

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 24 February 2021

Time: 7.00pm

Place: Virtual (via Zoom)

Present: Councillors: Jim Brown (Mayor), Michelle Gardner (Deputy Mayor), Sandra Barr, Philip Bibby CC, Stephen Booth, Lloyd Briscoe, Rob Broom, Adrian Brown, Teresa Callaghan, Laurie Chester, David Cullen, Michael Downing, Alex Farquharson, John Gardner, Jody Hanafin, Richard Henry, Jackie Hollywell, Lizzy Kelly, Graham Lawrence, Mrs Joan Lloyd, John Lloyd, Lin Martin-Haugh, Andy McGuinness, Maureen McKay, John Mead, Sarah Mead, Adam Mitchell CC, Margaret Notley, Robin Parker CC, Claire Parris, Loraine Rossati, Graham Snell, Simon Speller, Sharon Taylor OBE CC, Jeannette Thomas and Tom Wren.

Also Present: Alissa Dixon-Crew (Youth Mayor).

Start / End Start Time: 7.00pm
Time: End Time: 10.49pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Doug Bainbridge.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES - 28 JANUARY 2021

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Special Council meeting held on 28 January 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

3 MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Mayor began by looking forward, later in 2021, to the 75th anniversary of the designation of Stevenage as the UK's first post-war new town. Let's hope we can enjoy that.

The Mayor welcomed Councillor Adrian Brown to the meeting following his recent illness due to Covid-19. He had the sad duty to report the loss of an SBC staff member to Covid-19. The Council had seconded staff to the Robertson House vaccination centre, as well as appointing staff to work as Covid marshals, and SBC was continuing to maintain important services to its residents.

The Mayor announced that he had recently had his first Covid-19 vaccination. He thanked all the NHS workers and volunteers that were involved, and urged everyone when they were invited to make an appointment and received the vaccination.

The Mayor commented that many events had not been possible and others had been done in a different way, but it had been a busy couple of months and he had been involved with events including:

Events	Before latest lock down
Thursday 17 th December	Indoor market visit
Thursday 18 th December	Nationwide presentation and photos
Saturday 19 th December	Food Rescue Hub at Broadwater
Monday 21 st December	Quiz. Friends of Fairlands Farm.
28 th December	Tour round the Christmas toppers (the toppers raised about £1200 for the Mayor's charities)
30 th December (earlier)	Special constables video
Friday 29 th December	Haven First quiz (Mayor's Charity)
Tuesday 5 th January	New lock down
Thursday 21 st January	Holocaust Memorial Day Filming – so important that we stand together against racism
Thursday 21 st January	Media Interview on town centre and High Street
Tuesday 26 th January	Millennium Gardens. New plaque.
Wednesday 27 th January	Holocaust Memorial Day
Saturday 30 th January	Betty Game Opportunity Trust AGM
Thursday 11 th February	Watford Holocaust event
Monday 15 th February	Coptic Cathedral event
Wednesday 17 th February	Covid-19 First Vaccination
Friday 19 th February	New town signs
Wednesday 24 th February	Video for the Commonwealth Affirmation – inspiration from our diversity.
To come	Pride Awards – Stevenage Football Club /Foundation and the Lister Hospital

After ten months in office, the Mayor commented that he was still finding trying to fulfil the position during the pandemic very difficult. So many important events for the community had been cancelled or done in ways which were just not the same as people coming together.

The Mayor advised that people could still help him to raise money for his nominated charities. Go to - <https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/JimBrown20>. People were also encouraged to identify if there were any fundraising ideas or events where the Mayor could help boost their profile.

The Mayor concluded by stating that the High Street, the town centre and the neighbourhoods would be opening up again soon, and that there would be plenty to look forward to, but urged everyone to continue to look after each other.

4 **MAIN DEBATE - 2021/22 COUNCIL TAX AND GENERAL FUND AND CAPITAL BUDGETS**

The Main Debate related to item 4 on the agenda.

The Chief Executive advised that there was a small typographic error in recommendation 11 of the Motion, which was the same as Recommendation 2.5 of Item 4, and which should read 'That the 2021/22 Fees and Charges increase of £131,700, as approved at the January Executive, be noted.'

The Mayor reminded Members that, at the Annual Council meeting held on 20 May 2020, it was agreed to amend the Council's Standing Orders to require that prior notice be given of any amendments to the Budget recommendations. He understood that no such amendments had been submitted.

The Leader of the Council presented the proposed 2021/2022 Budget, projected 2021/22 General Fund Budget and final proposals for the 2021/22 Council Tax and Council Tax Support Scheme.

The Leader provided a synopsis of the past year, one of the most challenging ever experienced due to the Coronavirus pandemic. She thanked Council officers and Members, together with various partner organisations and the Stevenage community, for their magnificent support throughout the pandemic.

The Leader commented that, in spite of Government promises, SBC had received Government support funding which covered just over 50% of its Covid-related costs incurred over the past year. The cost to SBC of Covid-19 in 2020/1 was estimated to be £6.4Million and a further £3Million in 2021/22. This had resulted in a funding gap of £5Million, against a budget of £10Million.

The Leader reminded Members that the Council had taken early action to address this funding gap in June 2020, in order to lessen its impact on the 2021/22 budget. It was with great reluctance that the Council had needed to make cuts to certain services, such as community transport (alternative provision was under consideration); reduced Local Community Budgets (which it was hoped would only be a temporary measure); and cessation of a financial contribution towards the funding of Police Community Support Officers (although the Neighbourhood Warden service would continue).

The Leader commented that she was proud to state that, unlike a number of other local authorities, SBC was able to submit a balanced budget for 2021/22, largely due to the skill and expertise of officers and Members. She advised that 87% of the increase in Local Government Core Spending was to be funded by residents through rises in Council Tax. Due to the inadequacy of Government funding, SBC had been left with little choice but to increase Council Tax and fees and charges. This was in addition to a £1.5Million package of budget reductions. For 2021/22, the SBC element of the Council Tax would be increased by 2.32%. With the Hertfordshire County Council increase of 3.99% and a 7.58% increase for the Hertfordshire Police & Crime Commissioner, the Band C Council Tax for Stevenage in 2021/22 would be

£1,692 (an overall increase of just over 4%).

The Leader stated that the 2021/22 budget would include:

- The continued provision of over 120 services;
- The development of a Housing First approach to continue the work of housing rough sleepers;
- The continued provision of Council-built affordable housing;
- Provision of a strong cultural offer for the town through the SBC Cultural Strategy;
- Driving forward Community Wealth Building to create local prosperity within the town;
- Insourcing services wherever possible;
- Embedding of the Co-operative Neighbourhoods Programme in the way the Council worked (including resident involvement);
- Biodiversity and Climate Change initiatives; and
- Implementation of the Future Town Future Transport Strategy.

The Leader moved the Motion, recommendations of the Executive and the formal Council Tax Resolution that had been circulated to Members. This was seconded by the Deputy Leader (Councillor Mrs Joan Lloyd).

In seconding the motion, the Deputy Leader reiterated the fact that the measures set out in the budget report would enable the Council to remain financially resilient in 2021/22. The General Fund Budget was projected to be £12.2Million (net £10.6Million). The budget contained a prudent level of balances/reserves, although £2.4Million of savings needed to be identified during 2021/22.

The Deputy Leader reported that the level of General Fund balances as at 31 March 2021 was projected to be higher than the Covid risk-assessed figure of £3.65Million, and commented that all services and budget proposals had been rigorously challenged by the cross-party Leader's Financial Security Group.

The Deputy Leader advised that the Capital Budget for 2021/22 totalled £17.4Million, which included £3.9Million for regeneration improvements and £7Million for housing development schemes. The 2021/22 Housing Revenue Account budget would be £52Million, including £21.5Million for the building of new Council homes.

The Leader of the Opposition (Councillor Phil Bibby) stated that Members should recognise that the whole country would be paying for the Covid pandemic financially and socially for years to come. He felt that it was easy to criticise the Government for not funding all of the additional spending of local authorities, but that there was no "forest of money trees", and that it was inevitable that taxpayers would pick up the bill.

The Leader of the Opposition commented that consideration should be given to the fact that, so far, the Government had provided over £140Million to Hertfordshire councils to cover unbudgeted expenditure and compensation for lost income (part of an £8Billion package of support to Councils nationally). He was pleased to see that some of SBC's lost income had been compensated, as well as some of its

unbudgeted expenditure. The Government had needed to borrow an additional £350Billion since April 2020 to bridge the financial gap, and the total national debt was a staggering £2.9Trillion.

The Leader of the Opposition considered that, in spite of the above constraints, the SBC officers had produced a prudent and balanced budget for 2021/22, which he and his Group would be supporting. However, he would be expecting to see the drain on general balances ceasing in coming years through the implementation of most, if not all, of the further savings options mentioned in the report.

During the debate, and whilst acknowledging that the deadline for submission of budget amendments had passed, the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group (Councillor Robin Parker) asked if further consideration could be given to the following matters going forward:

- Bulky Waste Collection – the introduction of a reduced charge for the collection of less than 6 items per household;
- Local Community Budgets – a reduction in the Youth Mayor’s Budget so that it was at the same level as Members (£1,500);
- Local Community Budgets – the ability for Members to carry forward and amount of unspent budget from one financial year to the next, except in the final year of their term of office.

The Mayor requested officers to respond to Councillor Parker concerning these matters outside of the meeting.

After a full debate, a recorded vote* (see later) was taken and it was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the following be approved:
 - a. the revised working revenue estimates for the year 2020/21 amounting to £12,196,410 and the revenue estimates for 2021/22 amounting to £10,635,570;
 - b. the contribution from balances totalling £2,409,851 in 2020/21;
 - c. the contribution from balances totalling £326,067 in 2021/22.
2. That it be noted that at its meeting on 20 January 2021 the Executive calculated the amount of 27,733.8 Band D equivalent properties as its council tax base for the year 2021/22 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.
3. That the following amounts be calculated by the Council for the year 2021/22 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. £90,231,878 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. £84,114,724 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. £6,117,154 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. £220.57 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	£ 147.05
B	£ 171.55
C	£ 196.06
D	£ 220.57
E	£ 269.59
F	£ 318.60
G	£ 367.62
H	£ 441.14

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.

4. a. That it be noted that for the year 2021/22 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	Adult Social Care Charge	2021/22 Council Tax
A	£ 879.57	£ 100.85	£ 980.42
B	£ 1,026.17	£ 117.65	£ 1,143.82
C	£ 1,172.76	£ 134.46	£ 1,307.22
D	£ 1,319.36	£ 151.27	£ 1,470.63
E	£ 1,612.55	£ 184.89	£ 1,797.44
F	£ 1,905.74	£ 218.50	£ 2,124.24
G	£ 2,198.93	£ 252.12	£ 2,451.05
H	£ 2,638.72	£ 302.54	£ 2,941.26

- b. That it be noted that for the year 2021/22 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	£ 142.00
B	£ 165.67
C	£ 189.33
D	£ 213.00
E	£ 260.33
F	£ 307.67
G	£ 355.00

H £ 426.00

5. 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 2021/22 for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:

Valuation Bands

A	£1,269.47
B	£1,481.04
C	£1,692.61
D	£1,904.20
E	£2,327.36
F	£2,750.51
G	£3,173.67
H	£3,808.40

6. To determine in accordance with Section 52ZB Local Government Finance Act 1992 that the Council's basic amount of Council Tax for 2021/22 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 the 2020/21 revised net expenditure on the General Fund of £12,196,410 be approved.
8. That a draft General Fund Budget for 2021/22 of £10,635,570 be proposed for consultation purposes, with a contribution from balances of £326,067 and a Band D Council Tax of £220.57 (assuming a 2.32% increase).
9. That the Risk Assessment of General Fund balances of £3,650,000 be approved.
10. That the contingency sum of £400,000 within which the Executive can approve supplementary estimates, be approved for 2021/22, (reflecting the level of balances available above the minimum amount).
11. That the 2021/22 Fees and Charges increase of £131,700 as approved at the January Executive, be noted (Appendix I to Report 4A).
12. That the 2021/22 proposed Financial Security Options of £1,703,728 of which £1,462,182 relates to the General Fund (Appendix C to Report 4A) be approved.
13. That the Growth bids of £260,365 of which £166,966 relates to the General Fund (Appendix E to Report 4A), are approved in principle as set out in the report and

the priority order of implementation is approved as set out in paragraph 4.3.2.

14. That the General Fund pressures of £656,540 are noted, (Appendix E to Report 4A).
15. That the 2021/22 Council Tax Support scheme is approved as set out in section 4.8 of Report 4A.
16. That use of New Homes Bonus be noted (section 4.4 of Report 4A refers).
17. That the Executive approve the Financial Security targets for the General Fund as set out in section 4.11 of Report 4A
18. That the Executive approves the use of the additional COVID grants as set out in sections 4.5 and 4.6 of Report 4A.
19. That the Executive request the Senior Leadership Team to identify further options totalling £500K which could be implemented if the impact of COVID and other recessionary pressures are worse than projected (paragraph 4.1.5 of Report 4A refers).
20. That the Executive request the Senior Leadership Team to bring forward a Productivity Focused Transformation Programme by June 2021 to set out the plan for future savings (paragraph 3.9 of Report 4A refers).
21. That in accordance with the Council's Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules, the Council be recommended to continue with the current Co-operative Corporate Plan, subject to further review in Autumn 2022, (paragraphs 4.16.4-4.16.5 of report 4A refers).
22. That the comments from Overview and Scrutiny, Leaders Financial Security group and all Member group update (as set out in paragraphs 4.1.2 - 4.1.4 of Report 4A) be noted.
23. That Members note the Equalities Impact Assessments appended to Report 4A in Appendices G and H.
24. That the final General Fund Capital Growth Bids for 2021/22 only as detailed in Appendix A to Report 4B (and incorporated into Appendix D to Report 4B) be approved.
25. That the final General Fund Capital Savings and Slippage for 2020/21 – 2024/25 as detailed in Appendix B to report 4B (and incorporated into Appendix D to report 4B) be approved.
26. That the final HRA Capital budget requests for 2020/21 – 2024/25 as detailed in Appendix C to Report 4B (and incorporated into Appendix E to Report 4B) be approved.
27. That the updated forecast of Capital resources 2020/21 as detailed in Appendix D to Report 4B (General Fund) and Appendix E to Report 4B (HRA) be approved.

28. That the final 2021/22 General Fund Capital Programme as detailed in Appendix D to Report 4B be approved.
29. That the final 2021/22 HRA Capital Programme as detailed in Appendix E to Report 4B be approved.
30. That the Council's investment strategy for non-treasury assets as detailed in Appendix F to Report 4B be approved.
31. That the approach to resourcing the General Fund capital programme as outlined in Report 4B be approved.
32. That the progress on Locality Reviews as outlined in Report 4B be noted.
33. That the actions taken to ensure the General Fund Capital programme is funded as outlined in paragraphs 4.2.2 - 4.2.3 of Report 4B be noted.
34. That the 2021/22 de-minimis expenditure limit (section 4.10 Report 4B) be approved.
35. That the 2021/22 contingency allowances respectively in paragraphs 4.11.1 and 4.11.2 of Report 4B be approved.
36. That the Executive delegation set out in paragraph 4.11.3 of Report 4B, allowing approval for increases to the capital programme for grant funded projects, be approved.
37. That the appropriation of Dunn Close garage block (estimated value of £585K but red book valuation to be obtained) in 2021/22 from the General Fund to the HRA as detailed in Paragraph 4.12.3 of Report 4B be approved.

*Recorded Vote

For – Councillors Sandra Barr, Phil Bibby, Stephen Booth, Lloyd Briscoe, Rob Broom, Adrian Brown, Jim Brown, Teresa Callaghan, Laurie Chester, Dave Cullen, Michael Downing, Alex Farquharson, John Gardner, Michelle Gardner, Jody Hanafin, Richard Henry, Jackie Hollywell, Lizzy Kelly, Graham Lawrence, Mrs Joan Lloyd, John Lloyd, Lin Martin-Haugh, Andy McGuinness, Maureen McKay, John Mead, Sarah Mead, Adam Mitchell, Margaret Notley, Robin Parker, Claire Parris, Loraine Rossati, Graham Snell, Simon Speller, Sharon Taylor, Jeanette Thomas and Tom Wren - 36

Against – 0

Abstentions – 0

Not present – Councillors Doug Bainbridge and Liz Harrington.

5 PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS

None.

6 QUESTIONS FROM THE YOUTH COUNCIL

The Mayor advised that a number of questions had been submitted by the Youth Council, but unfortunately had arrived after the required deadline and were too late for inclusion the agenda. However, officers had been asked to provide replies directly to the Youth Council on the matters raised.

7 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

Council received one question from a member of the public relating electric vehicle charging points. The response to the question had been published in the supplementary agenda for the meeting. The questioner (Mr David Healey) was present in the meeting, and asked the following supplementary question:

“As the Council has committed to being more green, and has allocated funding for electric vehicle chargers, and the fact that some Government funding is available:

1. As part of this and other schemes, has the Council considered the potential in residential areas to install smaller, cheaper and more accessible lamp post chargers, as seen in other Council areas?
2. And when considering the location of these chargers in neighbourhood areas, has the Council considered those locations not only based on the electric grid, but also based on where there is current demand from residents (such as creating a list of requests/register of interests)?”

The Portfolio Holder for Economy, Enterprise and Transport replied by referring back to the Government’s “Road to Zero” Strategy, published three years ago, which stated how it was proposed to support the transition to zero emission road transport. Policy 27 of that Strategy alluded to the Automated and Electric Vehicles Bill 2018, which provided powers to provide a uniform method for accessing public refuelling points.

The Portfolio Holder advised that, as a consequence of the above Bill, Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) published an Electric Vehicle Technical report in September 2018. Section 6.9 of that report touched on the issue of the retrofitting of electric vehicle charging points in existing homes and homes with on-street parking. The Government recognised the challenges faced by local authorities in implementing such equipment, not least due to the infrastructure constraints. The HCC report went on to recommend a note of caution, particularly when investing in charging points, given the speed in technical innovation and the likelihood of some chargers becoming redundant.

The Portfolio Holder referred to the adopted SBC Parking Provision and Sustainable Transport Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). Sections 5.1 to 5.4 of that SPD referenced electric vehicle charging points, particularly with regard to new development. The SBC Future Town, Future Transport Strategy (in Sections 5.52 to 5.55) recognised the increase in electric vehicle usage, and an action embedded in the Strategy endorsed the implementation of more charging points, as part of a combined initiative with HCC.

The Portfolio Holder drew attention to the SBC Climate Change Strategy (September 2020), which informed that the National Committee on Climate Change, which advised the Government, had stated that there should be one electric vehicle charging point for every 1,000 cars by 2030. For Stevenage, this would mean 42 chargers on SBC-controlled land, against the current total of 10 such chargers. He agreed, therefore, that there was clearly a need for a much faster transition to electric vehicles, which would mean the installation of many more charging points to those currently provided.

The Portfolio Holder concluded by referring to the questioner's suggestion in his original question regarding a Joint Task Team, and advised that SBC officers were working very closely with their counterparts at HCC. He was confident that when funding and infrastructure issues were addressed the Council would be able to move forward.

8 LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S UPDATE

The Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Phil Bibby, asked the following question:

“In relation to the Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan, no-one would disagree with the necessity to revamp the Station gateway to the town centre, but this is only now going out to consultation, with plans for the SG1 development well progressed. Do you see a danger that no funding is secured for developing this area in the short-term, which is vital for the success of regeneration as a whole?”

The Leader of the Council replied that the Council had always planned to develop an Area Action Plan for the Station. She referred to the Town Investment Plan bid submitted to the Government by the Stevenage Development Board, the outcome of which was expected imminently. If the funding bid was successful, there was likely to be an indication from the Government about which projects contained in the bid were expected to be progressed. She stated that she would not be surprised if one of those projects would be the scheme for improvements to the Station area. She added that Mace, the developers of the SG1 scheme, had been involved throughout in discussions regarding the Station Area Action Plan, in order to ensure connectivity between these two projects. She commented that the scheme for improvements to the Station area had also received significant support from major businesses in the Borough, many of whom had representation on the Stevenage Development Board.

The Leader of the Council provided updates on the Covid-19 vaccination programme; the Prime Minister's relaxation of Covid restrictions Road Map; and local Covid-19 infection rates. She then invited Councillor Adrian Brown to address the Council. Councillor Brown gave a moving account of his recent experience in the Lister Hospital Critical Ward following his contracting of coronavirus. He thanked everyone for their messages of support and best wishes during his time in hospital and afterwards.

The Leader of the Council provided further updates on plans for a 6 month pilot scheme to reduce the cost of collection of bulky waste for up to 3 items; and works to build up the highway in certain parts of the High Street to increase pavement

seating/dining areas.

The Council then received updates from relevant Executive Portfolio Holders on the following matters:

- Green Homes Grants;
- Stevenage Gateway Area Action Plan;
- Local Community Budgets;
- Covid support for Community & Neighbourhood Teams;
- Neighbourhood Meetings; and
- Community Safety in Bedwell.

The Leader of the Opposition informed the Council that Hertfordshire County Council would be producing a position statement regarding electric vehicle charging points (proposing a mixture of off-street charging points, car park charging points, destination charging points and rapid charging stations). He added that HCC felt that on-street charging points had a role to play, but were struggling to find out how this would be managed on a day-to-day basis. He asked how parking would be managed in a street with electric charging points (in terms of a potential scramble between electric and fossil-fuel vehicles for parking spaces), and what would happen with the parking displaced from streets containing electric charging points?

The Portfolio Holder for Economy, Enterprise and Transport undertook to consult with officers and provide the Leader of the Opposition with a written reply.

With the Mayor's permission, the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group asked why the pilot proposal to reduce the cost of bulky waste collection of less than 3 items had not been included as an amendment to the 2021/22 budget?

The Strategic Director (CF) replied that this item was not a budget amendment for 2021/22, but would be included in the 2020/21 Third Quarter Revenue Budget monitoring report to be submitted to the meeting of the Executive on 10 March 2021, and upon which the Overview & Scrutiny Committee would be afforded the opportunity to comment.

9 ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY INCLUDING PRUDENTIAL CODE INDICATORS 2021/22

The Council considered a report in respect of the Annual Treasury Management Strategy including Prudential Code Indicators 2021/22.

In response to a question concerning the potential impact of Brexit on SBC's investments with counterparties, the Strategic Director (CF) replied that one money market fund domiciled in Luxembourg had closed recently (possibly Brexit-related), but that a major issue was that banks did not want fixed term deposits and hence the Council's investments had switched to other local authorities.

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

1. That the Treasury Management Strategy 2021/22, as attached at Appendix A

to the report, be approved.

2. That the prudential indicators for 2021/22 be approved.
3. That the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy be approved.
4. That an increase to counterparty limits for short term investments (invested for up to one year) from £8Million to £10Million, when cash balances are higher than £30Million, be approved.

10 UPDATE FROM SCRUTINY CHAIRS

The Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee reported that there had been two meetings of the Committee since the December 2020 Council meeting. The Committee had reviewed the decisions of the Executive on financial/budgetary matters, as well as a number of policy and strategy items.

The Chair of the Community Select Committee reported that Members of the Committee had been involved in an interesting Portfolio Holder Advisory Group meeting on the Community Safety Strategy. She had also held an informal meeting of the Committee to consider suggested items for scrutiny/review in 2021/22.

The Chair of the Environment & Economy Select Committee reported that formal meetings of the Committee had been temporarily suspended, but that the work of the Committee on scrutinising the response of the Council to the Covid-19 pandemic was continuing in a variety of informal ways, including a Sub-Group which was looking at the impact of the pandemic on young people.

11 NOTICE OF MOTIONS

SBC communications with new residents

A motion was moved by Councillor Stephen Booth, and seconded by Councillor Andy McGuinness.

Following debate, and upon being put to the vote, the motion was carried and it was **RESOLVED:**

“That the Council ensures that new residents, whether new to Stevenage or moving from other parts of the town, in addition to their Council Tax demand, receive a leaflet welcoming them to the area, explaining who their ward representatives are and how to contact them, their access to local facilities, what town wide facilities are available to them and useful information of these services and other essential services via web addresses and phone numbers.”

The Chief Executive stated that, with the Motion having been carried, he would ask the relevant officers to consider how to facilitate this and provide details of all the relevant financial and other implications as required. This would include giving consideration to the establishment of an online new residents section via the SBC website that could be updated quickly and easily as and when key information

changed and/or future additions or enhancements were suggested. Once an appropriate way forward has been identified he would inform all Members.

12 **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO COMMITTEE CHAIRS/PORTFOLIO HOLDERS**

The Council received five questions from Members to Committee Chairs/Portfolio Holders. The responses to the five questions had been published in the supplementary agenda for the meeting.

The Mayor asked Member questioners if they would be prepared to submit their supplementary questions and receive replies outside of the meeting.

- (A) Councillor Stephen Booth agreed to submit a supplementary question and receive a reply outside of the meeting.
- (B) Councillor Andy McGuinness agreed to submit a supplementary question and receive a reply outside of the meeting.
- (C) Councillor Parker commented that he would also submit a supplementary question in writing, and then asked the following supplementary question:

“On 11 February 2021, Officers had advised him that the new “town entry” signs were paid for from the Street Nameplate budget, which otherwise would have been underspent in 2020/21, at a cost of £5,240. Eleven days later he received a further communication from officers stating that the Engineering Service has limited funds for Street Nameplates and that they would only be replaced if illegible or broken. Which, if either, of these statements was correct and, if there was an underspend, why not return it to the General Fund? Why was there no public consultation regarding the new signage, and why do they not contain any Town twinning information?”

The Portfolio Holder for Economy, Enterprise and Transport replied by referring to the opening statement in SBC’s Arts & Heritage Strategy, in that the Council “aims to build our unique heritage to make Stevenage a destination town that attracts visitors from Hertfordshire, London and beyond to our thriving, creative environment”. This Strategy received cross-Party support when it was introduced.

The Portfolio Holder for Economy, Enterprise and Transport considered that the new “Town Entry” signs satisfied the above thinking creditably and effectively. The new signs were indicative of a thriving, vibrant town. He commented that similar new signs had recently been introduced in Welwyn Garden City, and had received very positive feedback from the local community. He was pleased with the new signs for Stevenage and he hoped that Members of the Council would be too.

- (D) Councillor Graham Snell agreed to submit a supplementary question and receive a reply outside of the meeting.

- (E) Councillor Tom Wren agreed to submit a supplementary question and receive a reply outside of the meeting.

13 MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME 2021/22

The Council considered a report in respect of a proposed Members' Allowances Scheme for 2021/22.

It was moved and seconded that the recommendation set out in the report be approved.

As an amendment, it was moved by Councillor Robin Parker and seconded by Councillor Stephen Booth, that the level of the Special Responsibility Allowance for the Chair of the Licensing Committee, together with the level of Allowance paid to the Leaders of the Opposition and Minority Parties, be referred back to the Independent Remuneration Panel for further consideration.

Following debate, and upon being put to the vote, the amendment was lost.

Upon the substantive motion being put to the vote, it was **RESOLVED** that a Members' Allowances Scheme for 2021/22, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be agreed.

14 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2021/22

The Council considered a report in respect of the Pay Policy Statement for 2021/22.

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

1. That the Pay Policy Statement set out in accordance with the Localism Act 2011 and the Local Government Transparency Code 2015, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.
2. 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 the Council's Chronicle magazine.

15 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That under Section 100A 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 involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in Paragraphs 1 – 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as amended by Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.
2. That the reasons for the following reports being in Part II were accepted, and that the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

16 THE FORMATION OF A WHOLLY OWNED HOUSING DEVELOPMENT COMPANY - RENEWED BUSINESS PLAN APPROVAL AND FINANCIAL PROJECTIONS

The Council considered a Part II report in respect of a renewed business plan and financial projections regarding the wholly owned Housing Development Company.

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that Recommendations 2.2.1 to 2.2.4 of the report be approved.

MAYOR