

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 12 December 2018

Time: 2.00pm

Place: Shimkent Room, Daneshill House

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: 3.40pm

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

No apologies for absence were received.

The Chair (Councillor Sharon Taylor) declared an interest in Item 4 – Draft Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Rent Setting and Budget Report 2019/20, as her daughter worked in the SBC Housing & Investment Business Unit. She considered that this was not a prejudicial interest and that she would therefore be remaining in the meeting for the duration of that item.

2 **MINUTES - 21 NOVEMBER 2018**

It was **RESOLVED** that, subject to the addition of the word “taken” between the words “been” and “on” in the final line of the first paragraph of Minute 9 – Urgent Part I Business: Stevenage Local Plan, the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 21 November 2018 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

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

The Leader was generally pleased with the recommendations of the Community Select Committee regarding the Resident Engagement Review, although she questioned the suggested change in name of the Neighbourhood Wardens to Community Engagement Officers, and had discussed this matter with the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Co-operative Working and Assistant Director (Communities and Neighbourhoods).

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

Community Select Committee – 7 November 2018

Environment & Economy Select Committee – 12 November 2018

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 14 November 2018

4 **DRAFT HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) RENT SETTING AND BUDGET REPORT 2019/20**

The Executive considered a report updating Members on the draft proposals on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budgets and rent setting for 2019/20, to be considered by the Council on 30 January 2019; proposing the HRA rents and service charges for 2019/20; and incorporating the options, fees and charges included in the Financial Security report agreed by the Executive at its November 2018 meeting, together with any revised income and expenditure assumptions identified since that report.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources advised that this was the final year of the four year 1% rent reduction implemented by the Government, which resulted in an estimated £5.8Million loss of rental income in 2019/20. The average rent for social and affordable housing for 2019/20 was £94.79 and £158.61 per week (based on a 52 week rent year). The 87 Low Start Shared Ownership (LSSO) properties would have a £3.86 or 3.4% increase per week in 2019/20 giving an average rent of £117.41.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources stated that there were 2,902 properties (subject to right to buys) which received service charges and 35% or 1,008 would receive a service charge reduction and that there were only 30 properties with an increase of over £4.50. Adding service charges to the rent reduction there were 136 properties with an increase of more than £3.50, which included the 87 LSSO's. There were 20 properties with an increase between £4.00 - £4.99. This mainly related to changes in block repair costs.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing, Health and Older People commented that the 2019/20 HRA budgeted spend had increased by £450,000, due to the funding of two Growth items agreed at the Executive meeting held on 21 November 2018. The revised HRA year end balance for 2019/20 was estimated to be £11,258,130.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the HRA dwelling rents not subject to the 1% rent reduction (currently Low Start Shared Ownership – LSSOs) be increased, from the week commencing 1 April 2019, by 3.4% i.e. £3.86 per week, which has been calculated using the existing rent formula CPI + 1%, in line with the Rent and Service Charge Policy approved at the January 2018 Council meeting.
2. That it be noted that the HRA dwelling rents (other than those outlined in Resolution 1. above) are subject to the 1% rent reduction from the week commencing 1 April 2019, or £0.96 or £1.60 per week for social and affordable rents respectively, as outlined in the Government's Welfare and Reform Act 2016.
3. That the draft HRA budget be approved, as set out in Appendix A to the report. This may be subject to change as a result of consultation and the finalisation of recharges from the General Fund.

4. That the final HRA rent setting budget for 2019/20 be presented to the Executive on 23 January 2019 and then the Council on 30 January 2019.
5. That key partners and other stakeholders be consulted and their views fed back into the 2019/20 budget setting process.

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other Options considered: As contained in report.

5 **TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION UPDATE**

The Executive considered a report which provided an update on the regeneration projects taking place in Stevenage Town Centre, and which sought an in principle agreement for the funding and design of a new bus interchange; approval to develop a business case and timetable for the development of enhanced leisure facilities; and approval to undertake an options appraisal for the Stevenage Arts and Leisure Centre.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration referred to the exceedingly popular transformation of Market Place and the progressing of the Queensway North development scheme. The proposed new Stevenage bus interchange would need to be agreed early in 2019 in order for its relocation to take place ahead of its current site being needed for the SG1 development.

An additional recommendation was agreed, requesting the Leader and Chief Executive to raise the matter of the continued delay in Growth Deal 3 funding with representatives of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) as part of their scheduled meeting in London on 19 December 2018.

A further additional recommendation was agreed to ensure that the most appropriate procurement method was used for the new Bus Station project.

The Strategic Director (TP) was requested to establish a Member Advisory Group regarding the composition and design of the proposed Public Sector Hub in the Town Centre.

The Leader requested the Strategic Director (TP) to pass on the appreciation of the Executive to officers in the Regeneration Team for their continued sterling work on the regeneration of the town centre.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the progress on regeneration activity across the town be noted.
2. That the delay in accessing Growth Deal 3 funding that has been allocated to Hertfordshire Local Enterprise (LEP) to support the regeneration of Stevenage Town Centre, and the potential implications of this delay continuing, be noted.

3. That the proposed approach to development and consultation for a new bus interchange be agreed.
4. That it be agreed to proceed with the next stages of the bus interchange project, with an estimated cost in the region of £6.1M, and that Officers be requested to bring forward funding options in the draft Capital Strategy in January 2019 should Growth Deal 3 funding continue to be delayed. This assessment should set out the implications of prioritising this infrastructure and the mitigation available.
5. That authority for the necessary purchase or lease of land, together with resolution of any current lease and restrictive covenant and other legal issues to enable the site to be assembled, be delegated to the Strategic Director (TP), having consulted with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration.
6. That delegated authority be sought from Hertfordshire County Council for Stevenage Borough Council to make Traffic Regulation Orders in order to facilitate the delivery of a new bus interchange facility.
7. That authority be delegated to the Strategic Director (TP), having consulted with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration, to authorise the sealing of the Traffic Regulation Orders following the consultation period and consideration/resolution of any objections received.
8. That the development of a business case and associated timetable for the development of a new and enhanced leisure facility to be located on St. George's Way be approved.
9. That the undertaking of an options appraisal for the Stevenage Arts & Leisure Centre, with a view to developing the theatre and cultural offer within the town centre, be approved.
10. That the Leader and Chief Executive be requested to raise the matter of the continued delay in Growth Deal 3 funding with representatives of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government as part of their scheduled meeting in London on 19 December 2018.
11. That the quickest appropriate procurement method be used to select a contractor to deliver the new Bus Station project.

Reason for Decision: As contained in report; 10. To press the MHCLG for the release of Growth Deal 3 funding; and 11. To ensure the swift delivery of the Bus Station project.

Other Options considered: As contained in report.

6 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE FOR QUARTER TWO 2018/19

The Executive considered a report which highlighted the Council's performance across key priorities and themes for Quarter Two 2018/19.

The Chief Executive gave a presentation on the report, and drew attention to the two Future Town, Future Council (FTFC) Programme and eight Corporate Performance measures at red status, together with improvement activities for each of these measures, as set out in the report.

The following issues were raised by Members:

- The Assistant Director (Finance and Estates) was requested to ensure that the Customer Care Training Programme was rolled out to the Shared Revenues and Benefits Team;
- Volunteers – it be made clear that the role carried out by volunteers (such as the Green Space Volunteers) was additional to the work of the Council's paid employees;
- Executive Members be provided with details of the extent of the usage of Agency staff by the Stevenage Direct Services Business Unit;
- Executive Members be provided with clarification of Paragraph 3.42 of the report;
- The Portfolio Holder for Housing, Health and Older People and Assistant Director (Housing & Investment) were requested to consider the proposed renaming of the Housing Advice and Homelessness Team.

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 Two 2018/19, together with the latest achievements, be noted.
2. That the review of contractual arrangements for the management of health and safety compliance and measures implemented to ensure regulations continue to be met be noted and endorsed (Paragraphs 3.88 to 3.91 of the report).
3. That the resource planning implemented to provide a sustainable solution to meeting the level of customer contacts through the Customer Service Centre and provide a more consistent level of service to customers be noted and endorsed (Paragraphs 3.107 to 3.113).
4. That the improvements in sickness management practice be noted and endorsed (Paragraphs 3.122 to 3.127).

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other Options considered: As contained in report.

7 **URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

None.

8 **EXCLUSION OF 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 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.

9 **PART II MINUTES - EXECUTIVE - 21 NOVEMBER 2018**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 21 November 2018 be approved for signature by the Chair.

10 **WEST OF STEVENAGE DEVELOPMENT**

The Executive considered a Part II report which advised Members of the current position of negotiations relating to West of Stevenage and which sought approval to progress the next stage of this strategic residential development.

A clearer version of Appendix B to the report was tabled at the meeting.

Members considered that further context and clarification of a number of issues raised in the report would be required before an informed decision could be made on this item.

It was **RESOLVED** that the item be deferred, and an expanded and amended report be considered by the Executive at its next meeting on 23 January 2019.

Reason for Decision: In order to provide Members with more context and clarification of the issues raised in the report.

Other Options considered: As contained in the report.

11 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR