

**COUNCIL
MINUTES**

2

Date: Wednesday 24 February 2010

Time: 7.00 p.m.

Place: Council Chamber

Present: The Mayor (Councillor S Myson) (Chair), the Deputy Mayor (Councillor J Lloyd CC) (Vice Chair), Councillors S Batson MBE DL, H Burrell, M Cherney-Craw, L Chester, G Clark, D Clark, D Cullen, M Downing, J Fraser CC, P Gallagher, J Gardner, L Harrington, R Henry, J Hollywell, M Hurst CC, D Kissane, L Knight, C Latif, Mrs J Lloyd, L Martin-Haugh, M Mason, M Notley, R Parker CC, M Patston, J Pickersgill, R Raynor, G Snell, S Speller, P Stuart, S Taylor CC, J Thomas, B Underwood and A Webb

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

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence had been received on behalf of Councillors B Clark, B Jackson, L Strange and V Warwick and also on behalf of Nick Parry, Chief Executive.

Councillors John Lloyd CC, C Latif, D Clark and B Underwood declared Prejudicial Interests in both Items 12 & 13 as they are members of the Board of Stevenage Homes Limited (item - 2010/2011 Capital Forward Plan & 5 Year Capital Strategy Update) and (item 13-Housing Revenue Account Budget 2010-2011). They left the Chamber and did not participate in the debate nor the vote.

2. MINUTES – COUNCIL – WEDNESDAY 9 DECEMBER 2009

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Wednesday 9 December 2009 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

3. MINUTES – EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL – WEDNESDAY 27 JANUARY 2010

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Extraordinary Council held on Wednesday 27 January 2010 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

4. MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Mayor informed the Council that she had changed the order of the business on the agenda, to consider first item 12 (2010/2011 Capital Forward Plan & 5 Year Capital Strategy Update) and then item 13 (Housing Revenue Account Budget 2010-2011).

The Mayor referred to a number of voluntary engagements she had attended especially in relation to her nominated charities and disabled groups. She also wanted to express her thanks to the excellent work undertaken by the Rotary Clubs of Stevenage and the Lions of Stevenage especially during difficult times.

The Mayor informed the meeting that the Leader of the Council and the Strategic Director (Community) had attended the inaugural Citizens Advice Awards ceremony in London on 19 January 2010, where the Council was awarded the prize 'Council partner of the year. This award was in recognition of SBC's prompt and pragmatic response to the recession. Claire Murphy of the local Citizens Advice Bureau was present in the Chamber and presented the award to the Mayor. The Mayor thanked Marion Hurle from Citizens Advice for nominating the Council and also thanked all the Council Members and Officers who had contributed to the work of the Economy Task Force.

Finally the Mayor informed the meeting that the Council had successfully retained its Investor in People accreditation which it obtained in 2000, as it had been able to demonstrate to the assessors that performance had improved through its people by using planned approaches to setting and communicating business objectives and developing its people to meet these objectives.

5. MAIN DEBATE – COUNCIL TAX SETTING AND BUDGET 2010-2011

Following the consideration of items 12 and 13 (see relevant minutes below), the Mayor gave her apologies and left the meeting as she had a prior engagement. The Deputy Mayor, Councillor J Lloyd CC, took the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

This matter had been considered by the Executive on 10 February 2010 following its initial consideration by the Executive and scrutiny by the Scrutiny Overview Committee in January. The decisions of the Executive had been set out in the agenda.

The Deputy Chief Executive advised the Council of the precepts which had since 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 0% and for the Police Authority, this would be £147.82 – an increase of 3.5%. She stated that these precepts had been included in the formal Council Tax Resolution, in accordance with the Executive's recommendation, that had been circulated around the Chamber.

The Deputy Mayor called upon the Leader of the Council, Councillor S Taylor to move a Motion on the Council Tax Setting and 2010-2011 budget.

Before she commenced her speech, Councillor Taylor repeated the concerns she had raised previously that due to the Code of Conduct provisions a number of Councillors had been precluded from taking part in detailed discussions on specific areas of budget. She considered that it was necessary to raise these concerns again at local and national level.

At this juncture Councillor Taylor presented a short DVD that reflected the range of services provided by the Council.

Before outlining the budget proposals, the Leader of the Council reiterated the impact of the global economic crisis and the collapse of the banking systems in the last year and the Council's response. She indicated that a number of national policies such as the Mortgage Rescue scheme and bringing some capital projects forward were introduced in Stevenage in order to reduce the impact of the recession.

Councillor Taylor reiterated the Council's vision of Stevenage as a major regional business and commercial centre with a range of good housing and this had been recognised by the Secretary of State in approving the West of Stevenage Development. Government investment had brought the Building Schools for the Future programme with the first phase currently being procured and construction work on Marriotts, Lonsdale and Nobel sites starting in March 2011. The opening of the £7million extension to the Business and Technology Centre had resulted in an increase in business incubation capacity. She stated that the Council's ability to attract Homes and Community Agency housing grant and good partnership with Registered Social Landlords had resulted in the provision of 89 more affordable homes in 2010 and an anticipated 264 in 2010/11. The Leader then presented the proposals for the General Fund Budget, including a nil increase to the Stevenage Borough Council's Council Tax.

The Leader moved a revised set of recommendations including the nil increase of Council Tax, and the final detail of the County Council and Police Authority precepts, as tabled around the Chamber, which were duly seconded.

The Council's Chief Finance Officer, confirmed that he was satisfied that the revised 2010/11 budget, as moved, was robust and that the reserves held were adequate.

After a full debate it was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the Budget summarised at Appendix A to the circulated report, as amended to take account of the 0% Council Tax increase be the Council's General Fund Budget for 2009/2010 and 2010/2011.
2. That the following be approved:
 - a. the revised working revenue estimates for the year 2009/10 amounting to £15,069,720 and the revenue estimates for 2010/11 amounting to £13,292,790;
 - b. the contribution from balances of £1,801,384 in 2009/10;

c. the contribution to balances totalling £107,294 in 2010/11.

3. That it be noted that at its meeting on 20 January 2010 the Executive calculated the amount of 28,570.81 Band D equivalent properties as its council tax base for the year 2010/11 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 2010/11 in accordance with Sections 32 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992:

a. £13,400,084 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. £7,853,024 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. £161,000 Being the utilisation of the Council's share of the estimated surplus totalling £161,181 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

e. 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

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.

5. a. That it be noted that for the year 2010/10 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

b. That it be noted that for the year 2010/11 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	£ 98.55
B	£ 114.97
C	£ 131.40

D	£ 147.82
E	£ 180.67
F	£ 213.52
G	£ 246.37
H	£ 295.64

6. That, having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at 4e. and 5a. 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 2010/11 for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:

Valuation Bands

A	£ 970.12
B	£ 1,131.80
C	£ 1,293.49
D	£ 1,455.17
E	£ 1,778.54
F	£ 2,101.92
G	£ 2,425.29
H	£2,910.34

6. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS

None.

7. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

8. LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S UPDATE

Both the Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Opposition declined their opportunity 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 EXECUTIVE – PRUDENTIAL CODE INDICATORS AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT

The Council had before it a copy of the officer report which had been considered by the Executive on 10 February 2010, and which recommended the 2010/11 Prudential Code Indicators and the Treasury Management Strategy for approval.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the revised Treasury Management Code of Practice 2009 as detailed in Appendix A to the report be adopted.
2. That the 2010/11 Treasury Management Strategy as detailed in Appendix B to the report, subject to the 'Audit Committee' replacing 'Scrutiny Overview Committee' at paragraph (iii) on Appendix B attachment 5 be adopted.
3. That the Prudential Code Indicators as detailed in Appendix B (attachment) 6 be adopted.
4. That the Audit Committee be the nominated body to ensure effective scrutiny of the treasury management strategy and policies.

12. MATTER REFERRED FROM EXECUTIVE – 2010/11 CAPITAL FORWARD PLAN & 5 YEAR CAPITAL STRATEGY UPDATE

This item was considered immediately following item 4 (Mayor's Communications) with the Mayor presiding. Councillors John Lloyd, C Latif, D Clark and Underwood 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 10 February 2010, and which had set out proposals for the 2010/11 General Fund Capital Programme, the 2010/2011 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme, and the Five-year Capital Strategy.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the revised 2009/10 and the 2010/11 General Fund capital programme as detailed in Appendix A, be approved.
2. That the revised 2009/10 and the 2010/11 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme, be approved.

3. That the updated forecast of resources as summarised in Appendix A, be approved.
4. That the Capital Forward Plan Bids detailed in Appendix B, be approved.
5. That the ongoing work of the Corporate Capital Review Group (CCRG) be noted.
6. That a Contingency Sum in the Budget and Policy Framework for 2010/11 of £500,000 for the Capital Programme be approved.
7. That a de minimus level of £5,000 for expenditure qualifying as capital, be approved.

13. MATTER REFERRED FROM EXECUTIVE – HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) BUDGET 2010/11

This item was considered immediately following item 4 (Mayor's Communications) with the Mayor presiding. Councillors John Lloyd, C Latif, D Clark and Underwood 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 10 February 2010 concerning the HRA Budget 2010/11. The recommendations from the Executive were set out in the agenda.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the Budget summarised at Appendix A to this report, the Council's HRA Budget for 2009/10 and 2010/11 be approved.
2. That the SHL Management Fee for 2010/11 of £14,308,958, with a reduction of £78,500 if the national pay award is a zero percent increase.
3. That the Fees and Charges schedule at Appendix D be approved.
4. That the HRA Contingency Sum in the Budget and Policy Framework for 2010/11 of £250,000 be approved.

14. MATTER REFERRED FROM AUDIT COMMITTEE – CONTRACT STANDING ORDERS

The Council considered an officer report considered by the Audit Committee at its meeting on 14 December 2009 entitled "Contract Standing Orders". The recommendations of the Audit Committee were detailed in the Agenda.

It was **RESOLVED** that the revised Contract Standing Orders, subject to the inclusion of a glossary of all acronyms, be approved.

15. OFFICER REPORT – MEMBERS ALLOWANCE SCHEME 2010-2011

The Council considered an officer report recommending a Members' Allowance Scheme for 2010/11.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Members' Allowance Scheme for 2010/11 as set out in Appendix A, be approved, subject to the index-linked increases not being applied for 2010/11.

16. AUDIT COMMITTEE – DRAFT MINUTES – 14 DECEMBER 2009

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on Monday 14 December 2009 be noted.

Mayor