

**NOTICE OF DECISIONS TAKEN (PART I - FOR PUBLICATION)**

**MEETING:** Executive – Tue 20 January 2015 – 14.00 hrs.  
Shimkent Room, Daneshill House, Stevenage, SG1 1HN

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Councillors S Taylor OBE CC (Chair), J Gardner (Vice-Chair), H Burrell, R Henry CC, Mrs J Lloyd, R Raynor, S Speller, J Thomas and A Webb.

**The deadline for Call-in of any of the decisions below is 28 January 2015.  
Subject to there being no call-in the attached decisions may be implemented with effect from 29 January 2015.**

<b>1. APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>	
There were no apologies or declarations of interest	
<b>2. MINUTES – 16 DECEMBER 2014</b>	J.Cansick x 2216
It was <b>RESOLVED</b> that the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 16 December 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.	
<b>3. MINUTES – OVERVIEW &amp; SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AND SELECT COMMITTEES</b>	J.Cansick x 2216
<p>The Portfolio Holder for Economy, Enterprise and Transport brought the Executive’s attention to the request from the Environment &amp; Economy Select Committee on 15 December 2015 ( Item 3C) that consideration be given to prioritising the creation of a local directory of businesses who would be willing to visit local schools to outline career opportunities. The Executive was of the view that this issue was much wider than something SBC could resolve alone and it was considered appropriate for the Portfolio Holders for Economy, Enterprise and Transport and Children and Young People to consider a way forward that would not impact too much on the delivery of other priorities for the Council.</p> <p>It was <b>RESOLVED</b> that the Minutes of the following meetings of the Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee and Select Committees are noted –</p> <p>3A Community Select Committee - 19 November 2014 3B Community Select Committee – 9 December 2014 3C Environment &amp; Economy Select Committee – 15 December 2014</p>	

**4. NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE LOCAL PLAN 2011-2031**

P.Pinkney x 2257

In considering the draft response it was considered that revision was needed to the comments regarding potential development west of Stevenage and developments of sustainable communities rather than 'urban extension' quoted. Also, as Members had yet to consider the recently completed Sports Facility Assessment it would be premature to make comments relating thereto.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the comments on North Hertfordshire's Preferred Options Local Plan (attached as Appendix 1 to the report) form the basis of the Council's formal response to North Hertfordshire District Council subject to amendments relating to comments in relation to development west of Stevenage; reference to developments of sustainable communities rather than 'urban extension' quoted; and comments regarding the Sports Facility Assessment. These revisions to be approved by the Leader and Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration.

2. That delegated authority is given to the Strategic Director (Environment) to finalise and submit the Council's response following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in the report and 1. See preamble.*

*Other Options Considered: As contained in the report.*

**5. COUNCIL TAX BASE 2015/2016**

C.Fletcher x 2933

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by Stevenage Borough Council for the year 2015/16 shall be 25,801.2 equivalent "Band D" properties reduced to 25,207.4 equivalent "Band D" properties after making allowances for 97.70% collection.

2. That the 2015/16 Council Tax Base be approved subject to any changes made to the Council Tax support Scheme for 2015/16.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.*

*Other Options Considered: As contained in the report.*

## **6. RESIZING OF THE REVENUES AND BENEFITS SERVICE**

C Fletcher x 2933

It was noted that there was risk to the extent of income collection associated with the localisation of Business Rates and this was an additional pressure that the resizing of the Revenues and Benefits Service was seeking to mitigate. Additionally the extra investment would go some way to maximise Housing Benefit Subsidy.

There was also concern at the potential cost of Business Rates appeals, which if upheld required refunds potentially dating back to 2005, long before the localisation, and given that the Government had not passed on to local authorities the budget held to address any successful appeal refunds.

Members expressed the view that it was unlikely that the Government had included the costs of such necessary investment in revenues and benefits administration when quoting the 'savings' made as a result of welfare reform.

The Executive noted the fourfold increase in e-mails received by the Customer Services Centre (paragraph 7.3.4 of the Appendix).

The Executive requested the Portfolio Holder for Resources to review the monitoring of performance.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That an increase of £90,000 for 2014/15 and £219,900 for 2015/16 for the Revenues and Benefits Service is approved to be incorporated into the General Fund final budget.
2. That the reduction in SBC costs to the Revenues and Benefits shared service of £53,750 in 2017/18 is noted.
3. That a transfer from the allocated welfare reform reserve of £82,945 in 2014/15 is approved to fund the majority of the increase in 2014/15 costs.
4. That a transfer from the Capacity Building Reserve of £185,016 is approved to part meet the increased costs in 2015/16.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.*

*Other Options Considered: As contained in the report.*

## 7. FINAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2015-16

C Fletcher x 2933

It was noted that the proposed 2015-2016 Scheme appended to the report was very lengthy and it would have been more appropriate not to have circulated hard copies to all Members, particularly as there was no change from previous years. It was suggested that in future where there were similar lengthy documents submitted as appendices electronic links might be sufficient. Officers were requested that in future they consult with relevant Portfolio Holders before lengthy appendices were circulated.

The view was expressed that when undertaking the review later in the year particular attention should be given to options developed by other authorities for dealing with exemptions e.g. the London Borough of Camden.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That Council be recommended to adopt the 2015/16 CTS Scheme proposed within this report (2015/16 Scheme attached at Appendix A to the report).
2. That a complete review of the scheme be carried out during the summer of 2015.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.*

*Other Options Considered: As contained in the report.*

## 8. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT FINAL BUDGET PROPOSALS 2015/16 AND RENT SETTING

C Fletcher x 2933

Appendix F to this report was circulated on a Supplementary Agenda.

The Executive expressed the view that it was important that when the letter to tenants was drafted it should make it clear that the CPI rate of inflation used in the calculations was that for September 2014.

With reference to the growth proposals Members could not clearly identify the initiative to increase the number of tenancy officers that would result in the downsizing of some of the areas covered by individuals. The Strategic Director (Community) undertook to confirm the anticipated impact of growth proposals quoted to ensure that they had the required outcome.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That Council be recommended to approve that the that HRA dwelling rents be increased, week commencing 6 April 2015 by

an average 2.18% or £2.15 per week which has been calculated using the new rent formula, CPI +1% in line with the 2014 Rent Policy.

2. That Council be recommended to approve the revised 2014/15 and the 2015/16 HRA budget, as set out in Appendix A to the report.
3. That Council be recommended to approve the proposed fees and charges as shown in Appendix B to the report.
4. That Council be recommended to approve the Savings Options totalling £283,920 as shown in Appendix C to the report.
5. That Council be recommended to approve the Growth Options with an impact of £1,503,950 on the HRA as shown in Appendix D to the report.
6. That Council be recommended to approve the minimum level of reserves for 2015/16 as shown in Appendix E to the report.
7. That the increase of £28,590 to the 2014/15 HRA working budget be approved.
8. That it be noted that a review of service charges is to be undertaken in 2015/16.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.*

*Other Options Considered: As contained in the report.*

## **9. 2015/16 DRAFT CAPITAL FORWARD PLAN & 5 YEAR CAPITAL STRATEGY UPDATE**

C Fletcher x 2933

Following comments from Members regarding delays caused by disputes with contractors the Assistant Director (Finance) reported that there was to be a thorough review of procurement and contracts.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the revised General Fund and HRA 2014/15 capital programme, as detailed in Appendix A and Appendix B of the report is approved.
2. That the draft 2015/16 General Fund Capital Programme as detailed in Appendix A of the report is approved for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

3. That the draft 2015/16 HRA Capital Programme as detailed in Appendix B of the report and as included in the HRA Business Plan is approved for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
4. That the updated forecast of resources as summarised in Appendix A (General Fund) and Appendix B (HRA) of the report is approved.
5. That the transfer of any unused General Fund borrowing costs to the Capital Reserve, (paragraph 4.3.2 of the report) is approved.
6. That the recommendations of LSPG regarding the General Fund Capital Programme are agreed (Appendix C of the report refers).
7. That the work undertaken by LSPG on behalf of the Executive in reviewing and challenging the General Fund Capital Strategy is noted.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.*

*Other Options Considered: As contained in the report.*

## **10. DRAFT 2015/2016 COUNCIL TAX SETTING AND GENERAL FUND BUDGET**

C Fletcher x 2933

This report was not circulated to Members 5 clear days before the meeting, nor was it available for public inspection during that time. The Chair determined however that given the reason for urgency set out in the report it be considered on this occasion.

The Executive welcomed the growth initiative relating to produce a qualitative study on children and family poverty in Stevenage as it was important to get this information to ensure that the focus of services supported the most vulnerable.

Members were also of the view that further work was needed to consider residents' parking concessions.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the 2014/15 revised net expenditure on the General Fund of £8,720,500 is approved.
2. That the Carry Forward request of £250,000 relating to the revenue contribution to capital for regeneration (New Homes Bonus funded) is approved, (paragraph 4.1.1 (6) of the report refers).

3. That a draft General Fund Budget Requirement for 2015/16 of £10,804,304 (including the carry forward request recommendation 2.2) be proposed for consultation purposes, with a contribution to balances of £350,344 and a Band D Council Tax of £192.10 (assuming a 1.90% increase) is approved for consideration by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
4. That the updated position on the General Fund Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), as shown at Appendix A and the Risk Assessments of General Fund Balances, as shown at Appendix B to the report, is approved for consideration by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
5. That a minimum level of General Fund reserves of £2,513,297, in line with the 2015/16 risk assessment of balances, as shown at Appendix B to this report, is approved for consideration by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
6. That the contingency sum of £400,000 within which the Executive can approve supplementary estimates, is approved for 2015/16, (unchanged from 2014/15) for consideration by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
7. That the 2015/16 proposed Fees and Charges increase of £290,040 (Appendix C) is approved for consideration by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.*

*Other Options Considered: As contained in the report.*

## **11. NATIONAL AND NON-DOMESTIC RATES (NNDR) 2015/2016 TAXBASE**

C Fletcher x 2933

Due to timing issues with the NNDR 1 form and completion of the work to calculate the impact of the Hertfordshire Pool this report was not available and was therefore withdrawn.

It was **RESOLVED** that delegated authority be given to the Strategic Director (Resources), following consultation with the Leader and Portfolio Holder for Resources, to approve the NNDR Tax Base 2015/2016 and that the Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee be requested to consider a waiver of the call-in period in order for this decision to meet the 31 January statutory deadline

*Reason for Decision: Due to the report not being ready for consideration but given the statutory deadline for a decision to be taken.*

*Other Options Considered: None*

<b>12. URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS</b>	
None	
<b>13. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS</b>	
<p>It was <b>RESOLVED</b>:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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 involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraphs 1-7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, as amended by SI 2006 No. 88.</li> <li>2. That having considered the reasons for the following item being in Part II it be determined that maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighs the public interest in disclosure.</li> </ol>	
<b><u>PART II</u></b>	
<b>14. PART II MINUTES – 16 DECEMBER 2014</b>	
It was <b>RESOLVED</b> that the Part II section of the Minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2014 be approved as a correct record and be signed by the Chair.	
<b>15. PART II MINUTES – OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 17 DECEMBER 2014</b>	
It was <b>RESOLVED</b> that the Part II section of the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on 17 December 2015 are noted.	
<b>16. URGENT PART II BUSINESS</b>	
None	