

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL**COUNCIL
MINUTES****Date: Wednesday 25 February 2015****Time: 7.00 pm****Place: Council Chamber**

Present: The Mayor, S Batson MBE DL CC and Councillors D Bainbridge, L Bell, P Bibby, L Briscoe, R Broom, J Brown, H Burrell, L Chester, E Connolly, J Gardner, M Gardner, L Harrington, R Henry CC, J Hollywell, D Kissane, C Latif, Mrs J Lloyd, J Lloyd CC, A McGuinness, M McKay, L Martin-Haugh, J Mead, S Mead, M Notley, R Parker CC, R Raynor, C Saunders, G Snell, S Speller, P Stuart, S Taylor OBE CC, H Tessier, J Thomas and A Webb.

Also present: S Field (Youth Mayor), J MacCarthy (Chair Youth Council)

Start/End Time: Start Time: 7.00 p.m.
End Time: 10.00 p.m.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M Cherney-Craw, G Clark, D Cullen and V Warwick.

There were no declarations of interest.

2. MINUTES – COUNCIL - WEDNESDAY 10 DECEMBER 2014

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Council meeting of 10 December 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

3. MINUTES – COUNCIL – WEDNESDAY 28 JANUARY 2015

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Special meeting of the Council held on 28 January 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

4. MAYOR'S COMMUNICATION

The Mayor provided Council with a brief update of events that she had attended since the last meeting.

She informed Council that she had attended 46 engagements since her last report, making a total of 290 in total.

Of note had been the visit to the Lister Hospital on Christmas Day and, staying with the Christmas theme, the Mayor's Christmas Toy Appeal was very well supported by GlaxoSmithKline and Council staff. Sufficient toys were donated to go to the Lister Hospital, the Salvation Army and Thriving Families in addition to the usual organisations. Thanks were extended to everybody that had donated a toy to the appeal.

Two other significant events were the Holocaust Memorial Day and the Multi-faith Service. Both were extremely well supported.

In January the Arts Panels on the walkway to the station were unveiled. Along with the Sports Panels they have been very well received and have prompted enquiries about other local personalities that could feature on a panel. The Mayor suggested that such panels could be placed in other areas around the town centre.

Finally the Mayor informed Council of a number of forthcoming events, which included:

- A tribute to Lady Constance Lytton and the Suffragettes on Sunday 8 March at Knebworth House
- The Mayor's Concert at the Gordon Craig Theatre on 10 March
- Midweek Supper at Nobel School on 15 April, and
- Community Open Day at the Coptic Church and Manor House on 26 April.

5. MAIN DEBATE – 2015/2016 COUNCIL TAX AND GENERAL FUND AND CAPITAL BUDGETS

The Main Debate related to item 5A and item 5B on the agenda.

The Chief Executive informed the meeting that since these matters were considered by the Executive the Council had been notified of the precepts to be levied by the County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner and these decisions were reflected in the motion that was to be proposed.

The Mayor called upon the Leader of the Council, Councillor S Taylor OBE CC to move the Motion on the Council Tax Setting 2015/2016, General Fund and Capital Budgets which was circulated around the chamber.

In her speech Councillor Taylor spoke of looking to the future and she highlighted a number of events that had taken place during the year that would act as a springboard to move the town forward. In particular she spoke of the creation of 260 jobs in the town; of the work

undertaken with the Local Enterprise Partnership to drive forward a 20 year plan to regenerate the Town Centre and of the plan to build 550 new homes in the next 10 years.

A number of new initiatives were announced, which included the possibility of introducing a residents' card and car park discounts for the townspeople, the creation of a financial inclusion fairness commission and a review of recycling to determine the viability of co-mingling recyclables from household collections.

Thanks were given to the volunteers at the Foodbank and the Leader paid tribute to the Youth Mayor, Shae Field, for her work in highlighting youth mental health issues.

After a review of how council tax monies would be allocated and an explanation of the Council's priorities for 2015/2016 the Leader announced that the Stevenage element of the Council Tax would be frozen for the sixth year running.

Thanks were then extended to all Members and Officers that had worked to prepare and scrutinise the budget.

At the conclusion of her speech a list of proposals for projects to be funded by the New Homes Bonus was circulated around the Chamber.

These proposals were:

- A Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator and a Stevenage Domestic Abuse Panel - £117,500
- An Antisocial Behaviour Co-ordinator (2 year post) - £38,840
- No More Project - £40,000
- Rationalisation, Repair and De-cluttering of Street Furniture in Stevenage Town Centre - £139,910
- Women's Cycle Tour – Stage Finish Host - £20,000
- Litter / Dog Bin Replacement Scheme - £20,000
- Shrub Bed and Hedge Area Rejuvenation - £150,000
- Town Centre Paving – Improving paving, jet wash existing paving slabs - £25,000
- Money Matters to Private and Housing Association Renters - £52,813

The Motion was formally seconded by Councillor Mrs J Lloyd who informed Council of the budget setting process and the challenges faced by Members and Officers alike to present a balanced budget to Council.

At the expiry of the time limit for the seconder's speech it was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that Standing Order 10c be waived to allow Councillor Mrs Lloyd to continue to second the Motion.

Councillor Mrs Lloyd informed Council that a full equality impact assessment had been carried out in relation to every facet of the budget and gave assurances that all possible steps had been taken to reduce the numbers of potential redundancies.

She concluded by reminding Council that the Motion was for a balanced budget, with a zero percent Council Tax increase and with a minimal reduction in services. She extended her thanks to all involved in the budget setting process.

The Mayor then invited the Leader of the Opposition, Councillor R Parker CC, to address the meeting.

Councillor Parker highlighted the work of the Leader's Services Priority Group in compiling the budget and thanked Officers for their work in the process.

He called for the Council to consider an expansion in its commercial and revenue generation activities, reconsider cuts made to some litter collection services and to become less reliant on car parking charges.

He added that he wished to see more flexibility in the Local Community Budget scheme to allow for carry forwards to fund larger projects.

The Leader of the Conservative Group, Councillor P Bibby said that his Group supported the budget and he thanked the Officers for their work in its preparation.

He advised the meeting that further radical thoughts would be needed to balance the budget in future years.

A full debate then ensued that included input from the public gallery. The main points raised included the following:

- Although it appeared that a nationwide economic recovery was underway there were still many in the town that were not benefitting from that recovery
- The positive developments for the town were welcomed

- The Council's extension the community grants programme and its commitment to maintaining the children's play schemes was commended
- Council Tax rates from properties above band D should be increased to raise revenues
- Tributes were paid to Councillor Taylor for her leadership through a difficult period for the Council.

In reply Councillor Taylor thanked those that had spoken for their contribution to the debate.

In reply to the suggestion that the Council should increase Council Tax for those properties above Band D she informed the meeting that to do so was outside of the powers of the Council and could not be actioned without a review of the Council Tax system.

The Motion was then put to a recorded vote* and it was **RESOLVED:**

**2015/2016 COUNCIL TAX AND BUDGET
(Report 5A)**

1. That the Budget summarised at Appendix A to the report, be the Council's General Fund Budget for 2014/15 and 2015/16:
2. That the following be approved:
 - a. the revised working revenue estimates for the year 2014/15 amounting to £8,612,570 and the revenue estimates for 2015/16 amounting to £10,401,200;
 - b. the contribution to balances totalling £73,812 in 2014/15;
 - c. the contribution to balances totalling £537,994 in 2015/16.
3. That it be noted that at its meeting on 20 January 2015 the Executive calculated the amount of 25,207.4 Band D equivalent properties as its council tax base for the year 2015/16 in accordance with Regulation 3 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992 made under Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended by Section 74 of the Localism Act 2011.
4. That the following amounts be calculated by the Council for the year 2015/16 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended by Section 74 of the Localism Act 2011:

- a. £90,213,073 Being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2)(a) to (f) of the Act, less the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3)(a) to (d)
- b. £85,460,974 Being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3)(a) to (d) of the Act.
- c. £4,752,099 Being the amount by which the aggregate at 3a above exceeds the aggregate at 3b above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act as its Council Tax requirement for the year.
- d. £188.52 Being the amount at 3c divided by the amount at 2 above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B (1) of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year
- e. Valuation Bands
- | | |
|---|----------|
| A | £ 125.68 |
| B | £ 146.63 |
| C | £ 167.57 |
| D | £ 188.52 |
| E | £ 230.41 |
| F | £ 272.31 |
| G | £ 314.20 |
| H | £ 377.04 |

Being the amounts given by multiplying the amount at 3d. above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands.

5. a. That it be noted that for the year 2015/16 Hertfordshire County Council have stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government

Finance Act 1992, for each of the categories of the dwellings shown below:

Valuation Bands

| | |
|---|------------|
| A | £ 760.73 |
| B | £ 887.51 |
| C | £ 1014.30 |
| D | £ 1,141.09 |
| E | £ 1,394.67 |
| F | £ 1,648.24 |
| G | £ 1,901.82 |
| H | £ 2,282.18 |

- b. That it be noted that for the year 2015/16 Hertfordshire Police & Crime Commissioner has stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended, for each of the categories of the dwellings shown below:

Valuation Bands

| | |
|---|----------|
| A | £ 98.55 |
| B | £ 114.97 |
| C | £ 131.40 |
| D | £ 147.82 |
| E | £ 180.67 |
| F | £ 213.52 |
| G | £ 246.37 |
| H | £ 295.64 |

- c. That, having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at 3e. and 4a. and b. above, the Council in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the following amounts as the amounts for council tax for the year 2015/16 for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:

Valuation Bands

| | |
|---|-----------|
| A | £984.96 |
| B | £1,149.11 |
| C | £1,313.27 |
| D | £1,477.43 |
| E | £1,805.75 |
| F | £2,134.07 |
| G | £2,462.39 |
| H | £2,954.86 |

6. To determine in accordance with Section 52ZB Local Government Finance Act 1992 that the Council's basic amount of Council Tax for 2015/16 is not excessive in accordance with principles approved by the Secretary of State under Section 52ZC having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at 3e.
7. That approval be given to a General Fund Revenue Account Contingency Sum in the Budget and Policy Framework for 2015/16 of £400,000.
8. That the advice of the Strategic Director (Resources) on the robustness of the draft budget and the adequacy of reserves (Appendix C) be noted.
9. That the Fees and Charges increases (Appendix F) be noted.
10. That the contribution from the Collection Fund (Council Tax) for 2015/16 of £142,003 be noted.
11. That the estimated pooling gains and retained business rate growth included in the 2015/16 budget of £669,177 be noted.
12. That it be noted that the General Fund Medium Term Financial Strategy remains largely unchanged from that reported to the

meeting of the Executive held on 20 January 2015 and continues to meet the financial objectives set by the Chief Finance Officer.

**2015/16 FINAL CAPITAL FORWARD PLAN & 5 YEAR CAPITAL STRATEGY
(Report 5B)**

1. That the final 2015/16 General Fund Capital Programme as detailed in Appendix A to the report be approved.
2. That the final 2015/16 HRA Capital Programme as detailed in Appendix B to the report and as included in the HRA Business Plan be approved.
3. That the updated forecast of resources as summarised in Appendix A (General Fund) and Appendix B (HRA) to the report be approved.
4. That the transfer of any unused General Fund borrowing costs to the capital reserve, (paragraph 4.3.2 of the report refers) be approved.
5. That the General Fund Capital Programme be agreed (Appendix C to the report refers).
6. That the work undertaken by LSPG on behalf of the Executive in reviewing and challenging the General Fund Capital Strategy be noted.

* Votes for the motion – Councillors S Batson MBE DL CC, D Bainbridge, L Bell, P Bibby, L Briscoe, R Broom, J Brown, H Burrell, L Chester, E Connolly, J Gardner, M Gardner, L Harrington, R Henry CC, J Hollywell, D Kissane, C Latif, Mrs J Lloyd, J Lloyd CC, A McGuinness, M McKay, L Martin-Haugh, J Mead, S Mead, M Notley, R Parker CC, R Raynor, C Saunders, G Snell, S Speller, P Stuart, S Taylor OBE CC, H Tessier, J Thomas and A Webb.

Votes against the motion – nil

Abstentions - nil

6. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS

None

7. QUESTIONS FROM THE YOUTH COUNCIL

None

8. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC.

8A Question from Mr N Wright.

In reply Councillor J Gardner advised that the Council acknowledged the problems caused by inconsiderate and illegal parking in the vicinity of the Lister Hospital and intended to review the restrictions later in 2015. The Parking Officer had been instructed to appoint a full time Civil Enforcement Supervisor with effect from April and to employ at least one additional Civil Enforcement Officer by the end of 2015.

In a supplementary question Mr Wright requested that Council reconsider its proposals for Blue Badge parking near the Lister and Coreys Mill Lane.

In reply to the supplementary question Mr Wright was advised that a full Equality Impact Assessment for the scheme had been undertaken and the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration invited Mr Wright to contact the Constitutional Services Team to arrange a meeting between himself, the appropriate Engineering Manager and the local County Councillor to discuss the matter further.

8B Question from Mr M Pickersgill.

In reply Councillor A Webb was advised of the Council's plans to build 500 new homes in the next ten years, the open market purchase programme and the potential to establish a wholly owned development company to increase the number of affordable homes in the town. The Council remained committed to increase the level of affordable housing in the town and addressing the needs of the 3000 people on the waiting list for such housing.

In reply to a supplementary question concerning actions that would be taken after the General Election Councillor A Webb advised that the Council would continue to lobby the Government of the day in the best interests of the townspeople.

9. LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S UPDATE

The Mayor called upon Councillor R Parker, Leader of the Opposition, to raise one matter relevant to the Borough.

The Leader of the Opposition asked that in light of the recent allegations about the HSBC concerning its involvement with tax avoidance schemes whether the Council should reconsider its relationship with the bank.

In reply the Leader informed Council that the Council's banking services were a procured service, subject to review and retender. The

next tender was due in two year's time and ethical behaviour would be a consideration in that process.

The Leader of the Council declined the opportunity to raise any matters on this occasion.

10. NOTICE OF MOTIONS

None received

11. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO COMMITTEE CHAIRS / PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

None

12. REPORT REFERRED FROM EXECUTIVE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE – PRUDENTIAL CODE INDICATORS AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2015/2016

The Council had before it a copy of the Officer report which had been considered by the Executive on 10 February 2015 and Audit Committee on 2 February 2015 which recommended that Council adopt the 2015/2016 Treasury Management Strategy and the Prudential Code Indicators.

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that the Treasury Management Strategy, as detailed in Appendix A to the report, and the Prudential Code Indicators, as detailed in Appendix A, attachment 2 to the report, be adopted.

13. OFFICER REPORT – COMMUNITY SAFETY STRATEGY 2015/2018

Council had before it the final version of the Community Safety Strategy 2015/2018 as recommended by the Executive at its meeting on 10 February 2015.

Council was advised that the previous strategy was out of date and had been revised to include mention of the Police and Crime Commissioner and his grant allocation responsibilities and any legislative changes.

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED:**

1. That the Community Safety Strategy 2015/2018, as shown at Appendix A to the report, which takes the consultation process into account be approved subject to amending the Foreword to become a joint statement from both the Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities, Older People & Health and the Chief Executive and for reference to be made in the Strategy to the joint working with SBC housing staff, particularly on anti-social behaviour.

2. That the Budget and Policy Framework detailed in the Constitution be amended by the deletion of the Community Safety Strategy as this is no longer a statutory requirement (Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011).

14. OFFICER REPORT – MEMBERS’ ALLOWANCES SCHEME 2015-2016

The Council had before an Officer report which recommended a Members’ Allowances Scheme for 2015/2016.

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that a Members’ Allowances Scheme for 2015/2016, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be agreed.

15. OFFICER REPORT – PAY POLICY STATEMENT

The Council had before it an Officer report which recommended that the Council approve the pay policy statement for the financial year 2015/2016.

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED**:

1. That the Pay Policy Statement set out in accordance with the Localism Act 2011, attached at Appendix One to the report, be approved
2. That it be noted that in the event that the Assistant Director (Finance) assume the role of section 151 officer then an annual salary supplement of £2,000 will apply, as noted in the Pay Policy at Appendix One to the report
3. That the Pay Policy be placed on the Council’s website and that a notice of the policy be published in the next edition of Chronicle.

16. AUDIT COMMITTEE MINUTES – 2 FEBRUARY 2015

The Council had before it the draft minutes from the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 2 February 2015.

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Audit Committee of 2 February 2015 be noted

17. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was moved, seconded and **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

item of business on the grounds that it 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 2008 No.88.

2. That having considered the reasons for the following report being in Part II it was determined that maintaining the exemption from disclose of the information contained therein outweighed the public interest in disclosure.

18. PART II OFFICER REPORT – SENIOR OFFICER APPOINTMENT

Council had before it an Officer report that sought the approval for an appointment to the post of Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service based upon the recommendation of the Appointments Committee.

Members paid tribute to the work of the outgoing Chief Executive and praised the quality of both applicants for the post.

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that:

1. The appointment of Mr Scott Crudgington to the roles of Chief Executive, Head of the Paid Service, Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer be approved with effect from 1 June 2015
2. Two months pay in lieu of notice for the current Chief Executive, Mr Nick Parry, in order that his appointment be terminated by mutual agreement between himself and the Council on 31 May 2015, be approved
3. It be noted that upon the anticipated appointment of Scott Crudgington his duties as section 151 officer be transferred to the Assistant Direct Finance (subject to separate consideration by the Appointments Committee)

Mayor