

Taunton Deane Borough Council

At a meeting of the Taunton Deane Borough Council held in the Principal Committee Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton on 9 October 2007 at 6.30 pm.

Present The Mayor (Councillor Hayward)
The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Slattery)
Councillors Mrs Allgrove, Beaven, Bishop, Brockwell, Brooks, Cavill, Coles, Mrs Copley, Mrs Court-Stenning, Critchard, Denington, Durdan, Edwards, Farbahi, Guerrier, Henley, Ms Herbert, C Hill, Mrs Hill, Horsley, House, Miss James, R Lees, Mrs Lees, Mrs Lewin-Harris, McMahon, Meikle, Morrell, Paul, Prior-Sankey, Mrs Smith, P Smith, Mrs Stock-Williams, Stone, Stuart-Thorn, Thorne, Watson, Mrs Waymouth, Ms Webber, D Wedderkopp, A Wedderkopp, Mrs Whitmarsh, Williams, Mrs Wilson, Miss Wood and Woolley.

1. Minutes

The minutes of the Meetings of the Council held on 17 July 2007 and 18 July 2007, copies having been sent to each Member, were signed by the Mayor.

2. Apologies

Councillors Bone, Bowrah, Govier, Hall, Leighton and Mullins.

3. Declarations of Interest

Councillors Henley, Paul and Prior-Sankey all declared personal interests as Members of Somerset County Council. Councillor Mrs Allgrove declared a personal interest as Chairman of the Somerset Association of Local Councils. Councillors Miss James also declared a personal interest.

4. Written Questions to Members of the Executive

(a) Councillor Thorne asked the following question:-

“Given the importance placed by the Council on dealing with anti-social behaviour in Taunton Deane, how satisfied is the Portfolio Holder for Community Leadership with the current delivery of this work, given that the Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator (a post hosted by the Council) has been absent through illness for the past eight weeks and that the situation is exacerbated by only having a part-time Community Safety Officer at present and what, if any, steps is the Portfolio Holder going to take to ensure an improvement in the situation?”

Councillor A Wedderkopp replied that cover for the Community Safety Officer is full-time - that is, 37 hours per week. The confusion about her being part-time may be because she is only based in the office here two days a week, but is doing Taunton Deane Borough Council work for the remaining three days per week also and is always contactable by phone or email. This is a temporary arrangement whilst the substantive post-holder is on secondment to the Home Office which is due to finish in March 2008 (but may end sooner in December). Dealing with anti-social behaviour case work is not a part of this post.

Taunton Deane Borough Council does not have an Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator. We host the post that is provided using funding from the Home Office. As such, when the post holder became ill there was no one else with the expertise to cover that work although Sedgemoor District Council's Anti-Social Behaviour staff did help out, through goodwill, by helping to "tie up loose ends" on cases when the post-holder first became ill. Wherever possible, guidance was given to help any callers with anti-social behaviour issues as follows:-

- Someone reporting anti-social behaviour who is a Council or Housing Association tenant were referred to their Housing Officer;
- Noise complaints were directed to Environmental Services;
- Someone calling for advice about Local Action Teams were referred to the Police Local Action Team Co-ordinator; and
- For other cases of anti-social behaviour, details were taken and the caller was advised that due to staff illness their complaint may not be dealt with for some time.

In the circumstances, I am satisfied that all that could be done over this difficult period has been done. The Home Office funding for the Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator post ceases on 31 March 2008. If the Council wishes to continue this post then funding of approximately £25,000 per annum would need to be found. In the unlikely event of this being possible alternatives are being investigated.

There is currently work being undertaken looking at the whole range of "safer communities" work undertaken throughout the whole County. Part of this review will look at how the limited resources for specialist posts such as the Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator can be used more effectively. Also, the contracts between the Police and Council's for Police Community Support Officers give us an opportunity to identify their role in dealing with anti-social behaviour casework.

(b) Councillor Edwards asked the following questions:-

"The Somerset Waste Board has been formed with the total support of all the political groups at Taunton Deane Borough Council.

It is therefore extremely disappointing and regretful that the administration has decided to ignore requests from the Conservative

Leadership and the Health and Leisure Review Panel to share the member representation on the Somerset Waste Board. This is especially disappointing considering the depth of knowledge that is available from within the Conservative Group from involvement in the process of developing the Somerset Waste Board over the last four years and also having introduced the key phases of the Sort It system in Taunton Deane.

Unfortunately, the actual decision to appoint two Liberal Democrat Executive Members to the Somerset Waste Board was taken at a meeting of the Executive on 19 July 2007 held at Lyngford House at 2.00 pm in the afternoon and the decision was not published until the period had passed for any call in. We therefore found out that this had been agreed when it was too late to challenge or discuss.

It was then agreed by you, as Leader of the Council, that this decision would be brought back to the Executive so it could be properly debated and our views put forward. This satisfied our group in light of the clerical error made in not informing the Council of the decision.

Unfortunately you then reneged on this agreement and decided to not bring this forward on the Executive's agenda as you had promised.

Therefore, I am forced to bring this to Full Council to ask the following questions:-

- (1) Why the Executive decided to ignore the views of Health and Leisure and the Conservative Group and decided on two Liberal Democrat Members on the Somerset Waste Board?
- (2) Why you felt it was necessary to renege on an agreement to put this item forward to the Executive? And
- (3) How you can justify constantly stating in your reports to Council and verbally that you want to work together as a Council and act with us as the largest opposition group in a "spirit of co-operation" when you ignore such an ideal opportunity to share what is ultimately a non-political role and one that I believe is better shared for the good of our community?

I would add that the Conservative Group has discussed this issue and unless we can find a solution to this issue we will bring a motion to the Full Council in December."

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Henley, replied as follows:-

- (1) Firstly, the meeting of the Executive on 19 July 2007 at Lyngford House was a public meeting and I apologise that a mistake was made in not notifying the decision taken at the meeting. If you or any member of your group had attended this meeting of the Executive

then you would have known of the decision and then challenge it in the appropriate way.

- (2) I did not renege on any agreement. The agreement was to take the decision back to Executive agenda setting. The Executive then decided not to change the appointment and therefore not to bring the decision before the Executive. All five District Council's and the County Council which make up the Somerset Waste Board are also sending two members of their ruling groups.
- (3) I do not accept your point about not working together. Since becoming Leader, I have worked very hard to be inclusive and to work together. Firstly you were offered a joint administration which for some reason you turned down. Secondly, I have made available to a number of your group an opportunity to become an observer at the Brewhouse Board Meetings when I could have just sent a Liberal Democrat Councillor. I have included your Leader in the press and publicity involving the launch of SouthWest One, acknowledging the role played by your Leader in this process and fully involving your Group and Members in the campaign against the Unitary Council, even attending a joint delegation with the Conservative Councillor Leader to see the Minister in London. As you will be aware, I will be making an offer to all Group Leaders on the budget to work together to pool our ideas on this subject so it is very unfair to claim that I have not been inclusive. However, I am sure that from time to time you will understand that sometimes it is appropriate for a member of the ruling group to fill a particular position.

5. **Recommendation to Council from the Executive**

Plastic and Card Kerbside Collections – Supplementary Estimate

At the meeting of the Executive held on 19 July 2007, the decision was taken to award the County Wide Recycling and Waste Collection contract. As part of that decision, the Executive recommended that a Supplementary Estimate be made to fund the costs of trials of kerbside plastic and card collections.

RESOLVED that a Supplementary Estimate from the General Fund Reserves of £80,000 be agreed to fund the one off costs of the trials of the new methods of plastic and kerbside collections.

6. **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 (Councillor Henley)**

Councillor Henley's report covered the following topics:-

- The proposed Unitary Council for Somerset result.
- Partnership working.
- The launch of SouthWest One.
- The current budget gap and the effect the cost of concessionary travel scheme had on this.
- The Wellington Food Town event.
- The success of Wellington and Taunton in Bloom.
- The success of the Taunton Flower Show.
- The commencement of the new system of Overview and Scrutiny.
- Meetings with local partners and stakeholders.

(ii) Communications (Councillor Brooks)

Councillors Brooks' report covered the following areas:-

- Public Relations.
- The Council's Website.
- Consultation and Information.
- Other communications.

(iii) Planning Policy and Transportation (Councillor Coles)

Councillors Coles submitted his report which drew attention to the following:-

- Improving Services in Somerset – SouthWest One.
- Taunton Firepool Regeneration.
- Development Management Staffing (Planning).
- Procurement of new development management IT system.
- Monkton Heathfield Major Planning Application.
- Residents parking.

On the assent of the Mayor, it was agreed that the Council's appreciation of the contribution made by both Members and Officers towards the successful launch of SouthWest One (formerly the ISiS Project) be recorded.

(iv) Economic Development, Asset Management and Tourism (Councillor Horsley)

The report from Councillor Horsley covered:-

- Inward Investment Agency.
- Destination Management Organisation.
- Taunton Business Improvement District (BID).
- Wellington Food Festival.
- Waterlinks.
- Taunton and Wellington Tourist Information Centre.
- Taunton East Development Trust.

- Sub National Economic Development and Regeneration Green Paper.
- Project Taunton.

(v) **Leisure, Arts and Culture (Councillor R Lees)**

The report from Councillor R Lees dealt with activities taking place in the following areas:-

- Events in the Parks.
- South West in Bloom triumphs.
- Arts.
- Westival.
- Parks Development.
- Sports Services.
- Tone Leisure.
- Programme initiatives.
- Sport and Health development.

(vi) **Environmental Services (Councillor Mullins)**

The report from Councillor Mullins (presented in his absence by the Leader of the Council, Councillor Henley) drew attention to developments in the following areas:-

- Licensing.
- Food Safety.
- Environmental Protection Team.
- Street Cleansing.
- Britain in Bloom – Deane Winners.
- Waste Collection and Recycling.

(vii) **Housing Services (Councillor Prior-Sankey)**

Councillor Prior-Sankey submitted her report which drew attention to the following:-

- The Housing Green Paper.
- Rough sleepers.
- New Affordable Housing.
- Transfer Removal Grants.
- Restructure.
- Deane Helpline.
- National News.

(viii) **Resources (Councillor Mrs Smith)**

The report from Councillor Mrs Smith provided information on the following areas within her Portfolio:-

- Democratic Services.
- Personnel.
- Corporate Support Services.
- ICT Service.
- Revenues and Benefits Service Unit.
- Financial Services.
- Scrutiny and Performance Management.

(ix) **Community Leadership (Councillor A Wedderkopp)**

Councillor A Wedderkopp's report focussed on the following areas within his Portfolio:-

- Taunton Deane Local Strategic Partnership.
- Community Partnerships.
- Crime and Disorder Partnership.
- Community and Services.

(The meeting ended at 8.38 pm.)