

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE
MINUTES

Date: Tuesday 16 December 2014

Time: 14.00 hrs.

Place: Shimkent Room, Daneshill House, Stevenage SG1 1HN

Present: Councillors S Taylor OBE CC (Chair), J Gardner (Vice-Chair), H Burrell, R Henry, Mrs J Lloyd, R Raynor, S Speller, J Thomas and A Webb.

Start/End Time: Start Time: 14.00 hrs.
End Time: 16.15 hrs.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no apologies for absence.

Councillor Speller declared a personal interest in Item 11 as the District Commissioner for Stevenage District Scouts.

2. MINUTES – EXECUTIVE – 18 NOVEMBER 2014

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2014 are approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. MINUTES – OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AND SELECT COMMITTEES

Having noted the item on Section 106 agreements in the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Minutes of 3 November, it was considered appropriate that these planning legal agreement processes should be the subject of a Modern Member Programme event in the new year. It was suggested that this session also cover the Community Infrastructure Levy.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources confirmed that she regularly monitored the level of SBC Section 106 monies that was to be spent.

Under the item concerning Town Centre Regeneration it was noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had enquired about the Government's response to the possible establishment of a Development Corporation. The Chief Executive updated the Executive and stated that since July he had written five times to various Government Ministers. He had received a holding reply three weeks ago stating that a response was being worked up and would be sent within two weeks.

The Leader indicated that if no response was received by 5 January 2015 a letter should be sent to the Prime Minister.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the following meeting are noted:

- A. Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 3 November 2014
- B. Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 24 November 2014

4. DRAFT 2015/2016 RENTS SETTING AND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA)

The Executive considered a report that set out draft proposals for the 2015/2016 HRA budget and rent setting.

It was noted that even with the 2.13% increase private sector rents were on average 84% higher than Council rents.

It was **RESOLVED**

1. That HRA dwelling rents be increased, week commencing 6 April 2015 by an average 2.13% or £2.10 per week which has been calculated using the new rent formula, CPI +1% in line with the 2014 Rent Policy.
2. That the draft 2015/16 HRA budget be approved, as set out in Appendix A to the report. This may be subject to change as a result of consultation and the finalisation of recharges from the General Fund.
3. That the proposed fees and charges be approved as shown in Appendix B to the report.
4. That the final HRA rent setting budget for 2015/16 be presented to the Executive on the 20 January 2015 and then Council on 28 January 2015.
5. That key partners and other stakeholders be consulted and views fed back into the 2015/16 budget setting process.
6. That it be noted that a review of service charges is to be undertaken in 2015/16.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report

Options Considered: As contained in the report.

5. BALANCED SCORECARD – QUARTER TWO

The Executive considered a report concerning overall performance results for Stevenage Borough Council Balanced Scorecard for quarter two 2014/15 and the performance management activity relating thereto.

He focussed particularly on those scores that were red as overall there was a down turn on the score and the number of measures that were red had increased.

Members were particularly concerned regarding the measure relating to the number of households living in temporary accommodation. The lack of permanent social housing to move families on from temporary accommodation was a significant factor but of particular concern was that the Council should not have to use Bed and Breakfast accommodation. The Strategic Director (Community) circulated an information paper on the current position regarding temporary/emergency accommodation. The Leader informed the meeting that she had requested the Portfolio Holder for Housing to urgently consider what options there might be for temporary accommodation to avoid the use of hotels and taking accommodation out of the general housing stock.

Concerning the two measures that were red in relation to anti-fraud, the Chief Executive explained that two members of staff had left and there were changes in the arrangements given the Government's decision to create one anti-fraud service looking at Housing Benefit Fraud. The Leader explained that local authorities had made representations that this new agency should also investigate Council Tax reduction scheme fraud, but this proposal had not been followed up. Accordingly SBC were working with five other local authorities to establish a joint anti-fraud service to cover the likes of Council Tax reduction scheme and other fraud. This arrangement was likely to be approved before the end of the month and go live in 2015.

The Leader requested that the Portfolio Holder for Resources monitors particularly the level of PDMs for Council staff undertaken as this measure was red. Officers explained that a number of PDMs had been put on hold due to the introduction and training for the new format for staff appraisals that was linked to the Council's Values.

Concerning ICT, following a question raised, officers undertook to provide an update on the roll-out of the thin client hosted desktop for Councillors.

The Leader referred to paragraph 3.7.4 of the report and requested that the details of how officers were going to address those instances of overflowing litter and dog bins be circulated to all Members. The Executive were reminded that it was important for officers to be alerted to 'hotspots' where there were regular problems with full bins.

The situation regarding the loss of rental income as a result of Right to Buy sales was of concern and the Strategic Director (Community) stated that he had been in receipt of an e.mail from the Government Department asking for comment on a proposal to target the SG1 with a marketing campaign regarding the Right to Buy Scheme. The Executive

requested that he should send a response strongly resisting this proposal quoting the many concerns the Council had, to include the variation between public and private sector rents (84% average), the number of households presenting as homeless and the Council's plans for the regeneration of the Town. The Leader requested that all Members be copied into this response.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the overall performance results for Stevenage Borough Council Balanced Scorecard for quarter two 2014/15 is noted.
2. That for areas of performance identified as not currently achieving target, the planned performance management activity outlined in paragraph 3.7 (and summarised in Appendix A to the report) is approved as appropriate.
3. That performance improvement outlined in paragraph 3.9 of the report as a result of the implementation of performance management activity previously approved is noted.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report

Options Considered: As contained in the report.

6. DRAFT COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2015/2016

This report had not been circulated five clear days before the meeting, nor had it been made available for public inspection during this time. The Chair determined however that given the reason for urgency set out in the report it be considered on this occasion.

The Executive considered a report that set out draft proposals for the 2015/2016 Council Tax Support Scheme.

In introducing the report it was explained that the proposals were to retain the current scheme un-amended. The Executive was of the view however that officers should consider options for the use of funding headroom.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the proposals for the 2015-16 CTS Scheme be approved.
2. That the proposed scheme be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as part of the Policy and budgetary Framework before the final CTS scheme for 2015/16 is presented to the

Executive on the 20 January 2015 and then Council on 28 January 2015.

3. That officers bring forward options for the utilisation of the funding headroom, to include possible revisions to the Scheme; changing the exemptions provisions; or providing support to increase the Revenues and Benefits Service to help mitigate the impact of welfare reforms.

Reason for Decision As contained in the report and 3. To consider how the funding headroom is best utilised.

Options Considered: As contained in the report.

7. URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS

Lewis Hamilton

The Executive recorded its congratulations to Lewis Hamilton on his being voted BBC Sports Personality of the Year.

Land Sales

The Portfolio Holder for Resources informed the receipts achieved following recent land sales that had gone to auction. The two properties had achieved well over the reserve prices netting the Council over £500,000 in capital receipts.

8. EXCLUSION OF 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 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, as amended by SI 2006 No. 88.

2. That having considered the reason for the following items being in Part II it be determined that the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

PART II

9. PART II MINUTES – EXECUTIVE – 18 NOVEMBER 2014

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II section of the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 18 November 2014 are approved a correct record and signed by the Chair.

10. PART II MINUTES – OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II section of the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on 24 November 2014 are noted.

11. VOLUNTARY SECTOR FUNDING 2015/2016

The Executive considered a Part II report concerning future funding for the voluntary sector.

Councillor Speller had declared a Personal Interest in this item as District Commissioner of Stevenage Scouts.

It was **RESOLVED** that the recommendations in the report are approved.

*Reason for Decision As contained in the report.
Options Considered: As contained in the report.*

12. FRIENDSLIFE – WOMEN’S TOUR FINISH EVENT

The Executive considered a Part II report that set out the opportunities and implications for Stevenage to host the Friends Life Women’s Tour (The Tour) Finish Event on Saturday 20 June 2015.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the recommendations in the report are approved.
2. That delegated authority is given to the Strategic Director (Community) to sign the necessary contracts.

*Reason for Decision As contained in the report.
Options Considered: As contained in the report.*

13. COUNCIL HOUSE BUILDING PROGRAMME

This report had not been circulated five clear days before the meeting, but the Chair determined that given the reason for urgency set out in the report it be considered on this occasion.

The Executive considered a Part II report concerning the Council’s approach to establishing a new ten year council house-building programme.

An additional recommendation and flow chart was circulated to Members

It was **RESOLVED** that the recommendations in the report and the additional recommendation are approved.

Reason for Decision As contained in the report.

Options Considered: As contained in the report.

14. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

None

Chair