

# STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

## EXECUTIVE MINUTES

**Date: Wednesday, 13 February 2019**

**Time: 2.00pm**

**Place: Shimkent Room, Daneshill House, Danestrete**

**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: 3.45pm

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

No apologies for absence were received.

There were no declarations of interest.

### 2 **MINUTES - 23 JANUARY 2019**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 23 January 2019 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

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

In relation to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee Minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2019, the Leader asked that an All Member Briefing be arranged early in the 2019/20 Civic Year on the Council's emerging IT Improvement Strategy, including costs and intended outcomes.

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

Community Select Committee – 9 January 2019  
Community Select Committee – 24 January 2019  
Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 29 January 2019

### 4 **FINAL GENERAL FUND AND COUNCIL TAX SETTING 2019/2020**

The Executive considered a report for recommendation to Council concerning the 2019/20 General Fund and Council Tax Setting.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources advised that the report was largely unchanged from the draft General Fund budget considered by the Executive on 23 January 2019. She outlined the areas in the report that had changed.

The Leader undertook to circulate to Executive Members the report prepared by the Assistant Director (Finance & Estates) which provided useful information on the methodology used for the calculation of the Council Tax Base.

The Leader asked officers to closely monitor the single person occupancy rate for Council Tax; and requested that the Leader's Financial Services Group give further consideration to premiums for 2020/21.

The Leader referred to some recent misinformation provided to residents regarding the Council's budget. The Leader stated that SBC had reduced its General Fund from £15Million in 2008 to £9Million in 2019. She commented that this had not been a wilful act of the Council, but had been necessitated due to a £5Million reduction in Government Grant funding over that period. In addition, the Council had needed to achieve further savings to cover pressures such as inflation and fuel costs over the same period.

The Executive noted that the words "Draft General Fund Budget" needed to be inserted at the end of Paragraph 4.1.1 of the report.

It was **RESOLVED** that the following proposals be recommended to Council on 27 February 2019:

1. That the 2018/19 revised net expenditure on the General Fund of £10,063,500 be approved.
2. That a final General Fund Budget for 2019/20 of £8,802,520 be proposed for consultation purposes, with a contribution from balances of £48,446 and a Band D Council Tax of £210.57 (assuming a 2.99% increase).
3. That the General Fund Summary, as shown at Appendix A to the report, be approved.
4. That the Risk Assessments of General Fund Balances and the minimum level of General Fund reserves of £2,671,410, as shown at Appendix B to the report, be approved.
5. That the contingency sum of £400,000 within which the Executive can approve supplementary estimates, be approved for 2019/20 (unchanged from 2018/19).
6. That the 2019/20 proposed Fees and Charges increase of £219,790 (Appendix C to the report) be approved.
7. That the 2019/20 proposed Financial Security Options of £798,552 (Appendix D to the report and including fees and charges detailed in Appendix C) be approved.
8. That 2019/20 business rate gains totalling £400,000 above the baseline assessment be ring fenced for town centre regeneration (SG1) (Paragraph 4.6.7 of the report refers) be approved.

9. That 2019/20 business rate gains totalling £364,830 above the baseline assessment be used to increase General Fund balances for 2019/20, (Paragraph 4.6.7 of the report refers) be approved.
10. That 2019/20 business rate gains totalling £275,000 above the baseline assessment be transferred to the NDR allocated reserve for 2019/20, (Paragraph 4.6.7 of the report refers) be approved.
11. That the 2019/20 Council Tax Support scheme be approved, as set out in Section 4.8 of the report.
12. That the advice of the Assistant Director (Finance and Estates) on the robustness of the draft budget and the adequacy of reserves (Appendix G of the report) be noted.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

## 5 **FINAL CAPITAL STRATEGY 2018/19 - 2023/24**

The Executive considered a report for recommendation to Council concerning the Capital Strategy 2018/19 – 2023/24.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources explained the major variances in the Strategy since the Draft version considered at the 23 January 2019 meeting of the Executive.

The Executive noted the different approach for the Bus Station project identified in Section 4.4 of the report, in the absence of certainty of receipt of Growth Deal 3 monies.

It was **RESOLVED** that the following proposals be recommended to Council on 27 February 2019:

1. That the revised General Fund and HRA 2018/19 capital programme, as detailed in Appendix B and Appendix C to the report, be approved.
2. That the draft 2019/20 General Fund Capital Programme, as detailed in Appendix B to the report, be approved.
3. That the draft 2019/20 HRA Capital Programme, as detailed in Appendix C to the report, be approved.
4. That the updated forecast of resources, as summarised in Appendix B (General Fund) and Appendix C (HRA) to the report, be approved.
5. That the Council's investment strategy for non-treasury assets (Section 3.2 of the report) be approved.

6. That the approach to resourcing the General Fund capital programme, as outlined in the report, be approved.
7. That the actions required to ensure the General Fund programme is funded, as outlined in Paragraphs 4.3.11-4.3.12 of the report, be noted.
8. That the 2018/19 increase in the year end underspends contribution from the General Fund to the Capital Reserve, if they are realised (Paragraph 4.3.13 of the report), be approved.
9. That the approach to funding the cost of the bus station prior to the release of Growth Deal 3 monies, as outlined in Section 4.4 of the report, be approved.
10. That the growth bids identified for inclusion in the Capital Strategy (Appendix A to the report) be approved.
11. That the return of Right to Buy one for one receipts, as outlined in Section 4.10 of the report, be noted.
12. That the 2019/20 de-minimus expenditure limit (Section 4.11 of the report) be approved.
13. That the 2018/19 contingency allowance (Section 4.8 of the report) be approved.
14. That the work undertaken by Leader's Financial Services Group on behalf of the Executive in reviewing and challenging the General Fund Capital Strategy be noted.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

## 6 **ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY INCLUDING PRUDENTIAL CODE INDICATORS 2019/20**

The Executive considered a report for recommendation to Council concerning the Annual Treasury Management Strategy, including Prudential Code Indicators, for 2019/20.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources referred to the replacement pages 192 and 206 of the agenda which had been tabled at the meeting.

The Leader corrected some misinformation which had been provided to residents concerning the forecast allocation of cash reserves. She commented that the whole of the £60Million cash reserves set out in the pie chart in Paragraph 4.4.6 of the report had been allocated; the Council made loans to other Local Authorities, but these were repaid with interest; and the £2Million allocated for sprinkler systems in tower blocks had been a decision approved by the Council.

It was **RESOLVED** that the following recommendations be made to Council:

1. That the Treasury Management Strategy 2019/20 be approved.
2. That the draft prudential indicators for 2019/20 be approved.
3. That the minimum revenue provision policy be approved.
4. That it be noted that no changes are being proposed to treasury limits contained within the Council's treasury management policies.
5. That the investment services provided to Queensway Properties LLP (see Paragraph 4.12.3 of the report) be noted.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

## 7 **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK**

The Executive considered a report in respect of the proposed Community Engagement Framework, which outlined the Council's co-operative approach to engaging local residents and community groups.

The Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods & Co-operative Working that the Framework contained some aspirations to better utilise web platforms and social media to engage with residents and groups. This would build on existing engagement mechanisms, such as community mapping and youth engagement through the Youth Council.

The Portfolio Holder for Communities, Community Safety & Equalities thanked the positive contributions from the Community Select Committee and Portfolio Holder Advisory Group in the preliminary work which had led to the production of the Framework document.

The following comments were made regarding the report:

- Every consultation exercise carried out by the Council should take account of the spirit of the principles contained in the Framework document, including consultation on statutory matters, such as planning documents;
- The Framework document should pay regard to the need to balance the expectations of different parts of the community on consultation issues;
- Some clearer Case Study examples of the good co-production between residents and partners in the design of new services should be included in the document, rather than simply focussing on the involvement of residents once a project had been established;
- Reference should be made to the expectation that, for social value reasons, all contractors employed by the Council would be expected to adhere to the principles set out in the Framework document.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the draft Community Engagement Framework, as attached at Appendix A to the report, be noted.
2. That the Strategic Director (MP), following consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Communities, Community Safety & Equalities and Neighbourhood & Co-operative Working, be delegated authority to finalise the Community Engagement Framework and arrange its publication.
3. That the need for development of a related toolkit and training programme to support the effective implementation of the framework across council departments after final publication of the completed framework be noted.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

## 8 **URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

The Chair advised that she had accepted an urgent item of business regarding North Hertfordshire College, which would be considered in the private (Part II) part of the meeting.

## 9 **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.

## 10 **WEST OF STEVENAGE DEVELOPMENT**

The Executive considered a Part II report in respect of land option agreements to enable access to the West of Stevenage development site.

It was **RESOLVED** that the recommendations in the report, and two additional recommendations, be approved.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

11 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

North Hertfordshire College

The Chief Executive updated the Executive on matters regarding North Hertfordshire College.

**CHAIR**