

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 24 January 2018

Time: 6.00 pm

Place: Shimkent Room - Daneshill House, Danestrete

Present: Councillors: Lin Martin-Haugh (Chair) (Chair),

Start / End Time: Start Time: Time Not Specified
End Time: Time Not Specified

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

An apology for lateness was received from Councillor Farquharson (arrived 6.10pm).

2 MINUTES - 13 DECEMBER 2017

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee, held on 13 December 2017, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3 PART 1 DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE

This report had not been circulated to Members five clear days before the meeting nor had it been made available for public inspection. The Chair determined, however, that, given the short time left before the end of the call-in period on 31 January 2018, it could be considered on this occasion.

(i) Budget and Policy Framework Item – Council Tax Base 2018/2019

The Council's Assistant Director (CF) introduced the report, which sought the Executive's approval of the Council Tax Base for 2018/19, and an increase in the long-term empty property premium from 1 April 2018, or such later date when the required regulations were introduced. It was reported that it had been confirmed to the Executive that there were three types of 'empty' property categories: 'Empty-unfurnished', 'Empty-undergoing structural repair' and those properties that were in such a state of disrepair and unoccupied that they were referred to the Valuation Office to determine.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part 1 Decisions taken by the Executive at its meeting on 23 January 2018 be noted.

(ii) Budget and Policy Framework Item – Council Tax Support Scheme

The Council's Assistant Director (CF) introduced the report, which proposed a Council Tax Support Scheme for 2018/19 and informed Members that there was nothing further to add to what Members had previously received when

they undertook a policy development meeting concerning this item and since it was last considered by the Executive and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part 1 Decisions taken by the Executive at its meeting on 23 January 2018 be noted.

(iii) Draft Stevenage Cultural Strategy

The Council's Assistant Director (RG) introduced the report, which outlined the development of a Cultural Strategy for the town and summarised a number of cultural ambitions over the next 10 years in order for Stevenage to become a destination creative town. He said that whilst there were no immediate financial implications to the Council, the delivery of key ambitions would require financial investment and that the Council would seek to work with other co-investors such as the Arts Council England, Heritage Lottery Fund and Hertfordshire LEP. He referred to a supplementary paper (tabled), which provided strong endorsement by the Council's Community Select Committee (CSC), for a bold and inspirational approach to cultural development, building on the town's unique cultural heritage and the clear links to health, well-being, skills and industry. The CSC also acknowledged that the involvement of the private sector and broader stakeholder buy-in would be key to the Strategy's success.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part 1 Decisions taken by the Executive at its meeting on 23 January 2018 be noted.

(iv) 2018/2019 HRA Rent-Setting and Budget Report

The Council's Assistant Director (CF) introduced the report, which updated Members on the final proposals on the HRA budgets and rent-setting for 2018/19, to be considered by Council on 30 January 2018. It was noted that a typographical error had been corrected at Paragraph 4.9.1 to the report to the effect that the first line should read "Housing Revenue Account Growth" and not "General Fund Growth" as stated. It was further noted that comments from the Council's Housing Management Advisory Board and its Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been included in the report.

The Executive was advised that with reference to Paragraph 5.4.8 to the report, £50,000 had been included in the risk assessment of balances should the Council need to borrow to fund fire safety works for high rise blocks.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part 1 Decisions taken by the Executive at its meeting on 23 January 2018 be noted.

(v) Budget and Policy Framework Item - Draft General Fund and Council Tax-Setting 2018/2019

The Council's Assistant Director (CF) introduced the report, which considered the Council's draft General Fund Budget for 2018/19 and projected 2017/18

General Fund Budget and draft proposals for the 2018/19 Council Tax. The Committee was advised that this matter would be presented at its February 2018 meeting.

The Executive had requested that it be made clear that the reference to a Council Tax increase of 2.99% was for modelling purposes and the final decision would not be made until the Council Meeting on 28 February 2018.

In response to a Member's question as to how much it would cost to provide three hours free parking across the Town, it was confirmed that around £1.5m income would be lost which would have to be recovered through other means.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part 1 Decisions taken by the Executive at its meeting on 23 January 2018 be noted.

(vi) Budget and Policy Framework Item – Draft Capital Strategy 2017/2018 – 2022/23

The Council's Assistant Director (CF) introduced the report, which, amongst other things sought the Executive's approval of revisions to the 2017/18 General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme and approve the draft Capital Programme for 2018/19 for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Committee was advised that this matter would be presented at its February 2018 meeting.

Members were advised that a different approach had been taken in order to retain and sustain facilities and the specific risks were highlighted.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part 1 Decisions taken by the Executive at its meeting on 23 January 2018 be noted.

4 URGENT PART 1 DECISIONS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

None.

5 URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS

None.

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 Part 1 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 DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE (IF ANY)**

This report had not been circulated to Members five clear days before the meeting. The Chair determined, however, that, given the short time left before the end of the call-in period on 31 January 2018, it could be considered on this occasion.

(i) Major Refurbishment Contract Procurement

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II decisions taken by the Executive at its meeting on 23 January 2018 be noted.

(ii) Town Centre Regeneration – Selection of a Preferred Development Partner for SG1

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II decisions taken by the Executive at its meeting on 23 January 2018 be noted.

8 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR