

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MINUTES

Date: Wednesday 16 October 2013

Time: 6.00 p.m.

Place: Shimkent Room, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

Present: Councillors J Thomas (Chair), J Brown, M Cherney-Craw,
G Clark, M Hearn, J Hollywell, H Tessier and S Walker.

Start / End Time Start Time: 6.00 p.m.
 End Time: 7.05 p.m.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

Matthew Partridge was introduced to the meeting as the new Strategic Director (Community).

There were no declarations of interest.

2. MINUTES – OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 1 OCTOBER 2013

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 1 October 2013 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. PART 1 DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE

The Committee had before it the agenda and reports from the meeting of the Executive held on 15 October together with the Notice of Decisions as published after the meeting.

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 22 October 2013, it be considered on this occasion.

Tenancy Contract Review

The Committee was advised that the Tenancy Contract had been written following an extensive consultation exercise and that the template used had been an award

winner at National level.

Members expressed concern at the length and wording of the contract and it was noted that the Committee was in agreement with the Executive regarding comments made about the language and tone of the document. It was acknowledged that it was a requirement for the contract to be written in unambiguous terms that would support any legal proceedings should they become necessary.

Members made a number of comments about the contract which were noted by the Officer for consideration for incorporation into the final draft of the contract, including; the relevance of including clauses about the running of businesses from home; the possibility of combining the clauses relating to the use of National Insurance Numbers and birth certificates as an aid to combat tenancy fraud and clarification of the responsibility of tenants to clean communal areas

In response to a Member request for an explanation of the Uimprove process the Assistant Director (Housing) undertook to provide a written reply to the Member concerned.

In response to a further request the Assistant Director (Housing) undertook to inform the Committee of the duration of the consultation exercise.

Note: Since the meeting the Committee has been advised that the consultancy exercise took place between June and August of this year and ran for 7 weeks.

Green Travel Plan

A Member asked a number of questions regarding cycle allowances and the Government backed Cycle Purchase Scheme to which the Officer responded.

Concerns were expressed that elements of the plan had been watered down to which the Officer responded that the Council was keen to implement a plan and that more ambitious targets could be incorporated in future revisions of the document along with proposals to encourage a higher take up of alternatives to the motorcar as the primary method transport.

In reply to a question it was confirmed that the targets within the plan referred equally to both staff and Members.

It was **RESOLVED** that the following Part 1 Decisions of the Executive taken on 15 October 2013 be noted:

- Tenancy Contract Review
- Green Travel Plan

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

None.

5. URGENT PART I BUSINESS

None.

6. 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.

7. PART II MINUTES – OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 1 OCTOBER 2013

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II Minutes from the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 1 October 2013 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

8. PART II DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE

The Committee had before it the Part II agenda and reports from the meeting of the Executive held on 15 October together with the Notice of Decisions as published after the meeting.

This report had not been circulated 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 22 October 2013 it be considered on this occasion.

It was **RESOLVED** that the following Part II decision of the Executive taken on 15 October be noted:

- Compulsory Purchase Order

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

None.

10. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

None.

Chair