



## 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 13TH SEPTEMBER 2006 AT 18:00.

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### **AGENDA**

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 23 August 2006 (attached)
3. Public Question Time
4. Declaration of Interests  
To receive declarations of personal or prejudicial interests in accordance with the Code of Conduct.
5. Housing Transfer Issues  
Report of Head of Housing (Housing Transfer Consultation Co-ordinator)

G P DYKE  
Member Services Manager  
05 September 2006





Members of the public are welcome to attend the meeting and listen to the discussion. Lift access to the main committee room on the first floor of the building is available from the main ground floor entrance. Toilet facilities, with wheelchair access, are also available. There is a time set aside at the beginning of the meeting to allow the public to ask questions



An induction loop operates to enhance sound for anyone wearing a hearing aid or using a transmitter. If you require any further information, please contact Greg Dyke on:



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Website: [www.tauntondeane.gov.uk](http://www.tauntondeane.gov.uk) (Council, Executive, Review Board & Review Panel Agenda, Reports and Minutes are available on the Website)

## **Executive – 23 August 2006**

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

Officers: Mrs J Wishlade (Strategic Director), Ms S Adam (Strategic Director), Mr R I Taylor (Chief Solicitor), Mr D Thompson (Chief Valuer) Mr M Green (Taunton Vision), Mr S Kendall (Economic Development and Regeneration Manager), Mr S Murphy (Principal Accountant) and Mr R Bryant (Review Support Manager)

Also Present: Councillors Mrs Allgrove, Mrs Biscoe, Croad, Govier, Hayward, House, Lisgo, Prior-Sankey, Stuart-Thorn and Wedderkopp

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

### **62. Apology**

Councillor Garner.

### **63. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2006 were taken as read and were signed.

### **64. Declarations of interest**

Councillor Prior-Sankey declared a personal interest in Agenda Item Nos 6 and 7 as both a member of Somerset County Council and the Wessex Regional Flood Defence Committee.

Councillor Govier declared a personal interest in Agenda Item Nos 6 and 7 as a member of Somerset County Council.

Councillor Mrs Biscoe declared a personal interest in Agenda Item Nos 6 and 7 as an employee of one of the legal firms mentioned in the reports.

### **65. Taunton Town Centre Management Company : Request for additional grant for Invest to Save purposes – Taunton Christmas Lights**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning an application made by the Taunton Town Centre Management Company (TTCM Co) for support to carry out an Invest to Save project in replacing and improving the current Christmas lights.

In recent years, the responsibility for the upkeep and operation of the lights in Taunton had been passed to the TTCM Co who were keen that the standard, visibility and impact of the Christmas lights were improved.

It was proposed to replace the current Christmas Tree lights, which had been plagued by a number of minor issues last year, with modern energy saving LED lights which also required minimum maintenance.

Currently the TTCM Co lit 19 Christmas trees in the town centre with each tree consuming 9,000w of power. LED replacement lighting would consume only 65w per tree, which represented a total energy saving of approximately 170,000w.

Noted that during the first four years of operation, the new LED system would enable well over half a million watts of energy to be saved. At a time when energy costs were rising steeply, an investment in LED lights would produce significant efficiency and consumption cost savings whilst also contributing to the aim for “public agencies to reduce overall energy consumption”. Noted that the installation of LED lights would also make a significant contribution to service and income targets for the TTCM Co.

Further reported that the Council provided an annual grant of £52,350 to the TTCM Co. The cost of the replacement LED system was estimated at £14,250.00.

The TTCM Co did not have the resources to purchase the system directly and had therefore approached the Council for an additional grant. The Council’s Financial Strategy permitted the funding of Invest to Save initiatives, such as the one proposed, from the General Fund Reserve.

Reported that it was expected that the annual energy savings predicted would take approximately three years to fully repay the initial purchase cost of the new LED system. In order to repay the money taken from reserves, the annual grant to the TTCM Co would be reduced by £4,750 to £47,600 for three years.

In year four, the Council would see an overall reduction in its budget as a result of this investment.

RESOLVED that under the terms of the Council’s Financial Strategy, a supplementary estimate from the General Fund Reserve of £14,250 be approved as an additional grant to the Taunton Town Centre Management Company to enable the purchase of new LED Christmas lights, with repayment taking place as described above.

## **66. Exclusion of press and public**

RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the items covered by Minute Nos 67 and 68 below as they contained exempt information as defined in paragraphs 7 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the

Local Government Act 1972, and the public interest in withholding the information outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information to the public.

**67. Firepool, Taunton – Disposal route and procurement of a Development Partner**

Consideration was given to proposals put forward by the Vision Delivery Team to market the land referred to as Firepool, Taunton (the Priory Bridge Road Car Park and the Livestock Market), with a view to identifying a development partner.

RESOLVED that it be agreed:-

- (1) to market Firepool as recommended by the Vision Delivery Team and the external consultants identified in the report, in accordance with the selection process outlined and to instruct a firm of Valuation Surveyors accordingly; and
- (2) to instruct solicitors to check the Official Journal of the European Union Papers, prepare a draft Development Agreement and negotiate the agreement with the successful developer's solicitors up to its completion.

**68. Appointment of external property advisers and external lawyers in connection with the disposal of the land at Firepool, Taunton**

Consideration was given to the appointment of external advisers and lawyers in connection with the proposed disposal for development of the two sites comprising the land at Firepool, Taunton.

RESOLVED that:-

- (1) the appointment of the company recommended in the report, for all property and valuation advice in respect of the proposed disposal of the land at Firepool, Taunton, be agreed; and
- (2) the appointment of the firm of solicitors recommended in the report, to undertake the necessary legal work on the Council's behalf in relation to the land at Firepool, be also agreed.

(The meeting ended at 8.20 pm).

## TAUNTON DEANE BOROUGH COUNCIL

### **SPECIAL MEETINGS OF THE EXECUTIVE AND COUNCIL – WEDNESDAY 13 SEPTEMBER 2006**

#### **REPORT OF THE HEAD OF HOUSING (HOUSING TRANSFER CONSULTATION CO-ORDINATOR)**

##### HOUSING TRANSFER ISSUES

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor G Garner)

##### Executive Summary

Councillors are asked to :-

1. Sign off the Housing Transfer Offer Document
2. To authorise procedure to stage one of the Housing Transfer Ballot procedure.

##### 1. Background and Considerations

1.1 Members are aware that the Housing Service, supported by advisors and directed by Corporate Director Jeremy Thornberry, has been consulting tenants to consider transfer of the Council's housing stock to a new Registered Social Landlord, Deane Housing. So far we have sent out leaflets, newsletters and other written material to all of our tenants to explain:-

- 1) Why the Council has chosen this path
- 2) The £1.85m shortfall in funding per annum if we are required to keep services as they are and meet the Government's "Decent Homes" standard.
- 3) The cuts required to services and jobs to close the funding gap
- 4) How tenants' rights are protected
- 5) What the benefits of transferring to Deane Housing would mean to tenants.

1.2 This literature has been supported by staff, Councillors and Deane Housing Shadow Board members attending many different events from coffee mornings to steam rallies, "door knocking", static stands in supermarkets and a mobile trailer visiting many villages and estates. Staff are now visiting tenants missed in the first round of door knocking. There has also been press coverage of the consultation procedures. All staff have been kept updated through meetings, newsletters and information from their managers.

- 1.3 During the consultation we have kept figures, a very rough guide, to record what staff believe tenants are saying based on the information received so far from the door “knocking process” (figures attached), but the main aim was to ensure that all tenants knew about the Housing Transfer Consultation and understood why the Council was consulting staff. The “door knockers” opinions were 27% in favour of transfer, 12% against, 44% undecided, 12% not known and 5% unlikely to vote. This is a very rough guide.
- 1.4 Since the meeting of the Political Leadership Group and Executive on 22 August we have received little relevant advice, but by the meeting on 13 September, we should have the results of a survey by SMSR, which should help inform members. Information will be relayed at the meeting.
- 1.5 Most other advice would indicate that we are at a quite normal position strategically at this stage in the housing transfer consultation procedure and that it is only when tenants have had time to read the offer document, see the DVD/video and consider the summary that views become more realistic.
- 1.6 We aim to have further market research carried out in the third week following the release of the offer document which will give a more accurate forecast of the tenants’ intention at ballot. Should it be necessary we could stop the ballot then, but councillors need to bear in mind that our consultation has been based on the slogan “You Decide”, meaning the tenants decide at ballot. They could therefore feel cheated if a ballot is not held.
- 1.7 At the same time we prepared a draft offer document. This has been scrutinised by the Executive, Housing Review Panel, Deane Housing Shadow Board, the Tenants Forum, advisors and housing managers. The Tenants Panel supported by Aldbournes, the independent tenants advisors, have worked very hard on this document, giving up most of their own time. I am grateful for their commitment. All their proposals have been considered, costed and added to the offer document whenever feasible.
- 1.8 In conjunction with the offer document a DVD/video and summary pamphlet are being prepared.

## 2. Conclusion

- 2.1 After much consultation, advice and hard work by all concerned the offer document is now complete and ready to be signed off. (copies available on 13 September).
- 2.2 Members must now decide whether the Council should take the next step towards balloting the tenants on transferring the housing stock to Deane Housing or not. The next step is “stage one”; issuing each tenant with their copy of the offer document, DVD/video and summary. At the same time staff will door knock again to ensure all tenants understand the promises contained in the offer document, with SMSR carrying out market research to clarify tenants’ understanding and likely voting position.



2.3 Further special meetings of the Executive and Council will be held on Monday 13 November 2006, when the Council must decide whether or not to proceed to ballot. This is subject to the decisions being made on 13 September.

3. Recommendations

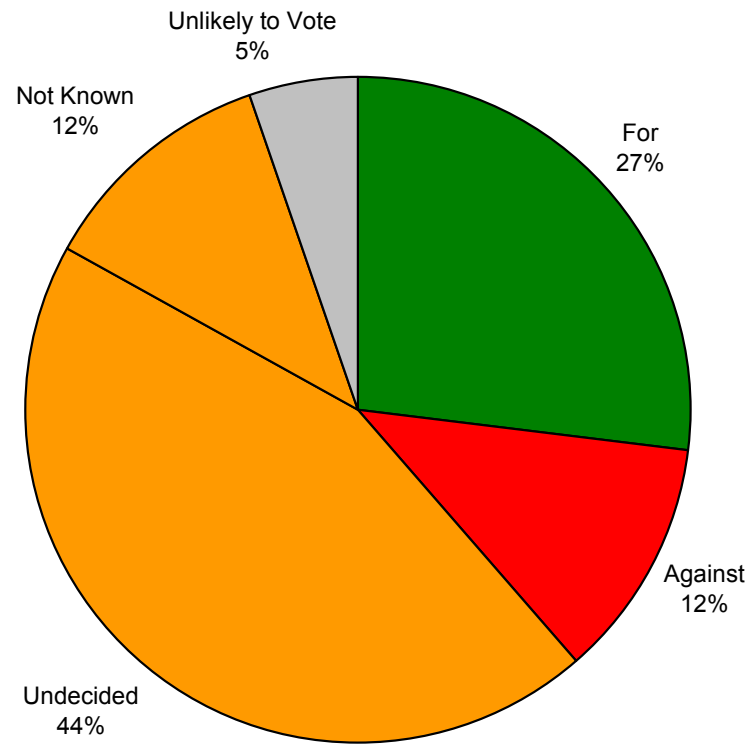
1. The Executive agrees to “sign off” the offer document.
2. The Executive agrees to proceed to stage one of the ballot process.

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Analysis of Door Knocking Campaign

Follow Up Action Required		Officer Opinion of Tenant View on Transfer		Outcome	
None	5168	For	1337	Successful	4930
Revisit	1694	Against	575	Out	1719
Phone	32	Undecided	2217	Declined	269
Letter	7	Unlikely to Vote	257		
Fact Sheet	14	Not Known	580		
Appointment	3				
	<b>6918</b>		<b>4966</b>		<b>6918</b>

### Visiting Officers Opinion of Tenant View on Transfer



### Tenants Areas of Concern About Housing Transfer

