

SUMMARY OF DECISIONS TAKEN (PART 1 – FOR PUBLICATION)

MEETING: Council – Wednesday 10 October 2012 – 19.00 hrs.
Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Stevenage, SG1 1HN

MEMBERS PRESENT: All Councillors with the exception of those listed at item 1 below.

ALSO PRESENT: Amy Danaher (Youth Mayor), Ash Young (Youth Council) and Katie Lane (Citizen's Advice Bureau).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P Bibby CC, M Hearn, R Raynor and J Thomas. There were no declarations of interest.
2. MINUTES – COUNCIL – WEDNESDAY 18 JULY 2012
It was RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Council meeting of 18 July 2012 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.
3.
There was no item 3.
4. MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS
The Mayor called upon Councillor H Burrell to introduce the 'Just Sing!' Choir who entertained the Chamber with renditions of Sally Gardens and Banuwa.

The Mayor then provided Council with a brief update of events he had attended since the last meeting.

5. MAIN DEBATE – ‘WELFARE REFORMS – WHAT WILL IT MEAN TO STEVENAGE RESIDENTS?’

Katie Lane, Head of Welfare Policy, of the Citizens Advice Bureau gave a presentation detailing the implications for claimants, local authorities and their partners as a consequence of the raft of changes to be implemented as part of the Government’s Welfare Reform Policy.

A Member requested a copy of the presentation and the Strategic Director (Resources) undertook to provide paper copies to all Members.

After a full debate, which included input from the public gallery, it was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED**

‘That this Council does, and always has, recognised the need to tackle benefit fraud wherever it occurs because of the impact that such fraud has on genuine claimants.

However, this Council believes that the Tory-led Government’s welfare cuts and their welfare reform agenda will have a detrimental impact on the citizens of Stevenage. We call on the Government to recognise the difficult situations that many hard working families are already facing and concentrate instead on a coherent strategy for growth and job creation.’

6. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS

None.

7. QUESTIONS FROM THE YOUTH COUNCIL

None.

8. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

9. LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S UPDATE

The Leader of the Opposition reminded Council that he had asked at the previous meeting when the Leisure Centre, which had been damaged by fire earlier in the year, would be fully re-opened. The Leader advised the Leader of the Opposition that the relevant Portfolio Holder would provide a full update at the meeting.

Council received updates of the following:

- The Duke of Edinburgh's visit to the Business Technology Centre
- The re-opening of the Leisure Centre
- The Museum's application for funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund
- The activities of the Children's Services section over the summer period
- Stevenage Day
- The Town Centre Improvements programme
- The Building Control Section's work with Hertfordshire Primary Expansion Projects
- The Local Council Tax Scheme
- A new approach to Environmental Action Days
- A revised Allocations Policy
- The Tenancy Strategy

10. NOTICE OF MOTIONS

After a full debate it was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED**

'That Stevenage Borough Council values Luton Airport in terms of the direct and indirect benefits it brings to the local economies of Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire. This Council considers the current proposals to expand this airport more reasonable than earlier proposals brought forward by the operators and is supportive of them on the grounds that they will further boost the local economy and enhance the travelling experience for passengers. However this Council remains very concerned about the potential impact of any increase in noise levels arising from the proposed expansion and will be strongly presenting the case to both the applicant and the Local Authority Planning Authority (Luton Borough Council) to minimise any increase in aircraft noise over Stevenage. This Council will also seek to require the development to mitigate any adverse effects of increased passenger traffic on the A1(M) between junctions 6 & 8 and on the A505 between Hitchin and the Airport.'

11. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO COMMITTEE CHAIRS/PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

None.

12. MATTER REFERRED FROM THE AUDIT COMMITTEE AND THE EXECUTIVE – TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW 2011/2012

Following a comment made by a Member concerning the wording of paragraph 4.9.4 of the report the Chief Executive undertook to amend the wording of the second sentence to read 'Key to retaining this rating will be a return to strong economic growth in order to reduce the national *deficit* burden....'

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that the 2011 / 2012 prudential and treasury indicators within the report be approved.

13. MATTER REFERRED FROM THE EXECUTIVE – 'FIRST STEP' COUNCIL MORTGAGE SCHEME

The Chief Executive advised Council that an Equalities Impact Assessment for the scheme had been produced and had been circulated around the Chamber for Members to consider.

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED**

1. That it be agreed in principle to adopt the Local Authority Mortgage Scheme (LAMS) in accordance with the outline provided within the report and that the following be approved:
 - a. A total indemnity value of £500,000 for Stevenage Borough Council;
 - b. To note that Hertfordshire County Council is proposing to provide a total indemnity value of £1,000,000 which will be 'pass ported' from the County Council to the district. A funding Service Level Agreement between the County Council and the District Council setting out the relationship and the relevant share of risk/return in respect of the £1,000,000 from the County Council will be agreed;
 - c. A total indemnity of £1,500,000 will be placed with the selected lenders;
 - d. A maximum loan size for the Stevenage scheme of £180,500 (based on a 95% loan on a house valued at £190,000 and an individual with a 5% deposit);
 - e. The Scheme to apply to all post code areas within Stevenage, to be provided to the lender(s) in a schedule to the indemnity need;
 - f. Subject to satisfactory resolution of the wording of the Option Letter referred to in the legal implications that the Council will confirm the Provision of appropriate indemnities to the Council's Chief Legal Officer (Monitoring Officer) and Strategic Director (Resources) (Chief Financial Officer), in accordance with the relevant legislation and lenders' requirements;
 - g. Delegate authority to the Strategic Director (Resources), in consultation with the Borough Solicitor and Executive Members for Resourcing and Housing, to agree the detailed financial and contractual arrangements and sign the necessary contracts, agreements and indemnities.

2. That a capital scheme to a maximum value of £500,000 be included in the Council's Capital Programme for 2012/2013, funded from the New Homes Bonus Reserve (£250,000); and sale of General Fund maisonettes (£250,000).
3. That the Treasury Management Strategy be amended as required to accommodate the accounting treatment required for the LAMS.

14. MATTER REFERRED FROM THE EXECUTIVE – RENT AND ANNUAL SERVICE CHARGE SETTING POLICY

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that the Annual Rent and Service Charge Setting Policy, as attached to the report as Appendix 1, be approved.

15. STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE – MINUTES – 24 SEPTEMBER 2012

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Statement of Accounts Committee held on 24 September 2012 be approved as a correct record.

16. AUDIT COMMITTEE – DRAFT MINUTES – 10 SEPTEMBER AND 24 SEPTEMBER 2012

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that the draft Minutes of the Audit Committee meetings held on 10 September 2012 and 24 September 2012 be noted.