

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 3 October 2018

Time: 2.00pm

Place: Shimkent Room, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

Present: Councillors: Sharon Taylor OBE CC (Chair), Mrs Joan Lloyd (Vice-Chair), Rob Broom, John Gardner, Richard Henry, Jackie Hollywell, Ralph Raynor and Jeannette Thomas.

Start / End Time: Start Time: 2.00pm
End Time: 3.08pm

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

No apologies for absence were received.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 **MINUTES - 5 SEPTEMBER 2018**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 5 September 2018 are approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

3 **MINUTES OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AND SELECT COMMITTEES**

In respect of Minute 3 of the Minutes of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 10 September 2018, regarding the potential risk to the Council regarding the repayment of Right to Buy receipts, the Leader asked that should the Council be in a position where receipts were returned to Government, officers to write to the Government to express the Council's continued concern at the unfairness of this policy, in view of the ongoing need for money to be re-invested in housing in the Borough. The Leader also requested that a Press Release be issued to this effect.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the following meetings of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Select Committees are noted –

Community Select Committee – 4 September 2018

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 10 September 2018

4 **THE FORMATION OF A WHOLLY OWNED HOUSING DEVELOPMENT COMPANY - CONCEPT AND BUSINESS CASE OBJECTIVES APPROVAL**

The Executive considered a report in respect of the concept and Business Case objectives relating to the proposed formation of a wholly owned Housing Development Company (WOC).

In response to questions raised by Members, the Assistant Director (Housing Development) commented:

- when General Fund/HRA developed land was offered for sale off plan, the WOC would be able to purchase at a discounted rate, which it was expected would produce a dividend when such properties were sold on.
- the WOC would seek to offer properties for rent at market value for a period of time;
- at a later point, subject to the WOC business plan, if any rental properties were to be sold they would be sold at full market value;
- it was anticipated that funding would be available to enable the WOC to deliver 25 properties in the first instance. This would be subject to a detailed business plan for Members to consider in due course;
- it would be technically possible for the WOC to branch out to acquire open market properties, however, this would be dependent on the priorities, aims and funding set out in the business plan for the WOC; and
- a number of other Local Authorities had set up WOCs. It was likely that WOCs would be affected by future legislation, although there was nothing to suggest that successive Governments would abandon the concept, as it benefited from cross-party support.

The Leader asked officers to ensure that, when reported back to the Executive, the Business Plan identified:

- how the lettings process for WOC properties would work (ie. an in-house or contracted out lettings agency);
- the Governance arrangements for the WOC, including Member oversight; and
- that appropriate arrangements were in place for robust scrutiny of the WOC's operation.

The Assistant Director (Housing Development) advised that it was intended that the WOC Business Plan would be reported back to the 12 December 2018 meeting of the Executive, or at worst to the 23 January 2019 meeting.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the business case, as outlined in the report, be approved, and that the principle of establishing a Wholly Owned Housing Development Company (WOC), for the purposes detailed in the report, be supported.
2. That a report be brought to a future Executive comprising a fully costed financial projection of the WOC's operational activities and a Business Plan, prior to the WOC commencing trading.

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other Options considered: As contained in report.

5 URGENT PART I BUSINESS

Winter Flu Vaccinations

The Chief Executive advised that there was currently a shortage of flu vaccine for 65+ year olds in Stevenage, due to a supply problem caused by the Health Service reducing its vaccine supplier from five to a single supplier. The problem did not relate to those who had pre-booked appointments for the vaccination, but could be problematic for those using an open access/walk-in service. It was anticipated that the problem would be resolved in the next 3-4 weeks.

The Leader asked that a note be sent out to all Members of the Council advising them of the above situation, in case they were approached by residents regarding the matter.

The Executive also noted that the NHS was expecting another challenging winter which would place an increased strain on its services during that period. Accordingly, District/Borough Councils had been asked to support the initiative directing residents towards using the 118 and 999 telephone numbers in cases of dire need.

Brexit

The Chief Executive explained that, in preparation for any enquiries from the public, the SBC approach to Brexit would be to treat it as a business continuity issue. A Sub-Group of SLT members would be established to develop the approach and report back to SLT on a fortnightly basis. Appropriate cross-checking would be carried out with other members of the Hertfordshire Resilience Forum.

6 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

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 to 7 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 outweighed the public interest in disclosure.

7 PART II MINUTES - EXECUTIVE - 5 SEPTEMBER 2018

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 5 September 2018 are approved for signature by the Chair.

8 GARAGE BUSINESS PLAN UPDATE

The Executive considered a Part II report that provided a summary of achievements

since the Garage Business Plan was agreed in July 2016; sought approval to amendments to the terms and remit of the Major Refurbishment Contract for flat blocks, so that it will include delivery of the refurbishment works to the Council's garage assets; and sought approval to plans for disposing of identified garage sites to raise capital funds to re-invest in the refurbishment of the Council's remaining garage assets.

It was **RESOLVED** that the recommendations in the report, including an addition to Recommendation 2.3, are approved.

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other Options considered: As contained in report.

9 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR