

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 5 September 2018

Time: 2.00pm

Place: Shimkent Room, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

Present: Councillors: Sharon Taylor OBE CC (Chair) (from 2.10pm), Mrs Joan Lloyd (Vice-Chair), Rob Broom, John Gardner, Richard Henry, Jackie Hollywell, Ralph Raynor and Jeannette Thomas.

Start / End Time: Start Time: 2.00pm
End Time: 4.16pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

As the Chair would be slightly late attending the meeting, the Vice-Chair assumed the Chair.

No apologies for absence were received.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES - 11 JULY 2018

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 11 July 2018 are approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

3 MINUTES OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AND SELECT COMMITTEES

In relation to the Minutes of the meeting of the Community Select Committee held on 12 July 2018, it was felt that consideration should be given to an MMP Training session regarding the Voluntary Sector.

In respect of the Minutes of the meeting of the Environment & Economy Select Committee held on 1 August 2018, the Service Director (Tom Pike) undertook to investigate the maintenance/cleaning regime of the Town Centre, Middle Row and Indoor Market Public Conveniences, with a view to improving the condition of these facilities.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the following meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Select Committees are noted:

Environment & Economy Select Committee – 13 June 2018

Community Select Committee – 20 June 2018

Community Select Committee – 4 July 2018

Community Select Committee – 12 July 2018
Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 16 July 2018
Environment & Economy Select Committee – 1 August 2018

4 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL)

At this point in the proceedings, the Leader of the Council arrived and assumed the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

The Executive considered a report that provided an overview of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and sought approval for two rounds of consultation on the Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule (PDCS) and subsequently the Draft Charging Schedule (DCS).

The Executive was advised that, unlike Section 106, the CIL would be chargeable on the majority of planning applications for new developments. However, Section 106 could still apply in respect of applications where site specific mitigation measures were required (ie. new schools, road infrastructure improvements etc.).

The Leader requested that the following measures be taken in relation to the CIL:

- The consultation exercise should be designed in such a way so as to encourage residents to engage and respond, not just developers;
- The Planning Control Committee would have an active role in monitoring CIL on a meeting by meeting basis, and the Audit Committee should be used to monitor the overall impact on a retrospective basis; and
- The performance relating to CIL should also be added to the Executive's Performance Monitoring Indicators.

The Executive supported the addition of recommendations relating to a 12 month review of the CIL and highlighted its continued concern regarding the Holding Direction on the Local Plan and its consequent impact on the introduction of CIL.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the updated evidence base for CIL is noted.
2. That the draft Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule (attached as Appendix 1 to the report) is approved.
3. That public consultation on the Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule for a period of six weeks, commencing on 12 September 2018, is approved.
4. That delegated powers be granted to the Assistant Director (Planning & Regulation), in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment & Regeneration, to make such amendments as are necessary in the final preparation of the Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule.
5. That delegated powers be granted to the Assistant Director (Planning & Regulation), in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment &

Regeneration, to consider consultation responses received in relation to the Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule and to make such amendments as are necessary to subsequently prepare the Draft Charging Schedule.

6. That public consultation on the Draft Charging Schedule, for a period of four weeks commencing on 16 November 2018, is approved.
7. That the CIL rates are reviewed 12 months after adoption to take into account updated viability evidence.
8. That significant concern is expressed regarding the continuing temporary Holding Direction on the Stevenage Borough Local Plan, which has been found sound on Independent Examination, by the Secretary of State which is causing delay in the introduction of CIL as well as preventing the positive determination of planning applications for much needed development throughout the Borough.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report; plus 7. To ensure the CIL rates are reviewed in a timely manner; and 8. To re-iterate the Council's concern regarding the Holding Direction on the Local Plan and its impact on the introduction of CIL. Other Options considered: As contained in the report.

5 COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME

The Executive considered a report proposing the continuation of the 2018/19 Council Tax Support (CTS) Scheme for 2019/20.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources advised that it was recommended that the Scheme remained unchanged from 2018/19 at an 8.5% maximum liability for those on maximum benefit (or £121.61 a year for claimants in a Band C property).

The Executive noted that further modelling would be required on the potential new scheme for 2020/21, which would be based on claimants' income bands, and would aim to simplify the criteria for customers, as well as mitigating the impact of changes in circumstances on workload and Council Tax collection resulting from universal credit reassessments.

It was **RESOLVED** that Council be recommended to approve the 2019/20 Council Tax Support Scheme, as proposed within the report.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.
Other Options considered: As contained in the report.*

6 GENERAL FUND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2018/2019 - 2022/2023

The Executive considered a report that provided an update on the General Fund Medium Term Financial Strategy for the period 2018/19 - 2022/23 and an Update on the Financial Security targets for the period 2019/20 – 2020/21.

The Assistant Director (Finance and Estates) referred to the revised table at

Paragraph 4.11.3 of the report circulated at the meeting. She commented that the data in the original table in the row entitled “Variance to Nov Financial Security Report” was the total General Fund balance and not the variance to the 2018 MTFS.

It was noted that the Leader planned to hold an Executive session concerning Financial Security in Autumn 2018.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) principles, as outlined in paragraph 4.1.6 of the report, are approved.
2. That, for modelling purposes, Council Tax increases be set at the threshold of 2.99%, subject to any change in government rules to achieve a balanced budget (Section 4.7 of the report refers).
3. That the updated inflation assumptions used in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (Section 4.4 of the report refers) are approved.
4. That a General Fund Financial Security Target of £2.24million is approved for the period 2019/20- 2021/22 (Paragraph 4.6.15 of the report refers), including an assumption that fees and charges increases be in line with inflation.
5. That amounts of £300,000 and £100,000 for 2018/19 and 2019/20 respectively, are approved for inclusion in the budget setting process as a Transformation Fund, to help deliver the Future Town Future Council programme, (Paragraph 4.5.2 of the report refers).
6. That General Fund growth is only approved for the Council's FTFC priorities and is funded from within the existing baseline budgets or by further savings in addition to the £2.24Million target identified (Paragraph 4.5.4 of the report refers).
7. That approval to enter the Business Rates Hertfordshire pilot for 2019/20 is delegated to the Assistant Director (Finance and Estates), after consultation with the Resources Portfolio Holder (Paragraph 4.8.7 of the report refers).
8. That the Leader's Financial Security Group oversee the development of the 2019/20 – 2021/22 savings package.
9. That a minimum level of balances for the General Fund of £2.96million is approved for 2019/20 (section 4.11 of the report refers).
10. That the MTFS is regularly updated for any material financial pressures so forecasts are updated and is re-presented to the Executive for approval.
11. That public consultation be commissioned in line with the requirements of the Council's Consultation and Engagement Strategy.
12. That the Trade Unions and staff are consulted on the key messages contained within the Medium Term Financial Strategies and more specifically when

drawing up any proposals where there is a risk of redundancy.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.

Other Options considered: As contained in the report.

7 1ST QUARTER REVENUE MONITORING REPORT 2018/2019 - GENERAL FUND AND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT

The Executive considered a report that provided an update on the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) projected 2018/19 outturn, including any carry forward requests, updates on savings and growth bids.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources advised that the General Fund net spend was projected to be £195,750 higher than the working budget. The HRA net spend was projected to be £75,400 higher than the working budget. The 1st Quarter variances were set out in the report.

In relation to the peppercorn rent issue referred to in Paragraph 4.2.8 of the report, the Leader requested that officers take further steps to secure higher rent levels from Registered Social Providers.

It was **RESOLVED:**

General Fund

1. That the 1st Quarter projected net increase in General Fund expenditure of £195,750 is approved.
2. That it be noted that cumulative changes made to the General Fund net budget remains within the £400,000 increase variation limit delegated to the Executive.
3. That the progress of the 2018/19 approved Financial Security options, growth bids and carry forward requests is noted.
4. That it be noted that the 2019/20 ongoing net pressure of £57,090 will be incorporated into the General Fund Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

1. That the 2018/19 1st Quarter projected net increase in HRA net deficit of £75,400 be approved.
2. That it be noted that the cumulative increases made to the HRA net budget remains within the £250,000 increase variation limit delegated to the Executive.
3. That the progress of the 2018/19 approved Financial Security options, growth bids and carry forward requests is noted
4. That budget carry forwards to 2019/2020 of £60,000 are approved.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.
Other Options considered: As contained in the report.

8 1ST QUARTER CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING REPORT 2018/19 - GENERAL FUND AND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT

The Executive considered a report that provided an update on the Council's 2018/19 and 2019/20 Capital Programme, and sought approval for revisions to the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources stated that the 2018/19 General Fund Capital Programme was projected to be £798,000 lower than the working budget or 2.5)% of the budgeted amount, all of which related to the re-profiling of scheme delivery between 2018/19 and 2019/20. The HRA Capital Programme was projected to be unchanged from the working budget of £26.1Million.

In response to a query raised by the Leader, the Assistant Director (Finance & Estates) undertook to provide Executive Members with clarification regarding the Boiler upgrade/replacement schemes for St. Nicholas Community Centre and Springfield House.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the 2018/19 General Fund capital programme net decrease in expenditure of £798,260 is approved, as summarised in Paragraph 4.1.1 of the report.
2. That the virement from the deferred works Budget of £49,000 and for the Multi-Storey Car Park of £12,140, as summarised in Paragraphs 4.1.5 and 4.1.6 of the report, is approved.
3. That the General Fund re-profiling of capital expenditure to 2019/20 of £1,627,500, as summarised in Table One of the report, is approved.
4. That it be noted that there is no increase in the capital expenditure for the 2019/20 Housing Revenue Account, as summarised in Table Two of the report.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.
Other Options considered: As contained in the report.

9 ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW OF 2017/18 INCLUDING PRUDENTIAL CODE

The Executive considered a report for recommendation to Council on the operation of the 2017/18 Treasury Management and Investment Strategy.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources drew attention to the cash balances (as at 31 March 2018) pie chart tabled at the meeting, which was a clearer representation of the pie chart set out in Paragraph 5.7.3 of the original report.

The Leader referred to a recent decision of Plymouth City Council to invoke the provisions of the Sustainable Communities Act 2007 to call upon the Government to share with the Council information it had on Brexit and its impact on the city. The Executive supported the Leader's suggestion that a similar request be made to Government concerning the sharing of Brexit impacts for Stevenage.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the 2017/18 Annual Treasury Management Strategy be recommended to Council for approval.
2. That the provisions of the Sustainable Communities Act 2007 be invoked to call upon the Government to share with the Council information it has on Brexit and its impact on Stevenage.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report; and 2. To obtain information regarding the impact of Brexit on Stevenage.

Other Options considered: As contained in the report.

10 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE - QUARTER ONE 2018/19

The Executive considered a report that highlighted the Council's performance across key priorities and themes for Quarter One 2018/2019.

The Chief Executive gave a presentation on the report, and drew attention to the three Future Town, Future Council (FTFC) Programme and eight Corporate Performance measures at red status, together with improvement activities for each of these measures, as set out in the report.

The Leader asked that Members be updated on developments regarding the Customer Service Centre in advance of the next Council meeting.

The Leader suggested that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may wish to consider bringing forward its planned consideration of staff sickness.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the delivery of priorities which form the Future Town, Future Council Programme and performance of the Council across the key themes for Quarter One 2018/19, together with the latest achievements, is noted.
2. That the initial implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act and activity to facilitate sustained performance to prevent homelessness in the town is noted and endorsed (as set out in Paragraphs 3.89 to 3.91 of the report).
3. That plans being implemented to ensure that sufficient staff are available to meet the level of customer contacts through the Customer Service Centre to provide a more consistent level of service to customers are endorsed (as set out in Paragraphs 3.109 to 3.114 of the report).

4. That the improvements to performance reporting practice and plans to revise policy and practice to support sickness absence management are noted and endorsed (as set out in Paragraphs 3.120 to 3.123 of the report).

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.

Other Options considered: As contained in the report.

11 URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS

None.

12 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That, 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 to 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, as amended by SI 2006 No. 88.
2. That having considered the reasons for the following items being in Part II, it be determined that maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighed the public interest in disclosure.

13 PART II MINUTES - EXECUTIVE - 11 JULY 2018

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 11 July 2018 are approved for signature by the Chair.

14 TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION - REGENERATING QUEENSWAY NORTH

The Executive considered a Part II report that sought authority to enter into contract negotiations with a private property development and investment company with the aim of entering legal agreements to bring forward the regeneration scheme on Queensway North.

It was **RESOLVED** that the recommendations in the report are approved.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.

Other Options considered: As contained in the report.

15 URGENT PART II BUSINESS

None.

CHAIR