

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

FULL COUNCIL MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 28th February, 2007

Time: 7.00pm

Place: Council Chamber, Daneshill House

Present: Members: Councillors S.K. Speller (Mayor), J. Lloyd, CC (Deputy Mayor), S. Batson, CC, G. Clark, R.A. Clark, D.W. Cullen, CC, M. Downing, CC (from 8.45pm), P.E.J. Gallagher, J. Gardner, B.P. Hall, L. Harrington, R.J. Henry, J. Hollywell, B. Jackson, T.G.M. Kent, CC (from 7.40pm), P.D. Kissane, L. Knight, JP, L.A. Lambert, C. Latif, Mrs J.E. Lloyd, M.A. Mason, S.M. Myson, M. Notley, R.G. Parker, CC, M.P. Patston, J.A. Pickersgill, J.R. Raynor, D. Royall, R.J. Smith, MBE, DL, G. Snell, Mrs L.G. Strange, P. Stuart, S. Taylor, H.C.L. Tessier, J. Thomas, A.T. Turner (until 9.00pm), B.G. Underwood and K. Vale.

In Attendance: Approximately 10 Members of the public.

Start/End Time: Start Time: 7.00pm
End Time: 10.12pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Mrs. Ann Webb, and apologies for lateness were submitted by Councillors Michael Downing and Tanis Kent.

Members declared the following non prejudicial interests in relation to Item 4 in respect of the General Fund Budget:-

COUNCILLORS:

PEJ Gallagher - Old Stevenage Community Association

B.P. Hall - Stevenage/Autun/Ingelheim Association

R.J. Henry - Sport Stevenage

John Lloyd, CC - Stevenage Day

S.M. Myson - Stevenage Leisure Ltd

R.G. Parker, CC - Chells Community Association

R.J. Smith, MBE, DL - Douglas Drive Day Centre & Pin Green Community Centre.

S. Taylor - Stevenage Leisure Limited

H.C.L. Tessier - Stevenage Haven, Springfield House and Stevenage Day

The following Members declared prejudicial interests in relation to Item 4 in respect of the General Fund Budget and left the meeting during discussion of this item.:-

COUNCILLORS:

S. Batson, CC - Stevenage Leisure Ltd

P.D. Kissane - Stevenage Consolidated Charities and Credit Union

M.P. Patson - Stevenage Leisure Ltd

The following Members declared prejudicial interests in relation to Item 10 in respect of the HRA Budget by reason their membership of the Stevenage Homes Ltd Board and they left the meeting during discussion of this item:-

Councillor E. Knight, JP

Councillor C. Latif

Councillor John Lloyd, CC

Councillor B.G. Underwood

2 MINUTES - Wednesday, 31st January, 2007

Minutes attached

It was RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 31st January 2007, having been circulated, be taken as read, confirmed and signed by the Mayor as a correct record, subject to Councillor Hugh Tessier's apologies for absence be included in Item 1.

Councillor L. Lambert indicated that he had been absent for the last meeting and, although he had not submitted his apologies at that time, he formally tendered them in retrospect.

3 MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Mayor announced that since the December 2006 Council meeting he had attended many Christmas events and had played the guitar at the Ladies' Choir Concert.

The Mayor highlighted other events which he had recently attended, including the Britain in Bloom National Seminar which had been hosted in Stevenage and organised by Royal Horticultural Society, the North Herts Sports Awards and the Young Person of the Year Awards. Concerning the Britain in Bloom Seminar, he payed special tribute to Jean Allinson for her work organising this event on the part of the Council.

He also referred to the launch of the Scouts Centenary Year and his visits to three affordable housing developments. The Mayor's future events included starting the British Heart Foundation Fun Run at Knebworth House on 4th March, the Charity Concert at the Gordon Craig Theatre on 5th March and cycling to Lavenham on 25th March.

The Mayor then drew attention to the impending retirements of two senior officers, namely Ian Paske, Chief Executive and Bill Welch, Strategic Director who had served the Council with dedication and distinction for many years.

The Leader of the Council thanked Ian and Bill for their constant hard work and devotion to the Council over the past thirty five and thirty three years respectively, and she gave examples of their many achievements throughout this time. On behalf of the Council, she wished them every success for the future as well as a long and happy retirement and she presented each of them with gifts from the Council.

Other Members of the Council joined in congratulating Ian and Bill on their many years of dedicated and loyal service to the Council and wished them both all the very best for the future.

Ian and Bill responded in turn to the tributes paid to them and thanked Members for their kind gifts.

It was RESOLVED that a vote of thanks to Ian Paske and Bill Welch for their unstinting service to Stevenage Borough Council be recorded.

The Mayor then informed the Council of a change of order in the agenda. Item 10 - the Housing Revenue Account Budget 2006/07 Probable and 2007/08 Estimates - was to be taken before the Main Debate.

4 **MAIN DEBATE - 'MONEY MATTERS'**

REPORT attached
APPENDIX attached

Councillors Batson and Patston, having declared prejudicial interests in this item, left the meeting.

The Council considered a report and recommendations from the meeting of the Executive held on 14th February 2007 in respect of the General Fund Budget, Revenue and Leasing Forward Plan and Capital Programme 2007/08. A revised Appendix C to the report was circulated, taking account of the County Council and Policy Authority precepts.

At this juncture, it was moved, seconded and RESOLVED that Standing Orders 17(f) and 18(c)(iii) concerning the time limits for the debate and for speaking be waived for this item.

The Leader of the Council delivered her budget speech for 2007/08. As part of her speech, she referred to work which had been undertaken in connection with making Stevenage a Fair-trade town and she introduced Nicola Brady from John Henry Newman School who served on the Stevenage Fair Trade Committee. Nicola gave a presentation on Fair-trade activities during the past year.

The Leader gave an overview of the budget recommended by the Executive, then drew attention to a series of proposals relating to the increase in Council Tax and Capital and Revenue Budgets for 2007/08.

These proposals were detailed in her speech, a copy which was circulated to all Members of the Council, together with a revised formal Council Tax Motion incorporating Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Police Authority precepts as well as the 2007/08 Budget.

The Motion was seconded by Councillor B.P. Hall.

During and following the Leader's Speech, the following Declarations of Interest were made:

COUNCILLORS:

- G. Clark - Credit Union (Prejudicial)
- J. Gardner - Stevenage Sport (Non prejudicial)
- E. Knight - SHL (Non prejudicial)
- C. Latif - SHL (Non prejudicial)
- J. Pickersgill - Credit Union (Prejudicial)
- L.G. Strange - Credit Union (Prejudicial)
- S. Taylor - Rock in the Park (Non-prejudicial)
- B. Underwood - Credit Union (Non prejudicial)
- K. Vale - Stevenage Borough Football Club

Those having declared prejudicial interests left the meeting.

The Assistant Chief Executive (Finance), in his role as Chief Financial Officer, confirmed that he remained satisfied with the robustness of the 2007/08 Budget Estimates and adequacy of reserves.

Following further debate, it was RESOLVED:-

1. That the comments of the Scrutiny Overview Committee on the General Fund Budget proposals be noted.
2. That the Budget summarised at Appendix A to the report be the Council's General Fund Budget for 2007/08.
3. That the following be approved:
 - a. the probable revenue estimates for the year 2006/07 amounting to £14,746,450 and the revenue estimates for 2007/08 amounting to £14,468,260;
 - b. the contribution from balances of £2,834,167 in 2006/07;
 - c. the contribution from balances totalling £1,978,669 in 2007/08 subject to the additional proposals put forward in the Leader's Speech.
4. That it be noted that at its meeting on 24th January 2007 the Executive calculated the amount of 27,473.70 Band D equivalent properties as its council tax base for the year 2007/08 in accordance with Regulation 3 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992

made under Section 33(5) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

5. That the following amounts be now calculated by the Council for the year 2007/08 in accordance with Sections 32 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992:

a. £12,489,591 - Being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 32(2)(a) to (e) of the Act, less the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 32(3)(a) to (c)

b. £7,653,773 - Being the aggregate of the sums which the Council estimates will be payable for the year into its general fund in respect of redistributed non-domestic rates and revenue support grant

c. £38,086 - Being the utilisation of the Council's share of the estimated surplus totalling £278,000 as calculated in accordance with Sections 97(3) and Section 98(4) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988

d. £174.63 - Being the amount at 3a. above less the amounts at 3b. and 3c. above, all divided by the amount at 2. Above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 33(1) of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year

e. VALUATION BANDS

A - £116.42

B - £135.82

C - £155.23

D - £174.63

E - £213.44

F - £252.24

G - £291.05

H - £349.26

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 be noted that for the year 2007/08 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 - £689.42

B - £804.32

C - £919.23

D - £ 1,034.13

E - £ 1,263.94

F - £ 1,493.74

G - £ 1,723.55

H - £ 2,068.26

b. That it be noted that for the year 2007/08 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 - £86.78

B - £101.24

C - £115.71

D - £130.17

E - £159.10

F - £188.02

G - £216.95

H - £260.34

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 2007/08 for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:

VALUATION BANDS

A - £892.62

B - £1,041.38

C - £1,190.17

D - £1,338.93

E - £1,636.48

F - £1,934.00

G - £2,231.55

H - £2,677.86

8. That a General Fund Revenue Account Contingency Sum in the Budget and Policy Framework for 2007/08 of £500,000 be agreed.

9. That the additional spending proposals made in the Leader's Speech be reported to Executive and Scrutiny Overview Committee in March for approval.

10. That the 2007/08 General Fund Capital Forward Plan schemes as summarised in paragraph 6.1 of the report be approved.

11. That a Contingency Sum in the budget and policy framework for 2007/08 of £2,000,000 for the Capital Programme be agreed.

12. That the advice of the Assistant Chief Executive (Finance) on the robustness of the draft budget and the adequacy of reserves as confirmed at the meeting be noted.

5 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None received.

6 PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS

None received.

7 LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S UPDATE

The Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Opposition stated that there were no matters for update.

8 NOTICE OF MOTIONS

None received.

9 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO COMMITTEE CHAIRS/PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

None received.

10 MATTER REFERRED FROM THE EXECUTIVE FOR DECISION - HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET 2006/07 PROBABLE & 2007/08 ESTIMATES

REPORT attached
SHL REPORT attached
APPENDIX attached
APPENDIX attached
APPENDIX attached

This item was taken immediately following the Mayor's Communications and before the Main Debate.

Councillors Knight, Latif, John Lloyd and Underwood, having declared prejudicial interests in the item, left the meeting during its consideration.

The Council had before it a copy of the officer report considered by the Executive, together with that body's recommendation. It was noted that the Scrutiny Overview Committee concurred with the Executive's recommendation that the initial HRA 2007/08 as detailed in Appendix A of the report be approved.

It was RESOLVED that the initial HRA 2007/08 Capital Forward Plan be approved as detailed in Appendix A of the report.

11 MATTER REFERRED FROM THE EXECUTIVE FOR DECISION - THE PRUDENTIAL CODE INDICATORS AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

REPORT attached
APPENDIX attached
APPENDIX attached

The Council had before it an Executive report from the Assistant Chief Executive (Finance) seeking approval to the Prudential Indicators for 2007/08.

It was RESOLVED:-

1. That the Prudential Code Indicators as detailed in Appendix A to the

report be adopted.

2. That the 2007/08 Treasury Management Strategy be adopted.

12 **OFFICER REPORT - MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME**

REPORT attached
APPENDIX attached

The Council considered a report requiring it to make a Members' Allowances Scheme from 1st April 2007 to 31st March 2008.

It was RESOLVED that the Members' Allowances Scheme as set out in the appendix to the report be approved for the period 1st April 2007 to 31st March 2008.

13 **MINUTES - APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE - 18TH JANUARY 2007**

MINUTES attached

Chief Superintendent Gary Kitching was thanked for his participation the appointments procedure in this connection.

It was RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Appointments Committee held on 18th January 2007, having been circulated, be accepted as a true record.

14 **MINUTES - AUDIT COMMITTEE - Wednesday, 27th September, 2006**

Minutes attached

It was RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 27th September 2006 be noted, and that Councillor A.T. Turner's name be removed from those listed as being present.

MAYOR