

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 14 October 2009 at 18:15.

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## **Agenda**

- 1 Apologies.
- 2 Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 16 September 2009 (attached).
- 3 Public Question Time.
- 4 Declaration of Interests. To receive declarations of personal or prejudicial interests, in accordance with the Code of Conduct. The usual declarations made at meetings of the Executive are set out in the attachment.
- 5 Recommendations of the Employment Land in Taunton Task and Finish Group. Report of the Scrutiny Officer (attached).
- 6 The Public Life of Public Space : The Taunton Deane Public Art Code. Report of the Arts Manager (attached).
- 7 Growth Point Funding - Re-profiling the Spending Plan. Report of the Strategic Director (attached). Please also see the Confidential Appendix 4 relating to this item at agenda item No. 8.
- 8 Executive Forward Plan - details of forthcoming items to be considered by the Executive and the opportunity for Members to suggest further items (attached)

The following items are likely to be considered after the exclusion of the press and public because of the likelihood that exempt information would otherwise be disclosed relating to the Clause set out below of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

- 9 Growth Point Funding - Re-profiling the Spending Plan - Confidential Appendix 4 (attached). Please also see agenda item No. 7.  
Clause 7 - Financial or Business Affairs.
- 10 Potential Purchase of Capital Asset, Taunton. Report of the Strategic Director (attached).

Tonya Meers  
Legal and Democratic Services Manager

03 December 2009

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 Democratic Services on 01823 356382 or email [d.durham@tauntondeane.gov.uk](mailto:d.durham@tauntondeane.gov.uk)**

**Executive Members:-**

Councillor R Henley - Leader of the Council

Councillor R Lees

Councillor A Paul

Councillor T Slattery

Councillor H Prior-Sankey

Councillor F Smith

Councillor A Wedderkopp

Councillor N Wilson

Councillor S Coles

## **Executive – 16 September 2009**

- Present:** Councillor Henley (Chairman)  
Councillors Coles, Paul, Prior-Sankey, Slattery, Mrs Smith,  
A Wedderkopp and Mrs Wilson
- Officers:** Penny James (Chief Executive), Joy Wishlade (Strategic Director),  
Brendan Cleere (Strategic Director), Maggie Hammond (Strategic  
Finance Officer), Emily Collacott (Acting Financial Services  
Manager), Ruth James (Performance and Client Lead), Richard  
Sealy (Client and Performance Manager), Simon Lewis (Strategy and  
Corporate Manager), Paul Rayson (Cemeteries and Crematorium  
Manager/Registrar), Paul Harding (Principal Revenues Officer),  
Martin Griffin (Retained HR Manager), Paul Carter (Financial  
Services Manager), Phil Sharratt (Interim Economic Development  
Manager), David McCubbin (Tourism Officer), Lesley Webb (Housing  
Enabling Manager), Erin Taylor (Scrutiny Officer) and Richard Bryant  
(Democratic Services Manager)
- Also present:** Councillors Bishop, Cavill, Mrs Court-Stenning, Critchard, Farbahi,  
Hayward, Horsley, Meikle, Morrell, O'Brien, Mrs Stock-Williams and  
Williams.  
Mr Graham Love, Chief Executive, Taunton Town Centre Company

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm.)

### **69. Apology**

Councillor R Lees.

### **70. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 11 August 2009, copies of which had been circulated, were taken as read and were signed.

### **71. Declarations of Interest**

Councillors Henley, Paul and Prior-Sankey declared personal interests as Members of Somerset County Council. Councillor Prior-Sankey also declared a personal interest as a Member of the Supporting People Commissioning Body. Councillor Coles declared a personal interest as a Director of Southwest One. Councillor Mrs Smith declared a personal interest as an employee of Somerset County Council. Councillor Meikle declared a prejudicial interest as a Board Member of the Taunton Town Centre Company and left the meeting during the discussion of Minute No. 79.

### **72. Mercury Abatement – Taunton Deane Crematorium**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the purchase of mercury filtration equipment for Taunton Deane Crematorium.

Tenders sought for filtration equipment had varied in both price and quality. The most favourable manufacturer quoted £551,214 plus optional extras for all three cremators to be filtered for mercury and an additional £100,000 for an extension to house the equipment.

Taunton Deane Crematorium carried out over 2000 cremations per annum and was a great asset to the Council. It was built in 1963 and had been listed due to its architectural interest.

The Crematorium's catchment extended beyond Taunton Deane and attracted business from Bridgwater, Chard and Minehead.

The Crematorium was equipped with three Joule cremators installed and maintained by Furnace Construction.

Emissions from crematoria had been regulated under the Environmental Protection Act (EPA) since 1991, but this legislation did not cover emissions of mercury. In recent years, the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) had sought to address this issue and had consulted with the industry on the introduction of gas cleaning equipment to remove mercury emissions.

A compromise had been reached that 50% of cremations would be abated for mercury by 2012.

The current cremators were working within the present legal requirements for emissions. If these remained, the EPA equipment on each machine would need to be replaced at a cost of £13,000 per machine. Servicing and maintenance costs were also submitted.

Cost comparisons had been made with neighbouring crematoria and this information was submitted.

The installation of new cremators and filtration equipment would be a long-term investment and was estimated to cost in the region of £1,000,000. It was proposed to finance this project from savings and borrowing which would be paid back from the cremation fee income. If the Council decided to re-tender the project, a wider and more selective response from manufacturers was likely to be received.

There was an opportunity to replace the existing equipment and install new cremators and filtration equipment without extending the building, saving building costs.

There were currently savings of £35 per cremation towards this project with £230,000 already in an earmarked reserve. This left a requirement for £770,000. The estimated life of the asset would be between 15 and 20 years. Submitted details of the estimated cost of borrowing over this period.

**Resolved that:-**

- (1) A re-tendering exercise for mercury filtration equipment and three new cremators be authorised; and
- (2) The proposal to finance the project cost through the earmarked reserve and borrowing be agreed and the capital programme be adjusted accordingly.

73. **Task and Finish Review into Employment Land in Taunton**

**Resolved** that this item be deferred until the next meeting of the Executive.

74. **Non-Domestic Rates – Section 49 Hardship Relief Policy**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning a proposal to introduce a procedure which gave the Council, under Section 49 of The Local Government Finance Act 1988, discretion to reduce or remit the payment of rates.

There were around 3,800 non-domestic properties within Taunton Deane who were liable to pay rates of roughly £33,000,000 a year.

As a billing authority, Taunton Deane had to be satisfied that the ratepayer would suffer hardship if it did not agree to reduce the payment of rates. Additionally it must be reasonable for the Council to do so, having regard to the interest of its Council Tax payers.

Central Government had provided guidance to help billing authorities decide whether to grant relief, details of which were reported. It was clear that the reduction or remission of rates on grounds of hardship should be the exception rather than the rule.

75% of the cost of any reduction or remittance of rates could be offset against the Council's payment into the National Non-Domestic Rate pool. The other 25% would be borne locally by Council Tax payers and met from the authority's General Fund.

Historically the Council had received very few applications for hardship from ratepayers. However, it was expected the number of hardship applications would rise significantly as the economic downturn started to bite.

The recommended policy for the Revenues and Benefits service to deal with applications in a proper and consistent way was set out in detail in the report.

It was clear that each complete application would be considered on its merits and the Head of Revenues and Benefits Service would make a written recommendation to the Section 151 Officer whether to reject the application or whether to make an award.

In making either recommendation, a number of factors would be taken into account including whether local employment was provided by the applicant, the causes of the hardship, the applicant's attempts to mitigate the hardship, the impact of Rates as a percentage of overall business expense and whether the business was viable.

Where a recommendation to reject an application was made, adequate reasons would be made to the Section 151 Officer to whom it was recommended should be granted delegated authority to decline applications.

Where a recommendation to approve the application was made, the recommendation should detail:-

- The period to be covered by the award;
- The social benefit to the Council Tax payers in the award being made;
- The amount of the award; and
- The sum to be met by the General Fund and the Non-Domestic rating pool respectively.

If the Section 151 Officer decided there was sufficient merit in awarding hardship relief a recommendation would be made to the Executive for a decision to be made. In circumstances where the Section 151 Officer's recommendation was supported, the Executive would also need to make the necessary budget arrangements to meet the commitment.

Details of how an unsuccessful applicant could appeal against to refuse to grant hardship relief were also submitted.

**Resolved that:-**

- (1) the proposals contained in the report be supported; and
- (2) Full Council be recommended to adopt the proposed policy for considering applications for Section 49 Reductions.

## **75. Proposals for improving Performance Management**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning proposals to improve and strengthen how Taunton Deane monitored and managed the performance of all Council services.

Ensuring the right things were being measured was an essential part of any effective performance management arrangement. Systems had to be in place to ensure performance against measures could be calculated and collated regularly, as well as being reported in a timely and appropriate manner.

Reported that in future, Performance Reports would be produced using the "exception principle" namely, only providing detail on those areas of concern

(poor or deteriorating performance) but also highlighting areas of excellent performance and summarising positive outcomes which were being delivered for the community.

It was also proposed to introduce a Performance Dashboard of not more than two sides of A4 which would provide a simplified summary of performance across a particular service area. The appendices would provide the detailed information behind the Dashboard and summarise issues and actions as necessary.

The Performance Report would be summarised into three main areas:-

- **Corporate Strategy** – detailing delivery and progress of the Corporate Strategy. This would include progress towards aims, objectives and key activities as well as results against performance indicators identified in the strategy;
- **Operations** – measuring the performance of business areas and operations critical to the effectiveness of the organisation. Included within operations would be the monitoring of National Indicators which fell within the scope of the service; and
- **Finance** – detailing the current financial position including revenue spending against budget, capital position and levels of reserves.

The performance of key partnerships would be detailed within these sections.

Further reported that where possible, performance information contained within the report would be based on a forecast of what was likely to be achieved at the end of the year, based on current levels of performance. Actual performance could be measured within the Service Performance Reports.

Indicators would be measured in a number of ways: by comparing forecast with target; by assessing progress since the previous year (direction of travel); and how performance compared relative to others (this could only be done annually).

It was proposed that a four band traffic light scheme would be used to summarise performance. This would allow for a better assessment of performance exceptions and would show quickly where resources could be reallocated to provide improvement in underperforming areas. The performance bands proposed were as follows:-

- ★ 10% or more above target (green star – solid colour)
- ☆ on target and up to 10% above (green star – outline)
- ▽ up to 5% below target (amber triangle – outline)

▼ more than 5% below target (red triangle – solid colour)

Where performance against any measure was shown to be an issue, commentary in the form of key messages setting out the reasons behind current performance levels as well as actions being undertaken to improve performance, would be provided.

It was anticipated that the performance monitoring of key partnerships such as Southwest One, Somerset Waste Partnership, Tone Leisure and South West Audit Partnership would form part of the monitoring report during 2010/2011.

As well as producing the Quarterly Report, the Performance and Client Lead and Performance and Client Officer would seek to develop a closer working relationship with each of the new Theme Managers and the relevant Portfolio Holders. Meetings would be held before each Quarterly Report was drafted to discuss the performance of the service and budget monitoring and relevant actions to tackle performance and finance issues would be agreed.

Further reported that in future the Quarter One Report would be a highlight report, only summarising those areas where services were not on target for meeting set indicators and summarising the reasons why and actions to be taken to remedy the situation.

The Quarter Two Report would be a more in depth report, focusing on areas where performance was not being achieved, highlighting excellent performance and outcomes which had been delivered as well as summarising any predictions for the end of the year. The Quarter Three Report would also be a highlight report, summarising progress and areas for concern, whilst the Outturn Report would again be a more in depth study of performance over the year which would feed into the development of the next Corporate Strategy.

The suggested timetable for introducing the new performance reporting system was submitted for information. Essentially, it would come into effect from April 2010.

Reported that at its meeting on 3 September 2009, the Corporate Scrutiny Committee had suggested a couple of improvements to the proposals. Firstly, that the performance statistics were provided next to the traffic light scheme and secondly that efforts were made to try and make the Performance reporting cycle tighter.

In respect of the latter, it was pointed out that the cycle was determined by the speed at which services provided the necessary information and the preset Committee timetable.

**Resolved** that the proposals for improving performance management be supported.

## 76. Performance and Financial Monitoring – Quarter 1 Report

Considered report previously circulated, which provided an overview of service and financial performance for Taunton Deane Borough Council between 1 April and 30 June 2009.

As the Outturn Report had very recently been approved by the Executive, it was proposed to focus only on the progress with performance on an exception basis. A more in-depth report would be provided for Quarter 2 in November 2009.

The Objectives of the Council, together with the Key Actions to attain them, had been listed within the Corporate Strategy 2008 – 2011 which had previously been approved by the Executive. So far, the Council was on track to deliver all the Objectives in the Corporate Strategy.

At Quarter 1, the only local indicators which were not on target were BV 9 and BV 10. These related to the in-year collection rates for Council Tax and Non Domestic Rates. Full details as to the reasons why the targets were currently being missed were reported together with the actions proposed to address the situation.

The remaining performance indicators were either on track or were not collected every quarter. A more in depth update would be provided as part of Quarter 2 monitoring in November 2009.

In respect of budget monitoring for the period April to June, the General Fund was showing a potential overspend of £299,000. The variations from the planned budget were reported and related to a reduction in income from Land Charges (£40,000), off street car parking (£30,000), Planning (£250,000), Investments (£13,000) and recycling/refuse (£66,000). A possible underspend on Concessionary Travel of £100,000 was also reported

Reported that agreement had now been reached in respect of the inflationary increase for staff pay. The 2009/2010 budgets had included a cost of living increase of 2.5% on salaries, but the increase had been limited to 1%. This would result in a saving of £120,000 meaning that the forecast overspend now stood at £179,000.

The General Fund Reserve was forecast to stand at around £1,580,000 at the end of 2009/2010. This took into account the supplementary estimate of £148,000 for the Core Council Review approved by Full Council in April 2009.

Budget monitoring of the Housing Revenue Account in the first quarter showed a potential underspend of £60,000. This was mainly due to further slippage in asbestos works due to compatibility with the Academy computer program.

The Housing Revenue Account Working Balance was forecast to stand at around £1,800,000 at the end of 2009/2010. This took into account the

supplementary estimates of £13,400 for the Core Council Review and the £20,000 approved earlier in the year.

Reported that no budget monitoring variance for either the General Fund or Housing Revenue Account Capital had been reported.

**Resolved** that the report be noted.

#### 77. **Full or Partial Flexible Retirement Policy**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning proposals to introduce a new policy for full or partial retirement to meet the requirements under the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS).

The scheme was a statutory pension scheme with rules laid down by Act of Parliament. However, the regulatory framework had never been rigid and had allowed scope for regional and local variances and accountability.

From 6 April 2006, Her Majesty's Revenues and Customs had allowed pension schemes to facilitate flexible retirement. As a result, flexible retirement provisions had been written into the LGPS.

This flexibility was introduced to assist Local Government in managing the impacts of the ageing population which would see a greatly increased retired population being dependant on a reduced active workforce. This would be achieved by creating conditions where gradual or phased retirement would be possible and would allow for paid work during retirement without financial penalty.

Reported that there were a number of discretions within the LGPS (75 in total) some of which were the responsibility of the employing authority and some the administering authority. Some of these discretions were also subject to the requirement to have a written policy.

In relation to full or partial flexible retirement, these discretions were contained in the Local Government Pension Scheme (Benefit, Membership and Contributions) Regulations 2007, details of which were reported.

These discretions allowed for a scheme member who had attained the age of 55 (or in certain circumstances 50) to draw all or part of their retirement benefits (both pension and lump sum) even though they had not retired providing that:-

- the employer consented, and
- there had been a reduction in hours or a reduction in grade.

With regard to a reduction in hours, it was normal for this to be at least a minimum 20% reduction and, to meet the financial business case, usually in the region of 50%.

Local Government generally, and Taunton Deane in particular, was undergoing significant changes to meet both the financial and service delivery pressures that needed to be faced. In undertaking restructuring it was important that the Council had a range of options that could be used to satisfy these pressures.

The ability to provide full or partial flexible retirement would allow the Council to work with staff to provide an alternative to 'cliff edge' retirements which could see the retention of key skills at the same time as securing cost reductions. This would facilitate succession planning and business continuity.

Reported in detail on the financial implications of introducing such a policy. It was clear that the proposed procedure required the proving of a business case which was based on the need for the proposals to demonstrate a saving over a three year period although the requirements of the service and other non financial benefits had to be taken into account.

If the payment of benefits occurred before age 65 the benefits would be reduced in accordance with guidance issued by the Government Actuary. The Council, however, had the power, on compassionate grounds, to waive any actuarial reduction that the employee might incur and this provision had been included within the proposed policy.

Consultations had taken place with the Taunton Deane UNISON Branch who were supportive of the proposals.

**Resolved** that:-

- (1) the proposed policy on Full or Partial Flexible Retirement as set out in the report be agreed; and
- (2) Full Council be recommended to formally adopt the policy.

78. **Possible relocation of Taunton Tourist Information Centre (TIC) to the Brewhouse**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the possible relocation of the Tourist Information Centre (TIC) from its current site in the Library, Paul Street, Taunton to within the Brewhouse Theatre building at Coal Orchard, Taunton. The report had been produced to give a high-level feasibility study and identification of the various options.

The report had been produced in consultation with the Brewhouse Theatre as one of the conditions agreed by the Executive on the 17 June 2009 in connection with its decision to award the theatre a further £50,000 in funding.

The study had considered a range of options ranging from renting space within the Brewhouse building to relocation with full integration of the Box Office activity.

Members also considered a report which had been commissioned in October 2008 titled "Review of Taunton Tourist Information Ticket and Travel Centre" which had been written by Buckley Young Associates Limited.

Some broad indicative possible costs and impacts had been calculated. If approval was given for this work to progress, a job task would be raised with Asset Management to produce a full report with detailed costings.

Tourism played a vital role in the economy of Taunton Deane and the vibrancy of Taunton Town Centre. The 2007 Value of Tourism Report produced by South West Tourism showed that the tourism industry was worth £167,000,000 per annum, supporting 3,123 jobs with 284,000 staying visitors and 1.7million day visitors. The tourism function and Taunton TIC contributed directly to this.

Taunton TIC transferred to the full control and funding by Taunton Deane Borough Council on 1 April 2005. Since then, the TIC had developed three main areas of operation:- (1) Tourist Information; (2) Ticket Centre for many local, regional and national events; and (3) Travel Centre, acting as booking agent for a number of companies including National Express, Berry's Coaches and Brittany Ferries.

In the past year it had a throughput (footfall) of almost 100,000 people with over 37,000 counter enquiries and 21,000 travel centre enquiries.

Noted that in the 2008 – 2011 Taunton Deane Borough Council Corporate Strategy the identification of a suitable site for the relocation of Taunton TIC was listed as a priority due to the forthcoming redevelopment of the existing site as part of the Project Taunton developments. This was no longer listed in the Corporate Strategy as Project Taunton had confirmed the demolition of the multi storey car park was unlikely to happen in the next three years.

Two locations within the Brewhouse had been considered as part of the feasibility study. The first option was the space in the current Box Officer / Foyer area. The second was the 'Green Room' within the building. The advantages and disadvantages of each location were reported.

It appeared that the space offered by the Green Room could provide greater opportunities to both parties, whether as a separate TIC or a combined operation. This unit would allow for a larger TIC to be established (than if the service was located within the current box-office). Being in a separate part of the theatre building, the TIC would be able to secure and lock its facility when the service was closed.

Further reported that the study had also considered the service options a relocation to the Brewhouse would offer. Again there appeared to be two options:-

- Relocate the TIC operation in isolation from the Brewhouse box office operation; or

- Relocate the TIC operation with a full merger of box office services – all run by Taunton Deane.

Although the latter option for a one-stop shop approach was the most attractive and user-friendly, a number of drawbacks had been identified including the merger of two teams with specialist knowledge and the need to harmonise opening hours.

Where possible, the early costs of relocation were submitted which included an indicative cost of £30,000 to refit the Brewhouse to accommodate the TIC. The other major costs such as the rent were unable to be calculated at this stage.

If agreement to progress exploring the options was eventually given, the following further matters would require detailed investigation:-

- **TIC Location within the Brewhouse Building**

Further exploration and a decision as to whether to locate in the current box office area or Green Room would need to be made.

- **TIC Market Research**

Ensuring that the relevant people had access to the TIC was fundamental. The TIC remit was to improve the visitor experience to Taunton Deane and to provide products and services to improve the economy of Taunton.

Visitor and statistical research relevant to the potential TIC market was required, especially footfall figures for the 'Coal Orchard' area would need researching as there were no current figures in existence.

The annual Library footfall figure was in excess of 500,000. The current location of the TIC limited its operations, as it was located in a tertiary shopping area. This was a sufficient distance away from the primary shopping streets which meant only those pedestrians using the Library, Paul Street and the nearby Multi Storey Car Parks passed the current TIC. In practice, if the TIC was to relocate it needed a location with higher footfall / passing trade. The Brewhouse location did not appear to provide this at this time.

Noted that the report produced by Buckley Young Associates had identified that if Taunton TIC was to move to a more prominent town centre premises the visitor traffic would increase substantially.

- **Replacement Box Office System**

If a merger of box office operations occurred a new box office system would be required. The Brewhouse had stated that a new system would be required and that sharing this cost would be cost effective for both organisations.

- **Box Office Commission**

As part of any negotiations should a box office merger be considered, there would be a need to negotiate the level of income Taunton Deane would gain from running this service.

- **Income Projections**  
It was difficult to forecast income projections other than stating what was currently achieved in terms of income and expenditure and reviewing that against footfall levels and marketing and promotional activity to raise awareness of the new service and location. Income from the revenue generating activities of the TIC did not cover all operating costs.
- **Rent and servicing costs**  
Until detailed negotiations were undertaken between Asset Management and The Brewhouse Theatre it was not clear what level of rent the TIC would be required to pay. As a result this could impact upon the overall cost of the TIC compared to current rental expenditure.
- **Personnel Issues (box office merger)**  
At this stage, the Personnel issues could not be quantified. Dependent upon the outcome of this process the advice of HR through Southwest One would be sought should some form of merger be agreed.
- **Hardware**  
The TIC till and telephone systems would need replacing.
- **Security**  
Both locations within The Brewhouse had no CCTV coverage. As part of negotiations with caterers and the Youth Service the Brewhouse was reviewing security procedures to enable shared use of the building. A new CCTV system would be a part of this, and the Brewhouse would be keen to share these costs.
- **Service Level Agreement (SLA)**  
Both Taunton Deane and the Brewhouse would require the setting up of an SLA if it was agreed that TIC would run the box office service. The SLA would define the level of service provided and set out responsibilities and priorities. It would cover issues including staffing, income and commission.
- **Publicity and Marketing**  
Taunton TIC had been in its current location for 13 years. For users of the service, there would be a need to promote the fact that the TIC had relocated in conjunction with promoting the products and services that it would then offer. This could be achieved through PR in local media, Parish Magazines, community newsletters, leaflets and signage at a cost.

When this matter had been discussed at the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 14 September 2009, Members had unanimously decided not to support the recommendation. The Executive had been particularly requested to ensure that:-

- the current footfall at the Brewhouse site was understood to ensure that any relocation of the TIC retained its viability;
- any decision on the relocation of the TIC had to take account of other possible locations within the town as set out in the Buckley Young report of 2008; and
- the options identified in Section 4 of the Buckley Young report were fully considered.

**Resolved that:-**

- (1) the comments of received from the Corporate Scrutiny Committee be noted; and
- (2) further work to explore the full cost implications of relocating the Tourist Information Centre to the Brewhouse Theatre be progressed on the following phased basis:-
  - Phase One - relocation to the Green Room in isolation to the Brewhouse Box Office Activity.
  - Phase Two - identify synergies and ways of increasing collaborative working
  - Phase Three - possible full integration of box office activity at a future date.

**79. Proposed funding support to Taunton Town Centre Company for Business Improvement District (BID) Administration Costs**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning a request for further funding from Taunton Deane towards the Business Improvement District (BID) administration costs.

Taunton Town Centre's BID was a five year programme of investment by local business rate payers to bring enhanced service improvements in support of retail, commerce and public areas across the town centre.

The BID was developed by Taunton Town Centre Company (the BID body) in close partnership with the Council (the billing authority) and the South West Regional Development Agency (SWERDA).

The five year programme of investment commenced on the 1 October 2007 and would conclude on the 30 September 2012.

During its lifespan the BID would invest over £1 million in service enhancements funded by the levy paying business community. In the first two years of the programme, this investment had been enhanced through

additional funding contributions from the private sector, Avon and Somerset Constabulary and Taunton Deane.

As the billing authority, the Council issued demand notices to all rateable value properties within the designated BID area in October each year. The Council charged the BID body reasonable costs for the collection of the levy.

In Years 1 and 2, aggregate receipts totalled £455,706. Collection rates remained high at over 95%. However, there had been a dramatic shift in the economy during this initial two-year period.

Due to a reduction in the total number of businesses trading within the BID area there had been a small but significant reduction in levy income when compared to the BID Business Plan agreed in 2007. This was estimated at over £30,000, most of which was thought to be non-recoverable.

In planning for Year 3 of the BID, it was estimated by the Council's Collection Team that the value of total recoverable receipts would drop by a further £20,000 and, dependant on the business attrition rate, could be significantly more.

In the first two years the Council had contributed £30,000 for each of the two years from the Local authority Business Growth Incentive (LABGI) fund in support of the BID. From this funding £20,000 had been allocated towards 'Shop Front Improvements' of which only around £5,000 had been drawn down to date allowing for the existing contribution made to be extended across the balance of the BID contract. The other £40,000 had been ring-fenced to meet the BID administration costs, ensuring the levy collected was directed towards physical service delivery.

The reduction in levy would result in adjustments to service delivery going forward. The Town Centre Company had embarked on an internal restructure and further cost savings measures to limit the impact on services were reported.

In order to protect service delivery under the BID, and negate deeper service cuts, the Council had been asked to reaffirm its funding support to the BID over the next three years.

When this item had been considered by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 14 September 2009, Members had felt the request for continued funding from Taunton Deane should be supported.

Noted that payment of the requested £20,000 would reduce the available LABGI Reserves, currently earmarked to seed-fund future economic development initiatives identified within the Economic Development Delivery Programme, to £68,810.

Also noted the possible requirement for future funding of £20,000 per annum for each of the years 2010/2011 and 2011/2012 to be considered for decision

each year prior to commencement of the BID operating year on 1 October and that projected future income values of the LABGI grant would not be able to support these payments.

**Resolved** that the payment of an additional grant of £20,000 from LABGI Reserves to support the Taunton Town Centre Company in providing administration for the BID contract during Financial Year 2009/2010 be agreed subject to the following condition:-

That the Chairman of the Taunton Town Centre Company submits a quarterly report in January, April, July, and October of each year remaining of the BID contract on actual and forecast BID finances and activities to a new Taunton Town Centre Economic Advisory Board, comprised of the following:-

Economic Development Portfolio Holder;  
Shadow Economic Development Portfolio Holder;  
Interim Economic Development Manager;  
Project Taunton Project Manager;  
Chairman of the Taunton Town Centre Company; and  
The Chief Executive of the CEO the Taunton Town Centre Company.

80. **Redevelopment of three sites in Taunton to provide Affordable Housing in perpetuity**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the provision of Affordable Housing in Taunton.

The Council had fallen behind in the delivery of affordable homes. There were potential sites in Taunton that were owned by the Council that were 'land hungry' and in need of updating or replacement. With careful planning, these could provide up to 270 new affordable homes.

The proposals reflected the Core Council's Review, the Council's commitment to providing Affordable Housing and complimented Project Taunton.

**Scheme One – Garage site behind Priorswood Shops**

This scheme would entail the demolition of 20 garages and the redevelopment of an area of land with six family homes, with plenty of on site parking. It would also replace at least six garages.

A public consultation had been held and invitations had been sent to all interested parties who might be affected by the proposed development. A number of concerns/comments were raised and details were reported.

The scheme proposals would be discussed with Development Control with a view to moving forward.

**Scheme Two - Redevelopment of Ruskin Close**

This included the relocation and provision of a new play area and would include a small piece of land currently leased to Thales. Included in the scheme was the development of 22 flats which was under negotiation between Knightstone Housing Association and Gadds.

At least 90 homes would be achieved by the redevelopment of this area, which included 1 and 2 bed flats, 2, 3 and 4 bedroom family homes, as well as homes for the disabled and move on accommodation.

Ruskin Close was in a quiet area and close to all amenities. There was a wide age range of tenants occupying these flats providing an effective mixed use community.

The existing flats on the site were no longer fit for purpose due to the following reasons:-

- The buildings were dated and unsuitable for people in need of supported living. Noise emitted from adjoining flats in the form of door banging, walking around overhead, and footsteps on the concrete stairs; and
- Each flat had outdated storage heaters. One of the major sources of complaint was the long, open walkways across the front of the flats. These walkways were served by a concrete stairwell which is very dark and cold where vagrants are sometimes found sleeping.

In addition to redeveloping Ruskin Close there was a current children's play area that needed urgent attention.

An indicative scheme would enhance this area, making better use of the land available.

Further reported that there was an adjacent site in Wordsworth Drive which was owned by Gadds Developers. The site had planning permission for 11 apartments and had been offered to Knightstone Housing Association for affordable housing. Knightstone was currently looking to redesign the block with 16 one and two bedroom flats for affordable housing and a new planning application was imminent.

On completion of these new apartments, residents of Ruskin Close would have the opportunity to choose which of the new flats they wanted to move into, should they wish to stay in the Close, as the First Phase of the overall redevelopment.

The Statutory Home Loss Payment with associated displacement compensation would be available to those residents of Ruskin Close who qualified.

Ruskin Close could be redeveloped in three phases which meant that existing tenants could move directly into their new homes.

A public consultation had been held and interested parties invited. There was much discussion about the existing play area and it was agreed that no one wanted the play area in the centre of the development. The architect was looking at alternative uses for this area.

Residents were also concerned that the new development could increase anti social behaviour and would prefer more parking and a landscaped area.

### **Scheme Three – The redevelopment of Victoria Gate and associated area**

There were currently 30 elderly person's flats in two separate locations, remote from one another on the site. The redevelopment would double the number of homes if the "no mans land" nearby was included.

The Supported Housing Manager had stated that Victoria Gate was an ideal location to provide a mix of general need and accommodation for older people with easy access to local services. The existing accommodation would benefit from refurbishment/replacement.

The area of "no mans land" was landlocked and future access could be achieved over Council land. The land was unregistered with no known owner. If secured, this land could be used for the development of affordable housing.

The Council would need to secure the "no mans land" through its Compulsory Purchase, with no cost to this Council. The land could then be sold to Knightstone Housing Association. The proceeds of the sale would be invested and Trustees appointed. The land could then be developed and tenants would be given the option of moving into the new flats in the area or to other appropriate accommodation in Taunton Deane.

It was proposed to transfer the existing flats to Knightstone Housing Association who would then demolish and redevelop the sites.

The present tenants in the flats at Victoria Gate would receive the Statutory Home Loss payment and compensation for displacement issues.

A public consultation had been held and details were submitted.

Noted that details of a fourth scheme at Parmin Close had also been submitted. However, as the public consultation had only taken place the evening before it was agreed that for the sake of openness and transparency this scheme should not be considered until the next meeting of the Executive.

### **Resolved that:-**

- (1) The principle of progressing the redevelopment and regeneration of the three sites outlined above be agreed;

- (2) The land concerned be transferred to the appropriate Registered Social Landlord (Housing Association);
- (3) It be agreed with the appropriate Housing Association that the disposal of this land, should in return, give letting priority to Taunton Deane residents through the Homefinder Somerset Scheme;
- (4) On disposal of the land it be legally agreed with the Housing Associations concerned that the land could never be used for anything other than for the provision of affordable housing;
- (5) The Compulsory Purchase of the “no mans” land at Victoria Gate at NIL cost to Taunton Deane Borough Council be progressed;
- (6) Tenants’ aspirations for relocation be met, where possible; and
- (7) The Council would work closely with all the residents in each of the above locations and keep them informed.

**81. Exclusion of the Press and Public**

**Resolved** that the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting for the following item because of the likelihood that exempt information would otherwise be disclosed relating to Clause 1 of Schedule 12(A) 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.

**82. The Future of the Home Improvement Agency and Handyperson Services**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the impending changes to the funding and delivery of Home Improvement Agencies (HIAs) in Somerset.

HIAs provided a service to vulnerable Client Groups, supporting applications for Disabled Facility Grants and discretionary repairs across the private and public housing stock. They provided case-workers to assess need, liaise with contractors and ensured work was undertaken and completed to the client’s satisfaction. HIAs also administered Handyperson schemes to provide a basic home repair service to vulnerable clients at a subsidised cost across all housing tenures.

Supporting People had decided that the current provision of HIAs across Somerset was no longer appropriate and were working with the other Somerset commissioners (including Taunton Deane) to commission a County-wide service from June 2010, which would include a Handyperson Scheme.

Submitted full details of the proposed new arrangements and how they would affect Taunton Deane.

Reported that under the new arrangements, Supporting People would be required to provide funding for a County-wide handyperson service. This gave the Council the option to withdraw our funding and rely on the HIA provided Handyperson service, or to add our funding into the 'pot' for an enhanced Taunton Deane Handyperson service.

Noted that any additional funding we chose to provide for a Handyperson Scheme would be paid to the new Home Improvement Agency to 'top up' the standard service. It would be counterproductive to run an additional scheme with different contact details and pricing models as this would prove confusing to customers and would compete directly with the new HIA.

The proposed funding commitment to the County-wide HIA was also reported.

When this item had been considered at the Community Scrutiny Committee on 15 September 2009, Members felt unable to support the proposal on the information that had been supplied. The Committee was concerned that there could be a deterioration in the Handyperson Scheme for the people of Taunton Deane. Accordingly, it was agreed to inform the Executive that the Handyperson Scheme should remain at Taunton Deane until proven to be unnecessary.

The Strategy and Corporate Manager, Simon Lewis, reported a communication from Ms Viv Streeter of Supporting People which confirmed that a series of performance targets would be set to ensure that current levels of service received under the Handyperson Scheme were maintained.

Members of the Executive also felt that it would not be economic to continue funding Taunton Deane's own Handyperson Scheme alongside one provided by the HIA.

**Resolved** that the proposed funding commitment to Supporting People for the County-wide Home Improvement Agency be agreed.

(The meeting ended at 8.14 p.m.)

## **Usual Declarations of Interest by Councillors**

### **Executive**

- **Members of Somerset County Council – Councillors Henley, Paul and Prior-Sankey**
- **Employee of Somerset County Council – Councillor Mrs Smith**
- **Director of Southwest One – Councillor Coles**
- **Member of Somerset Waste Board and employee of Sedgemoor District Council – Councillor Slattery**

# Taunton Deane Borough Council

**Executive – 14 October 2009**

## **Task and Finish Review into Employment Land in Taunton**

### **Report of the Scrutiny Officer**

(This matter is the responsibility of Councillor Simon Coles)

#### **Executive Summary**

This Task and Finish review has now been concluded. The final report has been submitted to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee and was approved subject to some amendments (detailed below) being recommended.

This cover sheet provides directions on how the Executive should deal with the Task and Finish report into employment land in Taunton, particularly its five recommendations.

The final report of the Task and Finish review follows this cover report.

#### **1. Recommended Changes to the Task and Finish Report suggested by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee**

- 1.1 The final report of the Task and Finish Group was considered by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 6 August 2009. During the discussion of this item, a number of suggested changes to the recommendations were made. These are shown in **bold print** on the attachment marked "Extract from the Minutes of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee meeting".
- 1.2 The report was also initially considered by the Executive at its meeting on 16 September 2009. The wording of Recommendation (3) was queried on the basis that the preferred location of the proposed strategic employment site was not referred to – even though such information was contained in the main body of the report.
- 1.3 As a result, the item was deferred to allow the Task and Finish Group to reconsider the wording of Recommendation (3). An amended form of words has now been put forward and this is shown in the bold, larger font in the attachment.

#### **2. The Executive is asked to do the following:-**

- 2.1 Consider the above recommended changes of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee and agree whether or not these should be included in the report.
- 2.2 Then consider the report and its recommendations and decide which, if any, of the recommendations it wishes to adopt.
- 2.3 If the Executive agrees to adopt any of the recommendations of the review, it should state who will be responsible for delivering each of the adopted recommendations. The Corporate Management Team (CMT) has had prior sight of the report and has identified a CMT member to take responsibility for each recommendation, if adopted.
- 2.4 If the Executive decides **not** to adopt any of the recommendations, it must specifically state why, as prescribed by the Local Government Act 2007.

### **3. Contact Details**

Erin Taylor  
Scrutiny Officer  
Taunton Deane Borough Council  
T: 01823 356415 (internal ext. 2305)  
e: [e.taylor@tauntondeane.gov.uk](mailto:e.taylor@tauntondeane.gov.uk)

**Extract from the Minutes of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 6 August 2009.**

**“Resolved** that the Executive be recommended to accept the Task and Finish Review’s recommendations subject to the changes shown in bold below:

- (1) In line with Circular 02/2009, the Council should initiate discussions with landowners and developers for the release of immediate short term employment land opportunities at Nerrols, Creech Heathfield and Walford Cross **and other suitable sustainable sites** for up to 5,000 square metres (around 2 hectares per site). **Such discussions should aim to encourage the owners of land to release sites to businesses, wherever possible, on a freehold rather than a leasehold basis;**
- (2) In line with Circular 02/2009, the threshold for out-of-centre office proposals for requiring a sequential assessment be raised to 1,000 square metres. This should enable additional windfall opportunities to come forward in the short term;
- (3) A strategic employment site of about 25 hectares **with good access to both the M5 Motorway and the A358** should be brought forward in the medium/long term, through the LDF. **The Council recognise that it needed to collaborate closely with all relevant agencies if it wished to build in flexibility into the Core Strategy. The owners of any potential site identified should again be encouraged to release sites to businesses, wherever possible, on a freehold rather than a leasehold basis;**
- (4) To progress a strategic **employment** site it was also recommended that a working group be set up and led by **the Strategic Director, involving** Economic Development, Project Taunton **and representatives of all relevant agencies**, a Councillor representative **and others as appropriate** with the purpose of developing an evidence base and proposal for the LDF Core Strategy. **Consideration should be given to a representative from Sedgemoor District Council being invited to sit on the Working Group.** As part of this process there should be community engagement with the parishes that would be affected. It was recommended that the strategic employment site should provide opportunities for major inward investment **and relocation of existing sites** to Taunton. It was accepted development (non Class A1) would be necessary to fund the initial infrastructure to open up the site, but the total proportion of floor space for such uses should remain ancillary (around 10%) and focus on medium sized office suites (300 – 1,000 square metres) in order to remain

consistent with Government policy and to avoid undermining Firepool as the strategic office site for the Taunton Strategically Significant City and Town (SSCT). **Such a Working Group should report back to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee within 4 months, with a progress report;**

- (5) The Executive be requested to identify the specific partners for the Working Group which would be led by Taunton Deane with the process and reporting back arrangements (to ensure progress was measured) being led by the Strategic Director, Joy Wishlade.”



**Executive**

# Task and Finish Review

## A Review into Employment Land in Taunton



## **Taunton Deane Borough Council: Executive A Task and Finish Review into Employment Land in Taunton**



Introduction by Councillor Norman Cavill

Chairman of the Employment Land Task and Finish Review

There can be no doubt that in recent years there have been several occasions when opportunities for inward investment within the Taunton area have been missed and companies wishing to expand have moved away.

This Task and Finish Group was tasked to assist in resolving and reversing this situation. We have had the benefit of reports clearly showing that business requires a variety of sites that we presently do not have allocated and an analysis of the existing allocations has resulted in a re-evaluation.

However this Group was also attended by representatives including consultants, professional agents and developers as well as officers from Taunton Deane, Somerset County Council and other statutory agencies.

As you will see from the report there was no doubt at all from those representing the private sector, that Taunton is chronically short of a major strategic site, required in the near future, which would complement Firepool. If the employment opportunities required over the next 20 years are to be provided then short, medium and long term sites are required.

This is in spite of the fact that businesses and consumers are experiencing the worst recession since the 1930s and that global warming is a reality driving the need to transition to a more sustainable economy that recognises and protects the heritage of Taunton and the surrounding natural environment.

This does not mitigate the urgent need for employment land, but rather, further emphasises the need to create local jobs in Taunton within sustainable employment sites.

The Economic Development Manager is developing a green job strategy that will be essential in stimulating the recovery from the current economic downturn. It

will promote the greening of existing jobs through more efficient use of resources, and stimulate new jobs by helping to develop skills, innovation and new technologies, which will contribute to the strengthening of the green knowledge economy but also the low carbon energy sector within Taunton.

In short we need to find the will and the way to break the mould of past years, and expedite the provision and allocation of these sites. This must become one of our primary objectives, if we are to have any future standing in the South West.

Councillor Norman P Cavill  
July 2009

## **Acknowledgements**

### **Ralph Willoughby-Foster**

Planning Policy Advisor, Taunton Deane Borough Council

### **Roger Mitchinson**

Senior Policy Officer, Taunton Deane Borough Council

### **Mark Green**

Project Taunton

### **Philip Sharratt**

Interim Economic Development Manager, Taunton Deane Borough Council

## Background to the Review

### **Why do a review on this subject?**

A growing body of evidence suggests that the demand for employment land and premises is outstripping the supply within Taunton. In particular, Taunton Deane Borough Council is aware of the strong private sector feeling that there is a shortage of available employment land and that there is not the choice of premises or sites available to meet the future needs of indigenous business growth nor of potential inward investors.

There appears to be a need for small sites in the short and medium term, to provide smaller industrial and office premises of less than 10,000 sq ft with a choice of tenures and a need for a medium/longer term strategic site to attract high value inward investment that will complement the office development at Firepool.

It is important to quantify the apparent need that exists and examine the current suitability of sites identified for employment uses in the Taunton Deane Local Plan. It is understood that of the 70-80 hectares allocated in the Local Plan only 2 or 3 hectares in the Taunton area are currently capable of being brought forward for development.

The ready availability of employment sites in Taunton is an important issue which needs to be addressed. Taunton has Growth Point status and is one of the Governments eight 'Priority Places', but does not have sufficient employment land in the short term to accommodate the growth and diversification of the economy that will allow Growth Point targets to be achieved.

It was acknowledged that many companies have relocated their operations to Exeter, Yeovil and other adjoining towns due to the lack of availability of appropriate sites within Taunton to accommodate their growth requirements. However, the preferred choice of location for many of these businesses had been Taunton.

It could be argued that Taunton has an excellent strategic position, equal or better than their final relocation choice and there is anecdotal evidence that a growing number of Inward Investment Companies have considered relocating to Taunton but were unable to be offered any suitable site. This inevitably leads to the conclusion that there is a lack of appropriate employment sites and that this factor is truncating the economic potential of Taunton.

It is clear that Taunton will have to deliver a wide diversity of employment if it is to achieve the sustainable growth targets of the future. Blackbrook Business Park was the last sizeable allocation made in Taunton and that was almost 25 years ago. If Taunton is in any way to realise its economic potential identified within the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) then alterations and additions to its present employment land allocation need to be made.

## **Definitions and Abbreviations**

- The Government Office for the South West - (GOSW)
- Strategically Significant Towns and Cities - (SSCT)
- Local Development Framework - (LDF)
- The Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2009 - (Circular 02/2009)

## **Membership of the Review**

Councillor Norman Cavill (chairman)

Councillor Habib Farbahi

Councillor Terry Murphy

Councillor Jayne O'Brien

Councillor Mrs Vivienne Stock-Williams

Councillor Mrs Mary Whitmarsh

Councillor John Williams

## Terms of Reference

This review is subject to the following terms of reference:-

- Review the Strategic Employment Sites currently available and recommend whether they ought to remain in the Local Plan;
- Identify locations for alternative Strategic Employment Sites which could be more readily available for a wide range and types of businesses;
- Establish what could be achieved through the preparation of the current Local Development Framework (LDF) whilst considering how lengthy potential delays to land coming forward for development may be overcome;
- Undertake consultations with interested parties;
- To consider how we should work with statutory bodies such as the Highways Agency and others to enable any proposed sites to be brought forward; and
- Make recommendations to the Executive.

At the first meeting the group acknowledged that it did not intend to duplicate work already being undertaken by the LDF Steering Group and that any recommendations made by the Task and Finish Group would feed into the preparation of the Core Strategy and the LDF.

# Evidence Taken, Key Findings and Recommendations

## 1. Taunton's Economy

The Task and Finish Group has identified that there is a need for Taunton to diversify the employment base and to increase private sector knowledge intensive activity that will provide choices of employment opportunities, retain talent within the area and attract higher wage earners to Taunton Deane.

The Local Economic Assessment, undertaken during January 2009, has shown that Taunton's economy is not thriving as it should and is overly dependant on public administration and low value consumer-led private sector activity to provide employment growth. See Taunton Deane Local Economic Assessment, Geoeconomics, February 2009.

The Government Office for the South West (GOSW) recommend that as Taunton is a Growth Point for the South West it is important that it should be investigating what restrictions it is facing and how these could be removed. The GOSW also recognise the need for flexibility in Taunton's economic growth in order to adapt to changes in the economic situation and to meet local need.

It was suggested to the group that the employment land opportunities in Taunton are not diverse enough and that this is evident in the low take up of allocated employment land for business use. It was stated that the Firepool development would not be appropriate to meet the needs of all growing local businesses and that it would not satisfy the diversity of requirements of potential inward investors, including high value manufacturing and design and production operations, or smaller operations requiring less than 10,000 sq ft of office space.

## 2. The Taunton Deane Employment Land and Premises Survey

During January 2009, questionnaires were distributed to businesses and public sector organisations within the Taunton Economic Zone. A total of 7,200 questionnaires were distributed with 884 returned completed - a significant increase on the 400 responses received when the questionnaire was last distributed in 2006.

The responses represented the views of a cross section of organisations across sectors, at ratios of around 30% industrial uses, 31% wholesale or retail, 23% office space, and 15% other including education, health, and hospitality uses:-

Agriculture, Food and Fisheries	5%
Manufacturing	12%
Construction	9%

Wholesale and Retail	31%
Hotel, Restaurant (including Tourism)	8%
Transport and Storage	4%
Real Estate and Business Services	6%
Public Admin and Community	6%
Education, Health and social work	7%
Other	11%

Of those that responded to the question about turnover 82% had a turnover of less than £2 million, 14% had a turnover between £2 million - £25 million and 4% had a turnover of £25 million or more, which is not unrepresentative of the structure of the local economy.

When asked if their present business premises were appropriate for their current needs, 11% of those responding reported that their premises situation was poor/very poor, indicating that if they had not already explored alternatives that they would need to plan to relocate within the next 3 year strategic cycle and that a further 34% of those responding only rated their current premises situation as “adequate for now”.

On this basis it is safe to assume that the lack of appropriate or suitable premises is a factor that has been given consideration within the decision making process to meet the growth aspirations of 45% of employers within the Taunton Economic Zone and may be a factor that is limiting the growth of employment opportunities for local residents and preventing the diversification of the local economy.

In terms of future requirements, these organisations require a choice of tenures, including easy-in/easy-out, rented, leasehold, freehold serviced and freehold land with premises predominantly of less than 10,000 sq ft, though there remains a significant proportion of organisations looking for premises within the range 10,000 sq of – 20,000 sq ft and larger than 20,000 sq ft.

Of these larger premises, Firepool will meet the needs of the larger office users requiring 10,000 sq ft plus, but it is recognised that there is currently no site available to accommodate the needs of those requiring larger manufacturing or production premises, or those with large warehousing and distribution operations.

50% of the respondents felt there was insufficient choice in employment space to meet their future needs and, in particular, identified that there was a shortage of small workshop/manufacturing space, premises for wholesale/warehousing or distribution operations and smaller office space.

The most important factors, beyond appropriateness, in determining what would compose suitable premises were cost and availability of parking, which is not surprising as the two most important factors to growing Small and Medium

Enterprises (SMEs) is cashflow and recruitment of a qualified and dedicated workforce.

The respondents were offered a number of options of 'preferred locations', including existing or planned employment areas and other areas to provide a complete choice around Taunton (North, East, South, and West) including existing sites within Wellington and Bridgwater. The top 4 locations identified were:-

- Firepool;
- East of Motorway (access to Junction 25);
- North Taunton; and
- Monkton Heathfield.

Whilst it might be expected that Firepool would have appeared close to the top of the list due to the publicity and anticipation of the regeneration of the town centre and its proximity to the town centre and the railway station, there is no significant employment allocation east of the motorway at Junction 25. There is a large allocation of employment land at Monkton Heathfield (14 ha) within the urban extension and a small allocation of employment land within what is currently planned as a mixed use housing scheme at Nerrols Farm where a total land allocation of 2 ha may be available for development in the short term.

The future of Taunton lies in the creation and growth of its indigenous business and despite the fact that the survey was undertaken during January 2009 when news coverage of the economic crisis was at its peak, there are a large number of businesses who are optimistic about the future.

Over half of the respondents were anticipating year on year growth of 5% or more, with 14% of respondents forecasting growth in excess of 15%, but the lack of available and appropriate premises of the size and tenure required by these organisations will have the effect of limited growth or forcing growth to occur outside of the Taunton Economic Zone.

Taunton is a Growth Point and the draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) identifies that to meet the employment requirements of the proposed housing growth an additional 16,500 jobs will need to be created. Respondents were asked what the 'big issue' was for them and 21% felt that it was issues to do with planning and premises, which came second only after the recession at 32%.

Respondents were also asked how they felt Taunton Deane Borough Council could help them and 29% felt that improvements to the planning process and availability of premises were areas where the Council could improve their support. 53% of respondents felt that the Council does nothing to help or actively hinders local businesses.

Frome is not a recognised Growth Point and yet there are 42.9 ha of employment land being brought forward in the short term.

Across Mendip there are further employment developments being brought forward including one site of 8 ha that is outside a settlement limit and the current LDF, but the needs of the local area are providing motivation for their Forward Planning, Development Management and Economic Development Teams to work together to overcome the planning problems that might at first sight appear to produce barriers to this development succeeding in being passed through the planning process.

If, as a result of the lack of allocated employment land in Taunton that is financially viable and attractive to the private sector to bring forward for development and can, and is likely to be, brought forward within the next strategic business planning cycle of 3 to 5 years providing the mix of tenures and range of premises that will meet the needs of these growing indigenous businesses, then these ambitious Growth Point targets for employment growth will not be achieved.

The findings of the survey are that the lack of employment land and appropriate premises in Taunton is an issue of such significance that solutions need to be found now as part of the LDF process.

### **3. The Future of Taunton**

Building on the Local Economic Assessment, during March 2009 the Economic Development Team worked with Professor Mark Hepworth and the Geoeconomics Team to produce a vision for the future of the Taunton economy. Within this study further detailed analysis of the economy was undertaken which highlighted that the 16,500 job creation target within the RSS was understated.

What Professor Hepworth describes as the 'inconvenient truth' is that around 4,000 jobs will be lost in the recession and that upwards of 20,000 new local jobs must be created between 2011 and 2026. Furthermore, a higher proportion of these jobs than before have to be concentrated in high skill, high paid occupations, with private sector knowledge intensive jobs being created at a rate of 2:1 to total jobs created in order to diversify the local economy and increase average earnings within Taunton Deane to the national average.

However, it was also revealed that 36% of the 60,000 jobs in Taunton Deane are part-time, against a regional average of 28% and a national average of 24%. Taunton is the number one part-time economy in the Country and to reduce the number of part-time jobs to the regional average will require creating an additional 4,800 full time jobs and an additional 7,500 full time jobs to bring part-time working down to the national average.

Therefore, the challenge is to create 28,000 new full time jobs between 2011 and 2026 growing high value employment at a rate 200% faster than low value administration and consumer-led employment.

It was also recognised that the local economy was imbalanced toward public sector employment, which provides around 40% of the total employment across Taunton Deane and contributes significantly to the knowledge intensive activity locally, whilst the bulk of private sector employment was in low value consumer-led activity such as retail, hospitality and tourism.

In order to provide choices of employment opportunities, which is required to retain talent and attract graduates, the local economy needs to diversify toward private sector knowledge intensive employment such as cultural and creative industries, digital and green technology businesses and programmes of activity to drive demand for 'green collar' employment, health and education establishments to attract talent including innovation centres and a physical central place for higher education in Taunton, production and construction businesses and activity including building modern industrial estates, a green building programme and social innovation to drive the adoption of sustainable energy production within mixed use urban extensions.

The "Envisioning the Future of the Taunton Economy" report suggests that Taunton is heading for gradual economic decline. There is a need for strong leadership from the Council to reverse this trend and for employment land to be made available to meet the needs of indigenous business growth and attract high value Inward Investment to Taunton, in addition to the opportunities for large office users created at Firepool.

The Firepool site will create 5,000 new jobs and the challenge for the Project Taunton Team is to ensure that this employment achieves the 3,300 high value private sector jobs required from the development to contribute to the diversification of the local economy. However, the real challenge is to create 28,000 new jobs of which 18,500 need to be high value private sector employment opportunities. Firepool, as the only strategic employment site available to Taunton will not accommodate this growth in employment and it is self evident that an additional strategic site of greater size than Firepool is required beyond the secondary employment sites already identified, including the 14 ha at Monkton Heathfield.

The Group feels that the Envisioning report, and subsequent work being commissioned by the Economic Development Unit, should be incorporated into the Corporate Strategy.

#### **4. The Stage 1 Employment Land Review**

The Stage 1 Employment Land Review was agreed at the Task and Finish Group

and signed off by Councillor Coles. It assesses existing Land Supply with Taunton Deane to inform allocations and requirements in the emerging Core Strategy. It was prepared Taunton Deane following broad agreement on findings through consultations with agents and developers.

A number of organisations took part in the consultation process, notably Summerfield Developments, Greenslade Taylor Hunt, Hatfield White, Alder King and Somerset County Council. A summary of the responses from those who took part in the consultation are contained in Appendix A. Appendices B, C, and D contain detailed responses to the Employment Land Review from Summerfield and WYG.

As a result of the consultation a number of sites were either removed from available supply (for example Henlade due to viability of development and sustainability) or retained but excluded from the totals as development was unlikely to result in additional employment (for example Priorswood former land fill site).

The Strategy Team and Planning Policy Advisor produced a report for this Group attached at Appendix E. The group decided to adopt the recommendations made in this report. The main points are summarised below.

The Stage 1 Employment Land Review Assessment identifies:-

- 55.5 ha of employment land available over the RSS period (2006-2026) for **industrial and other** employment uses within Taunton Deane, of which:-
- 22.2 ha within the Taunton SSCT (Strategically Significant Cities and Towns).
- 25.95 ha within the Wellington area.

In Taunton:-

- 8 ha immediately and short term available (within 3 years) comprised of sites at Taunton Trading Estate (5.2 ha), Crown land (1.95 ha), Courtlands (0.8 ha) and Frobisher Way (0.32 ha).
- 14 ha available within the medium term (3-10 years). All within Monkton Heathfield.

Office Use

- 100,000 sq.m. of commitments within the period 2006-2026. Nearly all of

this is within the Taunton SSCT and most is identified through the Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan.

#### Concerns

- Lack of short, medium and longer term opportunities within the Taunton SSCT for industrial/other land.
- Now that Blackbrook is nearing completion there is a lack of current opportunities for medium sized office suites (300-1000 sq.m.).

#### Options for short term release outside of Local Plan / LDF

- Under Circular 02/2009 site areas of approximately 2 hectares for non office use would not need to be referred to GOSW as a departure.
- It also defines Major development in the Town Centre as under 1,000 sq.m. Thus potentially allowing additional small scale out of centre office sites.
- In line with this the following sites could be investigated to be bought forward in the short term:-
  - Crown land at Nerrols (c2 ha);
  - Creech Heathfield (part of c8 ha total);
  - Walford Cross (c2 ha); and
  - Additional windfall out of centre office sites may also arise with the higher office 'threshold'.

It is unlikely that larger sites for immediate release could you be brought forward outside of the Development Plan system.

#### **5. Taunton's Infrastructure and Junction 25**

Taunton is in the centre of the South West region and needs to further improve its road infrastructure if it going to attract additional businesses. This is a challenge which needs to be embraced and overcome.

It was emphasized by consultants and developers that potential sites to attract businesses must have the correct location as well as good infrastructure. Strategic sites such as those in Exeter and Weston-Super-Mare, which had retail, office and industrial units were near the M5 Motorway and these are the sort of sites which should be identified in Taunton.

#### **6. Junction 25**

- The Task and Finish Group was advised that it is unlikely that another Motorway junction will be built, which had previously been suggested as an idea to service the Monkton Heathfield employment site.
- Whilst the Government has been calling for Taunton to increase its economic viability, the Highways Agency has in the past been reluctant to support increased use at Junction 25. As proactive leadership has demonstrated in the past with campaigning for the proposed dualing of the A358, it was agreed that the Council should be engaging with the Highways Agency and other authorities to enable the timely and correct investment to be brought forward to achieve a new strategic site.

Somerset County Council have said that although they do not believe Junction 25 should be the key determinate, as it would be expensive, it does need to be addressed and consideration should be given by linking it to the Henlade By-Pass. They have provided reassurance that if Taunton Deane has viable ideas they would work with the Highways Agency and the Council to achieve them.

- The land east of Junction 25 is considered of high value for employment use and it was agreed that it should be a priority for the Council to work with the Highways Agency for this strategic site to come forward. Particularly as the Park and Ride, once it is available, will significantly reduce the amount of traffic movement coming from the A358 direction.
- Future funding of £1 billion is available for transport improvements under the Regional Funding Allocation 2 (RFA 2). Taunton Deane needs to enlist the assistance of the RDA and others to support its bid for the Junction 25 improvements.
- Those representatives of the business sector gave their assessments and agreed that the only site that satisfied the requirements for a new strategic site was the land adjacent to Junction 25

## **7. Alternative Sites to Land East of Junction 25**

- It is important that potential projects are undertaken properly, for example any development at the Monkton Heathfield and A38 sites which would provide sustainable urban extensions with homes and offices. These developments could then lead the way for other similar sites, such as Galmington and Bindon Road. Although they would not be strategic sites, they would be significant in providing employment sites. However, the developers felt that it would be difficult to bring these sites forward without significant infrastructure investment to make them financially viable. The highways access would not be good enough for a strategic site.

- The Monkton Heathfield site could be bought forward in isolation without the rest of the housing development.
- There is an underlying need to find sites which are accessible. Therefore, the priority is to allocate sites near major roads in order to provide a good infrastructure.
- Apart from the Blackbrook site which is almost full, the only other site presently suitable for offices is Firepool. There is concern that there is a lack of sites for the types of business going to Blackbrook and that the Firepool site would not provide this type of development.

## 8. Funding

- The Regional Infrastructure Fund (RIF) produced about £2m for the flood storage scheme at Long Run Farm which will facilitate regeneration of Taunton Town Centre.
- The Local Transport Plan has included:-
  - The North West Taunton Package which provided the Silk Mills Bridge over the mainline Railway, a new Park and Ride site and bus priority measures.
  - Cambria Park and Ride is under construction.
  - Taunton Third Way and Northern Inner Distributor Road have planning permission and funding.
- To date Taunton has received about £9m of New Growth Point Funding. However there is a need to achieve Growth Targets if we are to be successful in future and avoid a potential payback situation.
- The total provision of road infrastructure can restrict the development of a small to medium site. This severely limits the number of potential sites around Taunton.
- To give this some idea of the costs of improvements. The Creech Castle Junction, which is to be funded by the RFA 2, would cost in the region of £20m. The Henlade bypass will cost £30m - £40m.

## 9. Recommendations

1. In line with Circular 02/2009, the Council initiates discussions with landowners and developers for the release of immediate short term employment land opportunities at Nerrols, Creech Heathfield and Walford Cross for up to 5,000 sq.m. (around 2 hectares per site);
2. In line with Circular 02/2009, the threshold for out-of-centre office proposals for requiring a sequential assessment be raised to 1,000 sq.m. This should enable additional windfall opportunities to come forward in the short term.
3. A strategic employment site of about 25 hectares be brought forward in the medium - longer term, through the LDF. (Any attempt to bring forward a strategic site outside the LDF would be blocked by the Highways Agency and possibly GOSW and SW Councils).
4. To progress a strategic site it is also recommended that a Working Group be set up and led by Economic Development or Project Taunton, involving a Taunton Deane Strategy Officer, and representatives of Somerset County Council Transport, Highways Agency, Environment Agency, Regional Development Agency/SW Councils, developers and agents and a Councillor representative with the purpose of developing an evidence base and proposal for the LDF Core Strategy. As part of this process there should be community engagement with the parishes that would be affected. It is recommended that the strategic employment site should provide opportunities for major inward investment to Taunton. It is accepted that an element of office and non Class B employment generating development (non Class A1) will be necessary to fund the initial infrastructure to open up the site, but the total proportion of floor space for such uses should remain ancillary (around 10%) and focus on medium sized office suites (300-1,000 sq.m.) in order to remain consistent with Government policy and to avoid undermining Firepool as the strategic office site for the SSCT; and
5. The Executive be requested to identify the specific partners for the Working Group which would be led by Taunton Deane with the process and reporting back arrangements (to ensure progress was measured) being led by the Strategic Director, Joy Wishlade.

## 10. Conclusions

Taunton is strategically placed in the centre of the South West. An attractive

location for businesses but without the required infrastructure and choice of employment sites.

The Task and Finish Group have recognised that Taunton is a Growth Point for the South West where there is a need to diversify and attract higher wage earners to the area. There are a large number of businesses that are optimistic about the future, but the lack of premises available may contribute to businesses leaving the area.

Taunton needs to improve its road infrastructure before it can attract the right business. The Firepool type developments will not be wanted by all potential businesses coming to the area and so other business types must be considered, such as high value manufacturing, design and production companies. The need for flexibility in Taunton's economic development in order to adapt to changes in the market has been identified.

Taunton has received funding to improve its infrastructure and must obtain further funding from the RFA 2 for development from 2014-2019. It should be noted that the figure of £1billion is for all the seven Counties of the South West Region.

Members from the private sector have informed the Group that it would be difficult to bring the alternative sites forward without significant infrastructure investment to make them financially viable. Taunton Deane should therefore be pro-active in engaging with the Highways Agency to enable investment to be brought forward to achieve Growth Point targets and enable development of land east of Junction 25.

The Group recommends that a new strategic site in excess of 20 hectares to the east of the M5 Motorway at Junction 25 is required as a minimum, in addition to the continued growth of smaller sites. Within the short term the only site available for immediate occupation is Chelston (Westpark 26) in Wellington, which means that there is little or no significant volume of employment land available around Taunton within the next three to five years.

It is essential for the economic wellbeing of Taunton that this Strategic site is brought forward as quickly as can be done.

# **Taunton Deane Borough Council**

**Executive – 14 October 2009**

## **The Public Life of Public Space: The Taunton Deane Public Art Code**

### **Report of the Arts Manager**

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Simon Coles)

#### **1. Summary**

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to introduce members to the Taunton Deane Public Art Code and its implications for development of the public realm in the future.
- 1.2. It also requests endorsement of the Code by this Committee and seeks support in principle for the Legibility and Connectivity Study: Rail, River, Routes and the other opportunities for public art recommended in the Commissioning Plan

#### **2. Introduction**

- 2.1. Taunton Deane Borough Council formally adopted the 1% for public art policy in June 2007 by the former Strategic Planning, Transportation and Economic Development Review Panel, who also recommended the establishment of the Public Art and Design Panel to ensure implementation of the policy.
- 2.2. The Public Art and Design Panel is chaired by Councillor Simon Coles and includes representatives from Somerset County Council, Project Taunton and the Council's Economic Development, Strategy and Development Management teams. The panel is currently supported by Public Art South West, a regional Arts Council agency.
- 2.3. Recognising the difficulties associated with requesting 1% of costs towards Public Art, the panel commissioned Independent Cultural Consultants to produce clearer guidelines for developers and a commissioning plan for Taunton as developments move forward. The Public Life of Public Space: The Taunton Deane Public Art Code is the resultant document, whose text was agreed by the Panel in August 2009. Copies of the Code (44 pages) can be found in the Member's Room.

#### **3. The Public Life of Public Space**

- 3.1. The Code clarifies the Council's policy statement as follows:-

**Taunton Deane Borough Council adopted a Public Art and Design Policy in June 2007. The aim is to promote and support excellence in public art as an integral element of the design of buildings and development and enhancement of the public realm. The policy relates to large new buildings and open space developments in Taunton Deane under private and public ownership.**

**All developments in excess of 15 residential units or 2500 square metres (gross) of commercial floorspace will be required to contribute towards the public art and public realm enhancements through commissioning and integrating public art into the design of buildings and the public realm or by a commuted sum to the value of one percent of development costs.**

- 3.2. The Code contains policy and guidance on the planning process and how artists can be used at each stage of development, from the master planning process to community engagement as well as the creation of site specific pieces of work.
- 3.3. The Commissioning Plan gives the creative rationale underlying the Code, and recommends adopting the three themes of 'Play, Knowledge and Nature' to inspire public art approaches.
- 3.4. The plan identifies connectivity and legibility as key issues that public art can help address and the need for the public realm to be designed for multiple end uses. It identifies a need for an audit to assess the current spaces that can or could potentially be used for public activities such as markets, performances, busking, temporary artworks and to future proof plans underway for the new spaces.
- 3.5. The plan also recognises a need for Taunton to enhance residents' and visitors' experiences in the public realm and promote the cultural offer through an animation programme linked to Taunton's wider leisure programme.
- 3.6. Site specific guidance on public art is given on each of the major development areas of Taunton including:-
  - Firepool
  - Firepool Lock
  - Cultural Quarter
  - Tangier
  - The High Street and East Street.

#### **4. Proposed next steps**

- 4.1. The Code will be designed into an attractive publication with images and examples of best practice and will also be available on the website. A smaller leaflet for initial contact and awareness raising will also be produced for Development Manager officers and those in first

contact with developers. We are aiming to achieve best practice in developing Taunton as a sustainable, green, imaginative and distinctive town through creative contributions into planning and using public space.

4.2. The plan for the rest of this financial year includes the need to move ahead with the Connectivity and Legibility Study and secure agreement on approaches to routes to, and from, the station and other transport interchanges, the River Tone and the Town Centre. The draft brief is attached as Appendix 1. I am currently working to secure £10,000 for the specialist public art consultant to facilitate the study and for artists to undertake the community engagement.

4.3. It is proposed that a public art seminar is held in January to present their proposals for cohesive and imaginative commissioning for the Riverside and connecting routes.

## **5. Recommendations**

5.1. The current public art policy sits within the Design Code of the Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan. It is not a Supplementary Planning Document although it is referenced with the Local Development Framework Core Strategy under culture and public art.

5.2. In order to strengthen its credibility as a policy that must be given due material consideration at planning, it is recommended that the 'Public Life in Public Spaces: The Taunton Deane Public Art Code' be endorsed.

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# Appendix 1

## The Public Life of Public Space The Taunton Deane Public Art Code

### Routes River Rail: A Connectivity and Legibility Study

#### Purpose

This paper sets out proposals for implementation of the Connectivity and Legibility Study as recommended in 'The Public Life of Public Space: The Taunton Deane Public Art Code'.

#### Introduction

The scale of development across Taunton Deane provides an exceptional opportunity to create an outstanding network of pedestrian routes and cycle ways from town and country linking Taunton Station, the planned urban extensions and the new park and rides with the town centre and the river and canal side promenades. Enhancing the legibility of routes and transport connections and the quality of experience for people using the public realm contributes directly to successful development particularly as development is being undertaken by a number of different private and public sector developers over an extended period of time.

#### Proposal

Taunton Deane Borough Council are commissioning a Connectivity + Legibility Study to create guidance to improve and enhance way-finding and ensure a coordinated approach to public art across Taunton. The guidance would sit alongside existing public art and design policy and all developers would be expected to follow its recommendations.

Private sector developers already investing in Taunton and Somerset County Council are invited to join with TDBC to commission the study to ensure a joined up approach to all aspects of connectivity and legibility. Arts Council England South West will also be invited to advise on the study.

The purpose of the guidance is to:

- Contribute to quality of place – what makes Taunton special and distinctive
- Increase connectivity and legibility between development sites
- Coordinate public realm treatments and approaches to public art across development sites in Taunton
- Guide an holistic approach to the design, quality and user experience of the public realm
- Take account of the cultural identities and heritage of the people of Taunton
- Enable the creation of a co-ordinated network of safe, attractive and accessible pedestrian routes, cycle ways and public transport nodes that link people with communities, places of recreation, work and commercial activity

# Appendix 1

## The Content of the Study

The study has two main interrelated strands and phases. **The first phase will involve the facilitation and agreement on the overall approach to improving Connectivity and Legibility and will make recommendations on specific public art and design commissions. These commissions will follow as the second phase.**

### **Strand 1: Connectivity: To define a strategic and coherent overview to routes and public spaces in and through the Town Centre**

i.e. Development of the River Tone and related pedestrian and cycle routes connecting the town centre and existing and new neighbourhoods with the green infrastructure and the rest of the Borough:

Consideration will be given to:

- Coherent overall design approach to routes
- Coherent proposals for public art commissions to enhance the linkage and treatment of public spaces in the town centre including new publicly accessible spaces at Taunton railway station and TTCAAP development sites
- Hard and soft surface and edge treatments
- Responses to flooding and wildlife habitat issues
- Opportunities for people to access and use both the water's edge and the water
- Functional commissions such as seating, lighting, fishing stands, viewing points
- Opportunities for creative planting schemes
- Creative community engagement projects exploring the meaning of the river to local people and the past and future of the town

### **Strand 2 : Legibility:**

Development of a coherent overall design approach to a legible public realm where the external environment helps people find their way around and navigate from place to place:

Consideration will be given to:

- Public art and design to contribute to legibility through signage, street furniture, energy efficient lighting
- Paving and planting treatments
- Marking public transport routes and design of shelters
- Landmark and orientation commissions
- Resting and 'people watching' places
- Relationship between new public spaces and existing squares and parks for performance and route finding
- Creative community engagement projects including, for example, digital and mind mapping techniques to involve local people in shaping a legible town centre

The key outcomes required are:

- Production of recommendations for public art commissions and guidance in an appropriate textual and visual format for use by developers responsible for the refurbishment or creation of the public realm in Taunton. The guidance

# Appendix 1

must take account of known developer priorities and objectives as well as the rationale and design principles of the Public Art Code and Taunton Town Centre Design Code SPD.

- The process through which the guidance is prepared must enhance and strengthen working relationships between the agencies responsible for delivery of the public realm in Taunton
- The process should also generate enthusiasm and awareness for the objectives of both the study and the development agenda in Taunton, for example, amongst local residents, businesses and other users of the existing town centre, river and canal
- National and international profile for development in Taunton through a symposium to review the interim guidance and share experience of innovation and quality in design, delivery and use of the public realm

Responsibility for delivery of the study rests with the members and officers of the Public Art and Design Panel.

## **Process**

The TDBC panel will appoint a public art specialist to co-ordinate an inter-disciplinary member team.

Initial discussion with St Modwen, appointed developer for Firepool, suggests scope for practical collaboration. St Modwen has committed to TDBC public art policy as part of its development agreement with Project Taunton and has already appointed a public art consultant and made provision for public art related expenditure.

It is proposed that St Modwen contribute a number of days of their public art consultant's time towards the Connectivity and Legibility Study as a whole, as part of their public art contribution at Firepool.

The Public Art specialist will work with the built environment professionals already involved in the development of Taunton: architects, landscape architects, engineers and urban designers. Collaboration with the Environment Agency, British Waterways, First Great Western, Sustrans and other relevant agencies will be essential.

There is also an opportunity to involve local people and existing users of the rivers and canals, ecologists, geographers, staff and students of Somerset College, young people and schools, local historians, a range of local artists and established arts and environment projects in the vicinity, such as the Neroche Scheme, to contribute their experience and knowledge to the study. Creative community engagement will be an integral part of the process.

A national symposium is proposed as an integral part of the commission in order to raise the profile of work in Taunton and attract investment in development opportunities in the borough. The symposium could invite three leading innovators in

# Appendix 1

urban design, art and public space to a workshop format day with the Lead Artist and members of the team. This will allow practical review of the proposals, following a similar model to the 'Design Review Panel' method established nationwide by CABE, and include a public seminar addressed by the team and invited innovators. This would also give Project Taunton a platform for marketing initiatives and enable existing developers to highlight their schemes.

## Recruitment

A long list of public art specialists, and/or arts organisations suitable for appointment is being prepared to facilitate the Connectivity and Legibility study and project manage a lead artist to undertake community engagement. Candidates must have a track record of facilitation and policy making and facilitating high quality creative work in the public realm combined with substantial experience of social and physical development, collaborative team working and community engagement.

The Lead Artist will be expected to have experience of creative community engagement and to define an inclusive and rigorous methodology to conduct and deliver the commission. The Public Art and Design Panel of TDBC will appoint the Lead Artist through written submission and interview.

## Resources and Programme

Funding is required towards delivery of Phase 1. The scale and sources of Phase 2 funding will depend on the outcomes of Phase 1.

### Phase 1

<b>Public Art specialist</b>	<b>5,000</b>
Lead Artist: Fees and Expenses	5,000
St Modwen's Public Art consultant	5 days in kind?
Symposium to review the interim proposals	1500
Production costs of guidance document	2000
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,500</b>

It is proposed that TDBC contribute £5,000 with additional in kind contributions of, for example, expertise from staff and consultants, access to office facilities for use by the lead artist and financial contributions from Project Taunton, Somerset County Council and St Modwen.

It would be beneficial for Phase 1 to be completed by the end of October 2009 in order to meet St Modwen's development programme.

A Grant for the Arts funding bid will be submitted to Arts Council England for up to £30,000 per annum for three years in order to contribute to implementation of the overall recommendations of the Public Art Code including this study. However ACE requires three months to consider applications so an outcome is unlikely before December 2009. It is therefore recommended that the costs of Phase 1 be met from the resources indicated above.

# Appendix 1

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# Taunton Deane Borough Council

**Executive – 14 October 2009**

## **Growth Point Funding – Re-profiling the Spending Plan**

**Report of the Strategic Director (Joy Wislade)**

(This item in the responsibility of Executive Councillor Simon Coles.)

### **Executive Summary**

The Growth Point funding is a partnership fund with Somerset County Council, through a joint application. This money is to be used for infrastructure that supports the growth of housing and the subsequent growth in the population. The agreed approvals for the spending programme have been ascertained from Taunton Deane's Project Taunton Steering Group and it will go to the Project Taunton Advisory Board (the partnership board) for ratification. Notification has been received that our funding for 2010/2011 is being reduced and therefore this requires us to re-profile the spend authorised in February 2009.

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 In December 2008 Taunton Deane and Somerset County Council were advised that the Growth Point allocation for Taunton was £3,338,104 capital and £301,249 revenue in 2009/2010 and a provisional amount for 2010/2011 of £3,972,516 capital and £300,698 revenue. We were encouraged to plan on the basis that we would receive this amount. The priorities for using this funding were discussed with members of the Project Taunton Steering Group and the Project Taunton Advisory Board and were approved by Executive in February 2009. The funding plan (which was a joint plan with Housing and Planning Delivery Grant which is unchanged) is attached at Appendix 1.
- 1.2 Along with all other Growth Points we received a letter from the Minister in July (copy attached Appendix 2) reducing our capital allocation for 2009/2010 by 43% i.e. to £2,248,263. The revenue funding has not been reduced. The Minister also advised us that there would be formal consultation on this proposal. The formal consultation period still has not commenced, although we have written a joint letter with the County to the Minister stating reasons why the reduction should not be as onerous in Taunton.

- 1.3 Discussions have also been held with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), the Regional Development Agency (RDA) and with the Government Office for the South West (GOSW). All agree that it would be unlikely that the reduced figure quoted in the letter will be increased and that the priorities set out below are the ones that Growth Point funding should be focused on.
- 1.4 Indeed, considering all the other statements on the reduction in public spending next year, and as we have not received any firm commitment from Government about even the reduced figure being available, we feel that it is prudent to have two delivery options: one with no further Growth Points being available, and one with the reduced figure for 2010/2011.

## **2. Priorities**

- 2.1 The re-prioritised spending plan is attach at Appendix 3. The new element is a contribution towards the completion of the Northern Inner Distributor Road (see **Confidential** Appendix 4). It shows that if we continue to undertake the works previously prioritised and if we do not receive any Growth Point funding next year we are over spent by £2,691,000. In this scenario it would be Castle Green which would be at risk as this is the project that is least aligned to the delivery of housing and economic growth. If we do receive the reduced Growth Point funding Appendix 3 still shows an over spend of £443,000. However, we would expect some tenders to come in well below the budget amount and would plan to manage this amount down to a nil over-spend.

## **3. Consultation**

- 3.1 Growth Points is a partnership fund between Taunton Deane Borough Council and Somerset County Council. Somerset County Council is supportive of this way forward. As Growth Point funding is now over seen by the HCA, we have also consulted with them the change of priorities. Similarly, the SWRDA have given their support.

## **4. Recommendation**

- 4.1 The Executive is asked to approve the amended priorities for Growth Points and to also recommend to Full Council the change to the capital programme of the capital elements of the plan.

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# Appendix 1

## HPDG and Growth Point Funding 09/10

	Revenue	Capital
<b>HPDG</b>	<b>£273,939</b>	<b>£ 119,122</b>
<b>Growth Pts</b>	<b>£301,249</b>	<b>£5,619,104</b> (£3,338,104 + £2,281,000 b/forward)
<b>Total</b>	<b>£575,188</b>	<b>£5,738,226</b>

## Suggested Spend

Item	HPDG Revenue	HPDG Capital	GP Revenue	GP Capital
F/P D/C staffing	160,939	44,122		
TDBC Project Taunton	30,000			
Planning Obligations SPD	30,000			
Hestercombe Appropriate Assessment		15,000		
Retail capacity study	53,000			
Firepool Weir		60,000		
Project Taunton Delivery Team			301,249	
Castle Green				2,625,000
Somerset Square				400,000
Firepool infrastructure and property				2,050,000
Urban extension planning				300,000
10 charging points for zero carbon emission vehicles				30,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>273,939</b>	<b>119,122</b>	<b>301,249</b>	<b>5,405,000</b>
<b>Balance</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>214,104</b>



Councillor Ross Henley  
Leader of the Council  
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17 July 2009

Dear Councillor Henley

## **BUILDING BRITAIN'S FUTURE - HOUSING PLEDGE: THE GROWTH FUND**

I am writing to give you more background on the Government's Housing Pledge announced by the Prime Minister recently, as part of Building Britain's Future. There are major opportunities for all areas to build new homes that local residents can afford to rent and buy, but it also involves some re-profiling and re-prioritisation across budgets.

We are committing an extra £1.5bn to fund an extra 20,000 affordable homes over this year and next. This money is available for your local authority to consider bidding for in order to build the low cost homes that people in your area need. It is on top of a total Government investment of £3bn this year to build 55,500 new affordable homes, which are essential in helping to meet Britain's housing need and to support jobs and the economy through the recession.

Making such a strong commitment to housing by funding extra homes when demands on public finances are so significant has required tough decisions. The majority of the extra money to build new homes comes from re-prioritising spending from other Government departments, but there are also decisions I have made on rescheduling, re-prioritising and greater efficiencies within this department's investment programmes.

The Growth Fund is intended to support the provision of infrastructure for planned housing growth. We must recognise, however, that the current exceptional economic circumstances mean that growth has been more difficult and much slower than envisaged in local growth and infrastructure delivery plans. Indeed, the delivery picture and the infrastructure investment needed today are very different to those envisaged when the three year Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) funding decisions were made in 2007, and when individual funding allocations were made in 2007 and 2008. Major schemes are stalled or slowed down across the country and levels of private sector interest have fallen. Focussing on getting house building re-started and onto a recovery path is, therefore, a key priority and a significant part of the new funding will do that. That also means re-prioritising existing funds.

Taunton has already received in 2008/09-2009/10 a share of the £500m distributed to local authorities in the Growth Areas and Growth Points. I now want to let you know my proposals for 2010/11.

As you know, we set out last December our provisional allocations for 2010/11, but have still to confirm these. I am not proposing to change provisional revenue allocations for 2010/11 but, given the circumstances which I have explained, I am proposing to alter your capital funding for growth next year from £3,972,516 to £2,248,263. I am proposing a similar adjustment for all local authorities that are looking for central Government support for such capital investment through the Growth Fund. This means that despite the pressures on public finances your local authority will still have received over this three year CSR period a total of £9,216,142 in capital and revenue funding to support housing growth. I can assure you that we will take account of this in looking at how growth is funded in the next CSR and as the economic position improves.

As you know, we have removed the ringfencing from this funding giving local authorities the flexibility to best meet local priorities. Given the difficult economic circumstances, I would expect local authorities to be making full use of this flexibility to ensure that they are able to deliver local priorities that will maintain delivery and momentum in the housing market. I expect all local authorities that are receiving this funding to be able to account for the use that is being made of this funding locally. The Homes and Communities Agency's regional teams will work with you to provide support and advice on delivering your growth plans and we remain committed to supporting your long term housing growth plans.

I am proposing to apply a common approach across all Growth Areas and Growth Points with funding for each being altered by the same proportion. These funding proposals will be subject to a short formal consultation exercise, which my officials will write to you about shortly.

I appreciate that these budgetary changes, which I am making to the Growth Fund and other departmental investment programmes, are challenging but I hope you will agree that further measures to stimulate house building this year and next are the right way to prioritise housing funds for the affordable homes that are needed in so many parts of the country.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Healey', with a horizontal line underneath.

**JOHN HEALEY MP**

## Appendix 3

### Growth Points

Ref.	Item	2009/10		2010/11	
		Income £000	Expenditure £000	Income £000	Expenditure £000
1.	c/fwd, annual allocation and anticipated allocation	5,619		2,248	
2.	Longrun Farm/Meadows		0		150
3.	Castle Green design		412		100
4.	Castle Green construction		0		3,268
5.	Somerset Square		400		0
6.	Firepool demolition		200		0
7.	Firepool enabling works		400		850
8.	Urban extension planning		300		700
9.	10 charging points for zero carbon emission vehicles		30		0
10.	NIDR		0		1,000
11.	Retail (EPF + £200K)		0		325
12.	Coal Orchard master plan		0		75
13.	Unit 4 Canal Road (top up)		100		0
14.	<b>Total</b>		<b>1,842</b>		<b>6,468</b>
15.	<b>Balance (nil receipt 2010/11)</b>		<b>3,777</b>		<b>-2,691</b>
16.	<b>Balance (proposed receipt 2010/11)</b>		<b>3,777</b>		<b>-443</b>

1. 2009/10 income consists of £2,281,000 carried forward from 2008/09 and the allocation for 2009/10 of £3,338,000. A July 09 letter from CLG, previously circulated, proposed a cut in GP capital funding from £3,972,516 to £2,248,263 for 2010/11.
2. Part payment for Longrun Meadows has been provided via RIF. A sum has been allocated, towards landscaping - a planning condition, for the balance.
4. No Castle Green construction costs will now be incurred in 2009/10 and this project will be reviewed dependent on 2010/11 allocation.
8. Although an allocation of £1million has been agreed for this project, it is unlikely that tenders will come back in excess of £700,000.
10. The completion of the NIDR is fundamental to the delivery of Firepool. As a result of planning and S106 problems, there is a £1million shortfall. This allocation plugs the funding gap, ensuring D of T funding and access to the northern sector of the Firepool site.
11. This sum is made up of up to £125,000 detailed in the exclusivity contract as payment to EPF if TDBC withdraws from the agreement. £200,000 has been allocated for legal and property advice towards signing the agreement.
15. These totals assume no capital funding receipt in 2010/11.
16. These totals assume the proposed capital funding receipt for 2010/11 (see item 1. above)

<b>Report</b>	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Details Of Consultation</b>	<b>Officer</b>	<b>Decision To Be Made By</b>	<b>Date</b>
Potential Affordable Housing Redevelopment Opportunity - Parmin Close, Taunton			Lesley Webb		11/11/2009
Replacement of Building Control Computer System following SAP introduction - request for supplementary estimate			Brian Yates		11/11/2009
Taunton Protocol for Sustainable Development			Joy Wishlade		11/11/2009
Core Council Review: Proposals for Theme 2 (Growth and Development) and Theme 4 (Community Services)			Brendan Cleere		11/11/2009
Windfall VAT Receipt			Maggie Hammond		11/11/2009
Local Development Framework Core Strategy Consultation Document			Ralph Willoughby-Foster		30/11/2009
Gambling Act 2005 and re-adoption of Taunton Deane's Gambling Policy			Olivia Walton		02/12/2009
Built Facilities Sports Strategy			Ann Rhodes		02/12/2009
Green Spaces Strategy			Karen Hughes		02/12/2009
Playing Fields Strategy			Karen Hughes		02/12/2009
Quarterly Corporate Performance/finance Update (Quarter 2)			Dan Webb		02/12/2009
Fees and Charges 2010/2011			Emily Collacott		02/12/2009
Savings Delivery Plans 2010/2011			Emily Collacott		02/12/2009
Allotments Strategy			Karen Hughes		02/12/2009
Proposed Capital Spend on Play and Youth Facilities			Karen Hughes		02/12/2009
Treasury Management Update 2009/2010 and Minimum Revenue Provision for 2010/2011			Lizzie Watkin		02/12/2009
Carbon Reduction Plan			Kevin Toller		13/01/2010
Proposed extension of Wellington Cemetery			Paul Rayson		13/01/2010
Review of Essential Users and Car Allowances			Brendan Cleere		13/01/2010
Council Tax Base 2010/2011			Emily Collacott		13/01/2010
Locality Based Service Delivery			Richard Sealy		13/01/2010
Purchase of Capital Asset, Taunton			Joy Wishlade		13/01/2010
Pest Control Contracting			Martin Daly		13/01/2010
Somerset Tourism Partnership Business Plan			David McCubbin		03/02/2010

Corporate Strategy 2010 - 2013			Mark Leeman		03/02/2010
Corporate Equality Scheme and Action Plan 2010 - 2013			Lisa Redston		03/02/2010
General Fund Revenue Estimates 2010/2011			Emily Collacott		03/02/2010
Council Tax Setting 2010/2011			Emily Collacott		03/02/2010
Housing Revenue Account, Revenue Estimates and Rent Levels, Deane Helpline and Deane Building DLO Account for the 2010/2011 Financial Year			Emily Collacott		03/02/2010
Capital Programme 2010/2011			Emily Collacott		03/02/2010
Economic Development Strategy			Phil Sharratt		03/02/2010
Private Sector Housing Partnership			Martin Daly		03/02/2010
Tourist Information Centre Review			Tim Burton		03/02/2010
Somerset Waste Partnership Business Plan			Joy Wishlade		03/02/2010
Establishment of a Taunton Growth Board			Joy Wishlade		03/02/2010
Quarterly Corporate Performance/Finance Update			Dan Webb		03/03/2010
Asset Management Plan			Joy Wishlade		31/03/2010
Quarterly Corporate Performance/Finance Update (Outturn)			Dan Webb		16/06/2010

## **Executive – 14 October 2009**

Present: Councillor Henley (Chairman)  
Councillors Coles, R Lees, Paul, Prior-Sankey, Slattery, Mrs Smith,  
A Wedderkopp and Mrs Wilson

Officers: Penny James (Chief Executive), Joy Wishlade (Strategic Director),  
Tonya Meers (legal and Democratic Services Manager), Caroline  
Corfe (Community Arts Officer), Maggie Hammond (Strategic Finance  
Officer), Adrian Priest (Asset Holdings Manager) and Richard Bryant  
(Democratic Services Manager)

Also present: Councillors Cavill, Mrs Court-Stenning, Hayward, Morrell and  
Williams.  
Mark Green, Project Taunton

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm.)

### **83. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 16 September 2009, copies of which had been circulated, were taken as read and were signed.

### **84. Declarations of Interest**

Councillors Henley, Paul and Prior-Sankey declared personal interests as Members of Somerset County Council. Councillor Prior-Sankey also declared a prejudicial interest in the item covered by Minute No. 89 below and left the meeting during its consideration. Councillor Coles declared a personal interest as a Director of Southwest One. Councillor Mrs Smith declared a personal interest as an employee of Somerset County Council. Councillor Slattery declared personal interests both as a Member of the Somerset Waste Board and as an employee of Sedgemoor District Council.

### **85. Task and Finish Review into Employment Land in Taunton**

Submitted for information, comment and approval the recommendations of the Employment Land in Taunton Task and Finish Group.

The Task and Finish Review had been set up to seek a solution to the growing demand for employment land in and around Taunton.

At its first meeting, the Task and Finish Review had agreed that its terms of reference should be as follows:-

- To review the strategic employment sites currently available and recommend whether they ought to remain in the Local Plan;

- To identify locations for alternative strategic employment sites which could be more readily available for a wide range and types of businesses;
- To establish what could be achieved through the preparation of the current Local Development Framework (LDF) whilst considering how lengthy potential delays to land coming forward for development might be overcome;
- To undertake consultations with interested parties;
- To consider how the Council should work with statutory bodies such as the Highways Agency and others to enable any proposed sites to be brought forward; and
- To make recommendations to the Executive.

At the first meeting the Task and Finish Group acknowledged that it did not intend to duplicate work already being undertaken by the LDF Steering Group and that any recommendations made by the Task and Finish Group would feed into the preparation of the Core Strategy and the LDF.

A series of meetings of the Task and Finish Review had been held and evidence had been collected from a number of sources including consultants, professional agents and developers and officers from Somerset County Council and other statutory agencies.

The Task and Finish Group had discussed the recommendations it wished to make to the Executive. These recommendations had initially been considered by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 6 August when a number of amendments were suggested. The Task and Finish Group has incorporated these amendments into the recommendations which were as follows:-

#### **Recommendation 1**

In line with Circular 02/2009, the Council should initiate discussions with landowners and developers for the release of immediate short term employment land opportunities at Nerrols, Creech Heathfield and Walford Cross and other suitable sustainable sites for up to 5,000 square metres (around 2 hectares per site). Such discussions should aim to encourage the owners of land to release sites to businesses, wherever possible, on a freehold rather than a leasehold basis;

#### **Recommendation 2**

In line with Circular 02/2009, the threshold for out-of-centre office proposals for requiring a sequential assessment be raised to 1,000 square metres. This should enable additional windfall opportunities to come forward in the short term;

#### **Recommendation 3**

A strategic employment site of about 25 hectares with good access to both

the M5 Motorway and the A358 should be brought forward in the medium/long term, through the LDF. The Council recognise that it needed to collaborate closely with all relevant agencies if it wished to build in flexibility into the Core Strategy. The owners of any potential site identified should again be encouraged to release sites to businesses, wherever possible, on a freehold rather than a leasehold basis;

#### **Recommendation 4**

To progress a strategic employment site it was also recommended that a working group be set up and led by the Strategic Director, involving Economic Development, Project Taunton and representatives of all relevant agencies, a Councillor representative and others as appropriate, with the purpose of developing an evidence base and proposal for the LDF Core Strategy. Consideration should be given to a representative from Sedgemoor District Council being invited to sit on the Working Group. As part of this process there should be community engagement with the parishes that would be affected. It was recommended that the strategic employment site should provide opportunities for major inward investment and relocation of existing sites to Taunton. It was accepted development (non Class A1) would be necessary to fund the initial infrastructure to open up the site, but the total proportion of floor space for such uses should remain ancillary (around 10%) and focus on medium sized office suites (300 – 1,000 square metres) in order to remain consistent with Government policy and to avoid undermining Firepool as the strategic office site for the Taunton Strategically Significant City and Town (SSCT). Such a Working Group should report back to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee within 4 months, with a progress report;

#### **Recommendation 5**

The Executive be requested to identify the specific partners for the Working Group which would be led by Taunton Deane with the process and reporting back arrangements (to ensure progress was measured) being led by the Strategic Director, Joy Wishlade.

**Resolved** that the recommendations of the Employment Land in Taunton Task and Finish Group be accepted.

#### **86. The Public Life of Public Space : The Taunton Deane Public Art Code**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the Taunton Deane Public Art Code and its implications for development of the public realm in the future.

Taunton Deane Borough Council had adopted the 1% for Public Art and Design Policy in June 2007. However, recognising the difficulties associated with requesting 1% of costs towards public art, the Public Art and Design Panel had commissioned independent Cultural Consultants to produce clearer guidelines for developers and a commissioning plan for Taunton as developments moved forward.

The Taunton Deane Public Art Code clarified the Council's policy statement. It had been re-worded as follows:-

“Taunton Deane Borough Council adopted a Public Art and Design Policy in June 2007. The aim was to promote and support excellence in public art as an integral element of the design of buildings and development and enhancement of the public realm. The policy related to large new buildings and open space developments in Taunton Deane under private and public ownership.

All developments in excess of 15 residential units or 2500 square metres (gross) of commercial floorspace would be required to contribute towards the public art and public realm enhancements through commissioning and integrating public art into the design of buildings and the public realm or by a commuted sum to the value of one percent of development costs.”

The Code contained policy and guidance on the planning process and how artists could be used at each stage of development, from the master planning process to community engagement as well as the creation of site specific pieces of work.

The Commissioning Plan gave the creative rationale underlying the Code, and recommended adopting the three themes of 'Play, Knowledge and Nature' to inspire public art approaches. This Plan also identified connectivity and legibility as key issues that public art could help address.

Reported that the Code would be designed into an attractive publication with images and examples of best practice. Noted that the Council was aiming to achieve best practice in developing Taunton as a sustainable, green, imaginative and distinctive town through creative contributions into planning and using public space.

The plan for the remainder of the current financial year included the need to move ahead with the Connectivity and Legibility Study and secure agreement on approaches to routes to and from the station and other transport interchanges, the River Tone and the town centre. A copy of the draft brief was submitted for the information of Members.

It was hoped to secure £10,000 for the specialist public art consultant to facilitate the study and for artists to undertake community engagement.

**Resolved** that the “Public Life in Public Spaces: The Taunton Deane Public Art Code” be endorsed.

#### 87. **Growth Point Funding – Re-profiling the Spending Plan**

Reference Minute No. 23/2009, considered report previously circulated, concerning the need to re-profile the Growth Point Funding Spending Plan.

In December 2008 Taunton Deane and Somerset County Council were advised that the Growth Point allocation for Taunton was £3,338,104 capital and £301,249 revenue in 2009/2010 and a provisional amount for 2010/2011 of £3,972,516 capital and £300,698 revenue.

The priorities for using this funding were discussed with members of the Project Taunton Steering Group and the Project Taunton Advisory Board and were subsequently approved by the Executive earlier in the year. Details of the Funding Plan were submitted.

A letter from the Minister for Housing and Planning had been received in July 2009 reducing the capital allocation for 2009/2010 by 43% to £2,248,263. The revenue funding had not been reduced. The Minister also advised that there would be formal consultation on this proposal. Although this consultation period had only just commenced, a joint letter with the County Council had already been sent to the Minister setting out the reasons why the reduction should not be as onerous in Taunton.

Discussions had also been held with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), the Regional Development Agency (RDA) and with the Government Office for the South West (GOSW). All had agreed that it would be unlikely that the reduced figure quoted in the letter would be increased.

In view of all the other statements on the reduction in public spending next year and in the absence of any firm commitment from the Government about even the reduced figure being available, it was felt prudent to have two delivery options: one with no further Growth Points being available and the other with the reduced figure for 2010/2011.

Details of the re-prioritised spending plan were also submitted. The new element was the completion of the Northern Inner Distributor Road. This showed that if the Council continued to undertake the works previously prioritised and if no Growth Point funding was received next year, there would be an overspend of £2,691,000.

In this scenario it would be Castle Green which would be at risk as this was the project that was least aligned to the delivery of housing and economic growth. If the reduced Growth Point funding was received an overspend of £443,000 would still occur. However, in the current economic climate it was expected some tenders were likely to be well below the budget amount reducing the anticipated overspend significantly.

**Resolved that:-**

- (1) the amended priorities for Growth Points be approved; and
- (2) Full Council be recommended to agree the change to the Capital Programme of the capital elements of the Growth Point Funding Plan.

## 88. **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

**Resolved** that the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting for the following item because of the likelihood that exempt information would otherwise be disclosed relating to Clause 7 of Schedule 12(A) 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.

89. **Potential Purchase of Capital Asset, Taunton**

Reference Minute No. 55/2009, reported on the progress made to date with the proposed purchase of this capital asset.

As part of the due diligence for this project a legal report on various obligations in the lease was requested in order to identify what terms had / had not been complied with that would affect an investment / development appraisal. This advice had now been received and details were reported. A particular course of action had been recommended to the Executive as a result.

In addition, and as outlined in Minute No. 87 above, the reduction in Government funding meant that Project Taunton's budget/Growth Points would not be in a position to become involved in this project financially. Ownership of this project would now pass to the Property Asset Management Team.

**Resolved** that:-

- (1) Due to the change in circumstances and the new information received in connection with the lease, the decisions taken by the Executive on 17 June 2009 concerning this matter (Minute No. 55/2009) be rescinded; and
- (2) Either officers with relevant experience in Southwest One, or an external professional agent, be instructed to carry out negotiations with the current leaseholder with a report being submitted to the Executive for further decision by 13 January 2010 at the latest.

(The meeting ended at 7.20 p.m.)