe
Chair	Cllr Lin Martin-Haugh
Vice-Chair	Cllr Robin Parker

Overview & Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2024-25
(Including review items, statutory Budget and Policy Framework items, and policy development items)

Scrutiny Review items 2024/25: Page 1	Strategic Director, Assistant Director, Lead Officer(s) & Portfolio Holder	Provisional meeting date(s) identified	Other details: i.e. (i) Number of meetings item can be covered in? (ii) Whether scoping required? (iii) Expectation/ style of meeting & (iv) other details	Comment by lead Assistant Director/Deputy	Other Details	Complete ✓ ✗
One off performance review of ICT	AD Technology Matt Canterford, SD Resources, Clare Fletcher & Exec Portfolio Holder Resources.	To be scheduled.	(i) Initially One meeting. (ii) Scope required. (iii) Presentation from officers leading to a Q&A with Scrutiny Members.		The session would consider the upgrades to hardware, systems failures, personnel levels and cyber security. To also include an <u>update on the Council's Website</u> – How user friendly is	

Scrutiny Review items 2024/25:	Strategic Director, Assistant Director, Lead Officer(s) & Portfolio Holder	Provisional meeting date(s) identified	Other details: i.e. (i) Number of meetings item can be covered in? (ii) Whether scoping required? (iii) Expectation/ style of meeting & (iv) other details	Comment by lead Assistant Director/Deputy	Other Details	Complete ✓ ✗
Page 12					<p>the website and is it fit for purpose?</p> <p>Due to the security risk of the Cyber Security measures affecting a number of key ICT systems, it will be necessary for this session to be conducted in a Part II confidential meeting.</p>	
Customer Services Centre – how well has the move to the single reception area gone?	AD Digital & Transformation, Jonathan James. Business Improvement Manager, Greg Arends.	To be scheduled.	(i) One meeting. (ii) No scope required. (iii) Presentation from officers leading to a Q&A with Scrutiny Members.			

Scrutiny Review items 2024/25:	Strategic Director, Assistant Director, Lead Officer(s) & Portfolio Holder	Provisional meeting date(s) identified	Other details: i.e. (i) Number of meetings item can be covered in? (ii) Whether scoping required? (iii) Expectation/ style of meeting & (iv) other details	Comment by lead Assistant Director/Deputy	Other Details	Complete ✓ ✗
	Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Resources & Transformation, Cllr Jeannette Thomas.					
YourSay Councillors Complaints System – What will the new system provide?	AD Digital & Transformation, Jonathan James. Business Improvement Manager, Greg Arends. Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Resources & Transformation, Cllr Jeannette Thomas.	To be scheduled.	(i) One meeting. (ii) No scope required. (iii) Presentation from officers leading to a Q&A with Scrutiny Members.			

Monitoring of Previous Recommendations/Actions								
Scrutiny items:	Strategic Director, Assistant Director, Lead Officer(s) & Portfolio Holder	Provisional meeting date(s) identified	Number of meetings item can be covered in?	Expectation/ Style of meeting	Scoping details (whether full scope or simple scope required)	Other details	Comment by lead Assistant Director/ Deputy	Complete ✓ ✘
Consider the Committee's Action Tracker		30 July 2024	One meeting	Members comment on the document – which may lead to further monitoring	No scope required			

Any monitoring of previous reviews will be agreed when the Committee considers the action tracker at its meeting on 30 July 2024.

Statutory Budget & Policy Framework Items:	Strategic Director, Assistant Director, Lead Officer(s) & Portfolio Holder	Provisional meeting date(s) identified	Number of meetings item can be covered in?	Expectation/Style of meeting	Scoping details (whether full scope or simple scope required)	Other details
The 2024/2025 HRA and Rent Setting	Clare Fletcher SD Sec 151 Officer/Executive Portfolio Holder for Resources	December 2024	Yes, covered in one meeting	Presentation by AD with supporting papers	No scoping required	
Budget Options 2024/25	Clare Fletcher SD Sec 151 Officer/Executive Portfolio Holder for Resources	November 2024	Yes, covered in one meeting	Presentation by SD & AD with supporting papers	No scoping required	
Council Tax Support Scheme (refresh of scheme reviewed annually by Exec)	Clare Fletcher SD Sec 151 Officer & Su Tarran HoS Executive Portfolio Holder for Resources	January 2025	Yes, covered in one meeting	Presentation by SD & AD with supporting papers	No scoping required	
General Fund Budget and Council Tax Setting	Clare Fletcher SD Sec 151 Officer/Executive Portfolio Holder for Resources	January 2025	Yes, covered in one meeting	Presentation by SD & AD with supporting papers	No scoping required	

Pre-Scrutiny Policy Development Items:	Strategic Director, Assistant Director, Lead Officer(s) & Portfolio Holder	Provisional meeting date(s) identified	Number of meetings item covered in?	Expectation/ Style of meeting	Scope details	Other details	Complete ✓ ✗
<u>Council Tax Support Scheme and Universal Credit</u> Page 16	Clare Fletcher SD Sec 151 Officer Executive Portfolio Holder for Resources & Transformation, Cllr Jeannette Thomas.	To be scheduled	One	Lead by the SD/AD and Chaired by the Chair of O&S Opportunity for Scrutiny Members to meet with officers and the Cabinet Portfolio Holder to carry out some pre-scrutiny of the any proposed changes or amendments to the Council Tax Support Scheme and to discuss the content and shape of a Policy document before it is completely finalised in order to help shape the final outcome.			