

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 17 April 2013 at 18:15.

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**Agenda**

- 1 Apologies.
  - 2 Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 13 March 2013 (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 Council Accommodation and Customer Access Project – Project Mandate.  
Report of the Strategic Director (attached).
- Reporting Officer: Joy Wishlade
- 6 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

05 April 2013

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](http://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 the Corporate Support Unit on 01823 356414 or email [r.bryant@tauntondeane.gov.uk](mailto:r.bryant@tauntondeane.gov.uk)**

## **Executive Members:-**

Councillor J Warmington (Community Leadership)

Councillor J Williams - Leader of the Council (Leader of the Council )

Councillor V Stock-Williams (Portfolio Holder - Corporate Resources)

Councillor N Cavill (Portfolio Holder - Economic Development, Asset Management, Arts and Tourism)

Councillor K Hayward (Portfolio Holder - Environmental Services)

Councillor J Adkins (Portfolio Holder - Housing Services)

Councillor M Edwards (Portfolio Holder - Planning and Transportation/Communications)

Councillor C Herbert (Portfolio Holder - Sports, Parks and Leisure)

## **Executive – 13 March 2013**

Present: Councillor Williams (Chairman)  
Councillors Mrs Adkins, Cavill, Mrs Herbert, Hayward, Mrs Stock-Williams  
and Mrs Warmington

Officers: Shirlene Adam (Strategic Director), Paul Harding (Performance and Client  
Lead), Dan Webb (Performance Lead), Tracey Healy (Principal  
Accountant), Tonya Meers (Legal and Democratic Services Manager) and  
Richard Bryant (Democratic Services Manager and Corporate Support  
Lead)

Also present: Councillors Horsley and A Wedderkopp.

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm.)

### **18. Apology**

Councillor Edwards.

### **19. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 6 February 2013, copies of which had been circulated, were taken as read and were signed.

### **20. Accounts Receivable – Write-offs**

Considered report previously circulated, which sought approval for the write-off of a number of irrecoverable sundry debts which had an individual value greater than £10,000.

Sundry debtors' invoices were raised by a number of sections within the Council and were used to collect income for a variety of Council services.

In accordance with good financial management principles the Council had made a provision for bad debts. This provision recognised that a proportion of the authority's debts would prove irrecoverable due to circumstances such as being unable to trace the debtor, debtor insolvency or where debtor had died with an insufficient estate.

The Council's Financial Regulations required that irrecoverable sundry debts, with an individual value of over £10,000 must be submitted to the Executive for approval.

Although any debt that was written off could subsequently be re-raised should circumstances change, it had been concluded that there was no further practicable recovery action available to the Council for the recovery of the four outstanding debts totalling £81,217.14 referred to in the report.

In the circumstances, the debts had been identified as irrecoverable and were recommended for write-off.

Further reported that this issue had also been considered by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 21 February 2013. Members had raised a number of particular points which were set out in the report together with appropriate responses for the information of the Executive.

**Resolved** that the four sundry debt accounts with a combined value of £81,217.14, as detailed in the report, be written-off.

21. **Use of Housing and Planning Delivery Grant to provide a staffing resource to support the implementation of the Community Infrastructure Levy**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the proposed provision of a staffing resource to support the implementation of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

The Council needed to introduce the CIL if it was to maximise opportunities to fund the strategic infrastructure necessary to support Taunton Deane's growth in the years ahead.

The draft charging schedule was currently being consulted upon and it was hoped to introduce the levy from September 2013.

The introduction of CIL would bring with it a range of tasks which would need additional resource to administer the levy.

It was therefore proposed to appoint a Community Infrastructure Levy Officer to administer the CIL process, including calculation, billing, collection and monitoring. Although the post would need to be evaluated, the indicative grade would be F (£22,958 - £26,276) which equated to £29,200 with on costs for 2013/2014 at the bottom of the scale.

Further reported that the CIL Regulations allowed the charging authority to top-slice five percent of the levy for administration. Therefore, the full cost of this post would ultimately be funded through CIL.

However, whilst it would take some time to generate the necessary income, the need for the post would be generated from implementation and it was therefore suggested that Housing and Planning Delivery Grant (HPDG) money was used to fund the post for a two year period.

The proposal was considered by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 21 February 2013 and issues raised around the benefits of a fixed term contract would be considered in relation to the recruitment of this post and any backfill arrangements.

**Resolved** that the allocation of £58,400 from the Housing and Planning Delivery Grant Earmarked Reserve be approved, to fund the Community Infrastructure Levy Officer post for two years.

22. **Financial and Performance Monitoring – Quarter 3 2012/2013**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the update on the financial position and the performance of the Council to the end of Quarter 3 of 2012/2013 (as at 31 December 2012).

The detailed 2012/2013 financial position for Quarter 3 was set out in the report although a high level summary was also included in the Scorecard. The monitoring of the Corporate Strategy, service delivery, performance indicators and budgets was an important part of the overall performance management framework.

The current forecast outturn for the Council's General Fund services was an under spend of £346,000 for the financial year 2012/2013. The significant variances to the forecast in this quarter were:-

- a) **Car Parking Income:** Under recovery of income of £470,000;
- b) **Deane DLO:** A potential shortfall of £101,000;
- c) **Council Tax Benefit:** Over recovery by £68,000;
- d) **Housing Benefit Subsidy:** A subsidy gain of £317,000;
- e) **Somerset Waste Partnership:** Under spend of £107,000.
- f) **Vacancy Factor and Pay Award:** A saving of £24,000;
- g) **Interest Payable:** In Quarter 2 an under spend of £226,000 was forecast. However this budget had been transferred to provide part of the funding for the new Business Growth Incentive Grant scheme;
- h) **Interest Receivable:** The forecast surplus from interest income had reduced £185,000. This reflected a transfer of £74,000 to the Business Growth Incentive Grant scheme.

Details as to why these variances had occurred were submitted.

Reported that the General Fund Reserves balance at the start of the year was £3,337,000. Following approved budget allocations during 2012/2013 the budgeted balance at the end of the current financial year was £3,138,000.

If the current trend continued on all the budgets above and the Council took no further corrective action in the year, the potential under spend of £346,000 would be transferred to this reserve, increasing the potential balance to £3,484,000 by the end of the financial year.

Noted that budgets and forecasts were based on known information and the best estimates of future spending and income of the Council. The income and expenditure of the Council over the financial year was estimated by the budget holders in the Council and then reported through the budget monitoring process. During this process, risks were identified which could affect the financial projections but the likelihood and/or amount were uncertain. Details of a number of risks identified during the Quarter 3 process were provided.

Further reported that the current forecast outturn for the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was an under spend of £43,000 for the current financial year. Details of the forecast variances were submitted.

As advised to Members in previous Financial Performance reports, there were significant differences between the budgets and forecasts for interest payable and interest income, resulting largely from the better than budgeted interest costs associated with the Self-financing Settlement debt taken out in March 2012. A net surplus of £818,000 continued to be forecast and it was recommended that this sum be transferred to the Social Housing Development Fund, to contribute to the financing of housing development projects.

The HRA Reserves "working balance" at the start of the year was £1,355,000. Following approved budget allocations during 2012/2013 the budgeted balance at the end of the current financial year was £1,883,000. With the above under spend the reserves had the potential to increase to £1,926,000 by the end of the financial year. This would provide a relatively modest headroom above the recommended minimum working balance of £1,800,000 as set out in the HRA Business Plan.

The Earmarked Reserves balance at the start of the year was £7,071,000. This included £6,597,000 for General Fund and £475,000 for the HRA.

The forecast year end outturn position had changed this quarter, from a surplus in Quarter 2 to a deficit in Quarter 3. The DLO Manager was currently reporting a potential under-recovery against budget of £101,000, based on a best estimate at this stage.

Noted that there were no variances to the Deane Helpline Trading Account to report.

The current forecast outturn for the Council's General Fund Capital Programme was Net Expenditure of £5,200,000, compared to the budget of £7,424,000. The forecast under spend is therefore £2,224,000 (30%) for the financial year. Of this amount, £2,176,000 related to slippage on projects into 2013/2014, with an under spend on project budgets of £48,000.

Explanations for variances were provided in respect of the following capital projects. Recommendations to carry forward the budgets of certain projects were also set out below:-

- a) Climate Change Initiatives – It was recommended that £40,000 of this budget be carried forward;
- b) PC Refresh Project - It was recommended that £15,000 of this budget be carried forward;
- c) ICT Infrastructure Maintenance - It was recommended that the £35,000 budget be carried forward;
- d) Members IT Equipment;
- e) DLO System;
- f) Project Taunton – Longrun Meadow Bridge C;
- g) Project Taunton – Firepool;
- h) Project Taunton – Castle Green;
- i) Project Taunton – Urban Growth;

- j) Project Taunton – Coal Orchard - It was recommended that the £10,000 budget be carried forward;
- k) Crematorium Mercury Abatement;
- l) Waste Containers;
- m) Grants to Registered Social Landlords – It was recommended that the £414,000 budget be carried forward;
- n) Landlord Accreditation Scheme;
- o) Disabled Facilities Grants – Private Sector;
- p) Acolaid Upgrade;
- q) Paul Street (Orchard) Car Park, Taunton; and
- r) Wellington Pavilion.




Noted that Budget Carry Forwards totalling £514,000 on the General Fund programme had been recommended.

The current forecast outturn for the Council's Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme was net expenditure of £4,958,000 against a budget of £5,500,000. The forecast under spend was therefore £542,000.

An explanation for the reported variances in the capital programme were reported and budget virements totalling £1,425,000 were identified.

The main areas of risk and uncertainty in the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme were detailed in the report and related to Kitchens, Bathrooms, Windows, Heating, Doors, Fire Safety Works in Communal Areas, Cladding, Fascias and Soffits, Air Source Heat Pumps, Door Entry Systems, Soundproofing, Disability Discrimination Act Work, Asbestos Work, Tenant Improvements and Community Alarms.

Analysis of the overall performance of the Council had revealed that 63% of all performance measures were on target. This was a similar position compared to the previous quarter (Quarter 2 was 60%) even though there was a slight increase in 'Red' alerts (six this quarter compared to three at Quarter 2). A summary / overview of the Quarter 3 scorecard was shown in the table below:-

| Section                    | No. of measures |  Green |  Amber |  Red | N/A        | Trend (from last quarter) |
|----------------------------|-----------------|---|---|---|------------|---------------------------|
| 1) Corporate Strategy Aims | 18              | 13<br>(72%)   | 4<br>(22%)  |   | 1<br>(6%)  | ↔                         |
| 2) Service Delivery        | 15              | 11<br>(73%)   | 2<br>(13%)  | 2<br>(13%)  |            | ↑                         |
| 3) Managing Finances       | 12              | 7<br>(58%)  | 2<br>(17%)  | 3<br>(25%)  |            | ↔                         |
| 4) Key Projects            | 7               | 5<br>(71%)  | 2<br>(29%)  |   |            | ↑                         |
| 5) Key Partnerships        | 8               | 4<br>(50%)  | 2<br>(25%)  | 1<br>(12%)  | 1<br>(12%) | ↓                         |
| 6) People                  | 6               | 2<br>(33%)  | 3<br>(50%)  |   | 1<br>(17%) | ↔                         |



|                         |           |                     |                     |                   |                   |   |
|-------------------------|-----------|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---|
| 7) Corporate Management | 10        | 6<br>(60%)          | 4<br>(40%)          |                   |                   | ↑ |
| <b>TOTALS</b>           | <b>76</b> | <b>48<br/>(63%)</b> | <b>19<br/>(25%)</b> | <b>6<br/>(8%)</b> | <b>3<br/>(4%)</b> | ↔ |

**KEY:**

- ↑ = Improving (ie more Green, less Amber &/or Red alerts)
- ↓ = Worsening (ie less Green, more Amber &/or Red)
- ↔ = No change

The current corporate performance scorecard had been introduced in 2009/2010 and had remained largely unchanged since then. Now that the new Corporate Business Plan had been approved, the Corporate Management Team would conduct a full review of the scorecard and recommended changes would then be discussed with Members in workshops early in Quarter 1 (2013/2014).

The performance report had been considered by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 21 February 2013 and its comments were reported for the information of the Executive.

During the discussion of this item reference was made to the Key Projects listed in Section 4 of the scorecard. Members enquired when reports on some of these projects, particularly Flood Alleviation Solutions, were likely to come forward.

The Chairman asked that this matter be referred back with the request that the items are added to the Forward Plan of both Scrutiny and the Executive at the earliest opportunity.

**Resolved that:-**

- (1) The report be noted;
- (2) The proposed budget virements set out in the Appendix to these minutes be noted and supported;
- (3) Full Council be recommended to approve the following carry forwards:-
  - (i) Climate Change Initiatives – £40,000;
  - (ii) PC Refresh Project – £15,000;
  - (iii) ICT Infrastructure Maintenance – £35,000;
  - (iv) Project Taunton – Coal Orchard – £10,000; and
  - (v) Grants to Registered Social Landlords – £414,000.

**23. Executive Forward Plan**

Submitted for information the Forward Plan of the Executive over the next few months.

**Resolved** that the Forward Plan be noted.

(The meeting ended at 7.01 pm.)

**BUDGET VIREMENTS FOR APPROVAL**

**APPENDIX**

| #              | Amount<br>£ | Fund | From                                  | To                              | Explanation  |
|----------------|-------------|------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
|                |             |      | Heading                               | Heading                         |  |
| 1              | 60,000      | GF   | Legal Services                        | Earmarked Reserves              | Transfer savings in Legal Services to Earmarked Reserves, to fund fixed term staff costs and court costs in 2013/14 to pursue recoverable outstanding debts. |
| 2              | 110,000     | HRA  | Interest Payable                      | Interest Receivable             | Allocated surplus interest savings to offset shortfall in interest receivable budget.  |
| 3              | 818,000     | HRA  | Interest Payable & Receivable         | Social Housing Development Fund | Allocate surplus interest savings to the Social Housing Development Fund to provide additional resources to finance housing development projects.            |
| <b>988,000</b> |             |      | <b>Total Revenue Budget Virements</b> |                                 |  |

| #                | Amount<br>£ | Fund | From                                 | To                                  | Explanation   |
|------------------|-------------|------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
|                  |             |      | Service / Heading                    | Service / Heading                   |   |
| 1                | 180,000     | HRA  |                                      | Kitchens                            | See HRA Capital Programme Variances section in the main body of the report for further details. The transfers reflect the current estimates of individual elements within the overall programme of capital maintenance and improvement works. Allocate surplus interest savings to the Social Housing Development Fund to provide additional resources to finance housing development projects. |
| 2                | 220,000     | HRA  |                                      | Bathrooms                           |   |
| 3                | 250,000     | HRA  |                                      | Windows                             |   |
| 4                | 120,000     | HRA  |                                      | Doors                               |   |
| 5                | 25,000      | HRA  |                                      | Fire Safety Works in Communal Areas |   |
| 6                | 375,000     | HRA  |                                      | Air Source Heat Pumps               |   |
| 7                | 75,000      | HRA  |                                      | Door Entry Systems                  |   |
| 8                | 20,000      | HRA  |                                      | DDA Works                           |   |
| 9                | 135,000     | HRA  |                                      | Asbestos removal                    |   |
| 10               | 25,000      | HRA  |                                      | Community Alarms                    |   |
| <b>1,425,000</b> |             |      | <b>Sub-total – Capital Virements</b> |                                     |   |
| 11               | 620,000     | HRA  | Heating Systems                      |                                     |   |
| 12               | 500,000     | HRA  | Cladding                             |                                     |   |
| 13               | 285,000     | HRA  | Fascias and Soffits                  |                                     |   |
| 14               | 18,000      | HRA  | Soundproofing                        |                                     |   |
| 15               | 2,000       | HRA  | Tenants Improvements                 |                                     |   |
| <b>1,425,000</b> |             |      | <b>Sub-total – Capital Virements</b> |                                     |   |

# Taunton Deane Borough Council

**Executive - 17 April 2013**

## **Council Accommodation and Customer Access Project – Project Mandate**

### **Report of the Strategic Director, Joy Wishlade**

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor of Resources, Councillor Mrs Stock Williams)

#### **1. Executive Summary**

The covering report sets out the context to recommend that the Executive mandate a project to establish options and recommendations to update the way the council goes about its business in light of technological, financial and social changes and from these conclusions devises a customer access strategy and office strategy for the Council. Other councils have already responded to these challenges and these are referred to in the earlier part of the report.

The report provides the background to the project including key outcomes, governance, risks and the resource requirements.

#### **2. Background**

- 2.1 The Executive considered the report on The Deane House Accommodation project in September 2012. One of the recommendations of this report was that officers were asked to look comprehensively at the Council's future accommodation needs in the light of the priorities identified in the Corporate Business Plan. This recommendation now appears as a separate project within the CBP and this report requests the formal approval of this project, including a request for resources.
- 2.2 Any review of accommodation needs to take into account access to services. The latest customer access strategy was approved in 2005 as part of the Southwest One project. This now needs revisiting and updating in the light of both social and technological changes and the Council's changing role.
- 2.3 Other Councils are very much in our position and are, or have, re-considered their approach to accommodation (with a view to reducing their overheads) and their customer access. In the locality of Somerset the

following initiatives are taking place:-

- Somerset County Council (SCC): rationalising use of offices throughout the county and where possible moving into shared accommodation; implementing “smart office” standards within County Hall to release space; investigating opportunities for sharing space at County Hall with other public sector organisations as a public sector hub within Taunton.
- Mendip District Council: introducing flexible working and “smart office” standards to free up space; instigating a community hub approach by letting out space to the Police, SCC and other public sector or third sector agencies; will have multi functional reception area with access to a number of services / agencies.
- Sedgemoor District Council: rationalised use of offices by moving to “smart office” approach; space being let out to SCC and other organisations. The driver for Sedgemoor was part of a change programme introducing new ways of working and investment in technology to drive down ongoing revenue costs.

2.4 The term “smart office” is a generic term that SCC has used to describe a way of using accommodation to deliver the following outcomes:-

- A Council that is more responsive and accessible for customers and partners;
- Financial savings for the Council; and
- Increased efficiency and productivity

2.5 These outcomes are delivered by:-

- Investing in more appropriate technologies that better meet our changing needs;
- Revisiting policies to ensure they support future working practices;
- Increasing performance from office accommodation and sharing with partners;
- Engaging with staff to enable the major changes in the way we work happen; and
- Consolidating the property estate to make better use of space and reduce how much storage is required.

2.6 Outside Somerset other Councils are also rising to the challenge of reducing their operating costs whilst modernising their customer interaction. A key example is Eastbourne Borough Council. Here a programme named “Agile Working” has been introduced, the key drivers for which were:-

- To create a way of working that allowed service delivery to be moved to wherever customers need it;
- To reduce the cost of accommodation;
- To provide more opportunity for staff to balance work and life; and
- To create a way of managing information and process that facilitated the sharing of these things with partner organisations more easily and reliably.

- 2.7 At a time when funding is being reduced and customer expectations are rising, Eastbourne has removed significant cost from its base whilst improving access and responsiveness.

### **3. Taunton Deane Current Position**

- 3.1 Any review of accommodation needs to be aligned with the Council's strategy for customer access. The last time that the Council reviewed this was in 2005 with the advent of Southwest One. A major work stream of this project will be to review and update the Customer Access Strategy, taking into account the changing role of the Council, together with social and technological advances.
- 3.2 In the current economic climate it is important for the Council to consider its overhead costs and seek to reduce these. The recent report about the opportunity to share the building with the Police showed that the investment required to bring the building up to modern day standards outweighed the financial return that the Council was likely to receive from rental income sharing with only one other organisation.
- 3.3 However, some of this investment will be required for any option that retains The Deane House as an office base. A full condition survey of The Deane House will therefore be commissioned as part of this project so that the true costs of continuing within this building are understood.
- 3.4 As Members are aware, the West Somerset Project is progressing alongside this project. This project will consider a recommended strategy for Taunton Deane Borough Council but which can be scaled to accommodate a shared approach should that be the final outcome.

### **4. Scope and Output**

- 4.1 It is appropriate that the Council considers all the options available to it for the future. The scope of the project will include:-
- To remain as sole / key occupier at The Deane House;
  - To review the business case for making changes to The Deane House in order to make it fit for purpose for sharing with other partners (see Executive report September 2012);
  - Joining a public sector hub at another location;
  - Moving as sole occupier to another location;
  
  - Dispersing the Council to a number of locations within the community;
  - To review all customer access channels: web, physical premises, telephone, social media;
- 4.2 All of these will have impact (both positive and negative) on the communities we serve and each will need to be assessed as to this impact.

#### 4.3 The fundamental outputs from this project must be:-

- A Business Case to provide flexible office accommodation for staff and Members which reduces our overhead costs.
- A Business Case to provide customer access to Taunton Deane services that is cost effective for the Council and best meets the future needs of its customers

### 5. Key Assumptions

- Any option will include looking at different ways of working;
- Any option will include solutions for travel / parking arrangements;
- The accommodation solution will be cheaper than the current provision;
- The accommodation solution will always comply with minimum standards laid down in the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992;
- Not all staff will have a permanent desk;
- Customer access arrangements will cost no more than currently on an ongoing basis.

### 6. Why do we need to do this?

#### 6.1 It is important for the Council to undertake this work in the near future to ensure that:-

- The Council has customer access that is fit for purpose;
- To drive down costs;
- To make most of the Council's resources;
- To enable decisions on investment priorities; and
- To ensure that any opportunities to share overheads are not missed.

### 7. Resource requirements

#### 7.1 This project will require project management resource above the day to day work of the Council plus funding to employ external expertise. The two areas that we will need external advice are in the areas of property advice and advice on the possibilities of updating the way we work and our

inter action with customers, including new technologies. It is therefore recommended that £70,000 is set aside from reserves to fund this project with the understanding that any money not spent will be returned to reserves at the end of the project.

#### 7.2 This funding will pay for a Project Manager to work three days a week on this project for up to a 9 month period plus some dedicated administrative support for two days a week for up to a 9 month period. In addition £20,000 has been allowed for to commission property advice and expertise as required and a further £20,000 for commissioning external expertise on updated ways of working and customer access solutions

including mobile working and use of new technologies. These figures are estimated but should the project be mandated and the requirements fully scoped, they will be further refined.

- 7.3 Any monies not used will be returned to the General Fund at the end of the project.

## **8. Governance**

- 8.1 The project will report to the Council's internal officer Project Management Group and to the Corporate Management Team on a regular basis.

- 8.2 The project will also report progress to the Portfolio Holder, the Shadow Portfolio Holder and the Group Leaders on a regular basis. Member briefings will take place at critical stages within the project.

- 8.3 The final report will be discussed at one of the Scrutiny Committees.

## **9. Risks**

- 9.1 A full risk register will be compiled as part of the project process. However, initial risks to achieving a positive outcome for this project are considered to be:-

- Lack of political appetite for change;
- No cheaper solution identified;
- Upfront investment too expensive;
- No partners found for joint solutions; and
- Customer access arrangements not cost effective.

## **10. Next steps and Timescales**

- 10.1 Once the project has been officially endorsed it will be managed using the principles of PRINCE2 stands and associated controls (including risk management).

- 10.2 Some work has already commenced. Taunton Deane is included in the options appraisal that SCC are working on for the public sector hub. This will be one of the options that are considered in the output of this project. SCC are hoping to come to conclusions about the public sector hub this summer.

- 10.3 A condition survey of The Deane House is being progressed via SW1. This will be required to ascertain the costs of staying as we are or of making the building fit for purpose to share with others over the period of the next 15+ years.

- 10.4 The timescales for reporting on this project are as follows:-

- Commission project - May 2013;

- Project Team set up - May 2013;
- First draft of options - October 2013;
- Business case for both accommodation and customer access to Scrutiny October / November 2013;
- Full Council decision - December 2013.

10.5 The implementation of the decision would then need to be set up as a further project with the appropriate financial commitments.

## **11. Finance Comments**

11.1 The costs of the project (£70,000) will have to come from General Fund (GF) Reserves and will require Full Council approval. Any under spend from the project will be returned to the General Fund. The current balance of GF reserves is in excess of £3,000,000 compared to the recommended balance of £1,500,000. The proposed spend is therefore affordable although will reduce the unallocated amount within GF reserves for use elsewhere.

11.2 The Finance Team will need to be fully engaged with this project as each option will require a robust financial assessment.

## **12. Legal Comments**

12.1 There are no legal comments at the commissioning stage. Legal representation will be included in the project governance going forward.

## **13. Links to Corporate Aims**

13.1 This is a key project that is identified in the Corporate Business Plan.

## **14. Environmental Implications**

14.1 Environmental implications need to be considered for each of the options considered within the project. These will form part of the consideration of whether options are considered to be suitable for recommendation. Issues to be considered will include the environmental sustainability of buildings and transport and travel implications.

## **15. Community Safety Implications**

15.1 Any relevant implications will be considered as part of the project

## **16. Equalities Impact**

16.1 This report requests permission to proceed with a project to develop a business case. At this stage there are no equalities issues for Members to consider. An initial assessment has been completed and supports this position.



16.2 As the project progresses, there will clearly be equality issues that need to be addressed, both for office accommodation and for public access. A full Equalities Impact Assessment will be completed and shared with Members as part of the project delivery.

## **17. Partnership Implications**

17.1 Working in partnership on options to share accommodation and public access will be considered as part of this project.

## **18. Comments from Scrutiny**

18.1 This paper was discussed at the Community Scrutiny Committee on 2 April 2013. Although the recommendations were supported concerns were raised on the following issues:-

- Consideration should be given to ensuring the Council continues to serve those who do not wish or are unable to use self help mechanisms;
- That the true value of our assets is established; and
- That Members are involved with the project

18.2 The first two of these points are fundamental to the project and will be covered within the work that is commissioned.

18.3 Members will be involved on a regular basis via both formal and informal briefings as described in paragraph 8. In addition, regular progress reports can be scheduled in to be brought to the Community Scrutiny Committee prior to any final report. Any issues that concern asset management will also be discussed with the portfolio holders responsible for this area.

## **19 Recommendations**

19.1 The Executive is requested to recommend the following for Full Council approval:-

1. That the Council Accommodation and Customer Access project is mandated by the Council; and
2. That £70,000 is allocated from General Fund Reserves to fund the costs of the project, recognising that costs will be minimised wherever possible and any under spend is returned to the General Fund.

**Contact:** Joy Wishlade  
Strategic Director  
[j.wishlade@tauntondeane.gov.uk](mailto:j.wishlade@tauntondeane.gov.uk)



**17/04/2013, Report:Customer Access and Accommodation Project Authorisation**  
Reporting Officers:Joy Wishlade

**15/05/2013, Report:Swimming Pool Provision in Taunton**  
Reporting Officers:Alison North

**12/06/2013, Report:DLO Relocation Report**  
Reporting Officers:Joy Wishlade

**10/07/2013, Report:Financial Outturn Report 2012/2013**  
Reporting Officers:Paul Fitzgerald

**10/07/2013, Report:Creechbarrow Road Development Report**  
Reporting Officers:James Barrah

**10/07/2013, Report:Business Plan Budgeted Service Profile**  
Reporting Officers:Simon Lewis

**10/07/2013, Report:Community Infrastructure Levy Instalment Policy**  
Reporting Officers:Phil Bisatt

**07/08/2013, Report:Planning toolkit for handling large scale and complex development proposals**  
Reporting Officers:Tim Burton