

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MINUTES

Date: Monday 16 February 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, J Brown, J Hollywell, L Harrington, C Latif,
S Mead and P Stuart.

Start / End Time Start Time: 6.00 p.m.
 End Time: 7.05 p.m.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R Broom, M Cherney-Craw and M Gardner.

There were no declarations of interest.

2. MINUTES – OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 21 JANUARY 2015

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 21 January 2015 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. 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 time left before the end of the call-in period on 18 February 2015, it be considered on this occasion.

SoSafe Community Safety Strategy 2015/2018

The Head of Business Strategy, Community and Customer Services presented the report.

The Committee was advised that although there was no longer a statutory requirement for the Council to produce a Community Safety Strategy, the SoSafe Partnership wished for the strategy to continue.

Prudential Code Indicators and Treasury Management Strategy 2015/16

The Assistant Director (Finance) presented the report.

The Committee was advised that the strategy assumed an interest rate rise by December 2015.

In reply to a question the Committee was informed that financial institutions were invited to tender to provide banking services to the Council.

In reply to a further question the Committee was advised that the Council took advantage of a scheme whereby cash balances could be invested with other Local Authorities.

Building a Brighter Financial Future – Financial Inclusion Strategy 2015-2018.

The Strategic Director (Community) presented the report.

The Committee was informed that the strategy linked with the corporate plan and had come about as a result of a request from the Executive.

In order to promote the strategy the Council would actively engage with partner organisations, such as the CAB, Children's Centres and Social Services to promote the services proposed. It was anticipated that Members would refer constituents in need of assistance to the service.

In reply to a question the Committee was advised that the strategy would augment the debt advice and other financial services offered by the CAB and was targeted at all residents in the town.

In reply to a question concerning the financing of the strategy the Committee was informed that there would be a set-up cost of £10k after which it was planned that the strategy would be cost neutral.

Older Persons' Services Guide

The Head of Business Strategy, Community and Customer Services presented the report and advised the Committee that the guide sought to provide a clear pathway for residents to access services.

The Committee was further advised that an alternative title for the document was being sought.

Members commented that the document required proof reading to correct a number of typographical errors.

2015-2016 Council Tax Setting and General Fund Budget

The Assistant Director (Finance) presented the report.

The Committee was advised that the report had been amended to reflect the Executive's recommendation to freeze council tax for the year 2015/2016.

In reply to a question concerning New Homes Bonus the Committee was advised that spend proposals would be presented to Council at its February meeting and would then go through the usual budget scrutiny process.

Members then asked a number of detailed questions about the Council Tax Freeze Grant which were answered by the Officer.

2015/2016 Capital Forward Plan and 5 Year Capital Strategy Update

The Assistant Director (Finance) presented the report.

The Committee was advised of further project spend slippage in both the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), due primarily to the Archer Road regeneration project.

The Committee was further advised that the number of Right to Buy purchases remained a major factor with the HRA Capital Budget.

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

- Minutes – 20 January 2015
- Minutes – Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Select Committees
- SoSafe Community Safety Strategy 2015/2018
- Prudential Code Indicators and Treasury Management Strategy 2015/16
- Building a Brighter Financial Future – Financial Inclusion Strategy 2015-2016
- Older Persons' Services Guide
- 2015-2016 Council Tax Setting and General Fund Budget
- 2015-2016 Final Capital Forward Plan and 5 Year Capital Strategy Update.

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

None.

5. URGENT PART I BUSINESS

None.

6. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Not required.

7. PART II DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE

None.

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

None.

9. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

None.

Chair