

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

**MEETING:**                    **Executive – Tuesday 10 February 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 18 February 2015.**  
**Subject to there being no call-in the attached decisions may be implemented with effect from 19 February 2015.**

<b>1. APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>	
There were no apologies or declarations of interest	
<b>2. MINUTES – 20 JANUARY 2015</b>	J.Cansick x 2216
It was <b>RESOLVED</b> that the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 20 January 2015 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>With reference to the Minutes of the Environment &amp; Economy Select Committee regarding Children’s play areas it was considered important to note that currently there was no capital budget for maintenance and upgrading of equipment. The Executive requested the Portfolio Holder for Environment &amp; Regeneration to consider this.</p> <p>The Executive were also reminded that a decision had been taken several years ago that identified 50 play areas that the Council was to continue to maintain with the remainder being scaled down when equipment had reached the end of its life. It was suggested that some Members were possibly not aware of this.</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 Environment &amp; Economy Select Committee – 7 January 2015  3B Community Select Committee – 12 January 2015</p>	

**4. SOSAFE COMMUNITY SAFETY STRATEGY 2015/2018**

D. Barker x 2835

In introducing the report the Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities, Older People & Health expressed his thanks to Debbie Barker, Senior Corporate Policy Officer (Community Safety & Strategic Partnerships) for the work she had undertaken in drafting the Strategy.

Child Sexual Exploitation was now included in the Strategy and it was noted that Members and Officers were looking to meet with the relevant agencies in order to confirm the position regarding the issue locally and to ensure that all partners were working together.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That Council be recommended to approve the Community Safety Strategy 2015/18, which takes the consultation exercise into account subject to amending the Forward to be a joint statement from both the Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities, Older People & Health and the Chief Executive and for reference to made in the Strategy to the joint working with SBC housing staff, particularly on anti-social behaviour.
2. That Council be recommended to amend the Budget & Policy Framework detailed in the Constitution by the deletion of the Community Safety Strategy as this is no longer a statutory requirement (Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011).

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

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

**5. PRUDENTIAL CODE INDICATORS AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT**

C.Fletcher x 2933

It was reported that the Audit Committee had made no comment on the report when it was considered on 2 February 2015.

Officers corrected a typographical error in the report – the second line of headings in the table at paragraph 4.2.1 should read ‘£million’ not ‘£000’ as quoted.

The Executive took the opportunity to congratulate the staff involved in treasury management for their performance in looking after the Council's investment funds.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That Council be recommended to adopt the 2015/16 Treasury Management Strategy as detailed in Appendix A to the report.
2. That Council be recommended to adopt the Prudential Code Indicators as detailed in Appendix A, Attachment Two to the report.

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

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

## **6. BUILDING A BRIGHTER FINANCIAL FUTURE – FINANCIAL INCLUSION STRATEGY 2015-2018**

J Cresser x 2028

Officers corrected a typographical error – recommendation 2.2 should have referred to 'paragraph 4.10', not '4.9' as quoted.

With reference to the proposal to establish a body to address poverty and advance equality of opportunity the view was expressed that it should be a Commission, not a 'Committee'. It was considered appropriate for the Chair of the Commission to be independent of the Council and additionally the Commission could take up the work already undertaken by the Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People on Child Poverty.

The Executive recorded its thanks to those officers who had worked on producing the Strategy.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the content of the draft Financial Inclusion Strategy 2015/18, as appended to the report be approved; and any matters for further consideration be highlighted.
2. That the consultation proposals as set out at paragraph 4.10 of the report be approved.
3. That delegated authority be given to the Strategic Director (Communities), following consultation with the Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing, to approve the final version of the strategy.
4. That a Financial Inclusion Fairness Commission be established to help the Council achieve its commitment to reducing child

poverty and to creating a more equal, fair society.

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

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

## **7. OLDER PERSON'S SERVICES GUIDE**

R Protheroe x 2938

It was noted that an alternative title to the document was being sought.

The Executive recorded its thanks to Fiona Rolfe, Neighbourhood Development Officer, for her work on this initiative.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the guide, as shown at the Appendix to the report, is approved for production and publishing with 1000 hard copies for distribution to Council departments, public and voluntary agencies, those working on the front line with older people and their families or carers with web site links to be made available on the Council web site and partner agency websites.
2. That the ongoing work to continually develop the document to provide current and relevant information is agreed with the guide becoming a key shared resource for all appropriate agencies in Stevenage.
3. That delegated authority is given to the Strategic Director (Community), following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for safe Communities, Older People and Health, to make further changes with regard to the implementation of the Care Act 2014 in April 2015 and any other legislative or local implementation changes.

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

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

## **8. 2015/2016 COUNCIL TAX SETTING AND GENERAL FUND BUDGET**

C Fletcher x 2933

The Chair proposed that the Executive should recommend a Council Tax freeze this year as opposed to a 1.9% increase recommended in the report. This was supported by all Members and the view was expressed that many people in the Town were struggling financially.

The Strategic Director (Resources) confirmed that budget briefings had been provided to each of the political groups.

In response to a question the Strategic Director (Resources), speaking as the Section 151 Officer, explained the position recommended regarding the Council's reserves. There were currently a number of risks within the local government financial climate and the Council's financial strategy was to build in sufficient balances to allow for the anticipated draw down of resources over the next five years. There were significant savings to be made over the next few years which still had to be identified and it had been necessary to reverse some savings that had previously been agreed given feedback from Members and residents. Furthermore, the future of New Homes Bonus funding was uncertain and the General Fund had the additional risk of any successful outstanding business rate appeals, the funding for which had not been passed down by central government.

Officers reported that in the light of the revised proposals that had come forward an amended report would be submitted to Council to reflect the proposed freeze to the level of council tax.

The Executive thanked all the Members and officer involved in putting the proposals forward. It was noted that activity on budget preparation had been started in the summer of the previous year and a great deal of time and effort had gone in to ensure that a balance budget was constructed.

It was **RESOLVED** that the following proposals be recommended to Council on 25 February 2015 -

1. That the Budget summarised at Appendix A to this report be the Council's General Fund Budget for 2014/15 and 2015/16 subject to the necessary amendment in the light of the decision to recommend a freeze in the level of Council Tax. A further update on the 2014/15 budgets will be given at the March Executive as part of the quarterly monitoring process.
2. That approval be given to a freeze in the level of Council Tax, giving a General Fund Net Budget Requirement for 2015/16 of £10,939,194 a contribution to balances of £573,994 (after taking account of the Government's council tax freeze grant) and a Band D council tax of £188.52 (the same as 2014/2015), which will be reflected in the formal draft council tax resolution to be circulated for Council.
3. That approval be given to a General Fund Revenue Account Contingency Sum in the Budget and Policy Framework for 2015/16 of £400,000.
4. That the advice of the Strategic Director (Resources) on the robustness of the draft budget and the adequacy of reserves (Appendix C, to be amended to reflect the council tax freeze), be noted.
5. That the Fees and Charges increases (Appendix F) be noted.

6. That the contribution from the Collection Fund (Council Tax) for 2015/16 of £142,003 be noted.

7. That the estimated pooling gains and retained business rate growth included in the 2015/16 budget of £669,177 be noted.

8. That it be noted that the General Fund Medium Term Financial Strategy remains largely unchanged from that reported to the meeting of the Executive held on 20 January 2015 and continues to meet the financial objectives set by the Chief Finance Officer.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in the report but with a freeze to the level of Council Tax to minimise increases to council tax payers given the continuing difficult financial climate.*

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

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

C Fletcher x 2933

Officers corrected a typographical error in the report - the first Scheme listed in the table at paragraph 4.4.1 should read 'KH233 New Build Programme', not 'Arts & Leisure Centre' as quoted.

It has previously been reported that representations had been made to the Department of Communities and Local Government to not pursue publicity regarding Right-to-Buy that was to be focussed in the SG1 and SG2 post codes for a number of reasons including the impact of these sales on the Council's housing stock and subsequently the waiting list. The Department had now agreed not to include SG1 although other parts of the town were still identified to receive promotional material.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That Council be recommended to approve the revised General Fund and HRA 2014/15 capital programme, as detailed in Appendix A and Appendix B to the report.

2. That Council be recommended to approve the final 2015/16 General Fund Capital Programme as detailed in Appendix A to the report.

3. That Council be recommended to approve the final 2015/16 HRA Capital Programme as detailed in Appendix B to the report and as included in the HRA Business Plan.

4. That Council be recommended to approve the updated forecast of resources as summarised in Appendix A (General Fund) and Appendix B (HRA) to the report.

5. That Council be recommended to approve the transfer of any unused General Fund borrowing costs to the capital reserve, (paragraph 4.3.2 of the report refers).

6. That the recommendations of LSPG regarding the General Fund Capital Programme be agreed (Appendix C to the report refers).

7. That the work undertaken by LSPG on behalf of the Executive in reviewing and challenging the General Fund Capital Strategy be noted.

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

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

#### **10. URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

The Portfolio Holder for Economy, Enterprise and Transport gave an update following a recent meeting of the Consortium of East Coast Main Line Authorities.

The Executive was of the view that it was important that Hertfordshire County Council continued its membership of the Consortium.

#### **11. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Not required

#### **PART II**

#### **12. URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None