

SUMMARY OF DECISIONS TAKEN (PART 1 – FOR PUBLICATION)

MEETING: Council – Wednesday 26 January 2016 – 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: Y Tiako, Youth Mayor

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Cullen, S Hearn, M Hurst, J Gardner, A McGuinness, M McKay, S Mead, C Saunders and V Warwick and Chair of the Youth Council T Harrison.

There were no declarations of interest.

2. REPORT REFERRED FROM THE EXECUTIVE – HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT FINAL BUDGET PROPOSALS 2016/17 AND RENT SETTING

The recommendations in the report were moved and seconded.

The Leader then moved an additional recommendation that the Council recognise and comment on the impact of the Government's policies on the Council's Housing Revenue Account and specifically the previously agreed housing development programme.

This motion was duly seconded and debated and it was **RESOLVED** that the motion be included as recommendation 12 below.

Council then made no further comment on the recommendations in the report and it was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that:

- 1 The HRA dwelling rents not subject to the 1% rent reduction be increased, week commencing 4 April 2016 by an average 0.9% or £0.95 per week which has been calculated using the existing rent formula, CPI +1% in line with the 2014 Rent Policy.
- 2 HRA dwelling rents (other than those outlined in 2.1) be subject to the 1% rent reduction from week commencing 4 April 2016 or £0.99 per week as outlined in the Governments Welfare Reform Bill (subject to the Bill being passed into statute).
- 3 The 2016/17 HRA budget, as set out in Appendix A, be approved. This may be subject to change as a result of consultation, changes to the government's Welfare Reform Bill.
- 4 The proposed fees and charges as shown in Appendix B to the report be approved.
- 5 The proposed 2016/17 savings options as outlined in Appendix C to the report be approved.
- 6 The proposed 2016/17 growth options as outlined in Appendix D to the report be approved.
- 7 The 2016/17 proposed maximum increase in Service Charges of £3.00 be approved.
- 8 The minimum level of reserves for 2016/17 as shown in Appendix E to this report be approved.
- 9 The revised 2015/16 budget of £1,688,120 surplus be approved.
- 10 The Rent and Service Charge Policy as shown in Appendix G to this report be approved.
- 11 That the contingency sum of £250,000 within which the Executive can approve supplementary estimates, be approved for 2016/17, (unchanged from 2015/16).
- 12 'This Council condemns the interference of the Government in the setting of rent levels for Stevenage Borough Council tenants.

Stevenage Borough Council has an agreed 30 year programme to build 1,900 council homes, to keep our housing stock to decent homes standard, to address regeneration in the neighbourhoods containing our housing stock and to repay the £200million self-financing loan related to housing taken out from the Government Public Works Loans Board in 2013.

The reductions in rent were imposed by the Government without consultation with housing authorities which creates a 'new burden' for stock holding councils that flies in the face of localism and devolution. In the case of Stevenage this Government action creates a £225 million hole in our housing business plan and clearly jeopardises our housing programme across the whole 30 years. Its effect will be to reduce the number of homes we are able to build and our ability to maintain our houses to the standard we have agreed with our tenants. Any attempt to restructure the debt to make it more affordable as a result of the loss of rental income, resulting from the Governments policy, would today increase the cost of repayment of the self-financing loan by up to £32 million in debt re-negotiation charges.

We call on the Chancellor of the Exchequer to enter into urgent discussions with local housing authorities to understand the impact of the action he has taken and explore how this can be mitigated.'

3. REPORT REFERRED FROM THE EXECUTIVE – COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2016/2017

Council was advised that the report had been before both the Executive and Overview and Scrutiny Committee and that neither body had made comment on the contents therein.

It was further confirmed that neither Hertfordshire County Council or the Police and Crime Commissioner had passed comment on the report.

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

- 1 The 2016/17 CTS Scheme proposed within the report be adopted.
- 2 A review of the scheme in 2016/17 for the financial year 2017/18, including other discretionary

discounts be approved.