

SUMMARY OF DECISIONS TAKEN PART I

MEETING: Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday 20 March 2014, 6pm, Shimkent Room, Daneshill House, Stevenage, SG1 1HN

MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillors J Thomas (Chair), G Clark (Vice-Chair), J Brown, M Cherney-Craw, J Hollywell, R Parker CC, S Speller, P Stuart and H Tessier.

ALSO PRESENT: Resources Portfolio Holder Councillor Mrs J Lloyd

THE AGENDA ITEMS REFERRED TO IN THIS SUMMARY OF DECISIONS MAY BE INSPECTED AT THE RECEPTION OF THE BOROUGH COUNCIL OFFICES, DANESHILL HOUSE.

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	
Apologies for absence were received from Councillors B Underwood and S Walker. There were no declarations of interest.	G Moody Ext 2203
2. MINUTES – OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 17 FEBRUARY 2014	
It was RESOLVED that the Minutes from the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 17 February 2014 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.	G Moody Ext 2203

3. PART 1 DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE	
<p>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 27 March 2014, it be considered on this occasion.</p> <p>3rd Quarter Monitoring Report General Fund and Housing Revenue Account</p> <p>The Assistant Director (Finance) presented the report.</p> <p>Members asked a number of detailed questions in relation to project slippage, carry forwards, training budgets and housing benefit overpayments which were answered by the Officer.</p> <p>In reply to a request the Assistant Director (Finance) undertook to clarify the graphs in the report relating to debts, so that when printed in black and white it would be clear what each column represented.</p> <p>2013/2014 Capital Strategy Quarter Three Outturn Report</p> <p>A revised table that showed unused New Building Receipts and Required HRA Funding (paragraph 4.7.4 of the report) was circulated to the Committee.</p> <p>The Assistant Director (Finance) presented the report and apologised for inconsistencies in the numbering of paragraphs.</p> <p>The Committee was advised that it was intended to reconvene the Leader’s Service Priority Group in the near future to review the Capital Strategy to identify ways of addressing a foreseen shortfall in funding.</p> <p>In reply to a question concerning community assets it was confirmed that a review on community buildings was underway and would be presented to the Committee as part of the scrutiny process.</p>	<p>C Fletcher Ext 2933</p>

In reply to a further question the Committee was advised that the Council held a commercial properties portfolio which generated income for the authority. It was confirmed that the portfolio was subject to regular review.

With regards to the future purchase of Town Centre properties the Committee was advised that such opportunities rarely became available and in the event of doing so would be subject to a robust business case examination before consideration of purchase was entertained.

Stevenage Borough Council Balanced Scorecard for Quarter Three 2013/2014

The Chief Executive presented the Council's Balanced Scorecard for Quarter Three.

The Committee was advised that overall the scorecard presented a healthy report with scores being higher than in quarter two and at the same period last year.

Members asked a number of detail questions about the scorecard which were answered by the Officer.

A Member expressed concern that given the difference in service standards the Customer Service Centre could be prioritising telephone calls over walk-in enquiries. The Chief Executive undertook to provide more detail to the Committee on how enquiries were managed through the centre.

It was **RESOLVED** that the following Part I decisions of the Executive taken on 18 March 2014 be noted:

- 3rd Quarter Monitoring Report General Fund and Housing Revenue Account.
- 2013/2014 Capital Strategy Quarter Three Outturn Report
- Stevenage Borough Council Balanced Scorecard for Quarter Three 2013/2014

R Protheroe
Ext 2938

4. WORKPLAN FOR 2014-2015

The Committee considered proposals for its workplan for the Municipal Year 2014/2015.

The Committee was advised that as the Overview and Scrutiny meeting on 7 April had been cancelled the time slot would be used to hold a joint meeting with the Community Select Committee to consider a Policy Development item on Community Buildings led by the Head of Property and Estates and the Resources Portfolio Holder.

K Brown
Ext 2154

In response to a question the Scrutiny Officer undertook to confirm whether it would be necessary to review the Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule as part of the Budget and Policy and Framework.

S Weaver
Ext 2332

The Committee was of the view that SBC Media and Communications should be scrutinised as many of the issues raised in the review of the Balanced Scorecard could be linked to that topic. During the discussion it was agreed that a review of 'The Co-operative Council' branding could also be incorporated into this scrutiny study.

The Committee also expressed a desire to review Section 106 agreements and was advised that the Resources Portfolio Holder was currently engaged in a review of the system. It was suggested that the Committee could scrutinise this area once the work had been completed.

There was an involved debate about the impact of redundancies and the Committee was of the view that whilst it was an important topic it did not necessarily fall within the remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That feedback from the Scrutiny Evaluation Questionnaire completed by Members be noted.
2. That having considered ideas put forward by individual Members from their Scrutiny Evaluation Survey and topics raised from Community Groups following canvassing of the groups through January and February 2014 the Committee determined the subject matter of its Scrutiny Studies for 2014/2015 to be:
 - a. SBC Media and Communications, including 'The Co-operative Council' branding
 - b. Section 106 Funds (following the Resources Portfolio Holder's review) as a one day study

S Weaver
Ext 2332

<p>c. (Resource permitting) Housing Business Plan (as a joint study with the Housing Select Committee)</p> <p>3. That monitoring or review of recommendations from previous studies be carried out as part of the normal scrutiny feedback process.</p> <p>4. That the Policy Development work identified for the Committee in 2014/15 as listed below be noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Design of the 2015/2016 Council Tax Support Scheme (if required) b. Looking after the town's assets – a sustainable capital strategy (timescale to be determined by the Assistant Director (Finance)) c. Community Buildings <p>5. That the Chair writes to all those Groups and individuals who have put forward suggestions for study thanking them for their interest and that they be sent details of the agreed workplan and opportunities to take part in the scrutiny work to be undertaken.</p>	<p>C Fletcher Ext 2993</p>
<p>5. URGENT PART 1 DECISIONS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</p>	
<p>None</p>	
<p>6. URGENT PART I BUSINESS</p>	
<p>The Committee was reminded that as the Overview and Scrutiny meeting on 7 April had been cancelled the time slot would be used to hold a joint meeting with the Community Select Committee to consider a Policy Development item on Community Buildings led by the Head of Property and Estates and the Resources Portfolio Holder.</p>	

7. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC	
Not required.	
PART II	
8. PART II DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE (IF ANY)	
None.	
8. URGENT PART II DECISIONS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	
None.	
9. URGENT PART II BUSINESS	
None.	