

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL**AUDIT COMMITTEE
MINUTES****Date: Monday 2 February 2015****Time: 6.00 p.m.****Place: Shimkent Room, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage**

Present: Councillors: L Chester (Chair), J Gardner (Vice-Chair),
D Cullen, J Hollywell, A McGuinness and M McKay.

Also Present: B Mitchell (Independent Member), T Blackman and
I Murray (Grant Thornton)

Started: 6.00 p.m.

Ended: 6.45 p.m.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

An apology for absence was received from Councillor P Bibby.

There were no declarations of interest.

Iain Murray was introduced to the Committee as the Engagement Lead for the Council's External Auditors, Grant Thornton.

2. MINUTES – AUDIT COMMITTEE – 11 NOVEMBER 2014

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 11 November 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. AUDIT COMMITTEE UPDATE

The Committee received an update from the Council's External Auditors, Grant Thornton.

The Committee discussed the Government's proposal to bring forward the 2017/2018 closure of accounts audit deadline 8 to the end of July 2018. This would mean the accounts would have to be completed by the Finance Department at the end of May instead of the end of June.

It was acknowledged that changes to end of year processes, especially with regard to estimates and accruals, would be necessary to meet the revised deadline and that close liaison with the External Auditors to ensure compliance with the Government's guidelines would also be essential.

In reply to a question it was confirmed that the Council had not responded to the DCLG consultation in respect of the proposal.

It was **RESOLVED** that the update be noted.

4. PRUDENTIAL CODE INDICATORS AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY.

The Assistant Director (Finance) presented the report.

The Committee was advised of the Council's current debt provision arrangements and cash balances.

In reply to a question concerning public awareness of the high levels of cash balances the Committee was advised that the reasons included timing issues around receipts and payments to and from the General Fund and the structuring of the Self Financing agreement. These reasons had been well documented in previous reports that had been before the Executive.

In reply to a further question the Committee was assured that the Finance Team exercised a rigorous monitoring regime of the Council's balances and cash flow forecasts.

The Committee did not wish any comments on the report to be submitted to either the Executive or Council.

It was **RESOLVED** that the revised Treasury Management Strategy and the Prudential Indicators be recommended to the Executive and Council.

5. URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS.

None.

6. EXCLUSION OF THE 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 I 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.

PART II

7. PART II MINUTES – AUDIT COMMITTEE – 11 NOVEMBER 2014

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II Minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 11 November 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

8. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

None.

Chair