

You are requested to attend a meeting of the Executive to be held in The John Meikle Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton on 24 June 2010 at 18:15.

Agenda

- 1 Apologies.
- 2 Public Question Time.
- 3 Declaration of Interests
To receive declarations of personal or prejudicial interests, in accordance with the Code of Conduct.
- 4 Review of Cemetery and Crematorium Fees and Charges. Report of the Cemeteries and Crematorium Manager (attached).
Reporting Officer: Paul Rayson
- 5 Revised charges for pre-Planning advice. Report of the Growth and Development Manager (attached).
Reporting Officer: Tim Burton
- 6 Housing Revenue Account Reform : Council Housing - A Real Future - Prospectus. Report of the Community Services Manager (attached).
Reporting Officer: Stephen Boland
- 7 Executive Forward Plan - details of forthcoming items to be considered by the Executive and the opportunity for Members to suggest further items (attached)

Tonya Meers
Legal and Democratic Services Manager

23 June 2010

Members of the public are welcome to attend the meeting and listen to the discussions.

There is time set aside at the beginning of most meetings to allow the public to ask questions.

Speaking under “Public Question Time” is limited to 4 minutes per person in an overall period of 15 minutes. The Committee Administrator will keep a close watch on the time and the Chairman will be responsible for ensuring the time permitted does not overrun. The speaker will be allowed to address the Committee once only and will not be allowed to participate further in any debate.

If a member of the public wishes to address the Committee on any matter appearing on the agenda, the Chairman will normally permit this to occur when that item is reached and before the Councillors begin to debate the item.

This is more usual at meetings of the Council’s Planning Committee and details of the “rules” which apply at these meetings can be found in the leaflet “Having Your Say on Planning Applications”. A copy can be obtained free of charge from the Planning Reception Desk at The Deane House or by contacting the telephone number or e-mail address below.

If an item on the agenda is contentious, with a large number of people attending the meeting, a representative should be nominated to present the views of a group.

These arrangements do not apply to exempt (confidential) items on the agenda where any members of the press or public present will be asked to leave the Committee Room.

Full Council, Executive, Committees and Task and Finish Review agendas, reports and minutes are available on our website: www.tauntondeane.gov.uk



Lift access to the John Meikle Room and the other Committee Rooms on the first floor of The Deane House, is available from the main ground floor entrance. Toilet facilities, with wheelchair access, are also available off the landing directly outside the Committee Rooms.



An induction loop operates to enhance sound for anyone wearing a hearing aid or using a transmitter.

For further information about the meeting, please contact Democratic Services on 01823 356382 or email d.durham@tauntondeane.gov.uk

Executive Members:-

Councillor J Williams - Leader of the Council

Councillor C Herbert

Councillor K Hayward

Councillor J Court-Stenning

Councillor N Cavill

Councillor J Lewin-Harris

Councillor T Hall

Councillor M Edwards

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Executive – 24 June 2010

Review of Cemetery and Crematorium Fees and Charges

Report of the Cemeteries and Crematorium Manager

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Ken Hayward)

1. Executive Summary

1.1 A few amendments to the Cemeteries and Crematorium fees and charges are requested to enable the service to be more competitive, offer a better service to the funeral directors and make better use of resources.

1.2 This report requests the removal of the 4 pm (chapel service time) surcharge, the introduction of a 'delivery only' facility, the removal of double fees for non-residents, reduce additional service time fee, a Saturday burial fee and a setting of a Saturday cremation fee.

1.3 The introduction of the 'delivery fee' is a new service, which is intended to attract funeral directors from a wider catchment area. The proposed fee is lower than the normal cremation fee as it does not involve full use of crematorium facilities. It is a competitive fee to encourage use by funeral directors who have the opportunity to use other crematoria.

2. Background

2.1 On Wednesday, 26 May 2010 a meeting was held at Taunton Deane Crematorium with a number of local funeral directors. A few areas of improvement, which should result in an increase in the use of the crematorium, were identified. These areas require amendments to the attached fees and charges in order to be implemented.

2.2 The Crematorium fees and charges are usually taken annually to Council but these amendments may increase the use of the services so are being presented at this meeting.

The areas of change are:

- (a) **Surcharge.** Removal of the 4 pm surcharge to help the service be more competitive, neither of our nearest crematoria; Weston Super Mare or Yeovil, apply this fee.
- (b) **Cremation Deliveries.** The introduction of three early times for the delivery of the deceased at a reduced cremation fee without any form of service.
 - (i) This will provide the crematorium with extra available service times later on in the day;

- (ii) Be better able to programme the cremation timetable which will result in more efficient use of resources; and
 - (iii) An improved service to the funeral trade which will encourage those on the borders with neighbouring crematoria to use this facility.
- (c) **Burial.** The removal of the double fees for non-residents. This will encourage better use from outside of the borough and take away the anomaly of a family having lived in the Deane for many years only to have moved away and having to pay double fees to be buried here.
- (d) **Saturday Cremation Fee.** Occasionally when a family requests a service on a Saturday, the Crematorium will oblige if staffing is available and the cremation fee is currently doubled. A fee of £800 would be more realistic rather than £1,100.
- (e) **Saturday Burial Fee.** This fee to be added when a Saturday burial is provided.
- (f) **Additional Service Time (reduce fee).** This will encourage funeral directors to book an additional time for large funerals.

3. Supporting Information

3.1 The Taunton Deane Cremation Fee is currently £550, the delivery fee is proposed at £450 reducing the current fee by £100. The impact of reducing this fee against other local Crematoria would show a reduction in fees charged:

Exeter actual Fee (saving of £168.00)

Weston Super Mare actual Fee 560 (saving of £110.00)

Yeovil actual Fee £515 (saving of £65.00)

3.2 Importantly receiving early funerals will enable us to have an improved programme for the use of our cremators; in some instances we will only use one or two cremators rather than three, providing additional savings through reductions in gas and electricity (savings not known at this stage).

3.3 The 4.00pm surcharge is £68. Funerals directors obviously try wherever possible to avoid paying this additional charge and may choose to use other crematoria. Weston or Yeovil do not apply this fee. During 2009, 1.6 cremations per week had the additional surcharge applied, the additional income totalled £5,600, or the equivalent of 10 funerals. It is hoped that additional business to both the crematorium and cemeteries will offset this loss.

3.4 Proposals - Impact on Income

Description	Cost Implications
Remove Surcharge	Estimated Full Year loss £5600, (equates to 10 funerals per annum) but removing could potentially attract more business to the crematorium.
Early Deliveries	Could attract additional business from outside our catchment area. Anticipated 20 funerals per annum 20x£450 =£9,000.

Burial "double fees"	Additional income estimated between £500 and £1,000 per annum.
Saturday Cremation & Burial	Additional income estimated between £500 & £1,000.
Additional Service Time	Increased family usage if the fee is reduced. Income should remain constant.

4. Finance Comments

4.1 The above measures may in the first instance reduce income levels but an indication from the Service Manager is that the reduction in fees would make the service more competitive and income levels may increase or remain constant. In addition there could be a reduction in expenditure levels due to utility costs savings.

5. Legal Comments

There are no legal implications

6. Climate Change

The change in the cremation schedule will enable the Crematorium to better programme the cremation timetable. This will result in having days when only one or possibly two cremators will be used rather than three. This will reduce use in both the gas and electricity required to run these machines.

7. Environmental Implications

Receiving the deceased early in the day will assist as detailed above in 6.

8. Equalities Impact

None identified

9. Risk Management

None identified

10. Partnership Implications

None identified

11. Recommendation

It is recommended that Full Council adopts the amendments to the Fees and Charges highlighted in this report.

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Taunton Deane Cemeteries and Crematorium

Table of Fees and Charges

Effective from 1 August 2010

Table of fees and other charges, the payment of which may be demanded under Section 9 of the Cremation Act 1902, by the Taunton Deane Borough Council for the cremation of human remains.

Part 1 - Cremation

For the Cremation:-	£
(i) of the body of a stillborn child or of a child whose age at the time of death did not exceed one month;	20.00
(ii) of the body of a child whose age at the time of death exceeded one month but did not exceed sixteen years;	103.00
(iii) of the body of a person whose age at the time of death exceeded sixteen years;	550.00
(iv) Cremation delivery fee;	450.00
(v) use of Chapel for additional service time.	100.00
(vi) Saturday cremation fee;	800.00
(vii) Chapel Attendant pall-bearing fee.	18.00

NOTE:- The Cremation fee includes:-
Use of Chapel, waiting room etc.
Services of organist and use of organ
Services of chapel attendant, which includes playing CDs, tapes, etc.
Medical referee's fee
Disposal of cremated remains in Garden of Rest
Certificate for burial of cremated remains
Provision of Polytainer when required

Part 2 - Urns

	£
Supply of Urn or Casket:-	
Stratford	38.00
Avon/Stirling	44.00
Malvern	54.00
Metal Postal	49.00

Part 3 - Cremated Remains

(i) Temporary deposit of cremated remains:-	
First month	20.00
Each subsequent month	24.00
(ii) Forwarding cremated remains excluding carriage	25.00
(iii) Collection of cremated remains on a Saturday (when available)	58.00

Part 4 - Memorials

(i) Entries in Book of Memory:-	
Two line inscription	56.00
Five line inscription	77.00
Eight line inscription	107.00
Flower) with five or eight	51.00
Badge or Coat of Arms) line inscription only	72.00
(ii) Memorial Cards:-	
Two line inscription	28.00
Five line inscription	35.00
Eight line inscription	38.00
Flower) with five or eight	51.00
Badge or Coat of Arms) line inscription only	72.00
(iii) Miniature Books:-	
Two line inscription	56.00
Five line inscription	70.00
Eight line inscription	74.00
Flower	51.00
Badge or Coat of Arms	72.00

Subsequent inscriptions		
	Per line	19.00
	Flower	51.00
	Badge or Coat of Arms	72.00
(iv)	Cornish Granite tablet for a ten year period	
	Standard memorial tablet	335.00
	Memorial tablet with vase	388.00
	Provision of flower container in existing tablet	53.00
	Cost of renewal 50% of current fee	167.00
(v)	Memorial plaque for a five year period	238.00
	Cost of renewal 50% of current fee	119.00
(vi)	Baby memorial plaques for a ten year period	74.00
<u>Part 5 - Other Fees and Charges</u>		
(i)	Certified extract from Register of Cremations	19.00

NOTE:- The charges in Part 4 and 5 (ii) include VAT.

Cemeteries

Table of Fees and Charges

Effective from 1 August 2010

Table of fees and other charges fixed by the Taunton Deane Borough Council for and in connection with burials in the Taunton Deane St. Mary's, St. James and Wellington Cemeteries.

Part 1 - Interments

The fees indicated for the various heads of this part include the digging of the grave but do not include the walling of a vault or walled grave. £

1. For the interment in a grave in respect of which an exclusive right of burial has not been granted:-
 - (i) of the body of a stillborn child or a child whose age at the time of death did not exceed one year; 113.00
 - (ii) of the body of a child or person whose age at the time of death exceeded one year. 298.00
2. For any interment in a grave in respect of which an exclusive right of burial has been granted:-
 - (i) of the body of a stillborn child or a child whose age at the time of death did not exceed one year:-

at SINGLE depth	129.00
at DOUBLE depth	156.00
at TREBLE depth	182.00
 - (ii) of the body of a child or person whose age at the time of death exceeded one year but did not exceed ten:-

at SINGLE depth	251.00
at DOUBLE depth	296.00
at TREBLE depth	320.00

(iii)	for the body of a person whose age exceeds ten years:-	£
	at SINGLE depth	378.00
	at DOUBLE depth	444.00
	at TREBLE depth	501.00
3.	Saturday burial (when available);	180.00
4.	For the interment of cremated remains:-	
(i)	in Garden of Remembrance (where cremation has not taken place at Taunton Deane Crematorium)	50.00
(ii)	in any grave in respect of which an exclusive right of burial has been granted	94.00
(iii)	Saturday interment (when available)	90.00
(iv)	To witness interment in Garden of Rest when cremation has taken place at Taunton.	20.00

Part 2 - Exclusive Rights of Burial in Earthen Graves

1. Taunton Deane Cemetery:-

For the exclusive right of burial for a period of 75 years in an earthen grave 2.3 m by 1.2 m

(i)	in Division L	454.00
(ii)	in Division A	550.00
(iii)	in Division B	447.00
(iv)	Cremated remains grave 78 cm by 76 cm	320.00

2. St. Mary's and St. James Cemeteries:-

For the exclusive right of burial for a period of 75 years in an earthen grave 2.6 m by 1.2 m

477.00

3. Wellington Cemetery:-

For the exclusive right of burial for a period of 75 years in an earthen grave

(i)	2.3 m by 1.2 m	477.00
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(ii) 1.2 m by 0.6 m 320.00

The fees indicated in Part 2 include the Deed of Grant and all expenses thereof.

Part 3 - Memorials and Inscriptions

For the right to erect or place on a grave or vault in respect of which an exclusive right of burial has been granted.

	£
1. In any "Traditional Section":-	
(i) a flat stone, kerbstone or any other form of memorial;	170.00
(ii) a headstone or cross with base, bases or tablet;	152.00
(iii) an inscribed stone vase.	58.00
2. In any "Lawn Section":-	
(i) a headstone;	152.00
(ii) an inscribed vase.	58.00
3. Cremated remains flat tablet	152.00
4. Each removal of memorial for additional inscriptions.	58.00

Part 4 - Other Fees and Charges

1. Certified extract from the Register of Burials.	20.00
2. Burial service in Crematorium Chapel (fee includes the use of Chapel, organ and the organist's fee);	100.00
3. Register search.	20.00

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Executive – 24 June 2010

Revised Charges for Pre-Planning Advice

Report of the Growth and Development Manager

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Mark Edwards)

1. Executive Summary

This report proposes revisions to charges made for providing officer advice to members of the public, developers and their agents on the merits of planning proposals prior to an application being submitted.

2. Background

- 2.1 This Council has charged for providing pre-application advice for a number of years. The majority of local planning authorities in the area now also charge or are proposing to do so. The charges were last revised in September 2008. The charges now proposed were considered by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 21 June 2010.

3. The Proposed charges

- 3.1 By approaching the Council for pre-application advice, members of the public and developers can ascertain whether there is a likelihood of whether permission will be granted for their proposal and/or whether amendments can be made prior to submission to improve its quality. This advice clearly does not commit the Council to a subsequent decision should an application be submitted.
- 3.2 It is widely accepted that engagement in pre-application discussions represents good practice and not only provides greater certainty for developers, but it also improves the efficiency of the planning application process and reduces the number of applications submitted which have little or no change of success. It also contributes towards improving the quality of development generally.

3.3 It is therefore important that the charges levied are not so high as to discourage engagement with the Council. The charges have therefore traditionally been set with an emphasis on ensuring that this is not the case rather than to recover the full cost of providing the service. This remains the case with these changes.

3.4 It is proposed to increase the majority of the charges by £10+VAT as follows:

Level 1 – Householder, Advertisement and Landscape advice. Three Preservation Orders and Listed Buildings (in cases where planning permission also required):-

Written Advice	-	£50 + vat @ 17.5% = £58.75
Meeting with note	-	£70 + vat @ 17.5% = £82.25

Level 2 – all other and Minor developments (eg. Less than 10 dwellings, 1000 sq ft industrial):

Written Advice	-	£90 + vat @ 17.5% = £105.75
Meeting with note	-	£130 + vat @ 17.5% = £152.75

Level 3 – Major developments (eg: more than 10 dwellings, 1,000 sq ft industrial):

Written Advice	-	£160 + vat @ 17.5% = £180.00
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Meetings for major applications (level 3) are currently charged at £75 + vat per hour. However, it is felt that it would be fairer and easier to charge a flat rate as for other proposals. It is proposed to set this at £200 + vat @ 17.5% which amounts to £235.00 in total.

3.5 There is no charge for advice on revised proposals following a refusal of planning permission or the withdrawal of an application.

Advice on proposals which only require Listed Building Consent also do not attract a fee.

3.6 These proposals have been referred to the Council's Planning Agents Forum and no objections to the charges were received. Agents generally appreciate this service being provided.

3.7 The proposed guidance notes to be provided on the Council's website are attached as Appendix 1.

4. Links to Corporate Aims

- 4.1 The provision of good pre-application advice contributes to the delivery of high quality sustainable development and is therefore directly linked to the corporate aims of Regeneration, Affordable Housing and climate change.

5. Equalities Impact

- 5.1 It is not considered that these small increases will have any material impact in terms of people's ability to access this service.

6. Recommendations

It is recommended that Full Council adopts the proposed changes to charges relating to pre-application planning advice.

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Taunton Deane Borough Council

Executive – 24 June 2010

Housing Revenue Account Reform: Council Housing – a real future – Prospectus

Report of the Community Services Manager

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Jean Court-Stenning)

1.0 Executive Summary

To agree a response to the consultation Council Housing: A Real Future - Prospectus issued by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) on the 25 March 2010.

This report recommends that, subject to Members' views, the responses set out in Appendix 'A' be the Council's response to the Government's consultation prospectus on the reform of council housing finance.

2.0 Background to the current Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Subsidy System

2.1 Every local authority with council housing must maintain a HRA. The HRA comprises the revenue expenditure and income arising from the provision of the Council's own housing stock. The HRA is a ring-fenced account: rent levels and expenditure on the housing stock therefore cannot be subsidised by Council Tax and, equally, local authorities are prevented from using rent income to keep Council Tax levels down. The basis of the current HRA subsidy system for council housing finance is the national redistribution of revenue from those councils that are deemed to have surplus income to those councils that are deemed to not have enough. HRA subsidy is the difference between assessed rent and assessed expenditure. It makes no difference if the real figures are significantly different. In essence, the current subsidy system supports a minority of councils in servicing their historic housing debt. Taunton Deane Borough Council is one of the councils adversely affected by this system – in 2010/11 some £6 million is to be paid to the government in the form of “negative subsidy” and redistributed to assist other local authorities that retain their housing stock.

2.2 The Government does not pay out all the money it receives. For example: In the 2009/10 financial year, the subsidy system nationally made a surplus amounting to £229 million, i.e. the authorities in negative subsidy paid in total £229 million more than was paid out to authorities that receive subsidy.

2.3 As well as the significant effect negative subsidy has on many local authorities, the HRA subsidy system has other serious faults, for example:

- The annual nature of determinations, even under the three year spending review, makes it difficult to undertake any serious long-term planning and develop housing investment strategies.
- It offers only very limited local autonomy
- The system has removed the clear link between rents paid and services provided locally.

3.0 Background to the Government's Proposals

3.1 The DCLG and the Treasury announced in 2007 a review of the national Housing Revenue Account Subsidy System. In July 2009 a consultation paper, Reform of Council Housing Finance, was launched which unveiled proposals for the future of council housing finance. Its stated intention was to dismantle the existing subsidy system and replace it with a localised system of self-financing for all councils.

In essence, the Government's self-financing option involved re-allocating the national housing debt by offering local authorities a debt settlement which they would then be responsible for servicing. In large measure, this would make more explicit the process which already happens now, with those councils in negative subsidy effectively servicing debt that has been incurred elsewhere.

3.2 Key to the process therefore would be the terms of the once-and-for-all settlement, which would be akin to a 30-year housing subsidy settlement.

3.3 However, the 2009 consultation documents did not provide authority-by-authority details of the potential impact of the options for change. They did not make clear exactly how this debt (which amounts to up to £21.5 billion nationally) would be re-allocated.

4.0 What does the Government's latest consultation document mean for Taunton Deane Borough Council's Housing Revenue Account?

4.1 On 25 March 2010 the Government issued a further document, Council Housing: a Real Future - Prospectus, which sets out the basis of the offer. The prospectus proposes dismantling the current system (something many local authorities have called for over many years), sets out

proposals for how a self-financing system would be created, and asks a series of questions about the detail of that system.

- 4.2** To inform the Council's response, Housing Quality Network was asked to evaluate the potential impact of the proposal for Taunton Deane Borough Council. Using figures provided by government it has been suggested the council will be allocated additional debt of £86 million. The cost of servicing the debt would be ring-fenced to the HRA, but the need to pay some £6 million of negative HRA Subsidy (@ 2010/11) to the Government will be removed.
- 4.3** Councils are not being asked to agree to firm figures at this stage. The figures provided are subject to confirmation as part of the next Spending Review. Housing Quality Network advise that we caveat our response to the consultation by clearly stating it is on the basis of the figures set out in the prospectus.
- 4.4** The prospectus sets out how the new self-financing system would work, with a one-off distribution and allocation of debt between authorities, so that each council should start the new system in an equal position to support its stock and to finance new build from future income without the need for subsidy. The basic structure of the proposal is as follows:
- 4.5** Central proposal:

 - 4.5.1** In future councils will be self-financing. This will be achieved by a one off financial arrangement that calculates the spending requirement for each council, with increases in the calculation of management and maintenance costs and with a discount rate of 6.5% usually used in stock transfer. For Taunton Deane Borough Council the opening debt settlement is shown as £116 million. Councils will be allowed to borrow up to the level in the settlement, which will enable some additional borrowing without forcing up overall public spending.
- 4.6** Income:

 - 4.6.1** The only income assumed is rent, and local authorities will need to adhere to national rent policy. Part of the government's rent restructuring policy is that social sector rents, both local authorities and Registered Social Landlords, should move towards (converge) a common 'formula rent' over a period of time. The aim of rent restructuring is that similar properties will have similar rents in similar areas. It is assumed this will be complete by 2015/16. To ensure councils continue to respect rent policy, housing benefit will only be paid to the level commensurate with national rent policy.
- 4.7** Spending needs:

4.7.1 Several pieces of research have been conducted that have demonstrated that, nationally, HRA system has, generally, been under-funding maintenance and management costs. Under the proposals it is suggested Taunton Deane Borough Council will have an overall 12.9% increase in overall expenditure.

4.8 Maintenance backlog and Decent Homes works:

4.8.1 There is an estimated, national, backlog of £3.2 billion to deliver Decent Homes. Although Taunton Deane Borough Council has met the Decent Homes Standard there remain a number of units that will require 'decent homes work' as and when they become void. This work is currently estimated, by council officers, to be in the region of £2.75 million.

4.8.2 The prospectus recognises that the settlement proposed here will not address the backlog, and commits to considering this spending need as part of the next Spending Review along with other identifying spending gaps. For example: Issues relating disability related adaptations, asbestos removal, and the Health and Safety Rating System. Further analysis of the work required on Taunton Deane Borough Council's housing assets in these areas needs to be undertaken to determine the extent of the cost of the total backlog.

4.9 Capital receipts:

4.9.1 The proposal is that local authorities retain 100% of capital receipts, with the expectation that 75% of these funds will be used for affordable housing and regeneration. Currently local authorities are required to pay over to Government up to 75% of capital receipts generated through the sale of HRA assets.

4.10 Debt:

4.10.1 Debt will be allocated using the Subsidy Capital Financing Requirement (SCFR) which currently forms part of the subsidy system calculation.

Amount of debt HRA can service under proposals	£116,294,00
Amount of debt currently recognised by subsidy	£30,585,000
Amount of additional 'settlement' debt under proposals	£85,709,000
Current actual HRA debt (2010/11)	£14,451,000
Actual HRA debt under proposals	£100,160,000

4.10.2 Such figures would therefore give Taunton Deane Borough Council some leeway for further borrowing i.e. the difference between the amount of debt the HRA can service under the proposals and the actual HRA debt under the proposals.

Note: Rigorous testing, prior to any further borrowing, would have to be carried out to ensure it could be afforded.

5.0 The consultation questions.

5.1 The questions which are now being asked in the prospectus are whether councils favour a self-financing HRA, or the continuation of the existing arrangements; and if they favour it, whether councils would be willing to see implementation from 2011/12. The six questions, together with proposed responses, are set out at Appendix 'A'. The consultation runs until the 6th July 2010.

5.2 Paragraph 3.28 of the prospectus states that the Government expects councils to "test the opening debt figure proposed under self-financing in a local business plan which reflects local information about actual income and spending needs and borrowing costs. A number of factors will have an effect on the borrowing profile in these individual business plans, including:

- Interest rates on existing and new debt
- Investment needs and the timing of this spend
- Difference between current actual housing debt held by a council and the level of debt supported by the subsidy system
- Capital receipts and any HRA reserves which can be used to supplement the revenue in the business plans."

5.3 Housing Quality Network have been asked to undertake an analysis of this offer: what it will mean for the financial viability of the HRA; and the advantages, disadvantages and associated risks.

5.4 Robin Tebbutt, Executive Director (Finance) from Housing Quality Network will be attending the meeting to present and report on his findings.

6.0 Finance Comments

6.1 At the time of writing further work needs to be undertaken with the Council's S151 Officer to assess the impact of the proposals. However, early comment refers to the principles being supported.

7.0. Legal Comments

7.1 No comment

8.0 Links to Corporate Aims (Please refer to the current edition of the Corporate Strategy)

8.1 Proposals have the potential for positive impact on all of the existing Corporate Aims: Tackling Deprivation and sustainable Community Development; Regeneration; Affordable Housing; and Climate Change.

9.0 Environmental and Community Safety Implications (if appropriate, such as Climate Change or measures to combat anti-social behaviour)

9.1 Proposals have the potential for positive impact on the environment and community safety.

10.0 Equalities Impact

10.1 The Government have undertaken a screening of the reform of council housing finance for race, disability and gender equality. On the basis of the screening the government does not believe that any specific equalities impacts will arise.

10.2 There will be a need for the Council to undertake an Equality Impact Assessment when making actual policy decisions under self financing.

11.0 Risk Management

11.1 Under the proposals the HRA will take on some of the external risk it is currently insulated from. Good business planning and risk management under the proposals will be essential.

12.0 Partnership Implications

12.1 It is considered the proposals will have additional responsibilities and workloads that will impact on our partners e.g. SW1

13.0 Tenant Services Management Board comments

13.1 In summary and following a formal presentation (10 June 2010), by Robin Tebbutt – Housing Quality Network of the HRA Reform Prospectus board members recommended the following:

1. To favour a self financing system based on the current proposals;
2. A preference to progress to implementation as soon as possible; and

3. A preference in favour of using additional resource to support new build.

14.0 Officer comment

- 14.1 On the basis of a £86 million debt settlement Taunton Deane Borough Council will be in a position to repay it and have scope for additional investment in the stock over the term of a plan. The responses to the questions have been drafted accordingly.

Note: Members should note that, at this stage, the figures set out in the prospectus are subject to confirmation as part of the next Spending Review, so Councils are not being asked to agree to firm figures and the response to the 'offer' does not therefore represent a contractual commitment.

15.0 Recommendation

- 15.1 (a) The Executive is requested to support the proposed responses to the Department of Communities and Local Government's Consultation Paper set out in Appendix A; and

(b) The Executive also recommends acceptance of these responses to Full Council.

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Appendix A

COUNCIL HOUSING: A REAL FUTURE Consultation Response

Q1 What are your views on the proposed methodology for assessing income and spending needs under Self Financing and for valuing each council's business?

Our broad view is that the proposed methodology provides a reasonable approach for valuing the housing business. With the uplifts to management and maintenance and major repairs allowances and the proposed 6.5% discount rate, self financing will provide a basis for a viable HRA Business Plan.

Q2 What are your views on the proposals for financial, regulatory and accounting framework for self financing?

We support the proposal for local authorities to report on a separate housing balance sheet and to introduce a separation of the loans pool between the HRA and the General Fund for accounting purposes. This is on the proviso that in practice funds would be managed jointly so that the costs and income potential from our treasury decisions are not adversely affected by this change. This will have the advantage of making the results of investment decisions in the respective areas more transparent. However, we need to go through this in more detail and undertake due diligence in relation to the accounting.

We also welcome the further clarification of the accounting treatment of core, core plus and non-core services.

Whilst Taunton Deane Borough Council is already accounting for expenditure appropriately between the HRA and the General Fund, revised guidance on the operation of the HRA ring fence will improve comparability of actual costs between local authorities.

Q3 How much new supply could the settlement enable you to deliver, if combined with social housing grant?

We are cautiously optimistic that there may be scope for additional new supply, subject to effective running of our business plan for at least 4 years from the onset and the availability of land.

We have modelled a scheme based on 110 new units assuming a 30% grant rate from the Homes and Communities Agency over years 4 to 9 of our business plan and 75 new units assuming a 0% grant rate over years 4 to 9 of our business plan.

Q4 Do you favour a self-financing system for council housing or the continuation of a nationally redistributive subsidy system?

On the basis of the proposals Taunton Deane Borough Council favours a self-financing system.

Q5 Would you wish to proceed to early voluntary implementation of self-financing on the basis of the methodology and principles proposed in this document? Would you be ready to implement self-financing in 2011-12? If not, how much time do you think is required to prepare for implementation?

Moving to early voluntary implementation of self financing based upon the information currently provided is supported subject to obtaining full and acceptable financial details and resolution of the issues raised within our replies to the other consultation questions.

Implementation in 2011/12 would be feasible subject to early receipt of final acceptable details from the government and conclusion of the financing arrangements.

The earliest possible confirmation, even if final implementation is delayed, or a clear statement that self financing on the basis of the proposals is going to happen, will allow us to secure the best terms on loans in the intervening period.

Q6 If you favour self-financing but do not wish to proceed on the basis of the proposals in this document, what are the reasons?

Taunton Deane Borough Council does favour self financing and would like to move to an early implementation of the system.

24/06/2010, Report:Housing Revenue Account Reform Proposals

Reporting Officers:James Barrah

24/06/2010, Report:Proposed changes to Pre-Planning Advice Charges and Crematorium fees

Reporting Officers:Tim Burton,Paul Rayson

14/07/2010, Report:Corporate Equality Scheme and Action Plan 2010 - 2013

Reporting Officers:Lisa Redston

14/07/2010, Report:Core Strategy - Interim Sites

Reporting Officers:Ralph Willoughby-Foster

14/07/2010, Report:Re-profile of Growth Point Funding

Reporting Officers:Joy Wishlade

14/07/2010, Report:Customer Access : Provision of 24 hour Telephone Payment Service

Reporting Officers:Claire Bramley

14/07/2010, Report:Cycling Provision in Taunton Deane - Recommendations of the Task and Finish Group

Reporting Officers:Erin Taylor

14/07/2010, Report:Adoption of the Allotments, Green Space, Play Pitch and Built Sports Facilities Strategies

Reporting Officers:Ann Rhodes

18/08/2010, Report:Proposed extension of Wellington Cemetery

Reporting Officers:Paul Rayson

18/08/2010, Report:Firepool Compulsory Purchase Order

Reporting Officers:Joy Wishlade

18/08/2010, Report:Quarterly Corporate Performance/Finance Update (Quarter 1)

Reporting Officers:Dan Webb

18/08/2010, Report:Control of parking on TDBC Public Spaces

Reporting Officers:Joy Wishlade

15/09/2010, Report:Review of Essential Users and Car Allowances

Reporting Officers:Martin Griffin

10/11/2010, Report:Quarterly Corporate Performance/Finance Update (Quarter 2)

Reporting Officers:Dan Webb

16/02/2011, Report:Quarterly Corporate Performance/Finance Update (Quarter 3)

Reporting Officers:Dan Webb