



## EXECUTIVE

YOU ARE REQUESTED TO ATTEND A MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE TO BE HELD IN THE PRINCIPAL COMMITTEE ROOM, THE DEANE HOUSE, BELVEDERE ROAD, TAUNTON ON WEDNESDAY 17TH NOVEMBER 2004 AT 18:15.

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### **AGENDA**

1. Apologies
2. Minutes
3. Public Question Time
4. Housing Stock Options. The Head of Housing will introduce Mr David Curtis of the Government Office for the South West and Mr Nigel Minto from the Community Housing Task Force (Part of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister), who will be in attendance to provide an update on the Government's position as to Housing Stock Transfers and to answer questions members may have on this topic.
5. Taunton Transport Strategy Review and the Third Way. Report of the Forward Plan Manager (attached). PLEASE NOTE that Mr Jeremy Callard from Somerset County Council will be in attendance to give members a short presentation on the Review.
6. Profile of Services. Report of the Chief Executive (attached).

G P DYKE  
Member Services Manager

The Deane House  
Belvedere Road  
TAUNTON  
Somerset

TA1 1HE

09 November 2004

Executive Members:-

Councillor Williams - Leader of the Council

Councillor Bishop (Planning and Transportation)

Councillor Mrs Bradley (Leisure, Arts and Culture)

Councillor Cavill (Economic Development, Property and Tourism)

Councillor Edwards (Environmental Policy and Services)

Councillor Garner (Housing Services)

Councillor Hall (Corporate Resources)

Councillor Leighton (Communications)

Councillor Mrs Lewin-Harris - Deputy Leader - (Community Leadership)

## **Executive – 20 October 2004**

Present: Councillor Williams (Chairman)  
Councillors Bishop, Mrs Bradley, Mrs Bryant, Cavill, Garner, Hall and  
Mrs Lewin-Harris

Officers: Mrs P James (Chief Executive)  
Mr S Rutledge (Chief Architect)  
Miss M Rumsey (Review Support Officer)

(The meeting commenced at 6.15pm)

58. Apologies

Councillor Edwards

59. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of the Executive held on 22 September 2004 and 28 September 2004 were taken as read and were signed.

60. Public Question Time

Councillor Mrs Bradley as a member of the public raised a query about a housing allocation in Kingston St Mary.

A written answer would be provided for her.

61. Disability Discrimination Act 1995 - Strategy

Considered report previously circulated, which outlined the strategy the Council would adopt to achieve compliance with The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995.

The DDA had been introduced to prevent discrimination against disabled people. It was based on the principle that disabled people should not be treated less favourably, simply because of their disability, by those providing goods, facilities or services to the public or by those selling, letting or managing property.

The report gave details of the additions that had been made to the Act since its introduction in November 1995.

The Council had been pro-active on disability issues not necessarily covered by the Act. This included the Equality Policy and the Equality Improvement Plan 2003-2006. Details of the relevant sections of the Plan relating to disability issues were submitted together with a progress report.

The Community Leadership Review Panel had considered the DDA Strategy in September 2004 and recommended that the Executive support the strategy and that it be adopted by Council on 14 December 2004.

New refurbishment work undertaken to Council property had complied with the relevant Building Regulations and the opportunity had been taken to include elements of work to ensure compliance with the Act.

The report gave details of how the Council intended to implement the DDA Strategy together with details of the following:-

- Properties that the Council owned or had a responsibility to ensure compliance with the DDA and Council's Equality Improvement Plan. These were listed in priority order and work would be arranged to follow this;
- Preliminary costs for the Council's major buildings only;
- Quick fix items; and
- The Housing Revenue Account properties that the Council were responsible for in ensuring compliance with the DDA.

An existing officer had been given the responsibility for disability audits and he was in the process of producing "Access Audits" and "Action Plans" for the Council's properties. The action plans would form the brief as to what actions would be undertaken.

Submitted details of the criteria that would be used in assessing the priority order/work to be undertaken.

A considerable amount of work needed to be done to ensure compliance with the Act and the Council's Equality Policy/Equality Improvement Plan. Work was likely to cost more money that was currently available. If this was the case, additional finance would be requested in future years.

RESOLVED that the Executive supported the Disability and Discrimination Act Strategy for Taunton Deane and recommended that it be formally adopted by Council.

62. Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the item numbered 5 on the agenda because of the likelihood that exempt information would otherwise be disclosed relating to Clause 1 of Schedule 12(a) of The Local Government Act 1972.

63. Request for Early Retirement

Considered report previously circulated, which sought approval for the early retirement of an employee.

The report gave details of how the early retirement had been sought under the "85 year rule" which was applied at the Council's discretion. It allowed employees to retire early if their pensionable service and age together reached 85 or more.

The implementation phase of the project upon which the officer was employed was now largely complete and it was therefore no longer necessary to maintain this post.

The report gave details of the financial cost and savings to the Council.

RESOLVED that:-

- 1) the request by the officer to retire early under the “85 year rule” be agreed; and
- 2) the use of General Fund Reserves to fund the one-off costs associated with this early retirement be approved.

(The meeting ended at 6.30pm)

## **TAUNTON DEANE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**EXECUTIVE - 17<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2004**

### **Report Of The Forward Plan Manager**

**(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Bishop)**

## **TAUNTON TRANSPORT STRATEGY REVIEW & “3<sup>rd</sup> WAY”**

### **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To provide the background detail to the development of the Taunton Transport Strategy Review (TTSR), including the “3<sup>rd</sup> Way”.
- 1.2 To seek the Executive’s support to the content of the TTSR, and their “in principle” support for the content of the “3<sup>rd</sup> Way” option, subject to receiving further details regarding impacts upon affected junctions.

### **2.0 SUMMARY**

- 2.1 The TTSR has been subject to development over the course of the past 18 months. This has involved a comprehensive public consultation exercise. The response to the consultation was one of general support for the TTSR strategy, although opinion was split on whether to pursue the Inner Relief Road, or to drop the proposal in favour of delivering a cultural quarter in the vicinity of Wood Street. Work has since progressed on the “3<sup>rd</sup> Way”, a compromise solution. Members are now requested to support the content of the TTSR and provide their “in principle” support for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Way option. The County Council are requested to provide further information on the impact of the “3<sup>rd</sup> Way” on the junction with Bridge Street and associated junctions along its route.

### **3.0 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Taunton Deane Borough Council, Somerset County Council and Regional Development Agency (RDA) have been working together over the past 18 months to develop an Urban Design Framework (UDF) for Taunton town centre. This work is being steered by appointed consultants, Terrence O Rourke (TOR). The project is important in order to develop certain key elements of the Taunton Vision proposals, including the identification of appropriate development opportunities and supporting infrastructure. An integral element of this work is the Taunton Transport Strategy Review (TTSR - prepared by Atkins on behalf of the County Council).
- 3.2 Atkins / Somerset County Council undertook consultation on the TTSR during February and March 2004. The Panel will be aware that some of the key proposals within the TTSR were: Northern Inner Distributor Road, relocation of bus station, extension to urban clearway on East Reach, reallocation of town centre parking away from commuters to shoppers, enhanced parking fees for commuters, together with options for the Inner Relief Road (continued support / withdrawal).
- 3.3 The response to the consultation was of general support for the proposed strategy, and for the majority of the major proposals. Attached at Appendix A is the Executive Summary to the TTSR Consultation Response (prepared by Atkins)\*.
- 3.4 Regarding the Inner Relief Road (IRR), the Panel will be aware that public opinion was equally divided upon whether to continue support for the proposed IRR, or to drop the proposal in order to facilitate the development of extensive cultural facilities

within the vicinity of Wood Street (the UDF option, favoured by TOR). Both Councils and the RDA have since been working on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Way, a compromise solution.

- 3.5 On 5<sup>th</sup> October 2004, all Members were invited to a “3<sup>rd</sup> Way” presentation at County Hall. Within the 3<sup>rd</sup> Way option, the IRR has been realigned in order to reduce environmental impacts and to maximise development opportunities including the provision of a new theatre complex off Wood Street. It would be designed as an urban street rather than freeway.
- 3.6 To inform the debate, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Way option has been appraised against both the IIR option and the UDF option (i.e. no IRR). All Members have been circulated with a CD copy of the County Council’s 3<sup>rd</sup> Way presentation\*. This sets out the results of the appraisal process.
- 3.7 The County Council’s Environment & Transport Review Panel considered the TTSR / 3<sup>rd</sup> Way on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2004, and provided support for its content. The County Council’s Executive Board are due to consider the TTSR / 3<sup>rd</sup> Way on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2004.
- 3.8 TDBC SPTED Review Panel considered the content of the TTSR / 3<sup>rd</sup> Way on 27<sup>th</sup> October 2004. The Panel resolved as follows:

*SPTED supports the content of the Taunton Transport Strategy Review and the proposals for the Third Way be supported in principle subject to further information being provided and consideration being given to the impact of the Third Way on the junction with Bridge Street and associated junctions along its route and that they be referred to Executive for further consideration and final approval.*

\* Any Member wanting to have a CD copy of the full version of the report into the consultation response, or who has not received a CD copy of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Way presentation, should contact Mark Leeman in the Forward Plan Unit (contact details are given below).

#### 4.0 **PRESENTATION TO EXECUTIVE**

- 4.1 Jeremy Callard (Transport Studies Manager / Somerset County Council) will provide Members with a detailed presentation on the content of the TTSR / 3<sup>rd</sup> Way. Members will be given the opportunity to raise any questions and concerns.

#### 5.0 **CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

- 5.1 The TTSR is central to the delivery of the Borough Council’s corporate priority relating to improved *Transport and Access*. The TTSR proposes improvements for all modes, including buses (new bus station, park and ride and bus priority), walking and cycling (new routes) and vehicles (e.g. NIDR and 3<sup>rd</sup> Way). Various elements of the TTSR, such as the NIDR, are crucial to realising the full potential of key town centre regeneration sites, thereby improving the local *Economy*. In addition, the TTSR is important for the delivery of *Environmental* improvements. The various components of the TTSR have been designed so as to reduce severance, congestion, pollution and noise impacts.

#### 6.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

- 6.1 Members are requested to resolve as follows:

That the Executive supports the content of the TTSR, and the proposals for the “3<sup>rd</sup> Way” be supported in principle subject to further information being provided and

consideration being given to the impact of the “3<sup>rd</sup> Way” on the junction with Bridge Street and associated junctions along its route.

### **Background Papers**

Taunton Transport Strategy Review: Report On Consultation. (Atkins - 2004)

Third Way Scheme: Presentation To Members (Somerset County Council – 5<sup>th</sup> October 2004)

SPTED Review Panel, 27<sup>th</sup> October 2004: Taunton Transport Strategy / The Third Way

### **List Of Appendices**

Appendix A. Taunton Transport Strategy Review: Report On Consultation – Executive Summary. Atkins (2004)

### **Contact Officers**

Mark Leeman, tel 01823 356484, e-mail [m.leeman@tauntondeane.gov.uk](mailto:m.leeman@tauntondeane.gov.uk)  
Ralph Willoughby-Foster, tel 01823 356480, e-mail [r.Willoughby-foster@tauntondeane.gov.uk](mailto:r.Willoughby-foster@tauntondeane.gov.uk)



# APPENDIX A

## Taunton Transport Strategy Review – Report On Consultation (Atkins / Somerset County Council) August 2004

### Executive Summary

The Taunton Transport Strategy Review (TTSR) is a study to review Taunton's current and future transportation needs. The study has reviewed existing transport policies, investment plans and transport improvement schemes, in order to propose a strategy which will enable Taunton's transport system to meet the future needs of the town.

In 2001, Taunton was identified as a Principal Urban Area (PUA)<sup>1</sup>. This status will require a period of significant growth of the urban area in terms of resident population, housing development and employment. An appropriate transport system must therefore be planned and delivered in order to properly manage the associated increase in travel demand.

Somerset County Council, Taunton Deane Borough Council and the South West Regional Development Agency have commissioned studies to provide insight into how such growth could be accommodated in Taunton. The Urban Development Framework (UDF) has considered the future role of the town centre and the re-development of under-used land, so as much growth as possible will be accommodated within the existing urban area. However, new development is required beyond the existing built-up area, and a further study (the UES) has considered a range of options for an urban extension to the town.

The land use proposals emerging from both the UDF and the UES will result in major changes to the layout of Taunton, with significant increases in travel demand. The TTSR study has considered both the immediate needs of the town, as well as Taunton's longer-term transportation requirements.

The views and opinions of residents, businesses and users of the transport system have been of great importance in developing this transport strategy. Every effort has been made to engage and consult with the public. This Report details the findings from the consultation programme.

### Methodology

The consultation process has involved a number of different mechanisms, including leaflets and questionnaires distributed to the general public and to a representative sample of the Somerset Influence Group, a series of public exhibitions, meetings and workshops with stakeholders representing a variety of organisations, and the development of an informative website<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> *Regional Planning Guidance for the South West Region (RPG10)*, September 2001, Government Office for the South West.

<sup>2</sup> 2,758 visits were made to the website.

Six workshop events were undertaken with local authority officers, Somerset County and Taunton Deane Borough Councillors, members of the Local Strategic Partnership, parish councillors, professional and voluntary interest groups in February 2004.

Leaflets and questionnaires were distributed in February/March. The survey of the Influence Group yielded 876 responses (a response rate of 58%) while an additional 747 responses were submitted by members of the general public. Additionally, 21 responses were submitted on the website, giving a total of 1,644 responses.

Public exhibitions were held in March. These were well-attended by members of the public.

### **The Strategy**

Overall, the transport strategy, its objectives and its deliverability are supported.

### **Public Transport Strategy**

Consultation has highlighted an overwhelming dissatisfaction with Taunton's public transport system, particularly bus services.

Proposals to introduce Park and Ride schemes are generally supported. The proposals which include new bus links and new services to development areas are also considered to be worthwhile. Consultees are also supportive of the proposal to relocate the town's bus station. However, views on bus priority are mixed, with no clear consensus.

### **Highway Strategy**

Proposals for a Northern Inner Distributor Road (NIDR) are generally supported. Other elements of the strategy, such as adjustments to Priory Roundabout on the A38 are also considered to be worthwhile. Consultees are more sceptical about the plans to extend the hours of operation of the clearway on East Reach and views on this proposal were wide-ranging.

### **Walking and Cycling Strategy**

The proposals to improve pedestrian facilities on routes into Taunton are welcomed. Similarly, plans to complete the cycle route network are supported. Stakeholders recognise the importance of improving facilities to maintain and improve on the currently high levels of walking and cycling. The importance of educating the public and school children to raise awareness of walking and cycling is also recognised.

### **Town Centre Strategy**

The presentation of the options for the town centre has yielded a range of contrasting opinions. Overall, support for the Vision for Taunton is greater than that for the Inner Relief Road (IRR), but no clear consensus has emerged. However, the possibility of a 'compromise' scheme has also emerged.

### **Parking Strategy**

Proposals for improved signage to the town's car parks are generally supported by stakeholders and the public. Similarly, plans to create new car parks on the edge of the town centre are supported by the public, though stakeholders have some reservations.

However, although proposals to reallocate town centre parking from long-stay (for commuters) to short-stay (for shoppers) are well-received, an associated increase in charges for long-stay parking is opposed. Some stakeholders do recognise that the success of Park and Ride is linked to the cost of town centre parking.

## **Travel Plan Strategy**

Consultation demonstrates support for proposals to change travel behaviour through the development of travel plans with schools and employers. The promotion of alternative modes of transport was welcomed.

Half of all survey respondents would be willing to try travelling into Taunton by alternative modes of transport to the private car.

## **Recommendations**

We recommend that further analysis is undertaken (using GIS software) to examine the geographical distribution of survey responses and to identify whether there are any particular clusters of support or opposition to some of the proposals. This additional analysis will help inform subsequent consultation work as the proposals and schemes are developed in more detail. The areas requiring further analysis are:

- ◆ NIDR;
- ◆ East Reach Urban Clearway;
- ◆ Inner Relief Road/Vision for Taunton;
- ◆ Pedestrian Priority in the Town Centre;
- ◆ Bus Priority; and
- ◆ Reallocation of Parking.

In addition, given that the consultation has identified no strong preference for one option over the other, and in light of consultees' requests for consideration of a scheme which combines both the IRR and Vision proposals, we believe that Somerset County Council and the RDA's decision to commission further work to assess the 'Third Way' is strongly validated by the outcome of the consultation.

As the surveys of the general public and the Somerset Influence Group yielded good levels of response, we do not feel that additional questionnaire surveys are necessary to consult with the public at this stage. There will of course be a need for consultation on specific proposals as they are developed in more detail, e.g. proposals related to the parking strategy.

The stakeholder workshops had a good attendance and discussions focused on a range of topics. However, we feel there will be merit in further exploring the views of organisations representing people with disabilities and particular needs as proposals are developed.

Given the general dissatisfaction with bus services in Taunton and the surrounding area we feel that further discussions with both bus users and non-users would be worthy of consideration. Detailed discussions with bus operators should also take place, to fully understand the dynamics of the local bus market and the challenges faced. This should be undertaken as part of the review of the Passenger Transport Strategy.

# TAUNTON DEANE BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE – 17 NOVEMBER 2004

## Report of Chief Executive

### Profiling and Prioritising of Taunton Deane Borough Council Services

#### 1. Executive Summary

Full Council agreed the Financial Strategy in April 2004. The Review Board were updated on 7 October 2004 regarding the Council's budget position and the strategy being adopted to address the budget gap.

This report follows on by setting out a profile of services. Once agreed by the Executive this will be used to develop targets for the 05/06 budget setting process. Services will either see investment increased, maintained or reduced according to their relative priorities.

The Executive is asked to consider the views of the Review Board and approve the profile of services.

#### 2. The Proposed Profile of Services

##### 2.1 Introduction

We are currently delivering many of our services to standards well above national performance averages. This is due to a hard working and skilled workforce, dedicated to excellent customer service.

However, like many other councils we are in a situation where our costs are rising and our income is remaining steady. This is not financially sustainable and our predicted budget gap for 2005/06 is £1.2 million.

Although rated as an excellent council, one of the weaknesses identified in our recent CPA inspection was a need to explicitly identify and communicate our 'non-priority' areas. The inspection report highlighted a lack of consistent understanding of non-priority areas from staff and members, resulting in a potential loss of clarity and focus, as managers and staff try to deliver on conflicting priority areas.

It is important to prioritise our services because:

- The Council has considerable resources and huge skills and knowledge. We need to focus these on delivery of our Corporate Priorities.
- No organisation can do everything. The Council does not have limitless resources so we must chose to do less in some areas.
- We want to maintain our 'excellent' status and continue on a path of improvement.
- It makes good business sense, regardless of our financial position.

## 2.2 Our Corporate Priorities

The Council has approved a Corporate Strategy 2005-2008, which identifies four top priorities, based on what matters to local people:

- **Delivering the Vision for Taunton**
- **Improving transportation and tackling congestion**
- **Reducing anti-social behaviour**
- **Promoting affordable housing**

## 2.3 Priority Services

Priority Services are those which have the most impact on achieving our Corporate Priorities or have a particular local significance to our community.

Our Priority Services for 2005-2008 are:

- **Economic Development and Regeneration**
- **Planning (including Transportation)**
- **Community Safety**
- **Licensing**
- **Street Cleaning and associated cleansing services**
- **Housing Strategy and enabling (affordable housing)**
- **Homelessness.**

Not all priority services will receive new investment – this will depend on past investment decisions and current levels of service and performance. Priority services that are already performing to an excellent standard will see investment maintained at current levels. Priority services that are not currently attaining high standards will have first call on resources to help them improve performance. In all but exceptional cases, resources will be diverted from lower priority service areas to achieve such improvements.

## 2.4 Lower Priority Services

The remainder of the Council's activities, whilst still important, cannot be high priorities. They include front-line services as well as support services that are essential to the smooth running of the Council.

All have dedicated and professional staff who are important to the Council and the community and have played a major part in achieving our CPA 'excellent' status. We need their continued enthusiasm and expertise to achieve financial stability and a renewed focus on delivering our priorities.

Council services that are not high priorities will not receive new investment. Heads of Service have been asked to identify how these services could be delivered differently, or with less direct use of Taunton Deane's own resources, or in some cases, stopped altogether in order to save our own resources.

Consideration of impact on standards of service needs to go hand in hand with decisions to maintain or reduce levels of investment in the future. In some cases, we will choose to reduce standards because we cannot continue to provide 'Rolls-Royce' services everywhere. In other cases, we believe that standards can be maintained or improved with investment at the same or lower levels.

We are working to define, and where possible quantify, clear performance standards for *all* services (high priority and lower priority). The following table establishes a prioritised profile and medium term investment pattern for services.

## 2.5 Profile of Services and Future Investment by TDBC (2005-2008)

Service	Increase Direct Funding	Maintain Direct Funding	Reduce Direct Funding
<b>High Priority</b>			
Economic Development and Regeneration	✓		
Planning (including Transportation)	✓		
Community Safety	✓		
Licensing	✓		
Street Cleaning	✓		
Affordable Enabling/Housing	✓		
Homelessness	✓		
<b>Medium Priority</b>			
Britain in Bloom		✓	
Car Parks		✓	
CCTV		✓	
Cemeteries and Crematorium		✓	
Communications		✓	
Customer Services		✓	
Democratic Services (including Members, Mayoral, Electoral Services and Parish Liaison)		✓	
Building Control		✓	
Emergency Planning		✓	
Heritage and Landscape		✓	
Land Charges		✓	
Pest Control and Dog Wardens		✓	
Policy and Performance		✓	
Sport and Leisure		✓	
Tourism		✓	
Training and Development		✓	
Waste collection and recycling		✓	
<b>Low Priority</b>			
Consultation activities			✓
Environmental Health (except Licensing and Dog Warden)			✓
Grants (in lower priority areas)			✓
Highways			✓
Flooding and drainage works			✓
Parks and Open Spaces			✓
Private Sector Housing (except enabling)			✓
Property (Deane Building Design Group/Valuation etc)			✓
Revenues and Benefits			✓

## 2.6 Support Services

Support services on the whole are not listed in the above table. These include services such as:

- Financial Services
- Information Services
- Legal Services
- Geographical Information Services
- Personnel
- Central Office Services.

These support services underpin priority services and play a key role in the smooth running of the organisation.

All support services are being reviewed to identify where possible savings could be made through greater efficiencies, trading activities, outsourcing and partnerships with other agencies. This review will conclude by March 2005. Support Services will reduce in some areas to reflect a new smaller front-line customer base.

## 2.7 Efficiency

All services, even those identified as priorities will be subject to efficiency savings reviews. All services will also be encouraged to seek external funding, and to explore opportunities to generate income for the corporate pot and or to increase service quality.

## 2.8 Implementing the Strategy

This is not a static Strategy. It will need to be kept under annual review to take account of changing local priorities and the Council's financial position. At this stage, several key steps are required:

- Agreement of high, medium and low priority services (November 2004).
- Consideration of plans to deliver savings in lower priority services (December 2004).
- Consideration of plans to deliver savings in support services (March 2005).
- Defining and quantifying (where possible) clear standards for all services, on the understanding that we cannot provide a 'Rolls-Royce' standard everywhere (March 2005).

## 3. Alternative Courses of Action

An alternative profile of services could be adopted. This is entirely a matter of choice for the Council. However, a profile that does not reflect the Council's stated Corporate Priorities or focus on the community's aspiration could arguably be difficult to justify.

Do nothing is an option. However, this would mean partners, the community and staff are less clear about the Council's priorities and strategic decisions around the allocation of resources would continue to be difficult to make.

4. Impact on Corporate Priorities and Finance

Agreeing a profile of services is crucial to ensuring this Council delivers a priority led budget for 2005/2006 and beyond.

5. Review Board Views

This report was presented to the Review Board on 4<sup>th</sup> November, 2004. The Board heard representation from various organisations and individuals.

The Board found it difficult to give a response to the profile in the absence of further information on each service. It was left for each Member to feed back their views on the profile. To date, three responses have been received and passed on to the Executive for consideration.

The Executive have given further consideration to Arts. It is their informal view that the Arts make a cross-cutting contribution to many of our objectives and it would be wrong to view it as a pure service delivered by the Council, especially given that the majority of our resources in this area are used to fund key stakeholders and grants rather than our own officer(s). For this reason consideration of Arts will be on the basis of its contribution to different aspects of our priorities. The priority impact will be expected to be on economic development, regeneration and crime and disorder.

6. Recommendation

The Executive is asked to approve the profile of services.

<b>Contact Officers:</b>	Penny James, Chief Executive	01823 356401
	<a href="mailto:p.james@tauntondeane.gov.uk">p.james@tauntondeane.gov.uk</a>	
	Brendan Cleere, Head of Policy & Performance	01823 356350
	<a href="mailto:b.cleere@tauntondeane.gov.uk">b.cleere@tauntondeane.gov.uk</a>	
	Shirlene Adam, Head of Resources	01823 356310