

Daneshill House  
Danestrete  
Stevenage  
Hertfordshire

16 January 2024

Dear Sir/Madam

Notice is hereby given that a meeting of the Stevenage Borough Council will be held in the Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage on Wednesday, 24 January 2024 at 7.00pm and you are summoned to attend to transact the following business.

Yours faithfully



Matthew Partridge  
Chief Executive

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## AGENDA

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**2. MINUTES - 20 DECEMBER 2023**

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 20 December 2023.

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**3. MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS**

To receive any communications that the Mayor may wish to put before the Council.

**4. COMMUNITY PRESENTATIONS**

None received.

**5. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS**

None received.

**6. QUESTIONS FROM THE YOUTH COUNCIL**

None received.

## **7. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

The following question has been submitted by a member of the public. A written answer to the questions will be published on a supplementary agenda.

### **Question from Mr Jim Borchers**

“At the recent Council debate on cycle path lighting concerns about wildlife and dark skies were mentioned. What principles has the Council got in place for new and existing external lighting on buildings and structures in the town with respect to wildlife and dark skies?”

## **8. LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S UPDATE**

In accordance with Standing Orders, the Leader of the Opposition shall be given the opportunity to raise one matter relevant to the Borough that has arisen since the last meeting of the Council. The Leader of the Council shall then have the opportunity to advise the Council of matters relevant to the Borough that have arisen since the last meeting.

## **9. UPDATE FROM SCRUTINY CHAIRS**

To receive updates from the Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees on the recent activities of those Committees.

## **10. NOTICE OF MOTIONS**

In accordance with Standing Orders, the following motion has been received for consideration:

### Impact of the Government's Autumn Statement on Local Government Finance

To be moved by Councillor Richard Henry and seconded by Councillor Jeannette Thomas.

“That:

1. This Council notes with deep concern the significant impact of de-funding local government by Conservative-led governments since 2010.
2. This Council recognises that local government in England has been actively stripped of funding under successive Conservative-led governments, including the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Alliance government. All English local authorities have been forced to cut spending on nearly every aspect of their services since 2010. Poorer areas have been hit disproportionately, leading to councils having to make harsh cuts, including to services such as parks, libraries, refuse collection, and children's centres. Following the Chancellor's Autumn Statement, the Chair and leaders of the four main parties in the Local Government Association (LGA) wrote an open letter to the Chancellor warning of “low financial resilience across the sector following a 27.0 per cent real-terms reduction in core spending power<sup>1</sup> since 2010/11.

The Local Government Association estimates that there is a “funding gap” of almost £3bn over the next two years.

3. This Council notes that since 2010, several councils have issued Section 114 notices (under the Local Government Finance Act 1988) and more look likely to follow. Both the Local Government Association (LGA) and the County Councils Network (CCN) undertook surveys of their member councils immediately after the Autumn Statement. The Local Government Association reported findings of a “growing financial crisis”, with almost one in five of its members at risk of running out of funds either this year or next.
4. A report by The National Audit Office (NAO) have published data that shows Stevenage’s Core Spending Power **has reduced by 64.5% in real terms** when comparing 2010/11 to 2020/21. The Council’s own government funding reduced by £5.3Million to 2019/20 and the need to fund inflationary pressures has meant the Council has had to find over £14Million of savings to stay financially resilient. This Council has had to make some very hard decisions – and those decisions get harder and harder each year as we are cut to the bone. It has to stop.
5. This Council:
  - a. Condemns the reduction of funding to local government since 2010 by successive Conservative-led governments and calls for immediate action by the current Government to provide a sustainable funding model for the sector, thereby stopping this assault on local democracy.
  - b. Calls on the Chancellor to listen to the voices of the leaders of the Local Government Association (of which Stevenage Borough Council is a member) in their letter of 13 October, 2023 and, in particular:
    - Address funding sufficiency and certainty issues faced by councils.
    - Take steps to strengthen the local government workforce.
    - Strengthen councils’ role in key national policy areas such as housing and net zero.”

## 11. **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO COMMITTEE CHAIRS / PORTFOLIO HOLDERS**

In accordance with Standing Orders, written answers to the following questions will be circulated on a supplementary agenda.

(A) Question from Councillor Margaret Notley

“Is the Executive Member satisfied that residents find it convenient to contact the Council via the telephone enquiry system?”

(B) Question from Councillor Andy McGuinness

“What formal assessment or analysis has been made of the success of the Councillors’ locality budget scheme?”

(C) Question from Councillor Bret Facey

“How long was the Portfolio Holder aware that running two separate payrolls (one for staff and one for Councillors) had been costing the Council £5,000 per year?”

(D) Question from Councillor Robin Parker CC

“As we know, local radio (both BBC and Independent, but particularly the former) has been decimated in recent times and in addition local newspapers have been cut severely.

What effects have these changes had on the ability of SBC’s Media and Communications Team (or others in SBC) to:

- (a) Obtain coverage for SBC related news and events?
- (b) Find out what is going on in both Stevenage and its surrounding area?”

(E) Question from Councillor Adam Mitchell CC

“Does the Portfolio Holder believe Right to Buy sales of our housing stock have had a positive impact on our town and residents?”

## **12. FINAL HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) BUDGET SETTING AND RENT REPORT 2024/25**

To consider and approve the final proposals for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget and rent setting for 2024/25.

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## **13. MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME 2024-2025 - REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL**

To consider the Independent Remuneration Panel report recommending to Council a Members’ Allowances Scheme for 2024/25.

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## **14. PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2024/25**

To consider a report recommending the Pay Policy Statement for the financial year 2024/25.

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