

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

Date: Tuesday, 15 December 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: 8.30pm

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

There were no apologies for absence and no declarations of interest.

2 **MINUTES - 25 NOVEMBER 2020**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 25 November 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 – 18 November 2020**

Noted.

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

Noted.

**Covid-19 – Update**

The Strategic Director (RP) updated the Committee on the latest Tier position in the County with parts of Hertfordshire having been put into Tier 3. He advised that there would be a Coronavirus Executive Committee on Friday 18 December at 2.00pm which members could view on YouTube which would include the latest epidemiology figures.

A series of Members' questions followed with responses from the Strategic Director:

- In relation to supermarkets, it had been widely reported at briefings that there was a particular issue with regard to the spread of Covid. The Strategic Director advised that there was a Covid protocol in place which had been agreed through the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) which all supermarkets should follow. It was suggested that the sanitisation stations should be at the exit of the supermarkets as well as the entrances.
- The SD agreed to find out whether shops had a duty to count customers in their stores, although it was thought that it was guidance/good practice rather than in any regulation.
- Covid Marshals – a business case would be submitted to the County Council for additional resources for more marshals to increase compliance activity. The numbers of Marshals was also being supplemented through redeployed staff from the communities and neighbourhood Department to ensure increased compliance activity. Significant marshalling activity was being undertaken in the Town Centre.
- A deep dive into statistics included a daily analysis of epidemiology data received into the County from the NHS/hospital/test and trace information. This allowed more targeted work to be undertaken.
- The Council was still waiting for the formal notice for information regarding the location of vaccination centres. Initially, vaccines would be administered through the hospital or doctors surgeries. Individuals should be contacted by their surgeries in the priority order set out by the Government. Members were of the view that some people could be missed and advised anyone concerned to contact their GP directly.

### **Housing First Approach - Stevenage Borough Council**

In response to Members' questions, the Housing Operations Manager replied as follows:

- Officers would ask the Leader of the Council if she was happy for the Stevenage MP to be contacted in relation to the request to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to recognise and assist with the significant funding gap now experienced by local authorities operating a Housing Revenue Account.
- In relation to the rules around local connection, officers advised that the Homelessness Reduction Act required local authorities to look at the local connexion of someone presenting themselves as homeless as a last step following their accommodation.
- The Strategic Director (CF) informed the Committee that the Government required Councils to submit covid related costs on a monthly basis including rough sleeping/homelessness grant funding.

### **Stevenage Parking Strategy 2021 – 2031: Public consultation**

In response to Members' questions, the Engineering Services Manager replied as follows:

- In relation to electronic vehicle charging points, the strategy was not too

specific as officers were aware that it was still early stages for electronic charging/vehicles and full consideration would be given in the future towards a programme for delivery. Officers confirmed that they would be working with the County Council to ensure there was a consistent electronic charging infrastructure;

- The Verge and Footway parking prohibition order had not been rolled out to the Old Town, Woodfield and Symonds Green Wards for a number of reasons including:
  - The Old Town being a special case with narrow roads and pavements etc;
  - Woodfield already having had a lot of investment in this area particularly around the hospital;
  - Symonds Green being one of the later built wards in the Town having larger parking areas built in.
- In terms of enforcement, depending on how many restrictions were in place, the Council would deploy the right level of enforcement.
- The Executive had asked for the consultation period to be extended from one month to two months. The consultation would include the Council's website, social media, the Chronicle along with a questionnaire. In response to suggestions by Members, officers agreed to engage councillors in the consultation process to get their ideas and share the proposed consultation plan with them to ensure as comprehensive a consultation as possible.

### **Housing For Older People Strategy 2020 – 2030**

In response to Members' questions, the Assistant Director (Housing and Investment) replied as follows:

- Information relating to the reasons for the change in tenure would be circulated to members;
- Conversations and consultation would be ongoing with customers and stakeholders to ensure the strategy would continuously evolve.
- The Committee's thanks would be conveyed to those officers responsible for the comprehensive consultation process on the draft strategy.

### **Corporate Performance 2020/21 – Quarter 2**

In response to Members' questions, the Strategic Director (TP) replied as follows:

- Officers would be asked to produce future reports with an additional column detailing the units used in each indicator;
- In relation to rent arrears, an Arrears Action Recovery Plan was in place to ensure people were supported and claiming the benefits they were entitled to.
- The SD would look into the seasonally adjusted recycling targets and provide details to Cllr S Mead.

### **Draft Housing Revenue Account Rent Setting and Budget Report 2021/22**

Noted.

## **Urgent Part I Business**

The Strategic Director (RP) gave an update on European Union Transition (Brexit). He advised that any updates on this matter would be brought to Members as soon as they were available. The Council would be working with partners such as the Citizens Advice Bureau to keep residents in particular EU residents informed of the latest position.

### **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 MINUTES - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 25 NOVEMBER 2020**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 25 November 2020 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

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

The Committee considered the Part II decisions on the following matters arising from the Executive meeting held on 9 December 2020.

#### **Financial Security Options 2021/22**

Noted.

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

None.

10 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

**CHAIR**