

## SUMMARY OF DECISIONS TAKEN PART I

**MEETING:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Monday 28 July 2014, 6pm, Shimkent Room, Daneshill House, Stevenage, SG1 1HN**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Councillors: L Martin-Haugh (Chair), R Parker CC (Vice-Chair), R Broom, J Brown, M Cherney-Craw, J Hollywell, L Harrington, C Latif and P Stuart.

**ALSO PRESENT:** Councillor J Thomas (for Item 3).

**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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<b>1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>	
Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L Bell and S Walker.  There were no declarations of interest.	G Moody Ext 2203
<b>2. MINUTES – OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 23 JUNE 2014</b>	
With regard to Minute 3 of the last meeting, the issue concerning the Customer Service Centre, the Strategic Director (Resources) apologised as he believed the question that had been raised had been covered in the report to the Executive (Item 4 on this agenda) and undertook to clarify and follow up the question after the	S Crudgington Ext 2185

<p>meeting.</p> <p>A Member reminded the meeting that there had been an incomplete paragraph in the Town Centre Regeneration report. The Strategic Director (Resources) undertook to circulate the full wording to Members of the Committee.</p> <p>It was <b>RESOLVED</b> that the Minutes from the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 23 June 2014 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.</p>	<p>S Crudgington Ext 2185</p> <p>G Moody Ext 2203</p>
<p><b>3. RESPONSE TO THE REVIEW ON MEMBERS' EXPENSES &amp; HOSPITALITY</b></p>	
<p>Councillor Thomas, the former Chair of the Committee, was in attendance for this item.</p> <p>Members asked a number of detailed questions about the response which were answered by the Officer.</p> <p>A Member commented that it should be noted that cuts to the Council's services began with the withdrawal of the Negative Subsidy in 2007 which was before the Government's austerity programme began.</p> <p>Also it was suggested that the wording at the foot of the document should be removed once the response was published as it was no longer relevant.</p> <p>Councillor Parker made a personal comment, that he wished to be recorded in the minutes, regarding the statement concerning the selection of the Mayor and expressed his disappointment that the response did not include wording to the effect that the Mayor could be selected from any political party. This view was not supported by the other Members of the Committee.</p> <p>It was <b>RESOLVED</b> that the response be noted and that a follow up date for a review be diarised.</p> <p>Councillor Thomas left the meeting at the conclusion of this item of business.</p>	<p>S Weaver Ext 2332</p> <p>G Moody Ext 2203</p> <p>S Weaver Ext 2332</p>

#### 4. 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 31 July 2014, it be considered on this occasion.

##### **Customer Services Centre – Review of Contacts**

It was noted that this item of business had been discussed at the Executive as a Part II item and that it had been resolved at that meeting to make it Part I.

The Committee was advised that the report had been prepared at the request of the Executive and would form the basis for a more in-depth review of the Customer Services Centre.

Members asked a number of detailed questions about the report which were answered by the Officer.

##### **New Homes Bonus – 2013/14 Scheme Allocations**

The Committee was reminded that a draft of this report had already been before them at its June meeting and that the wording in the report had been amended in respect of the poppies and floral displays at the roundabouts in the town.

The Committee was advised that the Executive had added an extra recommendation to the report and had identified an amount of £26,000 for the provision of a premium park/play area at Ridlins.

In reply to a question concerning the location of the play area the Committee was advised that the Executive was fulfilling a long term commitment to the provision of a proper play space in that area.

In reply to a further question concerning the funding of poppy displays within the town's floral arrangements the Assistant Director (Finance) advised the Committee that she believed that the displays had been made

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as part of the yearly planting scheme and undertook to investigate and feedback to the Committee should that assumption prove to be incorrect.

#### **Stevenage Borough Council – Making a Difference – Annual Report 2014**

In reply to a question concerning the size of the text in the report it was confirmed that the final ‘Making a Difference’ document would be fully compliant with all anti-discrimination legislation.

#### **Review of Procurement Strategy**

The Committee was advised that the Executive had requested that the recommendations be strengthened to increase the opportunities for local businesses and to ensure that the contractors used pay the living wage to staff.

In reply to a question the Committee was advised that the strategy acknowledged the legal constraints within which the Council’s procurement processes operated.

#### **Revised Stevenage Local Development Scheme**

In reply to concerns about access to private and social housing developments the Committee was advised that it was the remit of the Planning and Development Committee to comment on the design of applications put forward.

#### **Review of the Housing Allocations Scheme**

The Committee was advised that the Executive had added a recommendation granting delegated authority to the Strategic Director Community to review and amend the Under Occupation Policy to allow for appropriate downsizing based on need to ensure that larger properties may be made available to those in need.

In reply to a question it was confirmed that foster children were not taken into account in the Housing Allocations Policy. The Officer undertook to clarify the situation with the Member concerned outside of the meeting.

R Notley  
Ext 2972

### **2013/14 Capital Expenditure Outturn**

In reply to Members' concerns at the extent of slippage the Committee was advised that the relevant funds had been allocated to projects in both 2014/15 and 2015/16. This was due, in part, to the length of the procurement process. It was also stressed that no monies had been lost as a result of the slippage.

### **4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Monitoring Report General Fund and Housing Revenue Account**

In reply to a comment regarding the level of underspends the Committee was advised that they amounted to approximately 1% of the Council's gross expenditure.

The Committee was further advised that all underspends were reviewed by the LSPG and where possible savings were extracted or built into the integrated financial plan within the Medium Term Financial Strategy to support capital investment plans.

### **General Fund Medium Term Financial Strategy (2015/16-2017/18)**

The Committee was advised that the Executive had added two recommendations that covered concessions for local residents and training for managers on the commercialisation agenda.

It was **RESOLVED** that the following Part I decisions of the Executive taken on 22 July 2014 be noted:

- Customer Services Centre – Review of Contacts
- New Homes Bonus – 2013/14 Scheme Allocations
- Stevenage Borough Council – Making a Difference – Annual Report 2014
- Review of Procurement Strategy
- Revised Stevenage Local Development Scheme
- Review of the Housing Allocations Scheme
- 2013/14 Capital Expenditure Outturn
- 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Monitoring Report General Fund and Housing Revenue Account
- General Fund Medium Term Financial Strategy (2015/16-2017/18)

<b>5. OVERVIEW &amp; SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PLAN</b>	
<p>The Committee was advised that it was proposed to defer the Scrutiny Study of Media and Communications to 2015/2016.</p> <p>It was put to the vote and the Committee agreed to the revised workplan which included the deferment of the Media and Communications study to 2015/2016.</p> <p>It was <b>RESOLVED</b> that the Overview and Scrutiny Workplan for the year 2014/2015 be agreed.</p> <p>Note: Councillor Parker requested that his vote against the above decision be recorded.</p>	<p>S Weaver Ext 2332</p> <p>G Moody Ext 2203</p>
<b>6. URGENT PART 1 DECISIONS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>	
<p>None</p>	
<b>7. URGENT PART I BUSINESS</b>	
<p>None.</p>	
<b>8. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC</b>	
<p>It was <b>RESOLVED</b> that:</p> <p>1. 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.</p>	<p>G Moody Ext 2203</p>

<p>2. Members having considered the reasons for the following report being in Part II and determined that the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighed the public interest in disclosure.</p>	
<p><b>PART II</b></p>	
<p><b>9. PART II DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE (IF ANY)</b></p>	
<p>None.</p>	
<p><b>10. URGENT PART II DECISIONS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b></p>	
<p>The Committee was advised of an Urgent Part II Decision in respect of the award of the Insurance Contracts for Stevenage Borough Council authorised by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>The Committee was further advised by the Strategic Director Community of the reason for urgency.</p> <p>It was <b>RESOLVED</b> that the Urgent Part II Decision authorised by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted.</p>	
<p><b>11. URGENT PART II BUSINESS</b></p>	
<p>None.</p>	