

**STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**MINUTES**

**Date: Wednesday, 25 November 2020**

**Time: 6.00pm**

**Place: Virtual (via Zoom)**

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

**Start / End Time:** Start Time: 6.00pm  
End Time: 7.26pm

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Sarah Mead.

There were no declarations of interest.

**2 MINUTES - 13 OCTOBER 2020**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13 October 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 18 November 2020.

**Minutes of the Executive – 6 October 2020**

Noted.

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

Noted.

**Covid-19 – Update**

The Strategic Director (RP), assisted by the Strategic Director (CF), responded to a number of questions raised by Members as follows:

- Mass vaccination centres – it was confirmed that, should there be icy weather conditions over the winter months, it would be the responsibility of HCC to grit/salt highways in the vicinity of mass vaccination centres, but that SBC would be responsible for the gritting/salting of non-highway areas surrounding Neighbourhood/Community Centres should any of these be required for use as

vaccination centres;

- Covid Tier System – the Government was due to announce the new Tier system on 26 November 2020, and it was expected that Hertfordshire would be in Tier 2. The tiers were based on a number of factors (including numbers testing positive, current and projected hospital admissions, etc.), and the Government had indicated that the allocation of areas into tiers would be a central decision, with it being unlikely that individual areas would be permitted to contest this decision;
- Covid Suppression Plan for Stevenage – in terms of the county-wide Tactical Co-ordinating Group, Stevenage was a Priority 2 area, and the Group's focus was currently directed towards Priority 1 areas, such as Broxbourne and Three Rivers. Analysis showed that a significant proportion of Stevenage Covid cases was due to general community transmission; and
- Discretionary financial support for mobile businesses – the Additional Restrictions Grant Scheme would be intended to assist those businesses adversely affected by the pandemic in terms of them having received little or no support funding. Once the Scheme was signed off, this would give SBC the ability to provide support to such businesses, although it was stressed that SBC's total grant funding for this purpose was £1.75Million (up to 31 March 2021). Information on how to apply for support funding would be available on the Council's website, and applicants would also be able to contact the Shared Revenues & Benefits Service.

### **Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (SPD): Public Consultation**

In response to Members' questions, the Principal Planning Officer replied as follows:

- The formula/metric for 10% net biodiversity gain would be used following an audit of each application site; the biodiversity of each site would be graded according to numerous criteria, including quality and distinctiveness; the assistance of the Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust would be sought on large applications;
- The Principal Planning Officer undertook to include more information about the DEFRA metric and how it was used to grade the biodiversity of a site in the SPD prior to its adoption. This suggestion would be recorded as a formal response to the consultation; and
- The definition of minor amendments to the SPD prior to publication for consultation relating to textual, grammatical or formatting errors; it was anticipated that any major changes required to the document would be picked up through the public consultation process.

### **Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD): Public Consultation**

In response to Members' questions, the Principal Planning Officer replied as follows:

- The situations where Section 106 payments would be required in addition to Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) payments would be where specific site

mitigation would be required (such as the Town Centre Primary Education required as part of the SG1 development, as opposed to a more general primary education requirement across the town);

- It was recognised that, despite the use of CIL, there would invariably be an infrastructure funding gap, although other funding streams (such as Sports England) could be investigated; the Council was committed to re-visiting the CIL rates in future years, following its introduction.

### **Hertfordshire Growth Board – Proposed Future Governance Arrangements**

In reply to Members' questions, the Borough Solicitor, assisted by Strategic Directors, responded as follows:

- The Growth Board would be concerned with major infrastructure issues, and would be limited in its remit to lobby the Government regarding the status of specific planning applications (such as the SG1 application), which were the responsibility of individual local authorities with planning powers; and
- In relation to the Government Spending Review announcement and the £4Billion levelling up fund, and the need for support of Local MPs, could this put the Town Fund Deal and ability to access the funding it required at risk, it was confirmed that the Town Deal was covered by a clear guidance and a prospectus as how bids would be considered by the Government. Further details in respect of the £4 Billion fund were awaited, but related to projects that had to be delivered within the lifetime of the current Parliament (and the media had indicated with local support from the community and the MP), and included projects such as new by-passes; upgrading of railway stations; more libraries, museums and galleries; and improved high streets and town centres.

### **Mid Year Review of 2020/21 Treasury Management Strategy**

The Strategic Director (CF) advised that the Government had announced its review of PWLB, which included councils being prevented from borrowing to invest for yield, essentially for commercial investments. If councils were not doing that then the Government was now minded to reverse its 1% increase in PWLB borrowing rates. The downside was that if councils were borrowing from other sources for investment purposes then the opportunity to borrow from the PWLB would be forfeited.

In reply to a question, the Strategic Director (CF) confirmed that the closure of the Amundi Money Market Fund (based in Luxembourg) was due to Brexit. In future, funds would need to be invested in UK-domiciled money market funds.

### **Housing Revenue Account Medium Term Financial Strategy Update (2020/21 – 2024/25)**

Noted.

### **Second Quarter Revenue Monitoring Report 2020/21 – General Fund**

Noted.

## **Second Quarter General Fund Capital Monitoring Report 2020/21**

Noted.

### **Urgent Part I Business – SG1 Planning Application**

Noted.

#### **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 100A 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 DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE**

The Committee considered the Part II decisions on the following matters arising from the Executive meeting held on 18 November 2020.

##### **New Station North Multi-Storey Car Park**

Noted.

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

None.

#### **9 URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

### **CHAIR**