

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 28 February 2018

Time: 7.00 pm

Place: Council Chamber - Council Chamber

Present: Councillors: Pam Stuart, Doug Bainbridge, Philip Bibby CC, Lloyd Briscoe, Rob Broom, Jim Brown, Howard Burrell, Laurie Chester, Elaine Connolly, Michael Downing, Alex Farquharson, James Fraser, John Gardner, Michelle Gardner, Richard Henry, Jackie Hollywell, Carol Latif, Graham Lawrence, John Lloyd, Mrs Joan Lloyd, Lin Martin-Haugh, Andy McGuinness, Maureen McKay, John Mead, Sarah Mead, Adam Mitchell CC, Margaret Notley, Robin Parker CC, Ralph Raynor, Chris Saunders, Graham Snell, Simon Speller, Sharon Taylor OBE CC, Jeannette Thomas and Ann Webb JP

Start / End Time: Start Time: 7.00 pm
End Time: 8.45 pm

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L Harrington, R Hearn and M Hurst.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 **MINUTES - COUNCIL - 14 DECEMBER 2017**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Council meeting of 14 December 2017 are approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

3 **MINUTES - SPECIAL COUNCIL - 30 JANUARY 2018**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Council meeting of 30 January 2018 are approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

4 **MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS**

The Mayor informed the Council that since the last meeting, the Mayoral Team had undertaken a number of engagements and she referred to several highlights including:

- January's School Parliament meeting which discussed the environment and recycling;
- Holocaust Memorial Day which was organised with the help of the Secretary of the Stevenage Liberal Synagogue. Speakers included a woman born in a

- concentration camp and a speaker from Bosnia;
- A Curry night at Spice Rouge which raised over £400 for the Mayor's two charities;

The Mayor advised that she would shortly be unveiling a blue plaque in Orchard Road at the house where Gordon Craig used to live and also spoke about her concert on Tuesday 24 April which would celebrate the talent of the young people in Stevenage.

The Mayor encouraged Members of the Council to come along to the Civic Celebration of our community which would be held on Saturday 21 April.

Finally, the Mayor presented an award for "Excellence in the Community" to representatives from the Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse (SADA) Forum.

5 **MAIN DEBATE - 2018/2019 COUNCIL TAX AND GENERAL FUND AND CAPITAL BUDGETS**

The Main Debate related to item 5A and item 5B on the agenda. A revised page 42 had been circulated to Members.

The Mayor called upon the Leader of the Council, Councillor S Taylor OBE CC to move the Motion on the Council Tax Setting 2018/2019, General Fund and Capital Budgets which was circulated around the chamber.

In her speech, Councillor Taylor referred to the £16billion cuts that had been faced by Local Government between 2010 and 2020 and that the Government had turned down the Council's application to pilot 100% business rate retention, a move which would leave the county without the £12 million of additional funding it could have brought in and Stevenage without an extra £800,000 a year.

Councillor Taylor spoke about the town centre regeneration and the plans that had recently been unveiled last week which mark the start of large-scale regeneration in the town centre by the Council and development partner Mace. She was pleased to report that the development would bring in new shops, homes, work and leisure facilities, and give our local economy a huge boost with the potential for hundreds of new jobs and training opportunities for local people and that Mace were behind the London Olympics, the Shard and had worked on the New World Trade Centre in New York.

Concerning the New Homes Bonus received the Leader announced that this would fund the following projects:

- Funding for existing projects – "No More" and Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse;
- Neighbourhood Wardens £41,600;
- £40,000 towards developing a programme of participatory budgeting;
- Stevenage Cycling Festival incorporating the Tour Series £90,000;
- Funding an additional two charging points for electric vehicles in town centre parking bays - £15,000;

- Imagine Stevenage – Mobilising the Council’s Cultural Offer - £40,000;
- £10,000 additional funding for Stevenage Day;
- £10,000 funding towards a programme of events in the Town Centre;
- £7,000 towards events working with the British Legion to mark 100 years since the end of the First World War;
- £7,000 to support initiatives to mark the centenary of the suffragette movement.

Finally Councillor Taylor extended her thanks to all involved in the budget setting process and then moved the recommendations of the Executive and the formal Council Tax Resolution that was circulated around the Chamber.

The Motion was formally seconded by Councillor Mrs J Lloyd who informed Members that the Council’s finances were in a healthy situation but would have to continue to draw on balances until 2020/21 to ensure the protection of frontline services. Councillor Mrs Lloyd thanked the Members of the Leaders Financial Security Group and also the Council staff for their hard work in compiling the budget.

The Mayor then invited the Leader of the Opposition, Councillor J Fraser to address the meeting. Councillor Fraser advised that his Group would be supporting the Budget but expressed concern regarding the increase in the fee for blue badge season tickets.

The Leader of the Minority Opposition Party, Councillor R Parker CC stated that his group would be supporting the budget and he highlighted the work of the cross party Leader’s Financial Security Group (LFSG) in compiling the budget.

Councillor Parker expressed concern regarding residential parking issues, litter bin emptying and stated that the cost of parking in the Town Centre should remain frozen. He also suggested that the Local Community Budgets allocated to Councillors should be increased which would benefit local areas.

A full debate then took place. Members were particularly pleased to see support for the Stevenage Cycling Festival, participatory budgets, Stevenage Day and the commemoration of the centenary of women receiving the vote. Councillor John Lloyd was thanked for his work to help with the commemoration to mark 100 years since the end of the First World War.

In reply Councillor Taylor agreed with the comments regarding the LFSG which gave Members the opportunity to scrutinise the budget proposals throughout the year and she gave credit to Members that all parties had worked well together to enable the Budget to be produced. She agreed with many of the sentiments expressed regarding specific funding items and suggested that concerns relating to the increase in blue badge fees should be raised through the scrutiny process.

The Motion was then put to a recorded vote* and it was RESOLVED:

1. That the 2017/18 revised net expenditure on the General Fund of £10,493,720 is approved.

2. That a Final General Fund Budget Requirement for 2018/19 of £8,288,919 is approved, with a contribution from balances of £818,821 and a Band D Council Tax of £204.46. This is reflected in the formal Council Tax Resolution 3 – 8 below.

3. That the following are approved:

a. the revised working revenue estimates for the year 2017/18 amounting to £10,493,720 and the revenue estimates for 2018/19 amounting to £9,107,740;

b. the contribution from balances totalling £1,543,595 in 2017/18;

c. the contribution from balances totalling £818,821 in 2018/19.

4. That it is noted that at its meeting on 23 January 2018 the Executive calculated the amount of 27,058.5 Band D equivalent properties as its council tax base for the year 2018/19 in accordance with Regulation 3 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992 made under Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended by Section 74 of the Localism Act 2011.

5. That the following amounts are calculated by the Council for the year 2018/19 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended by Section 74 of the Localism Act 2011:

a. £86,038,055 Being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2)(a) to (f) of the Act, less the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3)(a) to (d)

b. £80,505,711 Being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3)(a) to (d) of the Act.

c. £5,532,344 Being the amount by which the aggregate at 3a above exceeds the aggregate at 3b above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act as its Council Tax requirement for the year.

d. £204.46 Being the amount at 3c divided by the amount at 2 above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B (1) of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year

e. Valuation Bands

A £ 136.31

B £ 159.02

C £ 181.74

D £ 204.46

E £ 249.90

F £ 295.33

G £ 340.77

H £ 408.92

Being the amounts given by multiplying the amount at 3d. above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is

applicable to dwellings listed in valuation D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands.

6. a. That it is noted that for the year 2018/19 Hertfordshire County Council have stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each of the categories of the dwellings shown below:

Valuation Bands			
A	£ 816.46	£ 63.85	£ 880.31
B	£ 952.51	£ 74.51	£ 1,027.02
C	£ 1,088.60	£ 85.14	£ 1,173.74
D	£ 1,224.67	£ 95.79	£ 1,320.46
E	£ 1,496.83	£ 117.07	£ 1,613.90
F	£ 1,768.96	£ 138.37	£ 1,907.33
G	£ 2,041.13	£ 159.64	£ 2,200.77
H	£ 2,449.34	£ 191.58	£ 2,640.92

b. That it is noted that for the year 2018/19 Hertfordshire Police Authority have stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and amended by Section 27 of the Police and Magistrates' Court Act 1994, for each of the categories of the dwellings shown below:

Valuation Bands	
A	£ 109.33
B	£ 127.56
C	£ 145.78
D	£ 164.00
E	£ 200.44
F	£ 236.89
G	£ 273.33
H	£ 328.00

7. That, having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at 3e. and 4a. and b. above, the Council in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the following amounts as the amounts for council tax for the year 2018/19 for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:

Valuation Bands

A	£1,125.95
B	£1,313.60
C	£1,501.26
D	£1,688.92
E	£2,064.24
F	£2,439.55
G	£2,814.87
H	£3,377.84

6. 8. To determine in accordance with Section 52ZB Local Government Finance Act 1992 that the Council's basic amount of Council Tax for 2018/19 is not excessive in accordance with principles approved by the Secretary of State under Section 52ZC having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at 3e.

9. That the Risk Assessments of General Fund Balances, as shown at Appendix B to this report, are approved.

10. That a minimum level of General Fund reserves of £2,760,570, in line with the 2018/19 risk assessment of balances, as shown at Appendix B to this report are approved.

11. That a contingency sum of £400,000 within which the Executive can approve supplementary estimates, be approved for 2018/19, (unchanged from 2017/18).

12. That the 2018/19 proposed Fees and Charges increase of £134,160 (Appendix C to this report) be approved for 2018/19.

13. That the 2018/19 proposed concessions (Appendix D to this report) be approved for 2018/19.

14. That the 2018/19 proposed new Financial Security Options of £342,399 (Appendix E to this report) be approved for 2018/19.

15. That the 2018/19 proposed Growth options of £470,371 (Appendix F to this report) be approved for 2018/19.

16. That the 2018/19 business rates gains of £356,610 above the baseline assessment be ring fenced for town centre regeneration (SG1), (paragraph 4.8.3 of the report refers) be approved for 2018/19.

17. That new capital receipts and unspent revenue balances (above the £350,000 transferred to the capital reserve) be earmarked for the Council's and resident's top priority, town centre regeneration be approved.

18. That the advice on of the Assistant Director (Finance and Estates) on the robustness of the draft budget and the adequacy of reserves (Appendix J) be noted.

New Homes Bonus Proposals

19. That the following New Homes Bonus schemes and initiatives proposed by the Leader, as detailed below, be referred to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee for comment and then reported to the Executive on 4 April 2018.

- Funding for existing projects – “No More” and Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse;
- Neighbourhood Wardens £41,600;
- £40,000 towards developing a programme of participatory budgeting;
- Funding an additional two charging points for electric vehicles in town centre parking bays - £15,000;
- Imagine Stevenage – Mobilising the Council's Cultural Offer - £40,000;
- £10,000 additional funding for Stevenage Day;
- £10,000 funding towards a programme of events in the Town Centre;
- £7,000 towards events working with the British Legion to mark 100 years since the end of the First World War;
- £7,000 to support initiatives to mark the centenary of the suffragette movement.

20. That the following New Homes Bonus scheme proposed by the Leader, as detailed below, be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their meeting on 8 March 2018 for comment in order that the required permissions and road closures can be submitted in time:

- Stevenage Festival of Cycling – Incorporating the Tour Series - £90,000

* Votes for the Motion – Councillors D Bainbridge, P Bibby CC, L Briscoe, R Broom, J Brown, H Burrell, L Chester, E Connolly, M Downing, A Farquharson, J Fraser, J Gardner, M Gardner, R Henry, J Hollywell, C Latif, G Lawrence, Mrs J Lloyd, J Lloyd, A McGuinness, M McKay, L Martin-Haugh, J Mead, S Mead, A Mitchell CC, M Notley, R Parker CC, R Raynor, C Saunders, G Snell, S Speller, P Stuart, S Taylor OBE CC, J Thomas and A Webb

Votes against the motion – nil

Abstentions – nil

6 **PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS**

None received.

7 **QUESTIONS FROM THE YOUTH COUNCIL**

None received.

8 **QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

None received.

9 **LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S UPDATE**

The Leader of the Opposition enquired about the plans that were in place to ensure the financial robustness of the Council particularly in relation to the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the use of Council balances.

The Leader of the Council advised that the Council would continue a planned draw on balances up to and including 2021/22 to help protect our front line services. The Council was also undergoing a transformation agenda which would deliver savings with more shared services and on-line services with invest to save projects.

The Leader advised that the Council's Financial Security plan would help the Council deliver efficiencies, innovation and transformation to avoid reducing front line services and the work of the Leaders Financial Security Group also helped challenge the options contained within the budget.

10 **NOTICE OF MOTIONS**

None received.

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

None received.

12 **ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY INCLUDING PRUDENTIAL CODE INDICATORS 2018/2019**

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED:**

1. That the Treasury Management Strategy as shown at Appendix A to the report is approved.
2. That the draft prudential indicators for 2018/19 are approved subject to any changes proposed by CIPFA to the Treasury Management Code and Prudential Code.
3. That the minimum revenue provision policy and the proposed changes currently under consultation are noted.
4. That it is noted that no changes are being proposed to treasury limits contained within the Council's Treasury Management Policies.

13 **MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME 2018-2019**

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2018/19 as set out in Appendix A to the report be approved.

14 **PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2018/2019**

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that:

1. The Pay Policy Statement set out in accordance with the Localism Act 2011, and the Data Transparency Code 2015 attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved
2. The Pay Policy be placed on the Council's website and that a notice of the policy be published in the next edition of Chronicle.

15 **AUDIT COMMITTEE MINUTES**

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that the Draft Minutes of the Audit Committee of 5 February 2018 are noted.