

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL
EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF COUNCIL
MINUTES

Date: Thursday 18 June 2009

Time: 7.00 p.m.

Place: Council Chamber

Present: The Deputy Mayor (Councillor J Lloyd CC), S Batson MBE DL, H Burrell, M Cherney-Craw, L Chester, B Clark, G Clark, D Clark, D Cullen, P Gallagher, J Gardner, L Harrington, J Hollywell, M Hurst CC, B Jackson, D Kissane, Mrs J Lloyd, L Martin-Haugh, M Notley, R Parker CC, J Pickersgill, R Raynor, G Snell, L Strange, S Taylor CC, B Underwood, A Webb

Agenda Item:

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In Attendance:

Start/End Time: Start Time: 7.00 pm
End Time: 7.45 pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence had been received from the Mayor, Councillor Sue Myson, and from Councillors M Downing, J Fraser CC, R Henry, L Knight, C Latif, M Mason, M Patston, S Speller, P Stuart, J Thomas and V Warwick, and also from Nic Heslop, Chair of the Youth Council.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 OFFICER REPORT - RESULTS OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTARY AND HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2009

An officer report had been circulated which formally reported the results of the European Parliamentary and Hertfordshire County Council elections which had been held on 4 June 2009.

In moving the recommendation, the Leader of the Council, Councillor S Taylor CC, offered congratulations to the newly-elected Councillors for Stevenage divisions on the County Council, and thanked the outgoing County Councillors for their service. Councillors G Clark and R Parker, as leaders of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat groups respectively, echoed the Leader of the Council's comments.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

3 OFFICER REPORT - HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) REVISED RENT INCREASE PROPOSALS 2009/10

Council had before it an officer report proposing a reduction in the 2009/10 rent increase as agreed in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) from 6.06% to 3.1%. The report had been considered by the Executive at its meeting on 10 June and the Executive's recommendations had been circulated on a supplementary agenda. The Scrutiny Overview Committee had considered the matter on 15 June, and their comments had been circulated around the chamber.

In moving the recommendations of the Executive, Councillor A Webb welcomed the additional housing subsidy which had allowed the reduction in the rent increase for 2009/10. This was particularly good news in view of the economic situation, and the move would help some of the most financially vulnerable people in the town.

Members noted that the proposed reduction in the rent to £73.59 for weeks 26 to 52 would mean that a perceived "increase" in the rent for 2010/11 was inevitable (i.e. to return to the average 2009/10 level of £75.75). Furthermore, this perceived increase would exacerbate any actual increase on the average 2009/10 level. It was considered that this needed to be made clear in the consultation exercise.

Reference was also made to the comments of the Scrutiny Overview Committee, which referred to the need for any communications plan to be subject to consultation with the Federation of Stevenage Tenants Associations (FOSTA), and with a focus group of tenants.

Responding to a question from a Member, the Deputy Mayor advised that officers would respond in writing regarding arrangements for tenants who terminated their tenancy between weeks 26 and 52, and who would therefore not have benefited from the full rent reduction.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the revised 2009/10 HRA rent increase of 3.1%, a reduction of 2.96% from the average rent increase of 6.06% approved by Council on 28 January 2009, be approved.
2. That the full year rent reduction be implemented from 29 September 2009, for the remaining 25 chargeable weeks, with the rent reduction being spread over the remaining 25 weeks (excluding two rent free weeks) and not backdated to 1 April 2009.
3. That the comments from Scrutiny Overview Committee be noted.
4. That a Communications Plan, to inform tenants of how their rents might be affected in the light of this adjustment, particularly what will happen in April 2010, be drawn up in consultation with the Executive Portfolio Holder for Housing for implementation by Stevenage Homes Limited and the Council.

4 OFFICER REPORT - TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY (REVISED)

An officer report had been circulated recommending further amendments to the Treasury Management Strategy, since its approval by the Council at the April meeting.

The recommendations of the Executive, who had considered the report at its meeting on 10 June 2009, had been circulated on a supplementary agenda. The Scrutiny Overview Committee had also considered the report, and had nothing further to add.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Treasury Management Strategy be amended to reflect the supported borrowing of £55 million.

5 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was **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 items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraphs 1-7 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the said Act as amended by SI 2006 no. 88.
2. That, having considered the reasons for the following reports being in Part II, it be agreed that maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

6 OFFICER REPORT - REVIEW AND RESTRUCTURE OF THE COUNCIL'S SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

The Council considered a Part II officer report detailing proposals to alter the structure and membership of the Senior Management Team (SMT). The report had not been circulated to Members five clear days before the meeting. However, the Council was requested to accept the report as urgent in order to allow the consultation on the proposals to commence.

The Chief Executive presented the report to the Council, outlining the major changes which were proposed. It was noted that there were two reasons for the restructure: to make the SMT smaller and more focussed; and to generate on-going revenue savings. Following approval by the Council, the new structure would be subject to a formal consultation process with staff, although those officers directly affected had already been made aware of the draft proposals.

In moving the recommendations Councillor S Taylor CC thanked all the officers involved for their patience following the deferral of a proposed structure which had been considered earlier in the year.

Further to a request for clarification, the Chief Executive noted that the Council had considered a previous proposal for a restructure of the SMT at the meeting on 28 January 2009. On that occasion, the Council had merely noted the proposal, and so there was no decision to rescind in order to approve this new structure. The proposed structure had been revised extensively following comments from Members and officers, and the new structure was now presented to Members for approval.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the Council confirms its agreement to the proposals for the future senior management structure, as set out in the report, subject to the amendment that Community Safety be added to the list of services falling within the Housing, Policy and Partnerships unit.
2. That, subject to consideration of the outcomes of the formal consultation period which closes on 20 July, the Chief Executive be authorised to

implement the revised senior management structure, with individual appointments being subject to the usual procedure.

3. That it be noted that, should Members wish to make any detailed comments, they may do so during the formal consultation period.