

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MINUTES

Date: Tuesday, 14 July 2020

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Virtual (via Zoom)

Present: Councillors: Lin Martin-Haugh (Chair), Philip Bibby CC (Vice-Chair), Sandra Barr, Laurie Chester, Michael Downing, Michelle Gardner, Andy McGuinness, John Mead, Sarah Mead, Adam Mitchell CC, Robin Parker CC, Claire Parris and Simon Speller

Start / End Time: Start Time: 6.00pm
End Time: 7.00pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Sarah-Jane McDonough.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 17 JUNE 2020

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 17 June 2020 be 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 meeting held on 8 July 2020.

Minutes of the Executive – 10 June 2020

Noted.

Minutes of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Select Committees

Noted.

Coronavirus (Covid-19) Incident Update Report and Recovery Plan

a. Covid-19 Data Sharing

In response to a request that Ward level Covid-19 data be provided to Ward Members, Strategic Director (RP) informed the Committee that the Council would share as much data as was permitted under Public Health England's data sharing agreement with local authorities. PHE shared some data in confidence with

Category One responders such as SBC. Officers would also provide ONS data and Ward level response data from Stevenage Helps and other sources.

Strategic Director (RP) reported that there was a lag in the supply of ONS data to local authorities. The Council would publish some unrestricted Covid-19 data on the website.

b. Primett Road Car Park

Members raised questions relating to the additional Executive recommendation to offer 3 hours free car parking in the former Waitrose Car Park (Primett Road) for the next six months, and reviewed thereafter.

Strategic Director (TP) informed the Committee that the recommendation for free parking provision at Primett Road car park was not included in the Recovery Report submitted to the Executive because the latest discussions with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) on specific sites had taken place just the Executive meeting.

As part of Incident Management arrangements, HCC had been working through prioritised sets of proposals for different towns within the County. Movement plans for Stevenage High Street had originally been identified as the second batch of those potentially requiring work. The Council (SBC) had anticipated displacement of parking provision in the Old Town High Street as a result of social distancing, appropriate queuing, recommendations for outdoor seating and the work on the High Street. It was anticipated that there would be some displacement of parking from the High Street as part of the works. It was felt appropriate to offer the same capacity of free parking for the same duration at the under-utilised Primett Road (Old Waitrose) car park to those displaced from the High Street.

c. Outdoor Seating Licensing

A Member reported that some district councils were reluctant to take responsibility for licences of outdoor seating facilities. With regards to the Council's position on this issue, Strategic Director (TP) informed Members that he was not aware of any concerns from Licensing or wider Planning and Regulation officers surrounding the issuing of licences for outdoor seating facilities in Stevenage. SBC and HCC officers were considering the option of issuing licensing for outdoor seating for some businesses in Stevenage. Officers were keen to collaborate to ensure that business requests for outdoor seating were met.

Housing First Approach at Stevenage Borough Council in Response to the Rough Sleeping Crisis

Noted.

A Co-operative Inclusive Economy Charter

Members welcomed the Charter and commented that it was important to link the Charter to community and neighbourhood management work and the promotion of local purchasing. A Member sought clarification on plans to use the Charter to engage those who were not affiliated to formal organisations within the community. Assistant Director (Communities and Neighbourhoods) assured Members that the

Charter would be captured in the resumption of the Neighbourhood Management Programme and it would be used in the engagement with existing community groups or new collectives of residents.

The Assistant Director also indicated that the adoption of the Charter would lead to a review of the Council's procurement strategy to make explicit reference to community wealth building. It was noted that the Charter would be key in efforts to revive the local economy post-Covid-19.

2019/20 Annual Report and Performance Overview

A Member sought clarification on the possibility of a review of the Council's Climate Emergency Strategy in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. It was noted that the pandemic had highlighted the urgency of progressing the Climate Emergency Strategy. However, social distancing requirements placed restrictions on the convening of meetings and events to discuss the Climate Emergency.

Strategic Director (TP) reported that due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council's Strategic Climate Change Member Group was having a wider look at the Climate Emergency Strategy. It was noted that Areas of potential that were unimaginable six months ago were now appear possible. The Council had adopted remote working arrangements wherever possible. The Council was reviewing workforce practices and building management and this was likely to lead to further reductions in the carbon footprint for Stevenage. In light of Covid-19 recommendations to minimise the use of public transport, partners in Hertfordshire were exploring ways of increasing and improving cycleways. The Strategic Director also stated that the Council was looking at projects that could benefit from the recently announced Green Homes Grant scheme.

4th Quarter Revenue Monitoring Report 2019/20 - General Fund and Housing Revenue Account

In response to a question about the overspend on indirect staff costs, Strategic Director (CF) informed the Committee that these costs related to the recruitment of staff while a restructuring of the Housing and Investment Business Unit was being carried out. The recruitment process for some of the posts took longer than expected and this increased financial pressures.

Capital Expenditure Outturn 2019/20

Noted.

Urgent Part I Business

Chancellor of the Exchequer's Summer Economic Statement

The Strategic Director (CF) provided the Committee with summary details of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Summer Economic Statement. The Council was still awaiting details of the Income Guarantee Scheme.

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

None.

5 **URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

None.

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 - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 17 JUNE 2020**

It was **RESOLVED** that Part II Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 17 June 2020 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

8 **PART II DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II decisions of the Executive meeting held on 8 July 2020 be noted.

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

None.

10 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR