

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MINUTES

Date: Monday, 19 March 2018

Time: 6.00 pm

Place: Shimkent Room - Daneshill House, Danestrete

Present: Councillors: Lin Martin-Haugh (Chair), Philip Bibby (Vice-Chair), Jim Brown, Howard Burrell, Michael Downing, Alex Farquharson, James Fraser, Michelle Gardner, Liz Harrington, Sarah Mead, Adam Mitchell CC and Robin Parker CC

Start / End Time: Start Time: 6.00 pm
End Time: 8.03 pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no apologies for absence or declarations of interest received by Members.

2 PART 1 DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE

The Committee considered a report, which had not been circulated to Members five clear days before the meeting, nor had it been made available for public inspection. The Chair determined however that, given the short time left before the end of the call-in period on 22 March 2018, it could be considered on this occasion.

(i) Minutes of the Executive of 14 February 2018

(ii) Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Select Committees

(iii) Hertfordshire Home Improvement Agency (HHIA)

The Council's Assistant Director of Planning and Regulatory Services introduced the report, which asked the Executive to consider whether the Council should join the Hertfordshire Home Improvement Agency (HHIA).

(iv) Stevenage Cultural Strategy (A 10 Year Strategy for Arts and Heritage)

The Council's Strategic Director introduced the report, which outlined the finalisation of a Cultural Strategy for the Town and summarised a number of cultural ambitions over the next 10 years in order for Stevenage to become a destination creative town. He advised the Committee that the Strategy had been well received by the Executive and that the recommendations had been agreed accordingly.

(v) 3rd Quarter Monitoring Report – General Fund and Housing Revenue

The Committee considered a report, which stated that the Council undertakes a review of all revenue and associated budgets on a quarterly basis and that the report represented the 3rd quarter monitoring report for 2017/18. The report also updated Members on the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) projected 2017/18 net expenditure and sought the Council's approval for the revisions to the 2017/18 revenue budgets. In addition, the report sought to update Members on the General Fund and HRA savings and growth items approved for 2017/18; the Council's reserves and balances available to support revenue expenditure and to seek approval for revisions to the allocated reserves and any financial security savings that contributed to the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account savings target.

(vi) 3rd Quarter Monitoring Capital Programme – General Fund and Housing Revenue Account

The Committee considered a report, which provided Members with an update on the Council's 2017/18 and 2018/19 Capital Programme and seek approval for the revisions to the General Fund capital programme. The report also updated Members on capital resources available to fund the capital programmes.

It was drawn to the attention of the Committee, a £269k underspend in the 2017/18 General Fund Capital Programme.

(vii) Draft Community Safety Strategy

The Council's Leisure Services Manager introduced the report, which outlined the emerging priorities of the SoSafe partnership for the next three years, which was considered by the Responsible Authorities Group (RAG) at its meeting on 5 February 2018.

The Council's Leisure Services Manager also confirmed that the report would be considered by the Executive in April and by the full Council in July 2018.

(viii) Housing Allocations Policy Review 2018

The Committee considered a report, which advised Members of the consultation outcomes and subsequent recommendations of the Allocations Policy Review.

(ix) Retrofitting Fire Suppressant Sprinkler Systems to Residential Tower Blocks – Programme Proposal (See also Part II Report)

The Council's Fire Safety Surveyor introduced the report, which sought the Executive's approval for the Council to commence a programme of retrofitting Fire Suppressant Sprinkler Systems to all of the Council's seven high rise flat blocks, including two sheltered schemes as these works would provide additional fire safety measures to the Council's residential high rise flat blocks. The budget for these works was not covered in the HRA business plan.

It was noted that the Council had met with representatives from the Department for Communities and Local Government, the outcome of which confirmed that the Council's high rise flat blocks were safe already and the proposals to fit sprinklers were deemed as additional safety measures.

(x) Corporate Performance for Quarter Three 2017/2018

The Council's Assistant Director of Corporate Services and Transformation introduced the report, which highlighted the Council's performance across key priorities and themes for quarter three 2017/18.

He advised Members that the Chief Executive had ran through the key highlights with the Executive and, in particular, the regeneration of the town Centre (SG1) and the appointment of MACE as contractor; the reduction in agency staff employed by the Council; the Council's Play Service, which had been listed for a LGC award; Customer Service Centre performance and sickness absence.

The Assistant Director advised Members that the Executive had endorsed how the Council was moving forward in these areas and that where key staff would be leaving the Council resilience was in place to cover this.

It was **RESOLVED** that the decisions on the following Part I items be noted:

- **Minutes of the Executive of 14 February 2018**
- **Minutes of Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Select Committees.**
- **Hertfordshire Home Improvement Agency (HHIA)**
- **Stevenage Cultural Strategy**
- **3rd Quarter Monitoring Report General Fund and Housing Revenue**
- **3rd Quarter Monitoring Capital Programme – General Fund and Housing Revenue Account**
- **Draft Community Safety Strategy 2018-2021**
- **Housing Allocations Policy Review 2018**
- **Retrofitting Fire Suppressant Sprinkler Systems to Residential Tower Blocks – Programme Proposal (See also Part II Report)**
 - **Corporate Performance for Quarter Three 2017/2018**

3 NEW HOMES BONUS 2018/19

The Committee considered a report, which sought the Committee's comments on a range of schemes and initiatives to be funded from the 2018/19 New Homes Bonus

Allocation.

A revised chart, which appeared at Paragraph 4.2.1 to the report, was circulated.

It was reported that the report was a follow-up to the New Homes Bonus proposals announced by the Leader of the Council in February 2018. As these formed part of the Budget but had not, to date, been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, they were before Members this evening in order that the Committee's comments could be reported back to the Executive on 4 April 2018 and thereby allow the projects to commence in April 2018. It was reaffirmed that there would be a further opportunity for the Committee to consider the matter once it had been presented to the Executive.

Nine New Homes Bonus proposals had been identified and announced for implementation as part of the Leader of the Council's Budget Speech at Council on 28 February 2018, as follows:

Scheme 1 – Neighbourhood Wardens

Scheme 2 – Stevenage Day

Scheme 3 – Acknowledging the end of World War 1

Scheme 4 – Stevenage Cycling Festival incorporating the Tour Series

Scheme 5 – Imagine Stevenage – Mobilising our Cultural Offer

Scheme 6 – Supporting Town Centre Events

Scheme 7 – Participatory Budgets

Scheme 8 – Recognising Suffragette Movement

Scheme 9 – Electric Charging Points

Members raised a number of questions in respect of the above, together with Appendix A to the report, which were addressed by officers.

It was **RESOLVED** that the allocation of £260,600 from the 2018/19 New Homes Bonus allocation be approved for the implementation and delivery of the nine schemes listed above as detailed in the report.

4 **OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2018/19**

The Council's Scrutiny Officer introduced the report, which sought the Committee's agreement to the Work Programme for the Select Committee for the Municipal Year 2018/2019 and to consider the issues raised by the Communities and Local Government Parliamentary Select Committee' paper "Effectiveness of Local Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committees."

Members raised points and questions in respect of the following, which were answered by officers.:

1. Receiving papers on time.
2. Opposition Members chairing overview and scrutiny committees
3. Executive appointment of chairs of overview and scrutiny committees

4. Identifying compliant social landlords and how the Council could work with them.
5. The Committee coming to a view on the issues raised in the above paper.

It was **RESOLVED** that the following be added to the Committee's Work Plan for 2018/2019:

1. A Special Meeting of the Committee be convened, to which all Members of the Council were to be invited, on scrutiny and how this worked for the Council and that there be a Scrutiny of the Scrutiny function at SBC
2. The issue of sickness and sickness management be considered at the end of the monitoring period for this year.
3. The Committee contribute to the development of the Council's new Website.
4. In addition to the above, it was noted that the Committee would also undertake programmed policy development work.

5 **URGENT PART 1 DECISIONS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

None.

6 **URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

None.

7 **EXCLUSION OF THE 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 paragraphs 1-7 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 outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

8 **PART II DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE**

Financial Implications – Retrofitting Fire Suppressant Sprinkler Systems to Residential Tower Blocks – Programme Proposal Part 2

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II decision taken by the Executive at its meeting held on 13 March 2018, be noted.

9 **URGENT PART II DECISIONS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

None.

10 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR