

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MINUTES

Date: Monday 17 February 2014

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, 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: 7.05 p.m.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M Hearn and B Underwood.

There were no declarations of interest.

2. MINUTES – OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 23 JANUARY 2014

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 23 January 2014 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 11 February 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 19 February 2014, it be considered on this occasion.

Prudential Code Indicators and Treasury Management Strategy

The Assistant Director (Finance) presented the report and informed the Committee that the Audit Committee on 3 February had made no comment on the report.

In response to a question the Committee was advised that long term borrowing rates were fairly consistent but were closely monitored by the Council.

In reply to a further question the Committee was advised that the underlying trend for

the Council would be to borrow money and the timing of any borrowing would be determined by cash flow and holding grant considerations.

Proposed New Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) Values

The Strategic Director (Resources) presented the report and advised the Committee that the proposals consolidated and updated Stevenage Borough Council and Stevenage Homes Limited values with Co-operative Council principles.

The Committee was further advised of minor changes to the subtext of the values that had been agreed by the Executive.

The proposed values generally met with the Committee's approval although some concerns were expressed at the accessibility of the wording within the document and one Member expressed disappointment that none of his suggestions appeared to have been included in the draft.

The Committee was advised that the final presentation of the values document had still to be finalised.

Community Funding Programme 2014/2015

The Committee was advised that the Executive had agreed Tranches 1 and 2 of the proposed savings with the Leader and relevant Portfolio Holders charged to discuss Tranche 3 prior to the finalised budget being reported at Council on 26 February 2014.

In reply to a question the Committee was advised that the report did not discuss the relative 'worth' of an organisation, or the state of the organisation finances and 'need' for Council support. It was noted that the Executive had discussed this issue in relation to the setting of the General Fund Budget and that a report would be made at Council on 26 February 2014.

Members then asked a number of detailed questions about the respective monetary worth of rent in kind and garages and the Strategic Director (Resources) advised the Committee that the Community Centre Strategy report, due to go before the Executive in June, would cover many of the questions raised around these issues.

2014/2015 Capital Forward Plan and 5-Year Capital Strategy Update

The Committee was reminded that the draft report had been scrutinised at the January meeting and the Assistant Director (Finance) updated the meeting with the latest situation regarding the General Fund Capital programme.

2014/2015 Council Tax Setting and General Fund Budget

The Committee was advised that an addendum to the Executive report had been circulated because Government guidelines for the calculation of the Business Rates meant a further £233,555 in the General Fund for 2014/2015, of which it was recommended that £170,000 be transferred to an earmarked reserve to cover the General Fund against loss of Business Rate income.

The Committee was further advised that the Leader, in consultation with the Portfolio

Holders for Community, Health and Older People and Resources were to give further consideration on funding for Community Associations, Douglas Day Drive Centre and Local Community Budgets and the outcome would be reported at Council on 26 February 2014.

In reply to a question the Strategic Director (Resources) undertook to clarify the communication of a Part II confidential report becoming Part I.

Urgent Part I Business – The former Fujitsu Building – Six Hills Way

The Committee was advised of the steps that the Council had taken to issue improvement notices to the owners of the former Fujitsu Building in Six Hills Way to remove and dispose of the waste left on site and to make both the site and the building secure.

It was **RESOLVED** that the following Part 1 Decisions of the Executive taken on 11 February 2014 be noted:

- Prudential Code Indicators and Treasury Management Strategy
- Proposed New Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) Values
- Community Funding Programme 2014/2015
- 2014/2015 Capital Forward Plan and 5-Year Capital Strategy Update
- 2014/2015 Council Tax Setting and General Fund Budget
- Urgent Part I Business – The former Fujitsu Building – Six Hills Way

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

The Committee was advised that an urgent Part I decision concerning the Calculation of Business Rates Tax Base for 2014/2015 had been authorised by the Chair on 29 January 2014.

It was **RESOLVED** that the urgent Part I decision taken by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted.

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 item of business on the grounds that it 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 DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE

The Committee had before it the agenda and a Part II report from the meeting of the Executive held on 11 February 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. The Chair determined however that given the short period of time left before the end of the call-in period on 19 February 2014, it be considered on this occasion.

Contract Award: Lift Servicing and Maintenance Contract

The Committee was advised of the tendering process and the savings realised by the award of the contract.

It was **RESOLVED** that the following Part II Decision of the Executive taken on 11 February 2014 be noted:

- Contract Award: Lift Servicing and Maintenance Contract

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

None.

9. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

None.

Chair