

SUMMARY OF DECISIONS

Meeting:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date:	Tuesday, 28 January 2020
Place:	Shimkent Room, Daneshill House, Danestrete
Members Present:	Councillors: Lin Martin-Haugh (Chair), Philip Bibby CC (Vice-Chair), Sandra Barr, Jim Brown, Laurie Chester, Michael Downing, Michelle Gardner, Andy McGuinness, John Mead, Adam Mitchell CC, Robin Parker CC and Claire Parris.

1	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	
	<p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Sarah Mead.</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>	
2	MINUTES - 18 DECEMBER 2019	
	<p>In relation to Minute 3 – Part I Decisions of the Executive (Community Centres Review), the Assistant Director (Finance & Estates) undertook to follow up the issue of the ongoing determination of the lease for the Old Stevenage Community Association and respond to the Member who had raised this matter at the meeting.</p> <p>It was RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 18 December 2019 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.</p>	
3	PART I DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE	
	<p>The Committee considered the decisions on the following matters arising from the Executive meeting held on 22 January 2020:</p> <p>Minutes of the Executive – 16 December 2019</p> <p>Noted.</p>	

Minutes of the Overview & Scrutiny and Select Committees

Noted.

Final Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Rent Setting Report 2020/21

In response to Members' questions, the Assistant Director (Finance & Estates) commented:

- After a number of years of rent reductions for Council tenants, the Government had reverted back to its previous policy of rent increases of CPI +1% for the next five year period; and
- In relation to the retention of 1 for 1 right to buy receipts, it was confirmed that the eligibility criteria required the use of these receipts for replacement homes. At present, the funds needed to be spent within 3 years, but officers would be writing to the MHCLG to request that the time period be extended to five years, as suggested in the Government's consultation on "Use of Right to Buy (RTB) Receipts".

Draft General Fund and Council Tax Setting 2020/21

Although the levels of 2020/21 fees and charges were to be noted, as they had taken effect from 1 January 2020, a Member raised doubts that the small increase in charges in the Old Town car parks would realise the level of additional income projected, as these car parks were invariably under-utilised. The Assistant Director (Finance & Estates) confirmed that the options to reduce spend and maintain current level of services were becoming more difficult.

In reply to a Member's question as to why the graph at Paragraph 3.2 of the report, which referred to Annual Government Grant Loss, commenced on 2011/12, the Assistant Director (Finance & Estates) commented that this was the year that the then Government's "austerity" programme had commenced. The Chair added that it was useful for Members to be shown the Grant Loss over the last 10 years in order to appreciate its cumulative impact on the Council's budget since 2011/12.

The Assistant Director (Finance & Estates) confirmed that all the savings options recommended by the Leader's Financial Security Group had been accepted by the Executive with the exception of the proposal to cease hard copy production of the

Chronicle magazine. However, this had been offset by savings identified as a result of managerial changes within Stevenage Direct Services.

Draft Capital Strategy 2019/20 – 2024/25

In response to a Member's query regarding why capital bid C59 (Improving the environmental credentials of the build at the Kenilworth Close scheme) had not been recommended for inclusion in the Capital Strategy, the Assistant Director (Finance & Estates) explained that, though not agreed as an additional resolution, the Executive had requested that, should there be a financial overachievement of land and asset sales during the year, then priority should be given to some of this income being earmarked for improvement of the environmental credentials of the build at the Kenilworth Close scheme.

4	URGENT PART I DECISIONS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	
	None.	
5	URGENT PART I BUSINESS	
	None.	
6	EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC	
	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	

	<p>paragraphs 1 – 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as amended by Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.</p> <p>2. That Members consider the reasons for the following reports being in Part II and determine whether or not maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighs the public interest in disclosure.</p>
7	PART II DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE
	<p>The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the Part II decision of the Executive concerning the appointment of a Development Partner at Kenilworth Close.</p> <p>The Assistant Director (Housing Development) answered a number of Members' questions regarding the report.</p> <p>At the conclusion of the debate, Councillors Robin Parker CC and Andy McGuinness wished their names to be recorded as not supporting the decision of the Executive in respect of the appointment of a Development Partner at Kenilworth Close.</p> <p>It was RESOLVED that the Part II decision of the Executive made at its meeting held on 22 January 2020 be noted.</p>
8	URGENT PART II DECISIONS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
	None.
9	URGENT PART II BUSINESS
	None.