

NOTICE OF DECISIONS

Meeting:	Executive	
Date:	Wednesday, 2 February 2022	
Place:	Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete	
Members Present:	Councillors:	Sharon Taylor OBE CC (Chair), Lloyd Briscoe (Part II only), John Gardner, Richard Henry, Jackie Hollywell and Jeannette Thomas.

WITH THE EXCEPTION OF ITEM 6, THE DEADLINE FOR CALL-IN OF ANY OF THE DECISIONS BELOW IS FRIDAY, 11 FEBRUARY 2022.

SUBJECT TO THERE BEING NO CALL-IN THE ATTACHED DECISIONS MAY BE IMPLEMENTED WITH EFFECT FROM MONDAY, 14 FEBRUARY 2022.

1	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	
	<p>Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs Joan Lloyd (Vice-Chair), Rob Broom, Phil Bibby CC (observer) and Robin Parker CC (observer).</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>	
2	TOWNS FUND BUSINESS CASE - NEW TOWNS HERITAGE CENTRE	C. Barnes x2292
	<p>The Executive considered a report seeking approval of the Towns Fund Business Case in respect of the New Towns Heritage Centre Project.</p> <p>The Executive supported the proposed Business Case. The following comments were made by Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the existing Museum was not the most accessible of buildings and the new Heritage Centre would be a significant improvement, both in terms of its modern facilities; its co-location with the library; and in view of its town centre location as part of the Civic Hub building; • there would be a need to involve and include the various and diverse communities in the town in the exhibition content of 	

the Heritage Centre;

- the modern Civic Hub facility would be designed with a low or zero carbon footprint, in contrast to the various public buildings it would be replacing throughout the town; and
- the Heritage Centre should contain information regarding the industrial and social history of Stevenage, including historical information regarding the past and current businesses operating in the town.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the endorsement of the project from the Stevenage Development Board be noted.
2. That the business case for the New Towns Heritage Centre project be approved, and that authority be delegated to the Strategic Director (TP) to submit the project summary to the Department for Levelling Up, Communities and Housing Towns Fund team on behalf of the Council (acting as Accountable Body).
3. That further engagement, building on the work of the Community Select Committee, stakeholder workshops and roundtable discussions, as set out in Paragraph 4.1.2 of the report, be endorsed, to support the development of the project.

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other Options considered: As contained in report.

3	TOWNS FUND BUSINESS CASE - STEVENAGE SPORT AND LEISURE HUB	C. Barnes x2292
	<p>The Executive considered a report seeking approval of the Towns Fund Business Case in respect of the Stevenage Sport and Leisure Hub Project.</p> <p>The Executive supported the proposed Business Case. The following comments were made by Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• in response to a question about mitigation against possible cost increases due to inflation, the Strategic Director (CF)	

advised that such mitigation could either require the use of additional funding and/or value-engineering the project to meet the allocated budget;

- in order to attract a higher and broader level of participation, it was important that the features of the new Sport and Leisure Hub facility were more extensive and up to date than those within the existing leisure facilities;
- the project would provide opportunities for individuals wishing to pursue a career in the leisure industry, as well as providing high quality facilities for those participating (at all levels) in a wide variety of sporting and leisure pursuits.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the endorsement of the project from the Stevenage Development Board be noted.
2. That the business case for the Sport and Leisure Hub project be approved, and that authority be delegated to the Strategic Director (TP) to submit the project summary to the Department for Levelling Up, Communities and Housing Towns Fund team on behalf of the Council (acting as Accountable Body).
3. That the development of a detailed project delivery plan, including detailed funding plan and continued engagement with key stakeholders, be endorsed.

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other Options considered: As contained in report.

4	URGENT PART I BUSINESS	
	<p><u>Levelling Up White Paper</u></p> <p>The Chair advised that this White Paper had just been published. In respect of its content, she made an initial holding statement.</p>	

The Chair stated that, whilst she welcomed the intent in the White Paper to level up areas of the country that had been left behind, and that there may be opportunities for Stevenage going forward, she had a number of concerns as to how levelling up was to be funded. In particular whether the funding would be for the long term and would genuinely address issues across the UK and not be over-focussed on the north-east and north-west.

The Chair felt that it was disappointing that the proposal of the Hertfordshire Growth Board submitted in the autumn of 2021 had not been accepted as a “pathfinder” project at this stage of the levelling up process. This was particularly so, as all 11 Hertfordshire local authorities, together with the Local Enterprise Partnership and Integrated Care Service were already working constructively in a statutory committee with a clear vision for the future of Hertfordshire.

The Chair recognised that there were significant economic, health, skills and housing inequalities in Hertfordshire, which were trying to be addressed through community wealth building. However, a long term strategy was needed, with ongoing funding support from the Government, to deliver for deprived communities, including some in Stevenage.

The Chair considered that, whilst levelling up could clearly benefit Stevenage in helping to drive forward the skills agenda, especially in the science and technology sector, an opportunity for a real step towards genuine transformational devolution had been missed.

The Chair was of the view that, without a significant funding package from the Government Treasury, and a new constitutional settlement to unshackle local government from Westminster, this White Paper would not achieve the full potential of localism. She felt that what was needed at local level was a secure and sustainable package of funding and powers to enable local leaders to supercharge the economy for the benefit of residents and businesses. Powers and funding would enable investment in transport infrastructure, skills development, economic growth and secure affordable housing, as well as the health inequalities in deprived communities.

The Chair welcomed the devolution of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, but was concerned that it was to be allocated on a formula system rather than through a bidding system. She felt that the sum available should at least match the funding that was previously delivered through European Union schemes. The ability to direct funding to where it could be used most effectively should be in the hands of local leaders and not Whitehall.

	<p>The Chair commented that real devolution of the funding would see each area allocated the resources it needed to make local projects happen. It was also the case that much of the funding had already been announced by the Government. She regretted that the White Paper had no focus on the Climate Change and digital capability agendas of local authorities.</p>	
5	EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC	
	<p>It was RESOLVED:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That under Section 100A 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 – 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as amended by Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006. 2. That the reasons for the following reports being in Part II were accepted, and that the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighs the public interest in disclosure. 	
6	LEISURE MANAGEMENT CONTRACT - PROCUREMENT STRATEGY	R. Gregory x2568
	<p>The Executive considered a Part II report in respect of a proposed Procurement Strategy with regard to the Leisure Management Contract.</p> <p>It was RESOLVED that the recommendations contained in the report be approved.</p> <p><i>Reason for Decision: As contained in report.</i></p> <p><i>Other Options considered: As contained in report.</i></p>	

7	URGENT PART II BUSINESS	
	None.	