STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MINUTES

Date: Tuesday, 15 February 2022
Time: 6.00pm
Place: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

Present: Councillors: Lin Martin-Haugh (Chair), Myla Arceno, Adrian Brown, Michael Downing, Alex Farquharson, Chris Howells, Wendy Kerby and Robin Parker CC.

Start / End Time: Start Time: 6.00pm
End Time: 7.25pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for Absence were received on behalf of Councillors Phil Bibby CC, Andy McGuinness, Sarah Mead, Claire Parris and Loraine Rossati.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 25 January 2022 be approved for signature by the Chair.

3 PART I DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE

2. Minutes

Noted.

3. Minutes from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Select Committees

Noted.

4. Covid-19 Update

The Strategic Director advised that two dates had been secured for the pop-up vaccination facility in Bedwell during March. A Communication Plan was being drawn up and it was confirmed that the Council would be promoting the facility via both digital and non-digital forms of communication.

All vaccines including first, second and booster vaccines would be available at the pop-up centre.

In response to a question regarding the impact of Covid on elective surgery and the resulting backlog, Officers advised that further information would be brought back to the Executive.

In response to a further question related to national statistics, some information had been provided regarding the numbers of patients that had been hospitalised without being vaccinated, however, more detailed information was still being sought by Officers.

In response to a number of questions, the following responses were given:

- There were no plans for a second booster although an annual booster was likely to be rolled out;
- Pre-booking for the pop-up centres would not be required. Although located in Bedwell, the Ward with the lowest numbers of people vaccinated, the facility would be open to all Stevenage residents;
- working with health colleagues across the County, Officers were investigating the potential for additional pop-up centres in other parts of the Town;
- It was noted that the majority of people who were being hospitalised were unvaccinated. Officers were working with the Herts Health Protection Board to obtain more detailed local information;
- as soon as information on the future use of the Nightingale Wards was available, officers would advise Members;
- In terms of the role of Environmental Health, officers confirmed that Herts Public Health had contacted surgeries within Stevenage regarding vaccine tracing with a view to SBC contacting individuals who had not received any vaccines so far;
- Officers were looking to review the outstanding Covid restrictions which were due to expire on 24 March. Further information would be circulated to Members along with information regarding Tier 3 and Tier 4 requirements.

5. Gambling Act 2005 – Review of Statement of Licensing Principles

In response to a question about whether the Living Room, an organisation established to support people living with addictions, had been approached as part of the consultation. Officers advised that they had not and although it was too late to consult with The Living Room on this consultation due to the required timeline for adoption of this Policy, they would make contact with them about the wider harms of gambling and would take their views on board for future consultations.

6. Final General Fund and Council Tax Setting 2022/23

The Committee was informed that the report had not been published in time to take into account the recent interest rate rise announced by the Bank of England.

A question had been asked at Executive regarding the £150 energy relief

scheme, which would be given out to residents via the Council Tax lists. Concern was expressed that not every Council Tax Payer paid by direct debit but would be responsible for paying the utility bills. Also in relation to houses of multiple occupation (HMO's), the landlord would pay the Council Tax rather than those responsible for the energy bills. Officers would be working on a resolution to this issue.

The following comments/questions were raised by Members:

- Councillors could help with communicating the message within the community regarding the funding;
- The majority of homes within the Town would be eligible for the £150;
- Officers advised that although there were a number of residents not paying by Direct Debit, the preferred method was direct to bank so this would need to be worked through by officers;
- Making Your Money Count was the new version of financial security;
- Members were informed that the identification of a further half a million savings were likely to go through the Leaders Financial Security Group for scrutiny.

7. Railway Station Multi-Storey Car Park – Business Case

The following questions/comments were raised by Members:

- Although options for Lytton Way were still under consideration, Officers confirmed that any of the four options within the Area Action Plan would work with the access to the new multi storey car park;
- In relation to the St George's Way Multi Storey Car Park, Officers advised that there was more work to be done but that there had already been some improvements, including enhancements to the lighting and the CCTV cameras;
- In terms of the 5th Platform and the additional demand at the station for parking, Officers agreed to provide a written answer although this would be challenging due to the impact of Covid on the demand for parking currently;
- Members asked about alternative parking arrangements for commuters during the construction of the MSCP. Officers advised that there was sufficient capacity in the Town Centre Car parks including the St Georges Way MSCP;
- Construction of the new MSCP would take approximately 40 to 50 weeks.

8. Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report Public Consultation Feedback

The following questions/comments were raised by Members:

- In terms of the comments from Consultees, the report only noted the comments rather than to provide a response to each point. Members

requested that a more meaningful response to the consultees was required. Officers agreed to take this on board and it would be provided in future reports on the topic;

- The current situation on Lytton Way with the construction of the crossing relating to the Bus Interchange did not form part of the Area Action Plan and this had caused some confusion for the public. Officers agreed to ensure that this would be clarified in the communications for future plans;
- Members asked about the retention of the bridge and the potential for an underpass to be constructed. Officers confirmed that the raised walkway and the works that were currently underway including the 'at grade' crossing between the new bus interchange and the railway station were not part of this consultation but had been included in the permission which formed part of the Bus Station application;
- Members were welcome to submit further representations in response to the Area Action Plan which could be included in the consideration of the consultation responses;
- The timescale for the Area Action Plan around the Railway Station was within the Local Plan and was a different timeline to the Bus Interchange work and the linked works. The AAP process was much longer term and there would be a number of years of consultation before a preferred option was chosen and approved. Officers agreed that a timeline to help separate the two would make the situation clearer for Members and the public.

9. Stevenage Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document 2021: Public Consultation Feedback

Officers advised that residential parking policy and guidance was not included in the design guidance SPD. The Sustainable Transport and Parking SPD which included parking standards had been adopted in 2021 and would not be revisited for 3 to 5 years.

10. Filming Opportunities in Stevenage

In relation to a question relating to road closures and the charges for this, the Strategic Director advised that she would ascertain details for the process and respond to Members.

11. Capital Strategy 2021/22 – 2025/26

Noted.

12. Annual Treasury management Strategy Including Prudential Code Indicators

Noted.

13. Urgent Part I Business – Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund

The following questions/comments were raised by Members:

- Members asked if the Council had an asset management database of the Council's housing stock. Officers advised that there was a database and would provide an explanation in writing, following the meeting, of the 400 properties that would fall within the scope of the project;
- In response to a question, regarding the saving on energy bills for these properties when the work was completed, Officers advised they would have to come back to Members with the information following the meeting.

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**

Not required.

7 **PART II DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE**

None.

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

None.

9 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR