

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MINUTES

Date: Wednesday 25 February 2009

Time: 7.00 p.m.

Place: Council Chamber

Present: The Mayor (Councillor M Patston), the Deputy Mayor (Councillor J Lloyd CC) and Councillors H Burrell, M Cherney-Craw, L Chester, D Clark, G Clark, R Clark, D Cullen CC, J Fraser, J Gardner, R Henry, M Hurst, B Jackson, D Kissane, C Latif, Mrs J Lloyd, L Martin-Haugh, M Mason, S Myson, R Parker CC, J Pickersgill, R Raynor, G Snell, L Strange, P Stuart, S Taylor CC, J Thomas, A Webb

Agenda Item:
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In Attendance:

Start/End Time: Start Time: 7.00 pm
End Time: 9.05 pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors S Batson MBE CC, M Downing CC, P Gallagher, L Harrington, J Hollywell, L Knight, M Notley, S Speller, B Underwood and V Warwick.

Councillors C Latif and J Lloyd CC declared prejudicial interests in item 11 as members of the SHL board, and left the meeting during consideration of this item.

2 MINUTES - WEDNESDAY 10 DECEMBER 2008

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 10 December 2008 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

3 MINUTES - WEDNESDAY 28 JANUARY 2009

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 28 January 2009 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor, subject to the removal of Councillor J Thomas from the list of Members present.

4 MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Mayor offered condolences on behalf of the Council and the town to David Cameron and his family, following the sad death of his son, Ivan, the day before.

The Council's condolences were also offered to the family of Brian Jones, the Council's former Engineering Services Manager, who had sadly passed away earlier in the month.

The Council joined the Mayor in sending best wishes to Councillor B Underwood and to the Council's former Chief Executive, Michael Banks, who were both currently in hospital.

The Mayor referred to the success of the recent 'Stevenage Has Got Talent' event. Of the 25 groups which had auditioned, six had been selected to perform at the Mayor's Charity event.

In addition, the Mayor referred to the 'Rock Challenge' event which he had attended at the Stevenage Leisure Centre. This initiative, which was organised through primary and secondary schools, challenged young people to work in a team to design, produce and support their own performances of music, dance or drama. The focus of the initiative was on reducing substance abuse.

The Mayor informed the Council that he had changed the order of business on the agenda, to consider item 11 (Capital Strategy Update) before item 5 (Setting the Council Tax and General Fund Budget 2009/10).

5 MAIN DEBATE - COUNCIL TAX AND GENERAL FUND BUDGET 2009/10

Following the consideration of item 11 (Capital Strategy Update), the Mayor gave his apologies and left the meeting as he had a prior engagement. The Deputy Mayor, Councillor J Lloyd CC, took the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

An officer report had been circulated that detailed the recommendations from the Executive in respect of setting the Council Tax and the General Fund Budget 2009/10.

The Chief Executive advised the Council of the precepts which had been set by the County Council and the Police Authority. For a Band D property, the County Council element of the Council Tax Bill would be £1,118.83 - an increase of 3.49%; and the for Police Authority, this would be £142.82 - an increase of 4.5%.

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

1. That Standing Order 18(c)(iii) be waived for the Leader's speech to allow up to 40 minutes.
2. That Standing Order 18(c) be varied to allow 15 minutes for the Leader of the Opposition.
3. That Standing Order 17(f) be waived to allow the debate to continue beyond 40 minutes if necessary.

Before outlining the budget proposals, the Leader of the Council referred to the global economic downturn, and its impact on Stevenage. She considered that this difficult situation required strong leadership at national and local level, and referred to the measures being taken by the Council to support the community, local businesses and the voluntary sector. This was informed by the Council's vision for the town: acknowledging its 'new town' heritage, but meeting the aspirations and

lifestyle of twenty-first century people, with modern recreational facilities, affordable housing, successful schools, and increased prosperity.

The Leader updated the Council on some of the initiatives introduced in the previous year's budget, and outlined how the Council would be investing money on behalf of the people of Stevenage for 2009/10. The recession had resulted in a significant impact on the five-year financial strategy with the anticipated reduction in income, and for a second year the Leader's Services Priority Group had reviewed services to identify potential savings. The Leader expressed regret in respect of some of these measures, but emphasised that the prioritisation was required to meet the pressure on the budget, and to maintain essential services. The Leader then presented the proposals for the General Fund Budget, including a reduced Council Tax increase of 3.9%. The details of the budget was set out in the speech, copies of which were circulated around the chamber.

The Leader then moved a revised set of recommendations including the revised level of Council Tax increase, and the final detail of the County Council and Police Authority precepts, as tabled around the Chamber, which were duly seconded. The Strategic Director (Resources), acting in his capacity as the Council's Chief Finance Officer, confirmed that he was satisfied that the revised 2009/10 budget, as moved, was robust and that the reserves held were adequate.

Two amendments were moved and seconded. After debate, a vote was taken and both of the amendments were declared LOST.

After a full debate, which included contributions from speakers in the Public Gallery, it was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the Budget summarised at appendix A to the report and adjusted for additional net savings of £52,500 be the Council's General Fund budget for 2009/10.
2. That the following be approved:
 - a. the probable revenue estimates for the year 2008/09 amounting to £14,901,260 and the revenue estimates for 2009/10 amounting to £15,072,850;
 - b. the contribution from balances of £1,953,530 in 2008/09; and
 - c. the contribution from balances totalling £1,804,514 in 2009/10.
3. That it be noted that at its meeting on 21 January 2009 the Executive calculated the amount of 28,487.65 Band D equivalent properties as its council tax base for the year 2008/09 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.
4. That the following amounts be now calculated by the Council for the year 2009/10 in accordance with Sections 32 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992:
 - a. £13,268,336 - 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. £7,813,954 - 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. £84,000 - Being the utilisation of the Council's share of the estimated surplus totalling £288,990 as calculated in accordance with Sections 97 (3) and Section 98(4) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988;
 - d. £188.52 - Being the amount at 4a. above less the amounts at 4b. and 4c. above, all divided by the amount at 3. 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; and
 - e. Valuation Bands - Being the amounts given by multiplying the amount at 4d. 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:
 - A. £125.68
 - B. £146.63
 - C. £167.57
 - D. £188.52
 - E. £230.41
 - F. £272.31
 - G. £314.20
 - H. £377.04
5. That it be noted that for the year 2009/10 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. £745.89
 - B. £870.20
 - C. £994.52
 - D. £1,118.83
 - E. £1,367.46
 - F. £1,616.09
 - G. £1,864.72
 - H. £2,237.66
6. That it be noted that for the year 2009/10 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. £95.21
 - B. £111.08
 - C. £126.95
 - D. £142.82
 - E. £174.56
 - F. £206.30

- G. £238.03
 - H. £285.64
7. That, having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at 4e. and 5 and 6 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 2009/10 for each of the categories of dwellings shown below - Valuation Bands:
- A. £966.78
 - B. £1,127.91
 - C. £1,289.04
 - D. £1,450.17
 - E. £1,772.43
 - F. £2,094.70
 - G. £2,416.95
 - H. £2,900.34.
8. That a General Fund Revenue Account Contingency Sum in the Budget and Policy Framework for 2009/10 of £400,000 be approved.
9. That the advice of the Strategic Director (Resources) on the robustness of the draft budget and the adequacy of reserves be noted.

6 PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS

None received.

7 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

A question had been received from Mr A Glanfield of Oaklands Close, Stevenage, concerning the development of Ridgemoor Park and the loss of the swimming pool. The full question was detailed in the agenda. The questioner made a statement in relation to the question and responses were given by the Executive Member for Environment and Regeneration, Council J Gardener, and by the Executive Member for Children and Young People, Culture, Sport and Leisure, Councillor H Burrell. A supplementary question was asked and was answered by Councillor Burrell.

8 LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S UPDATE

The Deputy Mayor invited the Leader of the Opposition, Councillor G Clark, to raise a matter in accordance with Standing Order 11. Councillor Clark indicated that he did not wish to raise any issues on this occasion.

The Deputy Mayor reported that the Leader of the Council had also indicated that she did not wish to raise any matters on this occasion.

9 NOTICE OF MOTIONS

None.

10 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO COMMITTEE CHAIRS/PORTFOLIO

HOLDERS

None.

11 MATTER REFERRED FROM THE EXECUTIVE - CAPITAL STRATEGY UPDATE

Note: This item was considered immediately following item 4 (Mayor's Communications) with the Mayor presiding. Councillors C Latif and J Lloyd CC, having declared prejudicial interests in this item, left the meeting for consideration of the item.

The Council had before it a copy of the officer report which had been considered by the Executive on 11 February 2009 and which set out proposals for the 2009/10 General Fund Capital Programme, the 2009/10 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme, and the Five-year Capital Strategy.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the Revised 2008/09 General Fund (£12,811,490) and Housing Revenue Account (£12,528,530) Capital Programme totalling £25,340,020 as detailed in Appendix A, including the virement of £300,000 to the Aids and Adaptations budget, be approved.
2. That the 2009/10 General Fund Forward Plan proposals totalling £362,500 as detailed in Appendix B and as included in the Five-Year Capital Strategy, be approved.
3. That the 2009/10 General Fund (£11,202,130), Housing Revenue Account (£7,606,480) Capital Programmes and the allowance for emergency works (£127,000), totalling £18,935,610 as detailed in Appendix A, be approved.
4. That the updated Five-Year Capital Strategy, as detailed in Appendix A, be approved, incorporating:
 - a. The 2008/09 Revised and 2009/10 General Fund Capital Forward Plans;
 - b. The 2008/09 Revised and 2009/10 Housing Revenue Account Capital Programmes;
 - c. Updated forecasts of resources estimated to become available from small land sales and Right-to-Buy sales; and
 - d. Contingency for emergency schemes of £127,000.
5. That the ongoing work of the Corporate Capital Review Group, Strategic Management Board, and the Executive Capital Working Group to bring the Five-Year Capital Strategy into balance, be noted.

12 MATTER REFERRED FROM EXECUTIVE - PRUDENTIAL CODE INDICATORS AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Council had before it a copy of the officer report which had been considered by the Executive on 11 February 2009, and which recommended the 2009/10 Prudential Code Indicators and the Treasury Management Strategy for approval.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the Prudential Code Indicators as detailed in Appendix A to the report be adopted, and the changes to the investment limits proposed in paragraph 4.2.8 of the report, be approved.
2. That the 2009/10 Treasury Management Strategy, as detailed in paragraph 4.2 of the report, be approved.

13 OFFICER REPORT - MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME 2009-2010

The Council considered an officer report recommending a Members' Allowance Scheme for 2009/10.

As noted during item 5 (Council Tax and General Fund Budget 2009/10) the Leader moved a revised motion, which was duly seconded.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Members' Allowance Scheme for 2009/10, as set out in Appendix A, be approved, subject to the index-linked increases not being applied for 2009/10.

14 AUDIT COMMITTEE MINUTES - 12 JANUARY 2009

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee, held on 12 January 2009, be noted.

15 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was **RESOLVED** 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 involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraphs 1-7 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act, as amended by SI 2006 No. 88.

16 PART II AUDIT COMMITTEE MINUTES - 12 JANUARY 2009

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II Minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 12 January 2009 be noted.