

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

31st March 2021

PRESENT:-

Labour Group

Councillor Bambrick (Chairman), Mrs Stuart (Vice-Chairman) and Councillor Gee.

Conservative Group

Councillors Atkin, Hewlett and Muller.

Independent Group

Councillor Roberts.

In Attendance

Councillor Mrs. Wheelton.

OS/41 **APOLOGIES**

The Committee was informed that no apologies had been received.

OS/42 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST ARISING FROM ITEMS ON AGENDA**

The Committee was informed that no declarations of interest from Members of the Committee had been received.

OS/43 **QUESTIONS RECEIVED BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 10**

The Committee was informed that no questions from members of the Public had been received.

OS/44 **QUESTIONS RECEIVED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 11**

The Committee was informed that no questions from Members of the Council had been received.

OS/45 REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2000 (RIPA) – REPORT ON USAGE

The Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) presented the quarterly report to Members.

RESOLVED:-

The Committee considered the internal report on the Council's use of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000.

OS/46 COUNCIL TAX COLLECTION AND UNIVERSAL CREDIT – UPDATE

The Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) presented the report to Members advising that the latest Government statistics released in January indicated that 55% of eligible South Derbyshire residents had transferred to the Universal Credit scheme and that 20% of council tenants were in receipt of Universal Credit. It was noted that Council rent arrears had doubled in the last two years and that Housing Officers were engaged in supporting residents to secure the collection of rent arrears.

The Committee was informed that Council Tax collection was at 96% as at the end of February 2021 and that many households had benefitted from the Government's hardship funding. The Strategic Director explained how a change of approach to collecting arrears due to Covid-19 meant soft recovery methods had been implemented with Officers contacting residents by telephone and email and advised that debt had been passed to enforcement during Covid-19, but those agencies had been operating under strict procedures whilst maintaining sensitivity.

Members welcomed the report and asked that thanks be passed to all staff for working hard to support residents during Covid-19 and raised questions regarding the hardship funding.

The Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) confirmed that residents covered by the Council Tax Discount scheme were targeted for hardship funding and bills adjusted automatically as per Finance and Management Committee recommendations.

RESOLVED:-

The Committee considered the current position regarding the impact of Universal Credit and Council Tax recovery and would provide feedback to the Finance and Management Committee to inform policy and service improvement.

OS/47 UPDATE ON TOURISM AND REGENERATION – Verbal Update

The Chief Executive provided a verbal update on Tourism and Regeneration in South Derbyshire during the Covid-19 pandemic informing Members that the

Tourist Information Centre had been brought into the Civic Offices until a location could be found and a recommendation submitted to the Finance and Management Committee. The regeneration of the brownfield site at Drakelow and a business development scheme based in Swadlincote Innovation Centre were highlighted along with the work underway on the Constitution for the Freeport.

Councillor Atkin how the hardship fund had been publicised and how long it would be available. The Chief Executive confirmed that government guidelines allowed for discretion in interpreting the criteria for funding, but everything was being done to help local businesses obtain grant funding. The Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) explained that businesses were being contacted and advised about the grant scheme which was still open for grant applications.

OS/48 **COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) delivered the report to the Committee.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee considered and approved the updated work programme.

OS/49 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AS AMENDED BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

RESOLVED:-

That, in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the Meeting as it would be likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that there would be disclosed exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of the Schedule 12A of the Act indicated in brackets after each item.

EXEMPT QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO 11

The Committee was informed that no exempt questions from Members of the Council had been received.

The Meeting terminated at 18:45 hours.

COUNCILLOR BAMBRICK

CHAIRMAN