

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

Date: Wednesday, 17 February 2021

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Virtual (via Zoom)

Present: Councillors: Lin Martin-Haugh (Chair) (Chair), Philip Bibby CC (Vice-Chair) (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 Start Time: Time Not Specified
Time: End Time: Time Not Specified

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no apologies for absence.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES - 26 JANUARY 2021

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Committee meeting held on Tuesday 26 January 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 PART I DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE

The Committee noted the minutes of the Executive meeting held on 20 January 2021.

Minutes of the Executive – 20 January 2021

Note.

Minutes of Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Select Committees

Noted.

4. Covid-19 Update

The Strategic Director (RP) presented a report in relation to Covid- 19 update. He outlined the following key issues:

- The Strategic Director (RP) advised that he provided an update on the latest Covid-19 position at the Executive meeting held on 10 February 2021, and a detailed update was also provided to Coronavirus Executive Committee

meeting held on 2 February 2021. He advised Members that there had been a reduction in Covid-19 cases, and currently stood at 150 per 1000 population in Stevenage, which was a 38.1 percent decrease for those over the age of 60.

The Strategic Director (RP) advised Members that the following actions would be taken following the Executive meeting on 10 February 2020.

- Officers were queried to provide further information on running a safe election during the pandemic.
- Further information would be provided to Members on South African variant, once received by the Officers.
- Information on how Members used their Local Community Fund to support Covid-19 would be shared with the Coronavirus Executive Committee on 26 February 2021.

In response to a question, the Strategic Director (RP) advised Members that Stevenage had the highest number of infections in the County, and the Council was closely liaising with the Director of Public Health to explore the underlying causes of the highest infection rate, and also to identify if there were further actions that needed to be taken.

5. Draft Community Safety Strategy 2021 – 2024

The Community Safety Manager presented Draft Community Safety Strategy 2021-2024. She advised Members that the Draft Community Safety Strategy was reviewed by the Responsible Authorities Group (RAG) in October 2020, followed by Portfolio Holders Group in January 2021, where Members supported the objectives set out in the Strategy. She advised Members when the Strategy was reviewed for 2018 – 2021; soSafe secured over £450,000 of external funding which resulted in the delivery of innovative projects including the SOS project associated with the anti-social behaviour and crime, SADA (Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse), and the Operation Urban which tackled homelessness and aggressive street begging.

In response to a question, the Community Safety Manager advised Members that Hertfordshire County Council had the Hate Crime Strategy and its consultation under their remit, and was a County wide strategy. The Council would be closely monitoring the Strategy outcome. She advised Members on third party reporting centres on hate crimes.

The Committee noted the Draft Community Safety Strategy for 2021 – 2024.

6. Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report for Public Consultation

The Planning Policy Manager updated Members on the draft Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan. He advised Members that the options proposed were high level,

strategic options to develop an improved environment, maximise density of space and economic opportunities around Stevenage Railway Station. He clarified the Issues and Options Report contained key concepts at this early stage and did not suggest specific proposal for the Railway Station and Lytton Way.

Members discussed the connectivity and ease access, safety, promotion of cycling and walking, demonstration effective engagement and design quality. Members noted that the report recommended sustainable travel considered throughout, green infrastructure in the public realm and considered climate change in all development decisions.

In response to a question, the Assistant Director for Planning and Regulations advised Members there would be a minimum of six weeks consultation, and an additional six weeks. He clarified that the second six weeks would more likely to be face to face if lockdown measure were lifted. Members would be informed about the process via email.

In response to a question, the Strategic Director (TP) advised Members that the consultation would be accessible and Council would be responsive for options to the consultation outcome. He explained that it would be for the public to decide which options they would want the Council to explore.

The Committee noted the draft Stevenage Connection Area Plan.

7. Final General Fund and Council Tax Setting 2021/22

The Assistant Director for Finance and Estates presented report in relation to Final General Fund and Council Tax Setting 2021/22. She updated Members on 2021/2022 and 2020/2021 budgets including Financial Security options and growths bids and pressures, Council Tax and Council Tax Support Scheme. She advised Members that the January Draft General Fund report to Executive set out the impact of Covid-19 on the Council's General Fund budgets, the cost of homelessness and elections resourced from Covid-19 funding included in the provisional finance settlement.

In response to a question, the Assistant Director for Finance and Estates (CF) advised Members on allotments. She explained that the Council took on the responsibility for the running of the allotments from the Allotment association in 2020, which had resulted in increased costs to the Council. Members agreed for the increased charge for the allotment in 2020/21 budget.

The Assistant Director for Finance and Estate (CF) would take Members comments on board regarding increased communication between the Council and the allotment holders. She also clarified that there would be more targeted Members trainings, and there was still budget left for it.

The Committee noted the Final General Fund and Council Tax Setting 2021/22.

8. Final Capital Strategy 2020 – 2025/26

The Assistant Director for Finance and Estate presented report on Final Capital Strategy 2020 – 20215/26. She reminded Members that the report was received by this Committee in January, where there was shortfall of £161,000 for 2021/22. She advised Members that the review had taken place for the shortfall, which resulted in a balance capital strategy recommended to Council.

The Committee noted the Final Capital Strategy 2020 – 2025/26.

9. Annual Treasury Management Strategy including Prudential Code Indicators 2021/22

The Assistant Director for Finance and Estates (CF) updated Members on the key issues of the report. She explained that the Council was increasing the counterparty limits for short term investments from £8Million to £10Million when cash balances were higher than £30Million.

The Committee noted the Annual Treasury Management Strategy Prudential Code Indicators 2021/22.

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 1-7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as amended by Local Government (Access to information) (Variation) Order 2006.

2. That Members considered the reasons for the following reports being in Part II and determined that the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighed the public interest in disclosure.

7 PART II MINUTES - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 26 JANUARY 2021

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on Tuesday 26 January 2021 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 of the Executive meeting held on Wednesday 20 January 2021.

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

None.

10 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR