

# STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

## EXECUTIVE MINUTES

**Date: Thursday, 14 March 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: 4.09pm

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

No apologies for absence were received.

There were no declarations of interest.

The Leader advised that Councillor Ralph Raynor (Portfolio Holder for Economy, Enterprise & Transport) was attending his final Executive meeting as he was standing down at the forthcoming Borough Elections. She was grateful for Councillor Raynor's work during his time as Portfolio Holder, thanked him for his sterling work in fostering excellent relationships with local businesses, and wished him all the best for the future.

The Leader stated that Scott Crudginton (Chief Executive) was also attending his final Executive meeting, prior him leaving the Council's service to take up the position of Director of Resources with Hertfordshire County Council. On behalf of the Executive, she thanked Scott for his support and advice in both his Chief Executive role and his previous roles at SBC, and wished him every success in his new role and for the future.

### 2 **MINUTES - 13 FEBRUARY 2019**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 13 February 2019 are approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

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

In relation to the Minutes of the Community Select Committee meeting held on 12 February 2019, the Leader commended the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Health & Older People and officers who had worked on the production of the Healthy Stevenage Strategy.

In respect of the Minutes of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 18 February 2019, the Community Development Team was requested to liaise with the Portfolio Holder for Communities, Community Safety & Equalities regarding any initiatives looking to undertake any work around resident involvement for the Council in building diversity in groups and services.

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

Environment & Economy Select Committee – 31 January 2019  
Community Select Committee – 12 February 2019  
Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 18 February 2019

#### 4 **THIRD QUARTER REVENUE MONITORING REPORT 2018/19 - GENERAL FUND AND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT**

The Executive considered a report in respect of the Third Quarter Revenue Monitoring Report 2018/19 – General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

The Portfolio Holder for Resources advised that the 2018/19 General Fund net spend was projected to be £80.9K lower than the working budget. The report stated that ‘this includes carry forward requests of £80,000’, however this should read £97.5K, as the Brexit funding had also been requested for carry forward into 2019/20. This meant that the net change in the General Fund projected expenditure was not a decrease of £890, as reported, but an increase of £16.6K once carry forward requests were excluded. It was further noted that ongoing budget pressures may require a review of the Financial Security savings target and any revision would be considered in the next Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) update.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources commented that the HRA net deficit was projected to decrease by £966K. However, from this underspend there were requests to carry forward expenditure budgets totalling £507.4K. The ongoing pressures of £19K would be reviewed at the next Business Plan and MTFS update.

The following matters were discussed:

- Paragraph 4.9.9 - Council Tax on Empty Property – in the light of the budget for council tax on void properties likely to be overspent by £75,750 for the year, officers were requested to investigate steps to be taken to mitigate against this in the future by returning as many void properties as possible back into the housing stock for re-letting.
- Paragraph 4.9.12 – Communal Area Maintenance – officers were requested to provide the Leader with details of and reasons for the underspend of £40,000, and an indicative date for when the review of caretaking/maintenance services would be taking place.

It was **RESOLVED**:

#### **General Fund**

1. That the 2018/19 3rd Quarter General Fund projected net decrease in expenditure of £80,890 is approved.
2. That it is noted that the cumulative changes made to the General Fund net budget remain within the £400,000 (increase) variation limit delegated to Executive.
3. That the progress of the 2018/19 approved savings, growth bids and carry forwards is noted.
4. That the 2019/20 pressure of £118,420 is approved. The ongoing pressure is £51,800 with £66,620 being for one year only.
5. That the new carry forward requests of £80,000 are approved.

### **Housing Revenue Account (HRA)**

6. That the 2018/19 3rd Quarter decrease in the net HRA deficit of £966,030 is approved.
7. That the progress of the 2018/19 approved savings, growth bids and carry forward requests is noted.
8. That the 2019/20 ongoing pressure of £17,000 is approved.
9. That the new carry forward requests of £507,470 are approved.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

## **5 THIRD QUARTER CAPITAL MONITORING REPORT 2018/19 - GENERAL FUND AND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT**

The Executive considered a report in respect of the Third Quarter Monitoring Report 2018/19 – General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

The Portfolio Holder for Resources stated that the 2018/19 General Fund Programme was projected to be £3.870Million lower than the working budget or 25% of the budgeted amount. Most of this related to slippage of £3.015Million and of this £1.19Million related to regeneration schemes. The largest slippage, relating to the CCTV relocation (£645K), had occurred as a result of reliance on third party cable providers to allow the scheme to be delivered.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources explained that the 2018/19 HRA capital programme was projected to be £911K lower than the budget or 3.9% underspent. All of the underspend related to slippage in the programme, of which £781K related to ICT and digital schemes.

The following matters were raised:

- Paragraph 4.1.10 – ICT expenditure – in response to a question regarding the anticipated 2018/19 underspend of £552,000, it was confirmed that slippage had occurred due to the time taken to appoint a new ICT Strategic Partnerships Manager and the scaling up of revenue resources to support the delivery of the required ICT capital projects. It was expected that this capital expenditure would take place in Quarter 1 of 2019/20.
- Paragraph 4.1.21 – Boilers in community centres – officers were requested to provide an answer to Executive Members in respect of a both the annual maintenance arrangements and planned replacement for boilers in community centres.
- Paragraph 4.1.23 – Pedaloos at Fairlands Valley Park – SLL be asked to ensure that the new pedaloos were made available for public use on a regular basis during 2019.
- Commercial investments – officers undertook to consult with the Estates Team and report back to Executive Members on progress with the Acquisition Strategy (ie. proposals to acquire commercial property inside and outside of the Borough).

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the 2018/19 General Fund capital programme net decrease in expenditure of £3.870Million is approved, as summarised in Section 4.1 of the report.
2. That the 2018/19 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) capital programme net decrease in expenditure of £0.911Million is approved, as summarised in Section 4.2 of the report.
3. That the 2019/20 General Fund increase in capital expenditure of £3.015Million (slippage from 2018/19) is approved, as summarised in Paragraph 4.1.3 of the report.
4. That the 2019/20 HRA increase in capital expenditure of £1.036Million (£911,000 slippage from 2018/19 and £125,000 vehicles) is approved.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

## 6 **HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY**

The Executive considered a report in respect of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Asset Management Strategy 2019-2024.

The Portfolio for Housing, Health and Older People advised that the Strategy sought to set out the underlying principles which sat behind excellent asset management for SBC and the key strategic projects and programmes to ensure the Council derived maximum value from its assets, whilst providing high quality homes for its tenants.

The Executive noted that Strategy would allow the Council to meet its strategic goals of having fit for purpose, safe, well maintained and well-presented stock, with a view to optimising housing development opportunities where appropriate. It contained a

series of key strategic aims and associated objectives. The objectives were summarised in the accompanying action plan, which would become the principal method for reporting and monitoring the delivery of the Strategy. A “plan on a page” had been provided to help provide an overview of how the constituent elements fitted together.

The Leader requested officers to ensure that the Asset Management Strategy included measures to be undertaken to ensure that when works were taking place, appropriate steps would be taken to protect the safety and security of residents and their properties.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Asset Management Strategy, as set out in Appendix D to the report, is approved.
2. That delegated authority is given to the Assistant Director (Housing & Investment), following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Health & Older People, to finalise the Strategy and related Action Plan.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

## 7 **CORPORATE PERFORMANCE FOR QUARTER THREE 2018/19**

The Executive considered a report in respect of corporate performance results for Quarter 3 2018/19, including an update on the delivery status of Future Town, Future Council Programme performance indicators.

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

The Executive was informed that there were three key areas that required specific attention and active management by officers. They were health and safety governance, Licensing of Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and the Customer Service Centre.

The following points were raised during the debate:

- Customer Feedback – in order to tackle areas where feedback to customers was not meeting performance targets, officers were requested to investigate methods (such as the option to provide additional administrative support) to improve communication and response times to customer enquiries within service areas where performance improvement was required.
- Garage Business Plan – officers were requested to report back to the Leader and relevant Portfolio Holders on the reasons why a petition had been submitted regarding the proposals for the Nash Close Garage complex when the overall proposals for the Garage Business Plan had yet to be decided or made public.

- Use of Agency staff – officers were requested to provide the Leader with a brief paper setting out the position regarding the use of agency staff and action that had / was being taken to seek to reduce agency usage.

The Leader wished to record her thanks to all staff associated with the recent achievement of the signing of the SG1 Project Development Agreement with Mace Developments Limited.

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 3 2018/19, together with the latest achievements, is 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 are noted and endorsed (Paragraphs 3.90 to 3.91 of the report).
3. That arrangements to meet new regulations (introduced in October 2018) relating to the Licensing of Houses of Multiple Occupation are noted and endorsed (Paragraphs 3.102 to 3.105 of the report).
4. 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 is noted and endorsed (Paragraphs 3.115 to 3.121 of the report).
5. That the improvements in sickness management practice is noted and future plans are endorsed (Paragraphs 3.131 to 3.135 of the report).

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

## 8 **CO-OPERATIVE NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME DELIVERY 2018/19**

The Executive considered a report in respect of a summary of the delivery of the Co-operative Neighbourhood Management (CNM) Programme, and a review of expenditure and delivered improvements in each ward in 2017/18 and 2018/19.

The Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Co-operative Working stated that the report reflected on some of the learning from the Enabling Social Action Partnership research which had been undertaken by the universities of Hull and Sheffield on behalf of the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). This had recognised the need to involve Ward Members and communities more directly in shaping the final programme of ward improvements, and had also recognised the added social outcomes that emerged from driving delivery at a neighbourhood level.

The Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Co-operative Working commented that the Programme also proposed some refocussing of priorities next year to ensure

that the impact of improvements better met community and Ward Member expectations. Part of this would be reinforced by the proposed area-based working model being developed by the Communities & Neighbourhoods, Stevenage Direct Services and Housing & Investment Teams.

The Executive viewed a video sponsored by the Communities and Neighbourhoods Team and forming part of the Council's successful bid to drive a Co-operative Policy Lab through the Co-operative Council Innovation Network (CCIN).

The following matters were discussed:

- Timescale for cross Business Unit Area Based Working – some of the background work had been completed leading up to the introduction of combined teams of Community/Neighbourhood and Housing Officers to drive forward the CNM Programme. A post was being recruited to in order to help drive this area of work forward across the Business Units.
- Involvement of Ward Members – officers were asked to ensure that schedules of works completed and works to be carried out in each ward were provided to Ward Members.
- The Executive was of the view that it should be made clear in all future communications regarding the CNM Programme that all Councillors were in full support of the programme; also that accuracy was essential when identifying locations where improvements had taken place or were scheduled to take place.

The Executive supported an additional recommendation requesting officers to prepare a document setting out the purpose and aims of the CNM Programme, and to devote a whole edition of the Council's Chronicle Magazine based around the work taking place in connection with the CNM Programme, including details of the rationale of the timetable for the work in various wards.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the delivery of activity undertaken through the Co-operative Neighbourhood Management (CNM) Programme to date is noted.
2. That the proposed Forward Plan for the CNM Programme over the coming year is noted.
3. That officers be requested to prepare a document setting out the purpose and aims of the CNM Programme, and to devote a whole edition of the Council's Chronicle Magazine based around the work taking place in connection with the CNM Programme.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report; and 3. To better publicise the the CNM Programme.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

## URGENT PART I BUSINESS

### Future High Street Fund: Expression of Interest

The Leader had accepted that this urgent item could be considered at the meeting, and could not wait until the following meeting of the Executive, because the deadline for expressions of interest regarding the Future High Street Fund to be submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) was by 22 March 2019.

In presenting the report, the Strategic Director (TP) advised that the as part of its “Our plan for the High Street” initiative, funding of £675Million had been made available for which authorities could bid, with the aspiration of supporting high streets to counter the challenges that they faced in the current economic and digital climate.

The report summarised the Fund’s criteria and application process and sought determination of how to best proceed with an expression of interest to be submitted by the Council. Although the Fund could contribute up to £25Million to a successful bid, it had been suggested that within the region of £5-10Million per town centre was more likely to be the upper limit of allocations.

The Leader asked officers to ensure that the expression of interest was accompanied by details of the type of projects that the Council would be hoping to implement should it be allowed to progress to the second stage of the process.

It was noted that, regrettably, the Old Stevenage High Street did not meet the criteria for the submission of an expression of interest. However, it was hoped that the possible use of heritage-related external funding could be obtained for investment in the High Street area.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the bid process and guidance issued by the MCHLG is noted.
2. That the submission of an Expression of Interest based on the Stevenage Central Framework and its associated evidence base is endorsed.
3. That delegated authority be given to the Strategic Director (TP), following consultation with the Executive Member for Environment and Regeneration, to agree a letter of support on behalf of Executive, to be submitted with the Expression of Interest

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other options considered: As contained in report.*



10 **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 involve 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.

11 **PART II MINUTES - EXECUTIVE - 13 FEBRUARY 2019**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 13 February 2019 are approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

12 **HOUSING BENEFIT OVERPAYMENTS WRITE OFFS GREATER THAN £10,000**

The Executive considered a Part II report in respect of the proposed write off of Housing Benefits Overpayments Write Offs greater than £10,000.

It was **RESOLVED** that the debts referred to in the report be written off.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

13 **FORMATION OF A WHOLLY OWNED HOUSING DEVELOPMENT COMPANY - BUSINESS PLAN AND FINANCIAL PROJECTIONS**

The Executive considered a Part II report in respect of the proposed formation of a Wholly Owned Housing Development Company (WOC) – Business Plan approval and financial projections.

It was **RESOLVED** that the recommendations contained in the report be approved.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

14 **REGENERATION SCHEME UPDATE AND THE DISPOSAL OF FOUR RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES AT GILES CRESCENT (FORMER WEDGEWOOD WAY SCHEME / DU PONT SITE)**

The Executive considered a Part II report seeking approval for the disposal of four residential units at Giles Crescent (former Du Pont site) that were intended to be for outright home ownership.

It was **RESOLVED** that the recommendations contained in the report, together with an additional recommendation made at the meeting, be approved.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

15 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

**CHAIR**