

Taunton Deane Borough Council

At a meeting of Taunton Deane Borough Council held in the John Meikle Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton on 22 July 2014 at 6.30 p.m.

Present The Mayor (Councillor D Durdan)
The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Mrs Hill)
Councillors Mrs Adkins, Mrs Allgrove, Mrs Baker, Beaven, Bishop, Bowrah, Cavill, Coles, Denington, Miss Durdan, Farbahi, Mrs Floyd, Mrs Gaden, Gaines, Hall, Hayward, Henley, Mrs Herbert, Horsley, Hunt, Miss James, R Lees, Mrs Lees, Ms Lisgo, Meikle, Mrs Messenger, Morrell, Nottrodt, Prior-Sankey, D Reed, Mrs Reed, Gill Slattery, T Slattery, Miss Smith, Mrs Smith, P Smith, Mrs Stock-Williams, Stone, Swaine, Tooze, Mrs Warmington, Watson, Mrs Waymouth, Ms Webber, A Wedderkopp, D Wedderkopp, Williams and Wren

1. Minutes

The minutes of the Annual Meeting of Taunton Deane Borough Council held on 8 May 2014, copies having been sent to each Member, were signed by the Mayor.

2. Apologies

Councillors Edwards, A Govier, Mrs Govier and Ms Palmer.

3. Declaration of Interests

Councillors Mrs Baker, Coles, Prior-Sankey, A Wedderkopp and D Wedderkopp declared personal interests as Members of Somerset County Council. Councillor Henley declared personal interests as a Member of Somerset County Council and as an employee of Job Centre Plus. Councillor Hunt declared personal interests both as a Member of Somerset County Council and as one of the Council's representatives on the Somerset Waste Board. Councillor Mrs Hill declared a personal interest as an employee of Somerset County Council. Councillor Tooze declared a personal interest as an employee of the UK Hydrographic Office. Councillor Wren declared a personal interest as Clerk to Milverton Parish Council. Councillor Nottrodt declared a personal interest as a Director of Southwest One. Councillors D Durdan and Stone declared prejudicial interests as Tone Leisure Board representatives. Councillor Gill Slattery declared personal interests as a member of the Board of Governors at Somerset College, a Patron of the Supporters of Taunton Women's Aid and as one of the Council's representatives on the Parrett Internal Drainage Board. Councillor Swaine declared a personal interest as a part-time swimming instructor. Councillor Farbahi declared a personal interest as a local owner of land in Taunton Deane. Councillor Mrs Herbert declared a personal interest as an employee of Job Centre Plus. Councillor Ms Lisgo declared a personal interest as a

Director of Tone FM. Councillor Bishop declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item No.7 but remained in the room whilst the matter was discussed at the invitation of the other Members of the Council.

4. **Public Question Time**

The following questions were asked in connection with the proposed development of land at Jurston, Wellington:-

- (i) Ann Loarridge stated that local people were concerned at the pressure this development would place on Wellington's infrastructure, in particular the roads, parking, resilience to flooding, local amenities and emergency responders. She felt the Council had a legal obligation to ensure that Wellington was resilient to the risks that this development presented.

Ms Loarridge asked when the Council would present the authoritative and most recent evidence that the local infrastructure could sustain the physical changes of this development and the pressures that an almost 20% population increase and a huge traffic increase would bring?

- (ii) Ken Bird felt that there had been a lack of thought with regard to this development during the preparation of the Core Strategy, particularly with regard to the likely impact of traffic on the town. Wellington already had a 'road to nowhere' at Longforth Farm. He asked the Council to think again about its plans for Jurston – a view which had been supported by the Town Council.
- (iii) Sarah Almond reported that Beech Hill and Laburnum Road were narrow roads which would be opened up to partly serve the new development. How could this be justified?
- (iv) Claire Bailey felt that the Jurston site was a large development alongside several others which had been, or were in the process of being built. It gave the impression that Wellington was having to take much of the development in Taunton Deane. Was this the case?
- (v) Tom Fasham referred to the access to local schools some of which were not served by footways. The predicted increase in traffic from the Jurston development would increase the danger to children walking or cycling to school. Did the Council think this was acceptable? He added that the development would require places for over 100 new pupils to be created at Court Fields School and asked if this was possible?

In response, the Leader of the Council, Councillor John Williams, stated that the adopted Core Strategy defined the likely areas suitable for development in Taunton Deane. The Council could not revisit the principle of the Strategy but could ensure local people benefitted from such developments.

The provision of infrastructure was considered with each planning application.

He was sympathetic regarding the traffic issues highlighted and the Council would work with the County Highway Authority to deliver answers. The road through the Longforth Farm development needed to be fully completed as this would be the ideal solution for diverting through traffic along this route away from the town centre.

With regard to the distribution of houses, Taunton was taking 80% of new development with Wellington 20%. A lot of thought had gone into the preparation of the Core Strategy and Taunton Deane would work with the community to achieve maximum gain from each development.

With regard to the points concerning education, these would be passed over to Somerset County Council for consideration.

5. Freedom of the Borough – Councillor Clifford William Bishop

Considered report previously circulated, concerning a proposal to admit Councillor Clifford William Bishop, as an Honorary Freeman of the Borough.

The Local Government Act 1972 (amended by the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980) allowed a Borough or City Council to admit “persons of distinction and persons who had in the opinion of the Council, rendered eminent services to the City, Borough or Royal Borough” as Honorary Freemen.

Conferring the title of Honorary Freeman was the highest honour that a Council of a City or Borough could bestow. Taunton Deane Borough Council had granted this honour on only four previous occasions.

Councillor Bishop had been an elected Councillor for over 50 years both at both district and parish level. During that time he had made a significant contribution to the local community of Taunton Deane generally and of the Bradford on Tone, Langford Budville, Nynehead and Oake Parishes in particular.

Should Members agree to grant this honour to Councillor Bishop there was a procedure, laid down in statute, which had to be followed involving the holding of a special meeting of the Council when a formal presentation would be made and the Honorary Freedom granted.

Resolved that the proposal that Councillor Clifford William Bishop be made an Honorary Freeman of the Borough in recognition of the eminent service rendered by him to the Taunton Deane community, be supported.

6. Appointment of a replacement Non-Voting Independent Co-optee to the Council’s Standards Committee

The Council had previously agreed the composition of the Council's Standards Committee to include three non-voting independent co-optees.

Earlier in the year, Mr Adrian Cox notified the Council that he wished to resign his position on the Committee.

At its most recent meeting, the Standards Committee had considered the replacement of Mr Cox and decided to offer the vacant position to Mr Lynn Rogers who, under the former Standards Regime, had served the Standards Committee as one of its independent members.

Resolved that Mr Lynn Rogers be appointed to the Council's Standards Committee as a non-voting independent co-optee.

7. **Superfast Broadband Extension – Request for Match Funding**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the proposed extension of superfast broadband in Taunton Deane.

Widening the availability of superfast broadband had become vitally important for all elements of the community, particularly businesses in the Taunton Deane area.

The current challenges around road infrastructure combined with the perceived shortage of employment land presented a significant challenge to the growth agenda in Taunton and inward investment potential. Superfast broadband was therefore an essential utility for the majority of our businesses and increasing its availability would assist with growth.

The current Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS) Programme was aimed to deliver 90% superfast broadband coverage to the area by the end of 2016. In Taunton this translated into a projected increase of coverage which was slightly higher than the target figure for premises. This would mean a significant projected increase in the businesses and homes in the area that would be able to access superfast broadband.

The provision of superfast broadband in the more rural areas of Taunton Deane was challenging due to a range of technical and practical factors that increased costs. Superfast broadband in the terms of this project was a speed of 24 Megabytes (MB) or more.

This would leave 10% of the CDS area without any improvement in broadband speeds, which equated to approximately 90,000 premises. This gap in broadband provision had been recognised by the Government, which under the Superfast Extension Programme (SEP) had made available an additional £250,000,000 with the objective of bringing the United Kingdom (UK) up to 95% superfast broadband coverage by the end of 2017.

The Government had recently announced how this funding would be allocated. CDS had been granted £22,750,000 - the largest single allocation made to a programme in England. To draw down this funding the Government had stipulated that Local Authorities should provide 50% match funding.

Reported that Somerset County Council (SCC) had already taken the decision to agree an in principle capital match contribution of up to £2,000,000.

Following this, the District Councils had been briefed on the SEP and asked to consider their own capital contributions to support a full application to BD:UK (Broadband Delivery UK) and collectively contribute an additional £2,000,000.

The Taunton Deane contribution was an element of the Somerset Districts/Borough contribution. The breakdown illustrated that the commitment in principle by Taunton Deane Borough Council of £380,000 would play a part in securing significant match funding.

The impact of this proposed extension, subject to the provision of appropriate funding, would increase premises coverage by an additional 3,634 premises. This would leave the remaining premises not reaching broadband speeds of 24mb per second, although broadband speeds were expected to increase to nearly all properties.

It was expected that a new procurement exercise would be required so that more appropriate technologies, such as wireless or 4G, could be deployed. Given the nature of the geography in question, CDS expected that these technologies would be required so as to ensure value for money and to deliver the additional superfast broadband coverage into the deeply rural areas.

A detailed partnering agreement and governance arrangements would be required at a later date following full consultation with all of the Councils in Somerset who were able to make available a capital contribution.

In order to secure this extension an agreement in principle is required to a total capital funding commitment of £380,000. This could be spread over three years (£130,000 in 2014/2015, £130,000 in 2015/2016, and £120,000 in 2016/2017), recognising this might have an impact on the delivery programme.

The proposal clearly met the Councils ambitions, but the challenge was around affordability. The financial challenges facing the Council were well understood and this project placed an additional "call" on the Councils already scarce financial resources. The decision was whether this was more important to the Council and the community it served than some of the other calls on resources.

If Broadband was the top priority, it was recommended this should be funded from the Growth and Transformation Reserve (which had the 2014/2015 New Homes Bonus funding). The Assistant Director – Business Development would then pursue any external funding opportunities with a view to this reserve being topped up with any successful bids.

Resolved that:-

- (a) The recommendation of the Executive to support the match funding request to progress the Superfast Broadband Extension as set out in this

report be approved;

- (b) The sum of £380,000 for the Superfast Broadband Extension Programme as a Supplementary Estimate in the Capital Programme be approved, underwritten by the Council from the Growth and Transformation Reserves (New Homes Bonus) pending the outcome of bids for external funding.
- (c) The Assistant Director (Business Development) be requested to urgently progress bids for external funding to cover the costs underwritten by Taunton Deane Borough Council on the Superfast Broadband Extension Programme. An update report on progress to be shared with the Community Scrutiny Committee in six months time.

8. Accelerating Growth Delivery

The Council had established growth as a top priority and had previously earmarked New Homes Bonus funding for delivering its ambitions.

There was currently an ambitious agenda for delivering major housing and employment, regeneration and physical infrastructure schemes to enable growth outlined in the Taunton Town Centre Rethink and Taunton Growth Prospectus documents.

In order to accelerate and secure delivery of such schemes, Members had been advised that it would be necessary to make appropriate use of available New Homes Bonus funding, to commission dedicated specialist and technical support.

Such funding was needed to bring schemes to a stage where they were 'shovel ready'. In this way, the Council would be better placed to take advantage of significant funding opportunities offered by the Local Enterprise Partnership, the Government and other agencies.

Experience had shown that many of these major funding opportunities arose with little time to prepare, but required a clear business case and ability to deliver within very tight timetables.

Reported that it was proposed that a contribution of £550,000 should be made from the 2014/2015 New Homes Bonus allocation, towards technical and specialist support for accelerating delivery of growth ambitions. The proposed profile of spend to accelerate growth was set out in the following table:-

Priority	Description	14/15 (£k)	15/16 (£k)	16/17 (£k)	17/18 (£k)	Total (£k)
Highways and Transport Capacity	This funding would provide additional transport and highways related support to accelerate the delivery of major schemes which are essential to realising economic growth potential and also to speed up essential highways input to the planning process.	50	50	50	50	200

Legal Capacity	This funding would provide additional capacity for legal input and expertise, dedicated to growth and regeneration schemes and projects.	30	30	0	0	60
Property and Estates Capacity	This funding would enable dedicated property and estates support to resolve issues and accelerate delivery of growth and regeneration projects.	145	145	0	0	290
Total		225	225	50	50	550

In addition to the schemes listed above, reported that a bid had been submitted for Government funding under the Homes and Communities Agency's 'Large Scale Infrastructure Programme', towards a dedicated team to accelerate delivery of major housing growth in Taunton. Major urban extensions elsewhere had had such resources to accelerate delivery and overcome day-to-day and complex matters associated with such large scale development. The outcome of this bid was expected over the summer period.

Resolved that the transfer of the commitment of New Homes Bonus from 2014/2015 to a new Earmarked Reserves for the purposes identified in the above table be approved, and be allocated to the Revenue Budget in each of the relevant financial years as the funds were used.

9. Shared Services Structure for Housing and Community Development – Request for approval for one-off Housing Revenue Account redundancy costs

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the proposed new structure for Housing and Community Development which had been developed to meet the requirements for the Joint Management and Shared Services (JMASS) project.

The JMASS project had focussed on identifying savings for the General Fund and had gained approval through Full Council for use of General Fund reserves to cover redundancy costs. Approval was now sought for use of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) reserves to cover one-off redundancy costs to put in place the HRA element of the new structures.

The biggest proportion of these costs related to the Housing and Community Development structure, however some costs also related to other redundancies across the Council where a proportion of an officer's time was attributed to HRA work.

Approval was also sought for an earmarked provision for further redundancy costs that might be required for Tier 6 redundancies across the Council once these proposals had been developed. This was an estimated figure provided by Finance based on modelling which had been applied in respect of earlier JMASS work.

The opportunity would be taken to review the HRA structure as part of the

JMASS project as it would be sensible to consider both General Fund (GF) and HRA at the same time to provide the optimum structure to best meet the needs of tenants. With regard to GF services, where a significant focus was on making financial savings, the approach taken for the HRA services was very different with emphasis placed on having the right structure to invest in better outcomes for tenants, rather than to make savings for the HRA.

Although the redundancy costs borne by the HRA were fairly significant, the structure would deliver significant benefits to tenants through providing joined-up partnership working on the ground that would deliver far more effectively than the current piecemeal public sector model currently in place. The Community Area Working model proposed in the new structure used the Halcon One Team model as an exemplar and the anticipated outcomes clearly justified this one-off cost over the HRA Business Plan lifetime.

Resolved that a Supplementary Estimate from the Housing Revenue Account General Reserves be approved to fund the estimated one-off costs to the Housing Revenue Account of the Joint Management and Shared Services restructure to provide the necessary structure to deliver improved outcomes for tenants over the lifetime of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan. Approval was sought as follows:-

- (i) £199,000 towards the Tier 4 and 5 Housing and Community Development structure;
- (ii) £28,000 to allow the Joint Management and Shared Services project to proceed in other parts of the Council for Tier 4 and 5; and
- (iii) £120,000 as a supplementary estimate of potential future Tier 6 redundancy costs across Housing and Community Development and other Council areas, with any underspends being returned to reserves.

10. **Approval of Redundancies**

Considered report previously circulated, requesting Member approval of the redundancies of the Revenues, Benefits and Debt Recovery Manager (West Somerset Council) with effect from 31 July 2014 and the Planning Policy Lead (Taunton Deane) with effect from 28 February 2015.

Under the Joint Management and Share Services (JMASS) project the post holders had been placed 'at risk' of redundancy and had expressed the preference to leave the organisation. These requests allowed other staff to be slotted into posts within the new JMASS structures and had been accepted by the Assistant Director (Resources) and Assistant Director (Planning and Environment) and the Senior Leadership Team after consideration of all the financial implications and HR implications.

Full Council approval was necessary as the 2014/2015 Pay Policy Statements required severance payments for staff exceeding £100,000 to be reported to Members.

Resolved that the redundancies of the Revenues, Benefits and Debt Recovery Manager with effect from 31 July 2014 and the Planning Policy Lead with effect from 28 February 2015 in accordance with the financial details set out in the report be approved.

11. Recommendations to Council from the Executive

(a) Financial Outturn 2013/2014

The Executive had recently considered the Council's financial performance for the 2013/2014 financial year, a summary of which was as follows:-

General Fund (GF) Revenue - The GF Revenue Outturn for 2013/2014 was a Net Expenditure position of £13,453,000, which was a £964,000 (6.7%) underspend against the Final Net Budget for the year. This was largely due to above forecast income levels in parking, planning, burials/cremations - as well as cost reductions in the final months of the year.

The following proposals were those the Executive wished to recommend for approval which would allocate £418,000 of the underspend or additional budget approvals for 2014/2015:-

Supplementary Requests of Underspend 2013/2014

Bid Description	Bid (£'000)
Development of IT Strategy For TDBC	50
Cemetery Extension – Taunton	121
Grass Cutting	50
Weed Spraying	10
Street Cleansing	42
Car Park Improvements	125
Capital Grants for Parish Play Equipment/Sports Halls/Clubs	20
TOTAL requested for approval	418

The GF reserves balance as at 31 March 2014 stood at £2,480,000. This balance would reduce to £2,062,000 if the above allocations of £418,000 were approved – well above the minimum reserves level.

The Earmarked Reserves balance as at 31 March 2014 was £13,009,000, representing funds that had been set aside for specific purposes to fund expenditure in 2014/2015 or later years including future capital programme spending, a new Business Rates Smoothing reserve and funding set aside to support service restructuring and transformation projects.

General Fund (GF) Capital - The GF approved Capital Programme at the end of 2014/2015 was £17,973,000. This related to schemes which would be completed over the next five years. The profiled expenditure on Capital Programmes during 2014/2015 was £4,350,000, with £13,623,000 being carried forward.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Revenue - The HRA was a 'Self-

Financing' account for the Council's Housing Landlord function, which was budgeted to 'break even'. The HRA Outturn for 2013/2014 was a net underspend of £861,000 (3.3% of gross income).

The Executive had recommended that funding should be allocated from the underspend for the following projects:-

- Community Development Reserve – to allow one-off investments in Community Development - £500,000; and
- Administration Support for area based teams to March 2016 - £41,000.

The HRA Reserve balance as at 31 March 2014 stood at £3,059,000, which was above the minimum level (£1,800,000) set within the Council's Budget Strategy and HRA Business Plan.

The HRA Earmarked Reserves balance as at 31 March 2014 stood at £614,000. This included £404,000 related to the Social Housing Development Fund, which was earmarked to fund investment in new social housing provision within the Council's own housing stock.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital - The HRA approved Capital Programme at the end of 2014/2015 was £20,363,000. This related to schemes which would be completed over the next five years. The profiled expenditure on Capital Programmes during 2014/2015 was £8,647,000, with £11,655,000 being carried forward and a net underspend of £61,000 being reported.

Deane DLO Trading Account - The year-end financial statements reported that the DLO had made an overall profit of £332,000 after contributing £101,000 to the General Fund.

Although this surplus had been transferred to the DLO Trading Account Reserves approval was sought to transfer £25,000 of this underspend to the Capital Replacement Reserve Fund to enable fuel tanks to be replaced and £240,000 into the DLO Vehicle Replacement Earmarked Reserve.

Deane Helpline Trading Account - The Deane Helpline had made a net overspend of £47,000 against the final budget. However, once Technical Accounting adjustments of £51,000 had been reversed, this deficit reverted to a surplus against budget of £4,000.

Taunton Unparished Area Fund (Special Expenses) - Total expenditure from the fund during 2013/2014 amounted to £75,004. Currently, £40,867 remained unallocated.

The introduction of the Business Rates Retention system had introduced new financial risks for the Council. The Council's share of Business Rates funding was directly linked to the total amount of Business Rates due and collected in the area.

Taking into account the inherent risks and uncertainties within the retention system, together with accounting timing differences, it was recommended that

a contingency balance of £1,265,000 in a Business Rates Smoothing Account Reserve should be maintained. This would be monitored over future years to gauge the affects on the Council as the retention system 'matured'.

Moved by Councillor Mrs Smith, seconded by Councillor T Slattery, that part (e) of the recommendation be amended to read as follows:-

“£500,000 to fund Community Development in 2014/2015 with delegated authority for initiatives to be approved by the Portfolio Holder for Housing, as recommended by a politically balanced Members' Panel, from the Wards containing our Council House Stock along with the Chairman of the Tenant Services Management Board and the Shadow Portfolio Holder for Housing. This Panel to be set up immediately to meet and to recommend specific proposals to the Portfolio Holder who would make the decision subject to the normal governance procedures of the Council.”

The amendment was put and was carried.

On the motion of Councillor Williams, it was:-

Resolved that:-

- (a) The Council's (revenue and capital) performance for the year 2013/2014, for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account, including the pre-approved carry-forwards and transfers to earmarked reserves, be noted;
- (b) The Carry Forward of General Fund Capital Programme Budget totalling £13,623,000 be approved;
- (c) The Carry Forward of Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme Budget totalling £11,655,000 be approved;
- (d) HRA Supplementary Estimates in 2014/2015 in the following areas, utilising 2013/2014 underspends, be supported and that the following be approved:-
 - i. £500,000 to fund Community Development in 2014/2015 with delegated authority for initiatives to be approved by the Portfolio Holder for Housing, as recommended by a politically balanced Members' Panel, from the Wards containing our Council House Stock along with the Chairman of the Tenant Services Management Board and the Shadow Portfolio Holder for Housing. This Panel to be set up immediately to meet and to recommend specific proposals to the Portfolio Holder who would make the decision subject to the normal governance procedures of the Council; and
 - ii. £41,000 to fund Administration Support in 2014/2015 and 2015/2016.
- (e) The transfers to the DLO Trading Account Earmarked Reserves to fund

vehicle replacements and fuel tank purchases and for this to be added to the General Fund Capital Programme for 2014/2015 be also approved.

Also **resolved** that General Fund Supplementary Estimates in 2014/2015 in the areas relating to an IT Strategy for the Council, the Taunton Cemetery extension, additional grass cutting and weed spraying, street cleansing works, car park improvements and play equipment grants, utilising 2013/2014 underspends, be not supported;

(b) Centre for Outdoor Activity and Community Hub (COACH) Project

Consideration had recently been given to the proposed provision of a Centre for Outdoor Activity and Community Hub (COACH) on a site at French Weir, Taunton. The facility would be both a building, including a floodable boat store, and a community facility.

The intention was to provide a sustainable and functional permanent home for a wide variety of clubs and Community Groups and the replacement of the public toilets as the current ones were sited on land that was required for the COACH scheme.

An application had been submitted to Sport England for grant funding earlier in the year. Initial discussions with Sport England had shown a good level of support for the project due to its unique nature.

With regard to contributory funding from the Council, Executive Councillor Norman Cavill had agreed last year to accept the Trustees' proceeds from the sale of land at Castle Street, Tangier (the former Taunton Youth and Community Centre) on the understanding that the money would be ring fenced for capital funding of youth projects to be agreed at the appropriate time.

To support the COACH project in their application to Sport England, the Executive had been of the view that a proportion of these funds - £200,000 - should be earmarked for the project as the required funding.

The proposed term of the lease of the land at French Weir was proposed to be 125 years from a date to be agreed at a peppercorn rent. All the other terms and conditions, including those relating to the provision of replacement public toilets, would be agreed by the Council's Property Estates Team in consultation with the Executive Councillors for Leisure and Property.

On the motion of Councillor Mrs Herbert, it was

Resolved that:-

- (a) The grant of a long lease to the COACH Trustees at a peppercorn rent on the terms and conditions set out in the report to the Executive be approved;

- (b) A proportion of the funds - £200,000 – from the sale of the former Taunton Youth and Community Centre be assigned as funding for the COACH project to support the application for funding made to Sport England; and
- (c) When the funds were forthcoming from the sale, they be added to the Council's Capital Programme.

(c) Council Accommodation

Consideration had recently been given to a report concerning the future of Taunton Deane Borough Council's Office Accommodation following an options appraisal exercise in December 2013.

The two options which had been under consideration over the past six months were a new build at Firepool, Taunton and a move to County Hall.

The Deane House had been built in 1987 and had seen little refurbishment since then. The building now needed significant investment.

The Council also had the challenge of meeting an unprecedented budgetary challenge and was considering all ways of cutting overhead costs in order to safeguard investment in front line services.

The review that had been undertaken had focused on the future of the Council's main office base and had looked at options for this. Whilst a detailed financial and qualitative evaluation of the two options had been undertaken, the Council had to be mindful of a number of key factors.

The Deane House cost around £650,000 per annum to occupy and staying at this location would involve significant additional costs although, in any event, the building was too large for the Council's current requirements.

A full Condition Survey had been carried out on the building and it was likely that in the region of £3,000,000 would need to be spent during the course of the next 2-5 years to make it fit for purpose.

Other organisations which had chosen to rationalise their office accommodation had at the same time incorporated new ways of working such as "Smart Office".

The evaluation of the Council's accommodation needs had included a range of qualitative criteria, including the importance of a flexible accommodation solution. In addition, the evaluation had focussed on a "best assessment" of the accommodation needs for the Council as currently understood.

During the second half of 2013 an internal review and high level option appraisal had been undertaken culminating in the property consultancy DTZ

being appointed to undertake the detailed feasibility study of the two preferred options of either moving to County Hall or a new build at Firepool.

The review process had now included consideration of the potential increased usage of West Somerset House in Williton to accommodate the single staff structure supporting both Councils. There was the potential for additional workstations to be provided there on the basis of a more efficient desk layout and the introduction of Smart Office ways of working, thereby reducing the Taunton space requirement.

The appraisal process had brought together two areas of analysis - financial and non-financial. The following was the outcome of the Overall Value for Money assessment:-

	60%	40%	100%	
	Financial Scoring	Qualitative Scoring	Total Combined Scoring	VFM Ranking
DH SQ+	48.67	95.15	67.26	4
SCC 25- Year Lease	97.68	100.00	98.61	1
Firepool LL	73.46	98.79	83.59	2
Firepool 25 Year Lease	76.09	68.48	73.05	3

The above exercise had concluded that an accommodation solution at County Hall was the best overall Value for Money Option.

Both the main options under consideration had assumed the subsequent disposal of The Deane House and the wider site. However, there was now a clear commitment to reinvest the amount of any receipt obtained for The Deane House and site in an income generating investment.

Any agreement to move to either County Hall or Firepool would involve many substantial next steps and tasks to implement and require significant resource.

Some cost estimates had been acquired to support the project via external project management support and other professional services. These would be subject to further negotiation and suitable scrutiny via procurement. The anticipated third party costs to see the project through to completion in 2017 were in the region of £250,000. This figure included the costs associated with the disposal of The Deane House site too.

Resolved that the recommendations concerning the Council's future main office accommodation being located at County Hall, Taunton, the disposal or retention as a regeneration project of The Deane House site and all other matters detailed, be not supported.

12. Reports of the Leader of the Council and Executive Councillors

(i) **Leader of the Council (Councillor Williams)**

Councillor Williams's report covered the following topics:-

- Regional Growth Funding;
- Local Government Association Annual Conference – 8 – 10 July 2014;
- Somerset Community Foundation;
- Accommodation Project;
- 2013/2014 Underspends;
- Flood Alleviation Scheme; and
- Affordable Housing Open Day – 4 June 2014.

(ii) **Planning, Transportation and Communications (Councillor Edwards)**

The report from Councillor Edwards provided information on the following areas within his portfolio:-

- Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (SADMP);
- Monitoring;
- Mid Devon Local Plan;
- Policy Team Staffing;
- Jurston Development Brief;
- Neighbourhood Planning,
- Taunton Railway Station Enhancement;
- Exeter to Taunton Metro – Wellington Railway Station; and
- Communications.

(iii) **Community Leadership (Councillor Mrs Jane Warmington)**

Councillor Mrs Warmington presented the Community Leadership report which focused on the following areas within that portfolio:-

- Community Safety;
- 2014 Health Profiles for Wards across Somerset;
- Changing the lives of troubled families (Family Focus);
- Early help – getset services;
- Voluntary Community Workforce – getting ready to work;
- North Taunton One Team;
- Voluntary and Community Sector Support;
- Taunton Deane Youth Network; and
- Education for Life.

13. **Suspension of Standing Order**

Resolved that Standing Order 28, Time limits for all meetings be suspended to enable the meeting to continue for a further half an hour.

(iv) **Economic Development, Asset Management, Arts and Tourism (Councillor Cavill)**

The report from Councillor Cavill covered:-

- Staffing Issues;
- Business Support;
- Marketing and Tourist Information Centre;
- Taunton Town Centre;
- Jobs Club; and
- Asset Management.-+

(v) **Environmental Services and Climate Change (Councillor Hunt)**

The report from Councillor Hunt drew attention to developments in the following areas:-

- Environmental Health / Licensing;
- Deane DLO; and
- Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP).

(vi) **Sports, Parks and Leisure (Councillor Mrs Herbert)**

The report from Councillor Mrs Herbert dealt with activities taking place in the following areas:-

- Parks;
- Community Leisure and Play; and
- Tone Leisure (Taunton Deane) Limited Activities.

(vii) **Housing Services (Councillor Mrs Adkins)**

Councillor Mrs Adkins submitted her report which drew attention to the following:-

- Changes to Enhanced Right to Buy;
- Right to Buy Applications;
- Tenant Services Management Board (TSMB) Election;
- Tenants' Forum;
- Affordable Housing Open Day;
- Deane Housing Development; and
- Housing Development and Enabling Manager.

(viii) **Corporate Resources (Councillor Mrs Stock-Williams)**

The report from Councillor Mrs Stock-Williams provided information on

the following areas within her portfolio:-

- Corporate and Client Services;
- Corporate Health and Safety;
- Customer Contact Centre;
- Health and Wellbeing;
- Legal, Democratic and Electoral Services;
- Resources; and
- Revenues and Benefits.

(Councillors Mrs Messenger left the meeting at 8.29 pm. Councillors Mrs Baker, Beaven, Bishop, Miss Durdan, Mrs Gaden, Hall, Henley, D Reed, P Smith, Stone, Swaine and Wren all left the meeting at 9.20 pm. Councillors T Slattery, Farbahi and Mrs Floyd left the meeting respectively at 9.29 pm, 9.51 pm and 9.54 pm.)

(The meeting ended at 9.56 pm.)

Taunton Deane Borough Council

At a meeting of Taunton Deane Borough Council held in the John Meikle Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton on 19 August 2014 at 6.30 p.m.

Present The Mayor (Councillor D Durdan)
The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Mrs Hill)
Councillors Mrs Adkins, Mrs Allgrove, Mrs Baker, Beaven, Bishop, Bowrah, Cavill, Coles, Denington, Miss Durdan, Farbahi, Mrs Floyd, Mrs Gaden, Gaines, Hall, Hayward, Henley, Mrs Herbert, Horsley, Hunt, Miss James, R Lees, Mrs Lees, Ms Lisgo, Meikle, Mrs Messenger, Morrell, Nottrodt, Prior-Sankey, D Reed, Mrs Reed, Gill Slattery, T Slattery, Miss Smith, Mrs Smith, P Smith, Mrs Stock-Williams, Stone, Swaine, Tooze, Mrs Warmington, Watson, Mrs Waymouth, Ms Webber, A Wedderkopp, D Wedderkopp, Williams and Wren

1. Apologies

Councillors Mrs Adkins, Farbahi and Ross.

2. Declaration of Interests

Councillors Mrs Baker, Coles, Prior-Sankey, A Wedderkopp and D Wedderkopp declared personal interests as Members of Somerset County Council. Councillor Henley declared personal interests as a Member of Somerset County Council and as an employee of Job Centre Plus. Councillor Hunt declared personal interests both as a Member of Somerset County Council and as one of the Council's representatives on the Somerset Waste Board. Councillor Mrs Hill declared a personal interest as an employee of Somerset County Council. Councillor Tooze declared a personal interest as an employee of the UK Hydrographic Office. Councillor Wren declared a personal interest as Clerk to Milverton Parish Council. Councillor Nottrodt declared a personal interest as a Director of Southwest One. Councillors D Durdan and Stone declared prejudicial interests as Tone Leisure Board representatives. Councillor Gill Slattery declared personal interests as a member of the Board of Governors at Somerset College, a Patron of the Supporters of Taunton Women's Aid and as one of the Council's representatives on the Parrett Internal Drainage Board. Councillor Swaine declared a personal interest as a part-time swimming instructor. Councillor Farbahi declared a personal interest as a local owner of land in Taunton Deane. Councillor Mrs Herbert declared a personal interest as an employee of Job Centre Plus. Councillor Ms Lisgo declared a personal interest as a Director of Tone FM.

3. Communications

Councillor Williams reported that he had recently received an email with a link to an article in a national newspaper regarding 'Britain's 20 friendliest places

to live'. According to a survey conducted by a comparison website in relation to the British property market, Taunton was number three on the list.

Councillor Williams read from the article which stated:- *“You don’t have to be tanked up with the local cider to appreciate the friendliness of Taunton and the people who live there. The County Cricket Ground, beloved of West Country sports fans, is legendary for its relaxed good humour. An abundance of independent shops and businesses in the town centre reveals an idiosyncratic community brimming with optimism. There are plenty of charming Victorian terraces in town and picturesque country cottages nearby.”*

4. **Financial Outturn 2013/2014 - Recommendation to Council from the Executive**

Following the decision made by Full Council on 22 July 2014 to which the ‘six month’ rule applied, a motion in accordance with Standing Order 23 (1) (b) had been received seeking rescindment of the part of the decision as to the proposed use of the General Fund (GF) Revenue 2013/2014 underspend.

The GF Revenue Outturn for 2013/2014 was a Net Expenditure position of £13,453,000, which was a £964,000 (6.7%) underspend against the Final Net Budget for the year. This was largely due to above forecast income levels in parking, planning, burials/cremations - as well as cost reductions in the final months of the year.

The following proposals were those the Executive wished to recommend for approval which would allocate £418,000 of the underspend or additional budget approvals for 2014/2015:-

Supplementary Requests of Underspend 2013/2014

Bid Description	Bid (£'000)
Development of IT Strategy For TDBC	50
Cemetery Extension – Taunton	121
Grass Cutting	50
Weed Spraying	10
Street Cleansing	42
Car Park Improvements	125
Capital Grants for Parish Play Equipment/Sports Halls/Clubs	20
TOTAL requested for approval	418

Moved by Councillor Coles, seconded by Councillor Prior-Sankey, that an additional £20,000 be allocated to enable Capital Grants to be provided for Play Equipment, Sports Halls and Clubs in the Taunton Unparished Area.

The amendment was put and was carried.

Moved by Councillor Coles, seconded by Councillor Prior-Sankey, that a sum of £300,000 be set aside from the Reserves towards meeting any essential

payments towards the maintenance of The Deane House whilst the outcome of the Local Government Elections in May 2015 was awaited.

The amendment was put and was lost.

On the motion of Councillor Williams, it was:-

Resolved that:-

General Fund Supplementary Estimates in 2014/2015 in the following areas, utilising 2013/2014 underspends, be supported and that the following be approved:-

- i. £50,000 to fund an IT Strategy for the Council in 2014/2015;
- ii. £121,000 to be added to the General Fund Capital Programme for 2014/2015 to fund the Taunton Cemetery extension, funded by a Revenue Contribution to Capital outlay (RCCO);
- iii. £50,000 to fund additional grass cuttings in 2014/2015;
- iv. £10,000 to fund additional weed spraying in 2014/2015;
- v. £42,100 to fund Street Cleansing works in 2014/2015;
- vi. £125,000 be added to the General Fund Capital Programme for 2014/2015 to fund Car Park improvements, funded by a RCCO;
- vii. £20,000 be added to the General Fund Capital Programme for 2014/2015 to fund Play Equipment grants in 2014/2015, funded by a RCCO; and
- viii. £20,000 be allocated to enable Capital Grants to be provided for Play Equipment, Sports Halls and Clubs in the Taunton Unparished Area.

5. Council Accommodation - Recommendation to Council from the Executive

Following the decision made by Full Council on 22 July 2014 to which the 'six month' rule applied, a motion in accordance with Standing Order 23 (1) (b) had been received seeking rescindment of the decision concerning the future of the Council's Office Accommodation.

Following an options appraisal exercise in December 2013, the two options which had been under consideration over the past six months were a new build at Firepool, Taunton and a move to County Hall.

The Deane House had been built in 1987 and had seen little refurbishment since then. The building now needed significant investment.

The Council also had the challenge of meeting an unprecedented budgetary challenge and was considering all ways of cutting overhead costs in order to safeguard investment in front line services.

The review that had been undertaken had focused on the future of the Council's main office base and had looked at options for this. Whilst a detailed financial and qualitative evaluation of the two options had been undertaken, the Council had to be mindful of a number of key factors.

The Deane House cost around £650,000 per annum to occupy and staying at this location would involve significant additional costs although, in any event, the building was too large for the Councils current requirements.

A full Condition Survey had been carried out on the building and it was likely that in the region of £3,000,000 would need to be spent during the course of the next 2-5 years to make it fit for purpose.

Other organisations which had chosen to rationalise their office accommodation had at the same time incorporated new ways of working such as "Smart Office".

The evaluation of the Council's accommodation needs had included a range of qualitative criteria, including the importance of a flexible accommodation solution. In addition, the evaluation had focussed on a "best assessment" of the accommodation needs for the Council as currently understood.

During the second half of 2013 an internal review and high level option appraisal had been undertaken culminating in the property consultancy DTZ being appointed to undertake the detailed feasibility study of the two preferred options of either moving to County Hall or a new build at Firepool.

The appraisal process had brought together two areas of analysis - financial and non-financial. The following was the outcome of the Overall Value for Money assessment:-

	60%	40%	100%	
	Financial Scoring	Qualitative Scoring	Total Combined Scoring	VFM Ranking
DH SQ+	48.67	95.15	67.26	4
SCC 25- Year Lease	97.68	100.00	98.61	1
Firepool LL	73.46	98.79	83.59	2
Firepool 25 Year Lease	76.09	68.48	73.05	3

The above exercise had concluded that an accommodation solution at County Hall was the best overall Value for Money Option. A Virtual Freehold at Firepool ranked in second place and remaining in occupation at The Deane House and investing in the building fabric and services, ranked in last place.

Both the main options under consideration had assumed the subsequent disposal of The Deane House and the wider site. However, there was now a clear commitment to reinvest the amount of any receipt obtained for The Deane House and site in an income generating investment.

Any agreement to move to either County Hall or Firepool would involve many substantial next steps and tasks to implement and would require significant resource.

Some cost estimates had been acquired to support the project via external project management support and other professional services. These would be subject to further negotiation and suitable scrutiny via procurement. The anticipated third party costs to see the project through to completion in 2017 were in the region of £250,000. This figure included the costs associated with the disposal of The Deane House site too.

On the motion of Councillor Cavill, it was

Resolved that:-

- (1) It be agreed that the Council's preferred option for its future main office accommodation, reception and Member debating space was at County Hall, Taunton subject to Somerset County Council confirming its intent to develop the site and the agreement of Heads of Terms, detailed commercial negotiations and design;
- (2) Delegated authority be provided to the Director of Housing and Communities to progress this project in consultation with a cross party working group including the Portfolio Holder for Asset Management and Shadow Portfolio Holder. At all stages, key decisions would be brought back to Full Council for determination;
- (3) A Supplementary Estimate of £250,000 for project related costs be approved, funded by £210,000 (84%) from General Fund (GF) Reserves and £40,000 (16%) from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Reserves based on the current level of usage of The Deane House by GF and HRA services;
- (4) Approval be granted to initiate steps to facilitate either the disposal of The Deane House site on the most favourable terms or entering into a regeneration project which would enable retention of the site and derived benefit to the Council; and
- (5) Subject to (4) above, a suitable investment be made in an income deriving asset of equivalent value to the receipt derived from The Deane House site disposal.

(The meeting ended at 7.45 pm.)