

## SUMMARY OF DECISIONS TAKEN PART I

**MEETING:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
Monday 16 November 2015, 6.00pm, Shimkent Room, Daneshill House, Stevenage, SG1 1HN

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Councillors: L Martin-Haugh (Chair), L Bell, P Bibby, L Briscoe, J Brown, M Downing, M Gardner, E Harrington, M Hurst, C Latif, S Mead, R Parker CC and Resources Portfolio Holder Mrs J Lloyd.

**THE AGENDA ITEMS REFERRED TO IN THIS SUMMARY OF DECISIONS MAY BE INSPECTED AT THE RECEPTION OF THE BOROUGH COUNCIL OFFICES, DANESHILL HOUSE.**

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<b>1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>	
There were no apologies for absence and no declarations of interest.	G Moody Ext 2203
<b>2. MINUTES – OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 19 OCTOBER 2015</b>	
It was <b>RESOLVED</b> that the Minutes from the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 19 October 2015 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.	G Moody Ext 2203
<b>3. PART 1 DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE</b>	
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 20 November 2015, it be considered on this occasion.	

## **2015/2016 MID-YEAR TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW**

The Assistant Director (Finance) presented the report and advised the Committee that the Executive had discussed the impact of the Government's announcement of a 1% rent reduction and the potential repayment of £8m of 'Right to Buy' receipts.

In reply to a question concerning the Council's replacement programme the Committee was advised that there were currently plans to build 550 social homes over the next 10 years. Investment in Housing development and Housing more generally was being considered as part of the refresh of the HRA Business Plan in light of Government policy announcements.

## **2<sup>ND</sup> QUARTER MONITORING REPORT GENERAL FUND AND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA)**

The Assistant Director (Finance) presented the report and advised the Committee of a typographic error in paragraph 3.8.2 of the Executive report which should read that the shrub bed and hedge rejuvenation project was due to commence in (not be completed by) November.

The Committee discussed the recovery arrangements for Housing Benefit Overpayments and questioned whether the Council could be more proactive in preventing overpayments occurring. In reply the Officer advised the Committee of the Council's current processes and the Portfolio Holder for Resources confirmed that she was satisfied that those arrangements were robust.

## **2<sup>ND</sup> QUARTER CAPITAL STRATEGY UPDATE**

The Assistant Director (Finance) presented the report.

In reply to a question concerning Disabled Facilities Grants the Committee was advised of funding arrangements for the service. It was also noted that demand for grants had been high so far this year.

The Committee was further advised that the Executive had recognised the impact that an aging population

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could have on this budget.

### **HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2015-2020**

The Head of Housing Management introduced the report and advised the Committee that the Executive had requested details of the number of households subject to the 'bedroom tax' that were reliant on the discretionary housing payments. This information would be shared with members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee when available.

### **GAMBLING ACT 2005 – STATEMENT OF POLICY**

The Head of Leisure, Community and Children's Services presented the report and advised the Committee that the amendment to the policy had been prompted by legislative changes.

The Committee was further advised that no responses to the consultation exercise had been received.

### **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS – SBC UPDATE TO THE RESPONSE TO THE REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMME**

The Head of Housing Management presented the report and advised the Committee of recent developments in the refugee resettlement programme.

Members then asked a number of detailed questions about the report, preparations for the public meeting on 28 November and the Council's arrangements to receive refugees which were answered by the Officer.

It was **RESOLVED** that the following Part 1 decisions taken by the Executive at its meeting on 11 November 2015 be noted:

- Minutes – 13 October 2015
- Minutes – Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Select Committees

J Cresser  
Ext 2028

A Sanderson  
Ext 2311

J Cresser  
Ext 2028

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2015/2016 Mid-Year Treasury Management Review</li> <li>• 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Monitoring Report General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA)</li> <li>• 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Capital Strategy Update</li> <li>• Homelessness Strategy 2015-2020</li> <li>• Gambling Act 2005 – Statement of Policy</li> <li>• Urgent Part 1 Business – SBC update on the response to the refugee resettlement programme.</li> </ul>	
<b>4. MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS SCRUTINY REVIEW</b>	
<p>The Committee received a presentation covering the role of the Council’s Communications Unit and the methods of communication employed by the Council from the Head of Service (Chief Executive’s Unit) and the Corporate Communications Manager.</p> <p>Members asked a number of detailed questions during the presentation which were answered by the Officers.</p> <p>Members raised a number of points about the presentation which included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The importance of intelligence to pre-empt issues and proactively engage with local press.</li> <li>• The benefit of positive news, especially with regard to developing refugee issues.</li> <li>• The need to build and maintain relationships with local media agencies.</li> <li>• The need to exercise caution when using social media such as Twitter or Facebook.</li> <li>• The need to strengthen ‘out of hours’ coverage especially for social media comments.</li> </ul> <p>Members thanked the officers for the presentation and requested that they be forwarded a copy of the slides after the meeting.</p> <p>In response to a Member request the Scrutiny Officer undertook to recirculate the background documents to the review that had previously been sent out.</p>	<p>R Protheroe Ext 2938</p> <p>L Culkin Ext 2168</p> <p>G Moody Ext 2203</p> <p>S Weaver Ext 2203</p>

<p>It was <b>RESOLVED</b> that the points raised be noted and incorporated into the review as appropriate.</p>	
<p><b>5. SCRUTINY REVIEW INTO SECTION 106 AGREEMENTS – EXECUTIVE PORTFOLIO HOLDER RESPONSE</b></p>	
<p>The Committee was advised that since the review into Section 106 Agreements there had been a major change in legislation which had impacted on the recommendations made.</p> <p>The Scrutiny Officer undertook to liaise with the Head of Planning and Engineering to arrange a briefing for Members on this issue.</p> <p>It was <b>RESOLVED</b> that the report be noted.</p>	<p>S Weaver Ext 2332</p>
<p><b>6. URGENT PART 1 DECISIONS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b></p>	
<p>None.</p>	
<p><b>7. URGENT PART I BUSINESS</b></p>	
<p>None.</p>	
<p><b>8. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC</b></p>	
<p>It was <b>RESOLVED</b> that:</p> <p>1. Under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt</p>	<p>G Moody Ext 2203</p>

<p>information as described in paragraphs 1-7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as amended by SI2006 No.88.</p> <p>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.</p>	
<p><b>PART II</b></p>	
<p><b>9. PART II MINUTES – OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 19 OCTOBER 2015</b></p>	
<p>It was <b>RESOLVED</b> that the Part II Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of 19 October 2015 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.</p>	<p>G Moody Ext 2203</p>
<p><b>10. PART II DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE</b></p>	
<p>This report had not been circulated to Members five clear days before the meeting. The Chair determined however that given the short time left before the end of the call-in period on 20 November 2015, it be considered on this occasion.</p> <p><b>General Fund Budget &amp; HRA Proposals 2014/15, 2015/16 Savings Options, Forward Plan and Updated Financial Strategy</b></p> <p>The Assistant Director (Finance) presented the report and the Committee was advised of the changes made by the Executive to the recommendations contained therein.</p> <p>Members asked a number of detailed questions about the report which were answered by the Officer.</p> <p>It was noted that a revised Concessionary Fees and Charges structure was due to be introduced from 1 April 2016. The Scrutiny Officer undertook to liaise with the Head of Environmental Services to arrange a date for</p>	<p>C Fletcher Ext 2933</p> <p>S Weaver Ext 2332</p>

<p>a Policy and Development meeting of the Committee to undertake this task.</p> <p>It was <b>RESOLVED</b> that the following Part II decision taken by the Executive at its meeting on 11 November 2015 be noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Part II Minutes – Executive – 11 November 2015</li> <li>• Part II Minutes – Overview and Scrutiny</li> <li>• General Fund Budget &amp; HRA Proposals 2014/15, 2015/16 Savings Options, Forward Plan and Updated Financial Strategy</li> </ul>	
<p><b>11. URGENT PART II DECISIONS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b></p>	
<p>It was <b>RESOLVED</b> that the Part I Decision taken by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 23 October 2015 in respect of the acquisition of a commercial property in the Town Square Stevenage be noted.</p>	<p>G Moody Ext 2203</p>
<p><b>12. URGENT PART II BUSINESS</b></p>	
<p>None.</p>	