

NOTICE OF DECISIONS

Meeting:	Executive	
Date:	Wednesday, 16 March 2022	
Place:	Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage	
Members Present:	Councillors:	Sharon Taylor OBE CC (Chair), Mrs Joan Lloyd (Vice-Chair), Lloyd Briscoe, Rob Broom, John Gardner, Richard Henry, Jackie Hollywell and Jeannette Thomas.

WITH THE EXCEPTION OF ITEM 5 BELOW (TOWNS FUND BUSINESS CASE – STEVENAGE ENTERPRISE CENTRE) *, THE DEADLINE FOR CALL-IN OF ANY OF THE DECISIONS BELOW IS FRIDAY, 25 MARCH 2022. SUBJECT TO THERE BEING NO CALL-IN THE ATTACHED DECISIONS MAY BE IMPLEMENTED WITH EFFECT FROM MONDAY, 28 MARCH 2022.

***IN VIEW OF THE URGENCY OF THIS DECISION DUE TO THE REQUIREMENT TO SUBMIT THIS BUSINESS CASE TO THE GOVERNMENT BY THE DEADLINE DATE OF 23 MARCH 2022, THE CHAIR OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HAS WAIVED THE RIGHT TO CALL-IN THE DECISION, IN ACCORDANCE WITH RULE 15(i) OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY RULES CONTAINED IN THE COUNCIL’S CONSTITUTION.**

1	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	
	Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Phil Bibby CC (observer) and Robin Parker CC (observer). There were no declarations of interest.	
2	MINUTES - 2 FEBRUARY 2022 AND 9 FEBRUARY 2022	
	It was RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meetings of the Executive held on 2 February 2022 and 9 February 2022 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.	

3	MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AND SELECT COMMITTEES	
	<p>It was RESOLVED that the following Minutes of the meetings of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Select Committees be noted –</p> <p>Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 25 January 2022 Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 9 February 2022 Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 15 February 2022</p>	
4	COVID-19 UPDATE	T. Pike x2288
	<p>The Executive considered an overarching verbal update report from the Strategic Director (TP), together with a short presentation from the Corporate Policy & Research Officer, providing information concerning the latest epidemiology statistics relating to the Covid-19 pandemic.</p> <p>Officers responded to questions raised by Members as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Covid infection level in parts of China and other countries was relatively high, primarily due to low vaccination take-up rates in some age groups, lower exposure to the virus related to the zero tolerance policy on outbreak control, and the transmissibility of the Omicron variant; • there was a dearth of information from the Government about the possible introduction of charging for Lateral Flow Test kits from 1 April 2022; • whilst a good number of people had been vaccinated at recent Bedwell pop-up vaccination clinics, there was no significant change in the vaccination rate in that ward, which was still about 10% below the rates in other wards; • even though the level of serious Covid infections had reduced, the importance of maintaining the message encouraging the 	

unvaccinated to get vaccinated was acknowledged.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Covid-19 update be noted.

5

TOWNS FUND BUSINESS CASE - STEVENAGE ENTERPRISE CENTRE

C. Barnes
x2292

The Executive considered a report seeking approval of the Towns Fund Business Case in respect of the Stevenage Enterprise Centre.

It was noted that the project had received the support of the Stevenage Development Board, and that the potential Gross Value Added (GVA) economic impact of the project, as set out in the Business Case, was significant.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the endorsement of the project from the Stevenage Development Board be noted.
2. That the business case for the Stevenage Enterprise Centre be approved, and authority be delegated to the Strategic Director (TP) to submit the project summary to the Department for Levelling Up, Communities and Housing Towns Fund team on behalf of the Council (acting as Accountable Body).
3. That it be noted that, due to ongoing commercial discussions, this project will be subject to an updated business plan to be approved by the Executive prior to drawdown of funding.

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other Options considered: As contained in report.

6	EQUALITIES, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION POLICY AND STRATEGY	R. Gregory x2568
<p>The Executive considered a report seeking approval of a proposed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and Strategy.</p> <p>Members stated that they would be pleased to work with the Portfolio Holder for Communities, Community Safety & Equalities on the production of the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Action Plan. It was noted that the work of the Stevenage Equalities Commission, together with relevant census data, would help to inform the Action Plan.</p> <p>In response to a Member's question, it was confirmed that the 16 organisations listed in Appendix B to the report were those that had contributed in the work on the draft Strategy, either through meetings with officers or responding online.</p> <p>The Chair asked for officers to give consideration to undertaking some research work on how the rising cost of living (due to increasing fuel, energy and food prices) was impacting the population of Stevenage, and to develop some mitigation measures to help residents alleviate the impact.</p> <p>It was RESOLVED:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, as attached at Appendix A to the report, be approved. 2. That the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, as attached at Appendix B to the report, be approved. 3. That an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan be brought back to the Executive for consideration in Autumn 2022. <p><i>Reason for Decision: As contained in report.</i> <i>Other Options considered: As contained in report.</i></p>		
7	CORPORATE PERFORMANCE - QUARTER 3 2021/22	R. Protheroe x2938
<p>The Executive received a presentation from the Chief Executive concerning the Quarter Three (October to December 2021)</p>		

Corporate Performance report 2021/22.

In relation to the focus on Voids, the Chair asked if it would be possible for officers to prepare a ward by ward report on long-term voids (including the length of time that the property had been void and reasons why) which could be provided to all Members with updates throughout the year.

In reply to a Member's question, it was confirmed that the SBC standard for void properties would need to be aligned to the imminently expected Government's updated Decent Homes standard.

In respect of the focus on Customer Services, the Chair commented that the Portfolio Holders for Housing, Health & Older People and Neighbourhoods & Co-operative Council would be maintaining an oversight of this area, with the aim of securing an improvement in performance by Quarter 4.

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 Three 2021/22, together with the latest achievements, be noted.
2. That the continued impacts of Covid-19 on the Housing Options and Homelessness services, and actions to recover performance (set out in Paragraphs 3.75 to 3.96 of the report), be noted.
3. That performance challenges relating to housing voids be noted and actions to improve performance (set out in Paragraphs 3.97 to 3.114 of the report) be endorsed.
4. That the challenges relating to garages with asbestos, the letting of Council garages, and the planned measures to improve performance (set out in Paragraphs 3.115 to 3.136) be endorsed.
5. That the key customer service related challenges (including performance within the Customer Service Centre, Complaints and Website) be noted, and the associated improvement activities (set out in Paragraphs 3.137 to 3.180) be endorsed.

	<p>6. That the Executive Action Tracker, as attached at Appendix 3 to the report, be noted.</p> <p><i>Reason for Decision: As contained in report.</i></p> <p><i>Other Options considered: As contained in report.</i></p>	
8	APPROVAL OF THE DISCRETIONARY 'ENERGY REBATE' SCHEME	C. Fletcher x2933
	<p>The Executive consider a report seeking approval of a discretionary Energy Rebate Scheme.</p> <p>It was RESOLVED:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the proposed discretionary Energy Rebate Scheme, as set out in Paragraph 4.1 of the report, be approved. 2. That delegated authority be given to the Section 151 Officer, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Resources, to make revisions to the scheme criteria, as specified in Section H of the proposed scheme. <p><i>Reason for Decision: As contained in report.</i></p> <p><i>Other Options considered: As contained in report.</i></p>	
9	3RD QUARTER REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2021/22 - GENERAL FUND AND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT	C. Fletcher x2933
	<p>The Executive considered a report in respect of 3rd Quarter Revenue Budget Monitoring 2021/22 (General Fund and Housing Revenue Account).</p> <p>In reply to a question, the Strategic Director (CF) explained that the estimated total value of revenue allocated reserves as at 31 March 2022 would be £7.1M. This value had decreased by circa £8M since 31 March 2021 (£15.2M total allocated reserves), primarily due to NNDR repayments required to the Collection Fund as a result of the Government granting business rate reliefs</p>	

giving less income (but the Council was compensated with S31 grants instead).

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the 2021/22 3rd Quarter projected net decrease in General Fund expenditure of £14,680 be approved.
2. That it be noted that the cumulative changes made to the General Fund net budget remains within the £400,000 increase variation limit delegated to the Executive, as set out in Paragraph 4.1.21 of the report.
3. That the changes to the 2022/23 General Fund budget of £80,000 reduction in spend, as set out in Paragraph 4.2.24 of the report, be approved.
4. That the 2021/22 3rd Quarter projected net saving in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget of £391,960 be approved.
5. That the HRA carry forward request of £325,000 for decant costs on redevelopment schemes be approved.

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other Options considered: As contained in report.

10	3RD QUARTER CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING REPORT 2021/22	C. Fletcher x2933
<p>The Executive considered a report in respect of 3rd Quarter Capital Programme Monitoring 2021/22 (General Fund and Housing Revenue Account).</p> <p>In response to a question, the Strategic Director (CF) clarified that one of the reasons for to total amount of Capital Programme slippage of £1.099M related to delays in procuring works for the Business and Technology Centre.</p> <p>It was RESOLVED:</p>		

1. That the inclusion of the additional £7.235Million to increase the Housing Wholly Owned Company budget to £15Million, as approved by the Executive in January 2021 and Council in February 2021, and as detailed in Table One and Section 4.2.3 of the report, be noted.
2. That the changes to the other 2021/22 General Fund Capital Programme budgets, totalling net slippage of £656,000, as summarised in Table One and detailed in Section 4.1.1 of the report, be approved.
3. That the 2022/23 General Fund Capital Programme net increase in expenditure of £656,000, as summarised in Table One and detailed in Section 4.1.1 of the report, be approved.
4. That the 2021/22 Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme slippage of £10.062Million, as summarised in Table Five and set out in Section 4.4.1 of the report, be approved.
5. That the 2022/23 Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme net increase in expenditure, as summarised in Table Five and set out in Section 4.4.1 of the report, be approved.

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other Options considered: As contained in report.

10a

URGENT PART I BUSINESS

Ukraine Crisis

The Chair provided an update on the impacts of the Ukraine crisis on Stevenage, and the work of the SBC Ukraine Crisis Working Group in preparing for the impacts. The Chief Executive informed the Executive of the outcome of a Government Briefing on the matter held earlier in the day.

11	EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC	
	<p>It was RESOLVED:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That under Section 100A 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 involve 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. That the reasons for the following reports being in Part II were accepted, and that the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighs the public interest in disclosure. 	
12	PART II MINUTES - EXECUTIVE - 2 FEBRUARY 2022	
	<p>It was RESOLVED that the Part II Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 2 February 2022 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.</p>	
13	WRITE OFFS	C. Fletcher x2933
	<p>The Executive considered a Part II report in respect of an update regarding a potential rent arrears debt write off, and seeking approval to approve a housing benefit debt write off.</p> <p>It was RESOLVED that the recommendations set out in the report be approved.</p> <p><i>Reason for Decision: As contained in report.</i> <i>Other Options considered: As contained in report.</i></p>	

14	URGENT PART II BUSINESS	
	None.	