

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MINUTES

Date: Thursday 23 February 2017

Time: 6.00 p.m.

Place: Shimkent Room, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

Present: Councillors L Martin-Haugh (Chair), P Bibby (Vice Chair), J Brown, M Downing, M Gardner, E Harrington, J Hollywell, S Mead, A Mitchell, R Parker CC and P Stuart

Start / End Time Start Time: 6.00 p.m.
 End Time: 8.06 p.m.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C Latif and C Saunders. There were no declarations of interest.

2. MINUTES – OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 15 DECEMBER 2016

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 25 January 2017 are approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. DRAFT PROPERTY INVESTMENT STRATEGY

The Committee was reminded that the report was before them as a Budget and Policy Framework item and any comments made would be incorporated into the final report for recommendation to Executive in March.

The report outlined proposals for a Draft Property Investment Strategy for 2017/18 – 2019/20 and recommended an initial investment of £15m to be resourced from prudential borrowing. Periodic reports on the progress in this area would come back to Executive and this Committee.

In response to a question, the Property Development Manager advised that she would be leading on any acquisitions, supported by her team alongside the engagement of consultants when considered necessary.

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

4. 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 2 March 2017, it be considered on this occasion.

- **Treasury Management Review Including Prudential Code Indicators 2017/18** – The Assistant Director (Finance and Estates) advised that the Executive was of the view that Council should be recommended to implement the revised arrangements from 1 March 2017 rather than waiting for the new financial year.

The Committee also noted the comments from the Audit Committee and Executive in relation to the use of property funds. It had been agreed that the Assistant Director (Finance & Estates) should also consult with the Audit Committee, not just the Chair. In response to a question on this matter, the Assistant Director advised that the timing of investments would not be compromised as special meetings of the Audit Committee would be convened if necessary.

- **Investing in Play Areas** – Following an introduction from the Strategic Director, the Committee received a presentation from the Environmental Performance & Development Manager on the current play area provision and proposals for future investment to enhance play spaces in the Town.

The Committee noted that the Executive had approved Option 1 in the Officer's report which would:

- Double the number of primary play spaces making provision for 0-16 year olds;
- Increasing the number of play spaces suitable for teenagers; and
- Improving a further ten local play spaces to provide play landscapes.

The Environmental Performance & Development Manager replied to a number of Members' questions including in relation to the play area at Bray Drive. She advised that officers were looking to resolve the issue of ownership and if it was owned by the Council, a Community Asset Transfer could be investigated.

In response to a question regarding accessibility, officers advised that they had used national guidance on distances to determine the level of play provision. For primary sites a 600m (8 minute walk) and secondary sites a 400m (5 minute walk) distance would be used.

Members congratulated officers on the new equipment installed at The Donkey Park. Officers confirmed they would respond to Members on the detail of equipment to be installed at the Sparrow Drive site.

Members were pleased to note that ward councillors would be consulted on the proposals in their areas at the earliest opportunity including a tour/walkabout with Officers and Members to visit the play areas in each ward.

- **2017/18 Final Capital Forward Plan & 5 Year Capital Strategy Update** – The Assistant Director (Finance and Estates) advised the Committee that the Executive was of the view that the proposals to fund drainage work at the golf course (£345,000) could not be viewed as a priority at this time

In response to a question, the Strategic Director advised that a review of the performance of the leisure management contract including a benchmarking exercise has been undertaken. The outcome of this review is being discussed with the operator with a view to a set of actions being agreed. The outcome of the review can be shared with Members once it has been finalised.

- **2017/2018 Council Tax Setting and General Fund Budget** – The Assistant Director (Finance and Estates) advised that proposals for the New Homes Bonus would be reported to the Council meeting on 28 February and on to the Special Meeting of this Committee scheduled for 2 March 2017.
- **Corporate Procurement Strategy 2016 – 2020** – The Committee was advised that the issue of local procurement, recognising the relevant legal/procurement boundaries, with a view to encouraging investment within the Town's economy, had been discussed at the Executive.

Members were keen to ensure that the Council's commitment to equalities and diversity was also carried through to ensure suppliers were aware of the requirements.

- **Draft Property Investment Strategy** – Dealt with as a Budget and Policy Framework item at item 3.

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

5. **URGENT PART I DECISIONS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

None

6. **URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

None

7. **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 item of business on the grounds that it 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 Local Government (Access to information) (Variation) Order 2006.
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.

8. PART II DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE

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 2 March 2017, it be considered on this occasion.

It was **RESOLVED** that the following Part II decisions of the Executive taken on 22 February 2017 are noted:

- **Part II Minutes – Wednesday 22 February 2017**
- **Stevenage Football Club – North Stand** – The Committee noted that the Executive had approved the report.

The Chair of the Committee agreed to waive the call-in on in relation to this decision to enable the decision on this matter to be made known to the Football Club as soon as possible after discussion at this meeting.

- **Leaseholder Payment Options (Major Works) Policy** – The Committee noted that the Executive had approved the report.

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

None

10. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

None

Chair