

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MINUTES

Date: Wednesday 21 January 2015

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, M Gardner, J Hollywell, L Harrington, C Latif, S Mead and P Stuart.

Start / End Time Start Time: 6.00 p.m.
 End Time: 7.30 p.m.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Brown and M Cherney-Craw.

There were no declarations of interest.

2. MINUTES – OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 17 DECEMBER 2014

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 17 December 2014 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. 2015/2016 DRAFT CAPITAL FORWARD PLAN AND 5 YEAR CAPITAL STRATEGY UPDATE

This item was considered at item 5 on the agenda.

The Committee was reminded that this report was before them as a Budget and Policy Framework item.

The Committee was advised that the report had been reviewed by the Leader's Services Priority Group and in reply to a question it was confirmed that the Garages Asset Management Plan was scheduled to be presented to the Executive in March.

The Committee was further advised of slippage in both the General Fund and HRA capital programmes.

The Committee did not wish to record any comments on the update.

It was **RESOLVED** that the update be noted.

4. DRAFT 2015/2016 COUNCIL TAX SETTING AND GENERAL FUND BUDGET

This item was considered at item 5 on the agenda.

The Committee was reminded that this report was before them as a Budget and Policy Framework item.

The Committee was advised that a formal decision concerning the level of any Council Tax increase would be made at the Council meeting in February.

Members asked a number of questions concerning the impact of accepting the Government's Council Tax Freeze Grant in lieu of any proposed Council Tax increase.

A Member then suggested that the Committee recommend a 0% Council Tax increase. This proposal was not supported by the Committee.

The Committee did not wish to record any comments on the report.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

5. PART 1 DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE

The Committee had before it the agenda and reports from the meeting of the Executive held on 20 January together with the Notice of Decisions as published after the meeting.

The Notice of Decisions 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 28 January 2015, it be considered on this occasion.

North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031

The Head of Planning, Regeneration and Transport presented the North Hertfordshire Local plan and advised the Committee of the synergies between that plan and the Stevenage Borough Council plan.

In reply to a question the Committee was advised that both Stevenage and North Herts Councils had a duty to co-operate in the formulation of local plans. Without such co-operation it was possible that both plans would fail.

Council Tax Base 2015-2016

The Head of the Shared Revenues and Benefits Service presented a report that contained the recommendations for the Council Tax Base for 2015-2016.

In reply to a question it was confirmed that the basis of the Council Tax calculations

had not changed from the previous year.

Resizing of the Revenues and Benefits Service.

The Head of the Shared Revenues and Benefits Service presented a report requesting additional funding for the service in order to respond to a sustained increase in workload.

The Committee was advised that the issue of increased workload had previously been dealt with on an ad hoc basis but that the issue now required a more robust solution to ensure a consistent service to clients.

Members asked a number of questions about the provision of anti-fraud services which were answered by the officers.

In reply to a specific question concerning funding it was confirmed that both this Council and East Herts Council would be making equivalent contributions to the required funding.

Final Council Tax Support Scheme 2015-2016

The Assistant Director (Finance) presented the report and the Committee was advised that a full review of the scheme was scheduled for early in 2015-2016.

In reply to a question the Committee was advised that the scheme had not been significantly revised as it was believed that it remained fit for purpose for the forthcoming year.

In reply to a further question the Committee was informed that there was a requirement to consult Hertfordshire County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner in the formulation of any scheme as they were preceptors.

Housing Revenue Account Final Budget Proposals 2015-2016 and Rent Setting

The Assistant Director (Finance) presented the report and the Committee was reminded that the proposals had previously been submitted in draft format.

The Committee was advised that a major review of the Council's service charges would be undertaken to ensure consistency with the Leasehold Sector.

National and Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) 2015-2016 Tax Base

The Committee was advised of the reasons for the withdrawal of the report and for the delegation of authority to the Strategic Director (Resources) to approve the NNDR tax base for 2015-2016.

It was **RESOLVED** that the following Part I decisions taken by the Executive at its meeting on 20 January 2015 be noted:

- Minutes – 16 December
- Minutes – Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Select Committees
- North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031

- Council Tax Base 2015-2016
- Resizing of Revenues and Benefits Service
- Final Council Tax Support Scheme.
- Housing Revenue Account Final Budget Proposals 2015-2016 and Rent Setting
- National and Non-Domestic Rates 2015-2015 Tax Base.

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

It was **RESOLVED** that the urgent Part I Decision in respect of the Shared Anti-Fraud Service Partnership authorised by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted.

7. URGENT PART I BUSINESS

None.

8. 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 reports being in Part II and determined that the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighed the public interest in disclosure.

9. PART II MINUTES – OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 17 DECEMBER 2014

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II Minutes from the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 17 December 2014 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

10. PART II DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE

None.

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

None.

12. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

None.

Chair