

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MINUTES

Date: Wednesday 1 October 2014

Time: 6.00 p.m.

Place: Shimkent Room, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

Present: Councillors L Martin-Haugh (Chair), R Parker CC (Vice Chair)
L Bell, P Bibby, R Broom, J Brown, M Cherney-Crew,
J Hollywell, L Harrington, C Latif and S Mead.

Start / End Time Start Time: 6.00 p.m.
 End Time: 7.44 p.m.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M Gardner and P Stuart.

There were no declarations of interest.

2. MINUTES – OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 28 JULY 2014

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 28 July 2014 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. MINUTES – OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 27 AUGUST 2014

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 27 August 2014 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. PART 1 DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE

The Committee had before it the agenda and reports from the meeting of the Executive held on 30 September 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 8 October 2014, it be considered on this occasion.

1st Quarter Monitoring Report – General Fund and HRA

The Assistant Director Finance presented the report and advised the Committee of

amendments to the budgets where proposed savings had either been delayed or not implemented.

In reply to a question concerning the proposed implementation of car parking charges at the Fairlands Valley Show Ground on match days the Committee was assured that the Council had taken reasonable steps to ensure that a robust communications process had taken place. That said it was accepted that officers would give such matters further consideration in future and strive to ensure that all those affected by such changes have an opportunity to comment.

2014/2015 Capital Strategy Update

The Assistant Director Finance provided the Committee with an update to the Council's Capital Strategy.

The Committee was advised that the projected expenditure on the General Fund capital programme showed a decrease of £1.9m on the working budget, whilst further slippage in HRA projects had been identified.

Clarification was sought concerning the additional deferred spend of £499k in the HRA Capital Programme 2014/2015.

In reply the Committee was advised that the deferred spend had been identified as a result of new monitoring procurement processes instigated since the 1st Quarter capital report was presented. It was anticipated that the continued implementation of more proactive procurement / contract management arrangements linked to the procurement review (the action plan for which is currently in development) would enable officers to highlight matters earlier and consider appropriate action where possible.

In reply to a question the Committee was advised that no monies had been lost from budgets as a result of the spend being deferred.

Treasury Management Review

The Assistant Director Finance advised the Committee that an increase in the Council's cash balances had resulted in a need to revise Counterparty limits to ensure that the Council remained within its treasury limits.

In reply to a question concerning the reinvestment of time expired fixed term deposits the Assistant Director Finance undertook to forward relevant details to interested Members.

In reply to a further question concerning prudential borrowing the Committee was advised that the Council had taken out such a loan for the General Fund in respect of purchase of part of the Town Square. To qualify for a 'prudential loan' the Council had to demonstrate both the need for the loan and the ability to repay it.

Rent Addendum

The Strategic Director Community introduced the report and advised the Committee that the original Rent Policy had been agreed by Council in October 2012. The

addendum was required due to changes in Government guidelines.

The Committee was advised that the Executive had requested an Equality Impact Assessment for this report.

The Strategic Director (Communities) confirmed that an EQIA had been written for this item but it was being reviewed in light of the comments of the Executive.

In reply to a question it was confirmed that the policy of rent convergence was no longer applicable.

Balanced Scorecard

The Strategic Director Resources presented the balanced scorecard and advised the Committee that there were five red indicators, each of which had been reviewed in detail by the Executive.

Members discussed the issues concerning the number of abandoned calls to the Customer Service Centre (CSC) and were advised that a small number of high volume call types had been identified that could be dealt with by an IT solution, thus removing the need for the caller to speak to a member of the customer service team. However such a solution would take approximately six months to deliver.

In reply to a question concerning an indicator for the time taken for the CSC to respond to a call the Committee was advised that the target was that calls should be answered within 20 seconds and that the indicator was green.

In reply to a request from a Member the Strategic Director Resources undertook to provide a list of all measures contained in the scorecard to any Member that expressed an interest in receiving it.

In reply to a further question the Committee was advised that a number of measures were under consideration to improve the ICT-User Satisfaction indicator. It had been acknowledged by the Executive that priority should be given to maintaining the availability of the Council's website.

HCC Bus Service Consultation

The Committee was advised that the Executive had requested a more robust response to the consultation than that in the original report and had delegated the Portfolio Holder Economy, Enterprise and Transport to draft a response to the consultation picking up the points raised at its meeting.

The Committee supported the Executive's stance against the proposals addressed by the consultation.

It was noted that the appendix attached to the report could be misleading as it implied that all highlighted services could be cut whereas only some of them would be impacted.

It was **RESOLVED** that the following Part I decisions of the Executive taken on 22

July 2014 be noted:

- 1st Quarter Monitoring Report – General Fund and HRA
- 2014/2015 Capital Strategy Update
- Treasury Management Review
- Rent Addendum
- Balanced Scorecard
- HCC Bus Service Consultation

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

None.

6. URGENT PART I BUSINESS

None.

7. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was **RESOLVED** that:

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.

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.

8. PART II MINUTES – OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 27 AUGUST 2014

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II Minutes from the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 27 August 2014 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

9. PART II DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE

None.

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

None.

11. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

None.

Chair