

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MINUTES

Date: Monday 3 June 2013

Time: 6.00 p.m.

Place: Shimkent Room, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

Present: Councillors J Thomas (Chair), J Brown, G Clark, J Hollywell,
R Parker CC. S Speller, P Stuart, H Tessier and S Walker.

Start / End Time Start Time: 6.00 p.m.
 End Time: 7.25 p.m.

1a. TO NOTE MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEE AND APPOINT A VICE CHAIR

It was **RESOLVED** that the membership of the Committee be noted.

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that Councillor G Clark be appointed vice Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the Municipal Year 2013/2014.

1b. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M Cherney-Craw, M Hearn and B Underwood.

There were no declarations of interest.

2. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee had before it its Terms of Reference which had been agreed at Annual Council on 22 May 2013.

In reply to a question it was confirmed that any changes to the Terms of Reference would need to be agreed at a meeting of Council.

In reply to a further question the Committee was advised that the three Select Committees would be autonomous and would not report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Terms of Reference be noted.

**3. MINUTES – RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –
16 APRIL 2013**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Resources Development and Scrutiny meeting held on 16 April 2013 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORKPLAN 2013/2014

The Committee had before it a report which detailed items previously agreed for study by the former Development and Scrutiny Committees.

The Committee was advised that there were four key strands to its responsibilities:

- Reviewing Executive decisions
- Scrutinising Budget and Policy Framework items
- Conducting its own scrutiny reviews of the work area of the Strategic Director (Resources)
- Conducting Policy Development

The Committee was advised that its workload from reviewing Executive Decisions and scrutinising Budget and Policy Framework items would preclude any further in-depth scrutiny reviews beyond the member Expenses and Hospitality topic previously agreed by the Resources Development and Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee was further advised that three of the four topics listed as potential Policy Development items would either be reviewed as Executive Decisions or dealt with by one of the Select Committees.

In reply to a request from Members the Strategic Director (Resources) undertook to clarify his areas of responsibility following a recent realignment of senior officer workload.

The Chair suggested that Officers be requested to investigate the provision of suitable training in research and questioning techniques for Members of the Committee.

The Scrutiny Officer was requested to schedule a review of the recommendations from the Treasury Management Strategy report at a meeting later in the year.

It was noted that prior to scrutiny reviews it would be necessary for Members to meet informally to prepare and allocate lead roles and lines of questions in advance of the formal meeting.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That Members Expenses and Hospitality be selected for scrutiny in addition to the Council's Budget and Policy Framework items.
2. That the following Budget and Policy Framework items be noted:
 - The 2014/2015 HRA and Rent Setting
 - General Fund Budget and Council Tax Setting
 - Savings and Growth Proposals
 - Stevenage Borough Local Plan
 - Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Scheme

3. That the following be considered as a Policy Development item:
 - Corporate Debt Policy
4. That the following be scheduled as a review of a previous recommendations:
 - Treasury Management Strategy
5. That Officers be requested to investigate the provision of suitable training in research and questioning techniques for Members of the Committee.

5. PART 1 DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE

This report had not been circulated to Members five clear days before the meeting nor had it been made available for public inspection. The Chair determined however that given the short period of time left before the end of the call-in period on 5 June 2013, it be considered on this occasion.

The Committee had before it the agenda and reports from the meeting of the Executive held on 28 May together with the Notice of Decisions as prepared after the meeting.

New Homes Bonus

The Committee was advised that the New Homes Bonus report had been scrutinised by the Resources Development and Scrutiny Committee on 16 April and comments made had been fed back to the Executive for consideration.

The Committee was further advised that the Executive had added recommendations 4 and 5 to those listed in the original report.

Members commented on the general appearance of the walkway to the station and the importance of maintaining the town centre and asked a number of detailed questions about the report which were answered by the Officer.

Stevenage Borough Local Plan

The Committee was advised that an MMP event covering the local Plan would be held on Thursday 6 June at Daneshill House.

Members expressed concerns at the length of the original consultation document and the Committee was advised that a more accessible leaflet would be delivered to all households in Stevenage in the expectation that it would raise response rates.

Members then asked a number of detailed questions about the report which were answered by the Officer.

It was **RESOLVED** that the following Part 1 Decisions of the Executive taken on 28 May 2013 be noted:

- **New Homes Bonus – 2013/2014 Scheme Allocations.**
- **Stevenage Borough Local Plan : First Consultation**

6. URGENT PART 1 DECISIONS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

None.

7. URGENT PART I BUSINESS

None.

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 involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraphs 1-7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as amended by SI2006 No. 88.
2. That, having considered the reasons for the following report being in Part II, it be agreed that maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighed the public interest in disclosure.

9. PART II DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE

This report had not been circulated to Members five clear days before the meeting. The Chair determined however that given the short period of time left before the end of the call-in period on 5 June 2013, it be considered on this occasion.

It was **RESOLVED** that the following part II Decision taken be the Executive on 28 May 2013 be noted:

- **Proposed Incorporation of the Hertfordshire CCTV Partnership**

10. URGENT PART II DECISIONS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

None.

11. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

None.

Chair