

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MINUTES

Date: Monday, 16 September 2019

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Shimkent Room, Daneshill House, Danestrete

Present: Councillors: Lin Martin-Haugh (Chair), Sandra Barr, Jim Brown, Laurie Chester, Michael Downing, Michelle Gardner, Andy McGuinness, John Mead, Sarah Mead, Adam Mitchell CC and Claire Parris.

Start / End Start Time: 6.00pm
Time: End Time: 7.30pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Phil Bibby CC and Robin Parker CC.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES - 15 JULY 2019

It was **RESOLVED** that minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 15 July 2019 are approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

3 PART I DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE

The Committee considered the decisions on the following matters arising from the Executive held on 11 September 2019.

Minutes of the Executive – 10 July 2019

Noted.

Minutes of the Overview & Scrutiny and Select Committees

Noted.

Corporate Performance 2019/20 – Quarter One

In relation to staff sickness levels, Members expressed concern that the figures were misleading as both short term and long term sickness had been combined. Officers agreed to provide Members with separate figures relating to the levels of short term and long term sickness absence. Confirmation of the implementation date of the new sickness procedure involving FirstCare would also be advised.

Medium Term Financial Strategy Update – General Fund 2019/20 – 2023/24

Officers advised that since the report had been published, the Government had advised that Local Authorities would only be able to increase Council Tax by 2%. In response to a question from Members regarding the report's inclusion of a 2.99% increase for Council Tax for 2020/21, Officers agreed to provide a written response to Members explaining the figure.

1st Quarter Revenue Monitoring Report 2019/20 – General Fund and Housing Revenue Account

Officers informed the Committee of the further delay by Ernst Young of the audit of the Council's Statement of Accounts. Members asked what action the Council was taking in response to the delay and the significant effect it was having on the Council and in particular members of staff. It was noted that the Leader and Officers had made representations regarding the delay, in particular the Housing Benefit Audit, but that the delays were being experienced by many Councils and several of the main Audit companies.

Members expressed their thanks to the Finance Team for their work and patience in dealing with the situation.

1st Quarter Capital Monitoring Report 2019/20 – General Fund and Housing Revenue Account

The Strategic Director undertook to circulate to Members the latest Welfare Reform Dashboard monitor for Stevenage.

In response to a question relating to the Kenilworth Scheme, Officers advised that the procurement response should be received in 6 to 8 weeks and that works would begin on-site in 2020.

Annual Treasury Management Strategy Review of 2018/19

Noted.

Urgent Business

(1) Brexit Update

The Strategic Director advised that a Brexit Officer Working Group had been established to prepare for the implications of a Brexit on 31 October 2019, in particular a worst case scenario of a no deal outcome.

It was noted that the Interim Strategic Director had been requested to:

- feed back to the Hertfordshire Resilience Forum Members' concerns regarding the shortage of medical supplies already being experienced by Stevenage residents and the potential for increased homelessness in the Borough should

unemployment increase due to companies relocating or ceasing to operate;

- prepare a Briefing Note on the latest Brexit developments for circulation to all Members of the Council;
- organise a round table meeting for businesses operating out of the Business Technology Centre to glean the concerns and issues that those businesses were expecting to experience through Brexit; and
- ensure that the Leader was invited to all future meetings of the Brexit Officer Working Group.

(2) Possible General Election Update

The Strategic Director confirmed that plans were in place to respond swiftly should a General Election be called in the coming months.

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

None.

5 **URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

The Chair accepted an item of urgent Part I business in respect of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

Councillor Jim Brown advised that he had attended the recent examination in public held regarding the CIL. He expressed concern regarding a number of issues which had arisen during the enquiry including an error in the figures which had been discovered regarding the proposed CIL rates.

The Strategic Director advised that as there was no representative from Planning at this meeting and specific technical information was required for a comprehensive response a full briefing note on the matter would be produced for Members. He also advised that the Executive and this Committee would have the opportunity to examine the results of the Inspector's Report when available.

6 **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.

7 **PART II MINUTES - 15 JULY 2019 - OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Noted.

8 **PART II DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE**

The Committee considered the Part II decisions on the following matters arising from the Executive held on 11 July 2019.

West of Stevenage Site – Access

Members expressed their appreciation to officers for involving them in this matter in particular the Local Ward Members.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II decisions of the Executive held on 11 July 2019 are noted.

9 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR