

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE
MINUTES

Date: Tuesday 12 July 2016

Time: 14.00 hrs.

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

Present: Councillors S Taylor OBE CC (Chair), J Gardner (Vice-Chair), S Batson MBE DL CC, Mrs J Lloyd, R Henry CC, R Raynor, S Speller and J Thomas

Start/End Time: Start Time: 14.00 hrs.
End Time: 16.55hrs

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no apologies for absence or declarations of interest.

The Chair welcomed Tom Pike, Strategic Director (Environment) to his first Executive meeting.

2. MINUTES – EXECUTIVE – 7 JUNE 2016

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 7 June 2016 are approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

3. MINUTES – OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AND SELECT COMMITTEES

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on 13 June 2016 are noted.

4. REFERENCE FROM STEVENAGE AND EAST HERTS JOINT REVENUES & BENEFITS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – AMENDMENT TO TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Executive considered a reference from the Stevenage and East Herts Joint Revenues & Benefits Executive Committee requesting an amendment to its terms of reference.

It was **RESOLVED** that the terms of reference of the Stevenage and East Herts Joint Revenues & Benefits Executive Committee be amended to read –

1. To compare the year's performance against the annual Service Plan for the Shared Revenues and Benefits Service.
2. To compare the year's performance against the approved budget of the Shared Service.
3. To give initial consideration to future development of the Shared Service and any changes in legislation that may affect service delivery and make recommendations thereon to the Executive or officers.
4. Where it is considered appropriate, report to the Executives of the Constituent Councils.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.

Other Options Considered: As contained in the report.

5. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (LDS) - COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL)

The Executive considered a report that detailed a timetable change to align the Local Development Scheme (LDS) with submission of the Stevenage Borough Plan to the Secretary of State in July 2016, as recommended by the report "Stevenage Local Plan – Submission to Secretary of State" that followed on this agenda.

The Executive requested that officers work towards aligning the implementation of CIL with the timetable for the Local Plan.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the LDS 2016 document appended to the report is approved.
2. That the LDS 2016 is brought into immediate effect through publication on the Stevenage planning web pages.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.

Other Options Considered: As contained in the report.

6. STEVENAGE LOCAL PLAN – SUBMISSION

The Executive considered a report that detailed the progress made to date in preparing the new Stevenage Borough Local Plan and the proposed arrangements for submission and public examination. The report also sought approval of the proposed submission documents and agreement to submit these to Council, to authorise subsequent submission to the Secretary of State.

The Executive considered a report that reviewed the current working arrangements and potential alternative approaches for Town Centre management in Stevenage.

The Executive took the opportunity to thank Zayd Al-Jawad, Richard Javes and their colleagues for the work undertaken on this very large and complex project and for producing a clear and comprehensive report. Members noted the extent of the contributions from many individuals and organisations and expressed their thanks to those who took part in the consultation.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the work undertaken to prepare the new Local Plan is noted and endorsed.
2. That the findings of the Local Plan - Publication version consultation, as set out in the Statement of Consultation (attached as Appendix 1), are noted.
3. That Council be recommended to approve the Stevenage Borough Local Plan (attached as Appendix 2) and associated Policies Map (attached as Appendix 3), the Regulation 22 Consultation Statement (attached as Appendix 1), and the Sustainability Appraisal (attached as Appendix 4) for submission to the Secretary of State under Regulation 22 of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. Submission documents will also include copies of the representations.
4. That delegated powers are given to the Head of Planning and Engineering to prepare statements or other supporting materials, as requested by the Inspector.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.

Other Options Considered: As contained in the report.

7. REVIEW OF TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT IN STEVENAGE

The Executive considered a report that reviewed the current working arrangements and potential alternative approaches for Town Centre management in Stevenage.

It was noted that recommendation 2.1 of the report should refer to paragraph '4.11'; not '4.1' as quoted.

The Executive was of the view that given the strategic role to be taken by the new Town Centre Manager (TCM) the post was required to be full-time. The additional cost of £29,000 for year one was to be funded from New Homes Bonus monies and a growth bid of £29,000 be included in the General Fund budget setting for 2017/2018 for year two.

It was considered that there should be a statement setting out the strategic aims for the TCM, to include environmental issues; establishing a relationship with the retailers; community safety; promotion and marketing; and a co-ordinated estates function. The Chief Executive indicated that officers would also work up a bid for capital investment for new stalls and pop-ups for the Town Centre.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the new criteria detailed in paragraph 4.11 of the report is applied when assessing applications for stalls, pitches, seating and A-boards in the town centre, which will initially decrease the town centre income budget, but should recover.
2. That a new full-time position Town Centre Manager (TCM) be established for a 2 year fixed term, with the responsibility for town centre income budget. The role to be funded from existing reserves for 2016/2017.
3. That a growth bid of £58,000, £29,000 for 2017/2018 and £29,000 for 2018/2019, is approved to cover the cost of the TCM for the second year. The first year to be funded by New Homes Bonus monies.
4. That these arrangements be reviewed after 18 months (January 2018).
5. That the Town Centre income budget is reduced by £6,250 in 2016/2017 to reflect the operational changes identified in paragraph 4.9. – 4.20. The 2017/2018 Town Centre budget will be reviewed during the 2017/2018 budget setting exercise.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report and 2. to address the strategic role to be played by this post.

Other Options Considered: As contained in the report.

8. COMMUNITY SAFETY DATA TRENDS

The Executive considered a report that provided details of community safety trends across various crime types, between the period 2011-2016 and considers respective Police resourcing levels across the County.

Supplementary information updating the table at paragraph 4.7.3 of the report was circulated to Members.

In response to a query raised officers indicated that they would investigate the difference between the figure quoted for 'All crime' and the total of the specific categories of crimes listed and report back to Members.

Given that where Stevenage sat in the ranking for individual crime categories in Hertfordshire, the Executive considered that further consideration should be given to the allocation of policing resources. This matter was to be referred to the Responsible Authorities Group. The increase in reported incidents of domestic abuse was highlighted although it was noted that this may relate to improved reporting. However the need for the Council to continue its support programme in this area was recognised.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the contents of the report are noted.
2. That a more detailed analysis of individual crime types be undertaken by the Responsible Authorities Group (RAG), in order to further focus the community safety partnership's (CSP) strategic planning moving forward.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.

Other Options Considered: As contained in the report.

9. CAPITAL STRATEGY OUTTURN REPORT 2015/2016

The Executive considered a report that provided an update on the outturn position on the 2015/16 capital programme including the resources used to fund that expenditure; the Council's Capital Strategy and any changes to the 2016/2017 capital programme; the actual 2015/2016 Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) and the MRP for 2016/2017; and resources available to fund the Capital Strategy.

It was noted that an urgent report was to be submitted to Council on 20 July 2016 regarding the impact of the referendum result on the sovereign status of UK financial institutions and the Council's Treasury Management Strategy.

Members emphasised their disapproval at the complex technical regulations that had resulted in nearly £4m right-to-buy receipts from the sale of Council housing stock being returned to central government whilst the Borough continued to face a housing crisis.

Pressure continued to be put on Government Ministers to address what is a local and national issue.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the 2015/16 General Fund capital expenditure outturn of £5,584,975 as summarised in paragraph 4.1.2 and detailed in Appendix A to this report is noted.

2. That the 2015/16 HRA capital expenditure outturn of £20,549,293 as summarised in paragraph 4.4.2 detailed in Appendix B to this report is noted
3. That the funding applied to the 2015/16 General Fund capital programme as summarised in paragraph 4.2.4 and detailed in Appendix A to this report is approved.
4. That the funding applied to the 2015/16 HRA capital programme as summarised in paragraph 4.5.1 and detailed in Appendix B to this report is approved.
5. That the 2016/17 General Fund capital programme total increase of £1,403,250 as summarised in paragraph 4.3.2 and detailed in the Appendix A is approved. The programme has increased by £136,110 which is within the amount delegated to the Executive of £250,000 to the General Fund (paragraph 4.3.8 of the report refers).
6. The use of a total of £60,000 from the Deferred Works budget: £50,000 for SLL Asbestos works, detailed at paragraph 4.3.6, and £10,000 to enable Daneshill House Lift Door Control Upgrade works, detailed at paragraph 4.3.7, be approved.
7. That the 2016/17 HRA capital programme total increase of £2,557,700 as summarised in paragraph 4.6.1 and detailed in Appendix B to this report is approved.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.

Other Options Considered: As contained in the report.

10. 4th QUARTER MONITORING REPORT GENERAL FUND AND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT

The Executive considered a report that provided an update on the 2015/16 outturn positions for the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and that sought approval for revisions to 2016/17 revenue budgets, as a result of the 2015/16 pre-audited actuals. The report also provided an update on the Council's reserves and balances available to support revenue expenditure.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the 2015/16 actual net expenditure on the General Fund of £8,891,797 is approved, subject to the 2015/16 audit of the Statement of Accounts.
2. That new carry forward requests totalling £337,530 is approved for the General Fund (paragraph 4.1.1 of the report refers).

3. That the removal of 2016/17 General Fund base budget net savings totalling £361,840 (including HRA impact) is approved, this will contribute towards the Council's Financial Security objectives for 2017/18 (paragraph 4.2.4 of the report refers).
4. That the net reduction of £266,620 to the 2016/17 working budget is approved (one year only pressures (£95,220) and ongoing savings (£361,840) - paragraph 4.3.5 of the report refers).
5. That the 2015/16 actual in year surplus on the HRA of £3,251,538 is approved, subject to the 2015/16 audit of the Statement of Accounts.
6. That new carry forward requests totalling £324,370 are approved for the HRA (paragraph 4.8.2 of the report refers).
7. That the removal of 2016/17 HRA budget net savings of £203,740 which will contribute towards the Council's financial security objectives for 2017/18 is approved (paragraph 4.7.2 of the report refers).

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.

Other Options Considered: As contained in the report.

11. **TOWN CENTRE ELECTRIC CAR CLUB AND ON STREET PARKING PROPOSALS**

The Executive considered a report concerning the introduction of an electric car club and the relocation and provision of taxi ranks, loading bays and additional pay & display parking facilities in Stevenage Town Centre.

The Executive, whilst supporting the proposals, was concerned that a growth bid had come forward without the being assessed against other spending priorities.

It was anticipated that the provision of support for this initiative would add impetus to the long awaited consideration of an electric bus that linked the retail areas of the town.

Officers confirmed that consultation had taken place with the local Taxi Forum.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the Council funds a 12 month pilot scheme with a car club to provide three electric cars in the town centre for the use of SBC staff for work related travel and public use at all times, a fourth car to be provided, at no cost to the Council, for public use only.

2. That the existing loading bays on Swingate (southern spur) by the ramp to the Leisure Centre be removed and replaced with two electric car club only bays and a charging point installed.
3. That a wasted concrete area of car park J be used to create a layby for two electric car club only bays and a charging point installed.
4. That the existing taxi rank on Swingate be removed and replaced with 15 pay and display spaces to help fund the scheme and offset potential loss of town centre parking associated with the future town centre regeneration.
5. That the existing taxi rank on Danestrete next to the Plaza be removed and replaced with 5 pay and display spaces to help fund the scheme and offset potential loss of town centre parking associated with the future town centre regeneration.
6. That new taxi ranks be set up on Danestrete in front of Swingate House and on Westgate behind Lloyds Bank in place of the existing loading bays.
7. That a new loading facility be provided in Westgate to the rear of McDonalds to replace the lost loading facilities and accommodate deliveries to the retail units from 1 Town Square (Paddy Power) to 56 Queensway (H Samuel).
8. That 7 new pay and display parking spaces be provided in Westgate to the rear of McDonalds to help fund the scheme and offset potential loss of town centre parking associated with the future town centre regeneration.
9. That a capital allocation of £51,780 in 2016/17 to implement the scheme is approved.
10. That an increase of £11,500 and £6,360 to the Green Travel Plan revenue budget for 2016/17 and 2017/18 respectively, to cover the pilot costs of an electric car club is approved.
11. That it is noted that subject to a satisfactory first year pilot, a growth bid will be requested to continue the scheme.
12. That an increase in the income budget of £13,280 and £32,030 for 2016/17 and 2017/18 respectively for the new pay and display parking is approved.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.

Other Options Considered: As contained in the report.

12. COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME

The Executive considered a report that provided an update on the review of Council Tax, Council Tax Support Scheme with proposals to amend Council Tax discounts and exemptions.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the discretionary discount changes summarised in paragraph 4.9.1 with effect from 2017/18, (subject to the cost to the HRA being mitigated) are approved, namely:

- Apply a 50% premium on long term empty properties
- Remove the 10% discount on empty properties

2. That the views of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on the scheme are noted.

3. That the proposal to introduce a 10% liability for working aged claimants is rejected.

4. That the approach taken by officers for prosecutions as a sanction for identified fraud in claiming council tax discounts or exemptions is noted.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report and 3. to continue with the current level of liability with all claimants paying the same percentage.

Other Options Considered: As contained in the report.

13. GARAGES ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Executive considered a report that set out proposals for the general fund residential garages, the funding for which required recommendation to Council.

The Executive received a presentation from officers.

With reference to the Timeline shown in the presentation, Members expressed the view that the communications & disposal plan and preparation of the specification could be started earlier subject to appropriate resources being in place.

With reference to the recommendation for the gradual implementation of the previous Executive decision to charge voluntary and community organisations up to 50% of the market rental, the Executive was concerned that this may be financially prohibitive for some organisations and further work was needed to identify and address potential cases of hardship. Additionally, there was a need to consider the role the individual groups played in the community. Accordingly it was considered that this recommendation only be agreed in principle at this

time, with further work to be undertaken and the Leader to approve implementation once she was content that this issue had been addressed.

A Member expressed the view that in some cases organisations might be able to use the bubble garages that were in less demand and were at a lower rent.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That Council be recommended to approve the funding of £9.24m over 10 years from £1.62m of capital reserves, capital receipts from the disposal of selected garage blocks (estimated at £860k, ring fenced to the investment ongoing) with the balance secured from prudential borrowing (of £6.76m).
2. That subject to, and in anticipation of Council approving the funding in 1. above -
 - 2.1 That implementation of a ten year Garage Business Plan for the Garages estate that will return the garage estate to a fit for purpose condition be approved.
 - 2.2 That approval to proceed with funding to be delegated to the Strategic Director (Environment) and the Assistant Director Finance, following consultation with Portfolio Holders for Resources, and Neighbourhoods & Co-operative Council, after satisfactory completion of the pilot schemes (as identified in section 4.2.3 of the report).
 - 2.3 That the Council adopts a new, demand based approach to rents for the garage stock.
 - 2.4 That additional staffing costs related to the implementation of the Business Plan as identified in section 4.7 of the report are approved together with additional resources funded through a mix of capital (£30k in 2016/17, £60k in 2017/18 and £30k in year 2018/19), and an ongoing annual revenue requirement of £28k from 2017/18 with an additional one off commitment of £7k in 2016/17 and £35k in 2017/18 (Capital as detailed in sections 5.1.2, and revenue as detailed in section 5.1.3 of the Financial Implications).
 - 2.5 That additional revenue budget to cover promotional costs of £2,500 in 2016/17, an ongoing £5,000 per year for the following four years (up to 2020/21), and reducing to £3,000 per year for the remainder of the Garage Business Plan (as detailed in section 5.1.3 of the Financial Implications) are approved.

2.6 That it is noted that the business plan net cost to the General Fund of £89k assumes a reduction in the General Fund contribution to the capital reserve of £175k per year in years 6-10 of the business plan.

2.7 That Council be recommended to approve that the Treasury Management Strategy at the next update (mid- year review) be amended to include the recommended supplementary estimate for the prudential borrowing.

2.8 That the introduction of the gradual rent charge for Council premises let to Voluntary and Community Organisations be introduced from 2017/18 of the Garage Business Plan, until the maximum of 50% of the prevailing rent is reached (as agreed by the Executive in 2012) be agreed in principle, subject to officers coming forward with proposals for dealing with cases of hardship and giving consideration to the role the organisation plays in the community. The proposals to be submitted to the Leader for determination following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Resources.

2.9 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (14 July 2016) report any comments on the proposed change to the Council's budget directly to the Council meeting on 20 July 2016.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report and 2.8 to ensure that cases of hardship are addressed.

Other Options Considered: As contained in the report.

14. URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS

None

15. 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 item of business on the grounds that it involves 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 reasons for the following items being in Part II it be determined that maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

16. FREEHOLD DISPOSAL OF LAND

The Executive considered a Part II report that recommended approval of the disposal of the freehold interest in a piece of land.

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

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.

Other Options Considered: As contained in the report.

17. JOINT MARKETING PROPOSAL

The Executive considered a Part II report that sought approval to a joint marketing proposal for a Council owned site.

This report had not been included on the Forward Plan and therefore the Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and been briefed and subsequently approved the report coming forward to this meeting.

It was **RESOLVED** that the recommendations in the report are approved with specific provisions regarding the affected cycle path.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.

Other Options Considered: As contained in the report.

18. PROPOSED EXTENSION TO SYMONDS GREEN COMMUNITY CENTRE

The Executive considered a Part II report for recommendation to Council concerning the proposal for using the future receipts from the disposal of the Symonds Green annex site to fund a project to deliver the proposed extension at Symonds Green Community Centre.

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

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.

Other Options Considered: As contained in the report.

19. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

None

Chair