

**STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
MINUTES**

**Date: Wednesday 3 July 2013**

**Time: 6.00 p.m.**

**Place: Shimkent Room, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage**

Present: Councillors J Thomas (Chair), G Clark (Vice Chair), J Brown, M Cherney-Craw, G Clark, M Hearn, S Speller, H Tessier and B Underwood.

Start / End Time      Start Time: 6.00 p.m.  
                                 End Time: 7.37 p.m.

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R Parker CC, P Stuart and S Walker.

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. MINUTES – OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 3 JUNE 2013**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 3 June 2013 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**4. SCOPING DOCUMENT FOR SCRUTINY REVIEW OF MEMBERS' EXPENSES AND HOSPITALITY**

The Scrutiny Officer circulated a revised draft scoping document for a scrutiny review into Members' Expenses and Hospitality and requested that the Committee define and agree its terms of reference for the study.

A Member commented that it was important that the review be as thorough, and with as higher degree of transparency as possible given the level of public interest in the subject.

The possibility of reviewing Members' Allowances and Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) was discussed. It was concluded that given the extent of the study undertaken by the Independent Remuneration Panel before recommendations were made to Council in this instance the Scrutiny concentrate on other expenses and hospitality received by Members.

Members identified a number of strands of the topic that they wished to review and

lead roles for research and questioning were agreed as follows:

- Town Twinning – Councillor M Cherney-Craw
- Comparative Figures – Councillor S Speller
- Equalities and Diversity – Councillor J Brown
- Community Reception – Councillor H Tessier
- Conferences – Councillor J Thomas
- Refreshments – Councillor G Clark
- Mayoral Expenses – Councillor B Underwood
- Travel and Car Parking – Councillor M Hearn

It was suggested that Members could meet informally in advance of the next meeting to prepare questions for witnesses and the Scrutiny Officer undertook to liaise with the Chair to arrange a date to conduct the formal review meeting.

The Chair reminded the Committee that as the scope of the review was Members' Expenses and Hospitality any questions should only focus on the benefits received by Members.

Two requests were made at the meeting for the details of the cost and numbers attending the Community Reception and Mayoral Taxi costs and the Strategic Director (Resources) and the Constitutional Services Manager undertook to provide further relevant background information for Members on request.

In reply to a question the Scrutiny Officer undertook to investigate the possibility of the attendance of a 'critical friend' from a neighbouring authority with a similar demographic at the review meeting.

It was **RESOLVED** that the revised scoping document, incorporating the amendments identified above, be approved.

## **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 3 July 2013, it be considered on this occasion.

The Committee had before it the agenda and reports from the meeting of the Executive held on 25 June together with the Notice of Decisions as prepared after the meeting.

### **SoStevenage Community Strategy**

The Committee was advised that the Executive had agreed that a revised list of the members of the SoStevenage partnership be appended to the Strategy.

### **Stevenage Borough Council Corporate Strategy 2013 / 2018**

In reply to a question the Committee was advised that the presentation of the

Corporate Strategy would be finalised once the content had been agreed at Council in July.

In reply to a further question the Committee was advised that a summary document would be prepared to accompany the full strategy to highlight the key points. A Member requested that a simple pictogram be included with the summary to show how the various plans within the Council interrelated.

### **Consultation and Engagement Strategy**

In reply to a question it was confirmed that the data within the Executive report had been collated from the 2011 census and not the 2001 census as stated. A Member commented that the report lacked a comprehensive list of the voluntary organisations within the town.

### **Balanced Scorecard 2012/2013 Quarter 4**

The Strategic Director (Resources) gave a presentation outlining the scope and content of the Balanced Scorecard.

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

The Strategic Director (Resources) undertook to follow up an enquiry relating to the data quality for the number of ICT incidents per day measure.

In reply to a question concerning Members ability to view the Balanced Scorecard the Strategic Director (Resources) advised the Committee that it should be possible for access to be arranged via the computer in the Members' library if required.

It was **RESOLVED** that the following Part 1 Decisions of the Executive taken on 25 June 2013 be noted:

- **SoStevenage Community Strategy.**
- **Stevenage Borough Council Corporate Strategy 2013 / 2018**
- **Consultation and Engagement Strategy**
- **Balanced Scorecard 2012/2013 Quarter 4**

#### **5. URGENT PART 1 DECISIONS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

None.

#### **6. URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

None.

**7. 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.

**8. PART II MINUTES – OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 3 JUNE 2013**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 3 June 2013 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**9. PART II DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE**

None.

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

None.

**11. URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

**Chair**