

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MINUTES

Date: Monday 11 November 2013

Time: 6.00 p.m.

Place: Autun Room, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

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

Start / End Time Start Time: 6.00 p.m.
 End Time: 7.10 p.m.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M Hearn, R Parker CC,
S Speller, B Underwood and S Walker.

There were no declarations of interest.

2. MINUTES – OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 16 OCTOBER 2013

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
meeting held on 16 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 4 November 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 on 12 November
2013, it be considered on this occasion.

Licensing Act 2003 – Licensing Policy Review

The Committee noted that the report was going on to Council.

Hackney Carriage / Private Hire Convictions Policy

The Committee noted that the report was going on to Council.

Under Occupancy Policy

In reply to a question concerning the Council's debt policy for tenants falling into arrears the Committee was advised that the Council was considering a raft of measures, including the creation of a 'performance dashboard' to enable potential issues to be identified and dealt with proactively.

The Committee was further advised that it was the intention of the Council to recover debts wherever practicable.

Welfare Reform – Impact on Residents and the Council's Response

The Committee was advised that the timescale for the implementation of Universal Credit was unknown, but that the Council was taking a number of preparatory steps for its introduction including the establishment of a Welfare Reform Group and a monitor to enable the early identification of potential issues.

In reply to a question concerning feedback to the Executive the Committee was advised that the next report to the Executive was scheduled for July 2014, however an earlier report would be made should the performance dashboard identify any issues which required Executive level intervention.

In reply to a further question the Committee was advised that the Leader had requested that all additional costs associated with the impact of the Welfare Reform Act on the Council be identified.

A Member commented that the Council could liaise with other authorities to bring pressure on the Government to highlight issues, including the increased difficulty for the Council to fulfil its duty of care and equalities issues raised as a result of the Welfare Reform Act. It was agreed by the Committee that this comment should be reported back to the Executive.

Treasury Management Strategy Mid-Year Review

The Committee was advised that there had been no breaches of the Council's prudential indicators for investments in the first six months of the year 2013/2014.

The Committee was further advised that at 0.56% the interest rates achieved by the Investment Team exceeded the 7 day LIBOR benchmark rate of 0.49% for the same period.

2nd Quarter Monitoring Report – General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

The Committee was advised that the Executive had requested that the wording of the Town Centre Improvement recommendation be amended to reflect that spend on the project had been deferred until 2014/2015 rather than the project itself had been deferred.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the following Part 1 Decisions of the Executive taken on 4 November 2013 be noted:

- Licensing Act 2003 – Licensing Policy Review
- Hackney Carriage / Private Hire Convictions Policy
- Under Occupancy Policy
- Welfare Reform – Impact on Residents and the Council’s Response
- Treasury Management Strategy Mid-Year Review
- 2nd Quarter Monitoring Report – General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

2. That the following comment be reported to the Executive

‘This Committee recommends that the Council liaise with other like-minded authorities to make the strongest possible representations to the Government concerning the negative impacts of the Welfare Reform Act on the residents of the town’.

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 reports 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 – 16 OCTOBER

2013

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II Minutes from the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 16 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 4 November 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 12 November 2013 it be considered on this occasion.

It was **RESOLVED** that the following Part II decisions of the Executive taken on 4 November be noted:

- General Fund Budget & HRA Proposals 2014/15, 2015/16 Savings Options, Forward Plan and Updated Financial Strategy
- OFSTED Inspection of Children's Centres

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

None.

10. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

None.

Chair