

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL
MINUTES**Date: Wednesday 24 February 2016****Time: 7.00 pm****Place: Council Chamber**

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

Also present: Yvan Tiako (Youth Mayor) and A Thurley (Youth Council)

Start/End Time: Start Time: 7.00 p.m.
End Time: 9.50 p.m.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Cullen, L Harrington, S Hearn, R Henry CC, M Hurst and C Saunders.

There were no declarations of interest

2. MINUTES – COUNCIL - WEDNESDAY 9 DECEMBER 2015

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Council meeting of 9 December 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

3. MINUTES – COUNCIL – WEDNESDAY 26 JANUARY 2016

The Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Phil Bibby made a statement of behalf of the Conservative Group, with regards to Item 2 of the Minutes on the Housing Revenue Account and Rent Setting for 2016/2017. Councillor Bibby stated that at the Special Council meeting his Group had voted against the amendment moved by the Leader of the Council.

This amendment was carried and therefore became part of the substantive motion. His Group had not realised this and whilst supporting the original motion and voting in favour, they had erroneously supported the proposal outlined in the amendment. He therefore requested that it be noted that his group does not support resolution 12 of Item No 2.

The Chief Executive informed Council that at the time of taking the decision on rent setting only Low Start Shared Ownership Properties were understood to be exempt from the 1% reduction in accordance with the draft Welfare Reform and Work Bill. Accordingly Supported Housing properties were included within the Council decision to apply the 1% reduction. It was now understood that the final legislation may include Supported Housing as an exemption. The Chief Executive advised that if this were the case, and Members were still minded to continue with the 1% rent reduction for current Supported Housing rents, it may be necessary for a specific decision to be taken to this end. The Chief Executive informed Council that he would keep Members informed of any developments.

It was **RESOLVED** that having noted the comments of the Leader of the Opposition and the Chief Executive the Minutes of the Special meeting of the Council 26 January 2016 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 he had attended since the last meeting. He highlighted some of the 88 engagements that he had undertaken such as the visit to Lister Hospital on Christmas Day, the ordination to the Episcopate of Canon Paul McAleenan and Monsignor John Wilson at Westminster Cathedral, the Holocaust Memorial Day event, Riding for the Disabled Riding Morning and the Stevenage Beer Fest.

The Mayor also informed Council of Mr Peter Bandy's retirement in March and thanked him for his service over the years and invited comments from the Chamber.

The Leader and Leaders of the Opposition Groups and other Members expressed their thanks to Mr Bandy for his professionalism, commitment, advice and work undertaken over the years, especially with regards to planning and development, and wished him well in his retirement.

5. MAIN DEBATE – 2016/2017 COUNCIL TAX AND GENERAL FUND AND CAPITAL BUDGETS

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

The Mayor called upon the Leader of the Council, Councillor S Taylor OBE CC to move the Motion on the Council Tax Setting 2016/2017, General Fund and Capital Budgets which was circulated around the chamber.

In her speech Councillor Taylor reminded the meeting that as Stevenage New Town prepared to celebrate its seventy years of existence, it was important to recollect Mr Lewis Silkin's visionary speech in the House of Commons where he espoused the idea of creating new towns that would provide housing for people of all incomes living together creating a spirit of friendship, neighbourliness and comradeship.

Councillor Taylor informed Members that despite cuts in grants from Central Government, the Council would continue to meet its obligations to the residents of the town through its Future Town Future Council programme by building and providing accessible and affordable housing, proceed with regenerating the town centre and improve its neighbourhoods.

With regards to the regeneration plans for the town centre, Councillor Taylor informed the meeting that the proposed scheme had attracted funding from the Local Area Partnership and that SBC had acquired property in the town centre and would be investing in two public realm improvement projects along Queensway.

Concerning the New Homes Bonus received the Leader announced that this would fund the following projects:

- Stevenage New Town 70th Birthday Celebrations - £40,000
- No More Project - £49,500
- Pearl Izumi Tour Series- £70,000
- Homelessness initiatives - £36,000
- Neighbourhood Improvements - £583,000
- Apprenticeship Programme - £111,000

The Leader then moved the recommendations of the Executive and the formal Council Tax Resolution that was circulated around the Chamber.

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

Councillor Mrs Lloyd informed Council that a full equality impact assessment had been carried out in relation to every aspect of the budget and advised that the decision to increase Council Tax was not taken lightly as the Council would prefer not to limit important public services to the people of Stevenage.

Finally she extended her thanks to all involved in the budget setting process.

The Mayor then invited the Leader of the Opposition, Councillor P Bibby to address the meeting.

Councillor Bibby highlighted the work of the Leader's Services Priority Group (LSPG) in compiling the budget and thanked Officers for their work in the process. He, however, called on the LSPG to be more radical in its approach on savings and efficiencies and acknowledged that although funding cuts were not generally welcome, Stevenage like other parts of the country was not immune to the dangers and risks facing the global economy.

Finally he asked for assurance that if and when parking restrictions were introduced in and around the Lister Hospital area, that Council would make provision in its budget for funding enforcement officers to sufficiently enforce parking restrictions in adjacent residential areas.

The Leader of the Liberal Democratic Party, Councillor R Parker CC thanked the Officers for their work. He stated that his group would be supporting the budget but had concerns of the level of car parking charges, management issues at the Building Maintenance Organisation and how Local Community Budget were spent.

Councillor Parker enquired on Council's methodology in carrying out its town wide survey as residents feedback received may not be representative of residents' views on services provided by the Council.

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

- Developing local enterprise along the lines of the Business Technology Centre (BTC) in neighbourhoods would create employment opportunities
- The provision of local housing for local people by the Council was welcome
- The Council should not adhere to cuts imposed by Central Government

- Housing remains a pressing issue, however there were concerns that Council's building programme could result in the loss of park lands.
- Council would not break the law in setting an unbalanced budget that would result in the Government appointing administrators to run the Council.
- The proposals for planning and building homes and Neighbourhood improved were welcome
- The Apprenticeship scheme was running well
- Community Safety initiatives such as No More Project were welcome as it continued to have an impact on the lives of those affected.
- The work on Domestic Abuse was to be commended and SBC was working in conjunction with partners to address this issue.

In reply Councillor Taylor thanked Councillor Mrs Lloyd and the LSPG and expressed the view that cuts by central government were not the solution to reducing debt but this should be done by investing in the economy.

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

2016/2017 COUNCIL TAX AND BUDGET (Report 5A)

1. That the Budgets summarised at Appendix A* to the report, be the Council's General Fund Budget for 2015/16 and 2016/17.
2. That General Fund Budget Requirement for 2016/17 of £7,693,090 is approved with a contribution from balances of £ 1,437,060 and a Band D Council Tax of £193.52 (assuming a maximum £5.00 on a Band D property or 2.65% increase) based on the Government's financial funding settlement. This is reflected in the formal Council Tax Resolutions 3-8 below.
3. That the following is approved:
 - a. the revised working revenue estimates for the year 2015/16 amounting to £9,850,550 and the revenue estimates for 2016/17 amounting to £9,130,150;
 - b. the contribution to balances totalling £817,002 in 2015/16;
 - c. the contribution from balances totalling £1,437,060 in 2016/17.

4. That it be noted that at its meeting on 19 January 2016 the Executive calculated the amount of 25,888.5 Band D equivalent properties as its council tax base for the year 2016/17 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.

5. That the following amounts be calculated by the Council for the year 2016/17 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. £88,700,617 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. £83,690,674 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. £5,009,943 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. £193.52 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 £ 129.01

B £ 150.52

C £ 172.02

D £ 193.52

E	£ 236.52
F	£ 279.53
G	£ 322.53
H	£ 387.04

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.

6. a. That it is noted that for the year 2016/17 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

	Basic Amount Of Council Tax	2% Social Care Charge	2016/17 Council Tax
A	£ 775.87	£ 15.21	£ 791.08
B	£ 905.18	£ 17.75	£ 922.93
C	£ 1,034.49	£ 20.28	£ 1,054.77
D	£ 1,163.80	£ 22.82	£ 1,186.62
E	£ 1,422.42	£ 27.89	£ 1,450.31
F	£ 1,681.04	£ 32.97	£ 1,714.01
G	£ 1,939.67	£ 38.03	£ 1,977.70

H	£ 2,327.60	£ 45.64	£ 2,373.24
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- b. That it is noted that for the year 2016/17 Hertfordshire Police Authority have stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and amended by Section 27 of the Police and Magistrates' Court Act 1994, for each of the categories of the dwellings shown below:

Valuation Bands

A	£ 98.00
B	£114.33
C	£130.67
D	£147.00
E	£179.67
F	£212.33
G	£245.00
H	£294.00

7. 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 2016/17 for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:

Valuation Bands

A	£1,018.09
B	£1,187.78
C	£1,357.46
D	£1,527.14
E	£1,866.50
F	£2,205.87
G	£2,545.23

H £3,054.28

8. That it is agreed that in accordance with Section 52ZB Local Government Finance Act 1992 that the Council's basic amount of Council Tax for 2016/17 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.
9. That the risk assessments of General Fund Balances of £2,796,985, as shown at Appendix I to the report is noted
10. That the advice of the Chief Financial Officer on the robustness of the draft budget and the adequacy of reserves (Appendix C) is noted.
11. That the contingency sum of £400,000 for 2016/2017 within which the Executive can approve supplementary estimates is approved.
12. That the 2016/17 proposed Fees and Charges increase of £201,440 (Appendix F) be approved.
13. That the 2016/17 proposed Concessions Policy (Appendix G) and proposed concessions (Appendix H) be approved
14. That the 2016/17 proposed Savings of £233,090 (Appendix D) is approved.
15. That the 2016/17 proposed Growth options of £60,160 (Appendix E) is approved.
16. That it is noted that the General Fund Medium Term Financial Strategy continues to meet the financial objectives set by the Chief Finance Officer.

2016/17 FINAL CAPITAL FORWARD PLAN & 5 YEAR CAPITAL STRATEGY

(Report 5B)

17. That the revised General Fund and HRA 2015/16 capital programme, as detailed in Appendix A and Appendix C is approved.
18. The 2016/17 General Fund Capital Programme as detailed in Appendix A is approved.
19. The draft 2016/17 HRA Capital Programme as detailed in Appendix C is approved.

- 20 That the updated forecast of resources as summarised in Appendix A (General Fund) and Appendix C (HRA) is approved.
- 21 The growth bids identified for inclusion in the Capital Strategy (Appendix B) is approved.
- 22 That the work undertaken by LSPG on behalf of the Executive in reviewing and challenging the General Fund Capital Strategy is noted.

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

None

9. LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S UPDATE

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

The Leader of the Opposition enquired about Council plans to monitor the implementation of the review of the BMO following the recent financial loss suffered by the organisation.

In reply the Leader reminded Council that BMO had, in previous years, been a profit making service, however due to the impact of a number of factors especially the single status implementation, the loss was accrued.

The Leader informed Council that in light of the situation within BMO, a review had been completed by an independent company. This had resulted in a number of changes such as the restructuring of BMO management team; an improvement plan; and monitoring processes

had been put in place to ensure that BMO continued to provide and deliver a good service for Stevenage tenants.

10. NOTICE OF MOTIONS

None received

**11. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO COMMITTEE CHAIRS /
PORTFOLIO HOLDERS**

A. Question from Councillor R Parker CC

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration responded to a question on Council plans to repair damage to grass verges caused by Council refuse vehicles or contractors.

Council was advised that adopted grass verges adjacent to the highway in Stevenage were the sole responsibility of County Council and its contractual agreement with County did not include the reinstatement of verges. However any damage to verges by SBC drivers whilst carrying out their duties would be immediately reported to County for their contractor to undertake the works.

In reply to a supplementary question on whether the Council planned to communicate the issue of responsibility to residents whose verges have been damaged, Councillor J Gardner noted the comments and indicated that damages to verges were not always caused by SBC vehicles and that he would discuss the issue with the relevant Head of Service.

B. Question from Councillor G Snell

In reply to a question on Council's plans to improve the efficiency of the operation of the SBC search facility on the SBC website, the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Co-operative Council advised that most of these issues would be addressed as part of the Future Town Future Council Programme as it was vital that there was equal access to services

In reply to a supplementary question on timetable for its delivery, the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Co-operative Council advised meeting that a report was presently being prepared, after which an Officer review would be undertaken. Councillor Speller welcomed Members input and suggested a reference group, including Members, monitor the progress of this work and that Officers would provide Members with a timeline and an explanation on the works to be undertaken.

C Question from Councillor A McGuinness

In response to a question on whether Council had plans to increase the provision of publicly accessible toilets across town, the Portfolio Holder Resources indicated that SBC had no plans to increase the provision of publicly accessible toilets however there might be opportunities for this in the future through the delivery of Stevenage Central and other regeneration plans.

In reply to a supplementary question the Portfolio Holder Resources advised that in the past the Council had managed public toilets in and around neighbourhood centres but due to anti-social behaviour and increasing maintenance costs Council had to close them. With regards to members of the public experiencing incontinence issues, the Portfolio Holder Resources indicated that considering this was more of a public health issue, she was not best placed to respond.

12. REPORT REFERRED FROM EXECUTIVE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE – PRUDENTIAL CODE INDICATORS AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2016/2017

The Council had before it a copy of the Officer report which had been considered by the Executive on 16 February 2016 and Audit Committee on 1 February 2016 which recommended that Council adopt the 2016/2017 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, is adopted.

13. OFFICER REPORT – MEMBERS’ ALLOWANCES SCHEME 2016-2017

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

1. That the report of the Independent Panel is noted and that findings form the basis of the formal Members’ Allowances Scheme and the allowances paid the Mayor and Deputy Mayor.
2. That in the light of the report of the Independent Panel the draft formal Scheme shown at Appendix B to this report is approved for 2016/2017.

3. That allowances during 2016/17 be increased in line with future staff pay wards covered by the terms and conditions of the National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC) once known and as recommended by the Panel. This indexation to apply until 2020 subject to any further Independent Panel reports.

Councillors A. McGuinness, R Parker CC and G Snell requested that their opposition to resolutions 1 and 2 above be recorded in the Minutes.

14. 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 2016/2017.

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

1. The Pay Policy Statement set out in accordance with the Localism Act 2011, and the Data Protection Code 2015 attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved
2. 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.

15. AUDIT COMMITTEE MINUTES – 1 FEBRUARY 2016

The Council had before it the draft minutes from the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 1 February 2016.

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that the Draft Minutes of the Audit Committee of 1 February 2016 be noted

Mayor