

TAUNTON DEANE BOROUGH COUNCIL

A Meeting of the Taunton Deane Borough Council held in the Principal Committee Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton on 13 December 2005 at 6.30 pm.

Present: The Mayor (Councillor Lees)
The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Hindley)
Councillors Mrs Allgrove, Beaven, Bishop, Bone, Bowrah, Mrs Bradley, N Cavill, Miss S Cavill, Clark, Mrs Cluff, Coles, Croad, Davies, Denington, Durdan, Edwards, Floyd, Garner, Govier, Hall, Hayward, Henley, C Hill, Mrs Marie Hill, House, Leighton, Mrs Lewin-Harris, Lisgo, Meikle, Morrell, Mullins, Murphy, Paul, Phillips, Prior-Sankey, Slattery, Mrs Smith, Stone, Stuart-Thorn, Vail, Wedderkopp, Weston, Mrs Whitmarsh, Williams and Mrs Wilson

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 11 October 2005, copies having been sent to each Member were signed by the Mayor.

2. Apologies

Councillors Mrs Biscoe, Mrs Marcia Hill, Mrs Jones, Ms Priscott and Watson.

3. Vision for Taunton

Council received a presentation from Ian Franklin, Vision Delivery Team Project Director, and Mark Green also of the Vision Delivery Team regarding the present position of the Vision for Taunton. Progress to date of a number of different aspects of the Vision were reported. It was noted that presentations of this nature would be made to the Council from time to time in order that all Members were kept up to date and informed of progress on the Vision.

4. Members Allowances 2006/2007

Mr David Baker OBE, Chair of the Independent Members Allowances Panel, reported that the Panel had completed its annual review of member's allowances.

A copy of its report and recommendations had been circulated to all Councillors. It had also been considered by the Resources Review Panel at its meeting on 10 November 2005.

Details of the Member's Allowances scheme that had been recommended by the independent Panel were submitted.

These recommendations had been considered by the Council's Resources Review Panel at its meeting on 10 November 2005. The Panel had recommended that the recommendations of the Independent Member's Allowances Panel be agreed.

Moved by Councillor Mrs Lewin-Harris, seconded by Councillor Hall that the recommended Member's Allowances scheme for 2006/2007 be amended to enable a 3.5% increase in basic and special responsibility allowances.

The amendment was put and was lost.

On the motion of Councillor Mrs Whitmarsh it was RESOLVED that the existing Member's Allowances scheme be discontinued and replaced with the scheme recommended by both the Member's Allowances Panel and the Resources Review Panel with effect from 1 April 2006. (Full details of the scheme are set out in the report submitted to Council).

5. Car Parking Charges 2006/2007

Submitted recommendations from Councillor Bishop, Executive Councillor, Planning and Transportation following a meeting of the Traffic Regulation Order Panel held on 29 November 2005.

Moved by Councillor Henley, seconded by Councillor Floyd that the recommended parking tariffs for 2006/2007 be amended as follows. Following a proposal from Councillor Weston, the amendment was further added to and the following composite amendment was therefore submitted for consideration.

- a. Remove the proposed increase in car parking charges for Wellington.
- b. Remove the increase in shopper car park charges.
- c. Ring fence all the proposed monies gained from the increase in commuter car park charges for specific transport measures including (i) that income from car parks be used to improve public transport in Taunton Deane (ii) to investigate measures to increase use of public transport and to discourage single use of cars and (iii) to invest in measures to encourage alternative uses of transport.

The amendment was put and was lost.

On the motion of Councillor Bishop it was RESOLVED that:

- (a) the parking tariffs for 2006/2007 be increased as set out in the appendix attached to the report and
- (b) the Taunton Deane Borough (Off-Street Parking Places) (No 27 Amendment) Order 2005 as set out in the report submitted be confirmed. (Councillors Govier, Henley and Prior-Sanke declared a personal interest in the above item as members of Somerset County Council).

6. Recommendations to Council from the Executive

(a) Capital Programme Update 2005/2006

Reported that over recent months detailed reports had been submitted to the appropriate Review Panels regarding some expected changes to the Capital Programme of the Council. Although the details of each of these expected changes had been explained fully in the reports to the Review Panels, the

Executive had considered a report which consolidated these variations. Details were submitted of the schemes where changes to the Capital Programme were being sought.

On the motion of Councillor Mrs Bradley it was RESOLVED that the proposed changes to the Capital Programme be supported and the following be agreed:

- (i) Additional funding for the indoor tennis centre extension of £60,000.
- (ii) Virement of £44,000 from the "Grants to Parish Play Areas" budget towards health and safety improvements in Taunton Deane Borough Council play areas within parishes.
- (iii) Virement of a total of £28,000 from the Depot Improvements budget to DDA works and to the DLO reserve.
- (iv) Reductions to the Housing Capital Programme as outlined in the report.
- (v) A Supplementary Estimate from the HRA Working Balance of £500,000.
- (vi) A Supplementary Estimate from General Fund reserves of £60,000 to meet the additional debt costs that would result from a switch of supported borrowing approvals from the HRA to the General Fund.

(b) Acceptance of a Tender for Revenue and Benefits Software

At its meeting on 21 September 2005 the Executive had considered details of the outcome of the procurement exercise undertaken to buy a new suite of Revenues and Benefits software to replace the present in-house systems.

The tender had been awarded but it was necessary to vire £56,000 from Housing Benefit admin to Revenue Contribution to Capital in order to meet the expected shortfall in Capital funding.

On the motion of Councillor Hall it was RESOLVED that £56,000 be vired from Housing Benefit admin to Revenue Contribution to Capital.

(c) The Local Government Pay and Workforce Strategy

In March 2004 a three year pay settlement had been agreed for Local Government. As part of the settlement both employers and the trade unions had agreed that a number of pay and workforce related issues needed to be progressed and that this should be done through a national framework.

Progress had been made on all fronts in particular in workforce planning and leadership development. There was however still much work to be done on the pay and grading review and additional resources would be needed to meet the deadline for this exercise. Alternatives were currently being looked at to replace the Council's existing job evaluation system with one which met the requirements of this strategy. Following on from this it would be necessary to plan for a major review of every job in the organisation and re-evaluate them on the new chosen system. This was a very large piece of work that had to be

completed by March 2007. Further staff resources were required to achieve this. It was estimated that it would cost in the region of £75,000 which included staff, computer system support and necessary licences.

On the motion of Councillor Hall it was RESOLVED that a Supplementary Estimate from the General Fund reserve of £75,000 for additional resources to implement the new job evaluation scheme be agreed.

(d) Council Tax Section 13A Reduction Procedure

The Local Government Act 2003 had introduced various changes to the Council Tax legislation. One of these changes added a new "Section 13A Billing Authority's power to reduce the amount of tax payable" to the Local Government Finance Act 1992. The new powers allowed the Billing Authority to reduce the Council Tax payable either for specific classes of cases or for individual cases. The Billing Authority had the power to either reduce or cancel the amount of Council Tax payable.

The new legislation was designed to allow Billing Authorities to create local discounts or exemptions in order to cater for local circumstances. The disadvantage of this change, however, was that the cost of awarding any such reduction had to be wholly funded by the Billing Authority. No provision was made for the other precepting authorities to contribute.

This meant that the financial implications of any decisions to create a class of reduction had to be considered in detail before any such reduction was created. It was anticipated therefore that such reductions would only be awarded in exceptional cases.

The Executive had considered the procedure to be adopted to deal with such applications on a consistent basis. Details of the proposed procedure were set out both in the report to Council and the minutes of the Executive meeting.

On the motion of Councillor Hall, it was RESOLVED that the procedure and delegation of powers, as outlined in the report to Council, be agreed when considering applications for Section 13A reductions.

(e) Fees and Charges

The Executive had considered the fees and charges for 2006/2007 for the Land Charges, Licensing and Cemeteries and Crematorium services.

For the Land Charges service, no increase in the basic search fee was proposed. For the Cemeteries and Crematorium an estimated £132,000 would be generated by the proposed charges.

Appendix C submitted with the report to Council contained a summary of the Licensing fees and charges with the exception of the Licensing Act 2003 fees as these were set by statute and were currently under review centrally. The proposed fees and charges had also been considered by the Review Board.

On the motion of Councillor Edwards, it was RESOLVED that the fees and charges for 2006/2007 as set out in the report submitted to Council be agreed.

7. Questions to and Reports of the Leader of the Council and Executive Councillors

The following reports were made to the Council on the main items of current and future business.

(i) Leader of the Council (Councillors Williams)

Councillor Williams' report covered the following topics:

- Budget 2006/2007 and the Revenue Support Grant.
- Delivery of effective services.
- Vision for Taunton including the Livestock Market, Somerset County Cricket Club, Tangier and High Street areas.
- Regional Spatial Strategy.
- Silk Mills Bridge and the Park and Ride scheme.
- Overview and Scrutiny process.
- Turning on of the Taunton Christmas lights.
- Taunton Ice Rink.

(ii) Communications (Councillor Gwyneth Leighton)

Councillor Leighton submitted her report which covered the following areas:

- Information.
- Consultation.
- Local Government reputation project.
- Weekly Bulletin.
- Campaigns.
- Media training.
- Deane Dispatch.

(iii) Planning Policy and Transportation (Councillor Bishop)

Councillor Bishop submitted his report which drew attention to the following:

- 17th Annual Building Control Conference and Exhibition.
- Planning training.
- Planning applications and decisions.
- Regional Transport Strategy.
- Public Transport Forum.

(iv) Leisure, Arts and Culture (Councillor Mrs Bradley)

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

- Community Arts and Arts Development including the cultural quarter and the Brewhouse. With regard to the cultural quarter Councillor Mrs Bradley thanked the Chairman of the Working Party, Max Hebditch for the very considerable time and expertise that he had given to the Council.
- Parks.
- Sports.
- Tone Leisure Limited events.
- Networking.

(v) Economic Development, Asset Management and Tourism (Councillor N P Cavill)

The report from Councillor Cavill covered:

- Asset Management.
- Economic Development.
- Tourism.
- Rural Economy.
- Taunton High Street.

(vi) Environmental Services (Councillor Edwards)

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

- Licensing.
- Health and Safety.
- Food Safety.
- Environmental Protection.
- Waste Services.
- Cemeteries and Crematorium.

(vii) Housing Services (Councillor Garner)

Councillors Garners report focussed on two areas within the housing portfolio. The first provided the usual update on housing stock options and the second updated Councillors on the position regarding homelessness in Taunton Deane.

(viii) Resources (Councillor Hall)

The report from Councillor Hall provided information on the following areas within his portfolio.

- Boundary review.
- Customer Service.
- ISiS.
- Financial Services.

- Member Services.
- Internal Audit.
- Benefits.
- Revenues.

(ix) Community Leadership (Councillor Mrs Lewin-Harris)

The first draft Local Area Agreement had now been through the scrutiny process at Taunton Deane and had been submitted to Government Office by the County Council at the end of November. An outline was submitted of the aims and targets that had particular relevance to this Council. Councillor Mrs Lewin-Harris' report continued to focus on the following areas within her portfolio.

- Policy and Performance.
- Scrutiny.
- Relocatable CCTV camera.
- Community planning.
- Local action teams.

8. Appointment of Civic Marshall

For the past few years the post of Civic Marshall had been efficiently undertaken by Councillor Mrs Mary Whitmarsh. Councillor Mrs Whitmarsh now wished to relinquish this role and it was therefore necessary to appoint a successor. Councillor Mrs Jean Allgrove, a past Mayor of the Council, had indicated that she was willing to undertake the duties of Civic Marshall. RESOLVED that Councillor Mrs Jean Allgrove be appointed as Civic Marshall and Councillor Mrs Whitmarsh be thanked for carrying out the duties over the past few years.

(The following Councillors left the meeting at the times indicated. Councillor Bone at 7.25pm, Councillor Mrs Cluff at 8.00pm, Councillor Prior-Sankey at 8.25pm, Councillor Floyd at 9.10pm, Councillor Stone at 9.20pm, Councillor Govier at 9.25pm and Councillors Morrell and Edwards at 9.30pm).

(The meeting ended at 10.15pm).