

Taunton Deane Borough Council

At a meeting of Taunton Deane Borough Council held in the Principal Committee Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton on 10 October 2006 at 6.00 pm.

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

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 13 September 2006, copies having been sent to each Member, were signed by the Mayor.

2. Apologies

Councillors Mrs Biscoe, Bone, Mrs Cluff, C Hill, Mrs Marie Hill, Mrs Marcia Hill, Lees, Paul, Ms Priscott and Stone

3. Public Question Time

- (1) Mr Barry Mowlem asked how much per household per annum it used to cost to collect household rubbish in the year before the recycling scheme began, how much it cost in the year of household recycling collections and how much it would cost in the 2007/2008 financial year allowing for inflation. What percentage of the rates were spent on such collections when everything went into one truck and what would that percentage be in 2007/2008. Mr Mowlem went on to make a lengthy statement in connection with the collection and recycling of household waste.

Councillor Mrs Bradley asked for a full copy of the questions posed by Mr Mowlem so that she could give a reply. She went on to draw attention to the fact that recycling was driven by the EU Landfill Directive whereby all local authorities had to find other ways of dealing with household waste.

- (2) Mr Paul Partington asked a series of 11 questions in respect of footpath 18/3 Lower Hilly Park to Rectory Road, Norton Fitzwarren.

Councillor Garner replied that the question of the costs incurred in 2002 was still being investigated by officers as the information was not

readily available and involved searches of the DLO files. He confirmed however that a written response relating to that and all the other questions of fact raised would be sent to Mr Partington within seven days. As Councillor Garner had indicated at the last Council meeting when a question was raised by Mr Partington in relation to this footpath, the decision to pursue this extinguishment was an operational decision made by the Housing Officers and not one with which Members would expect to be involved. Councillor Garner was, however, arranging to be briefed on the matter to satisfy himself that this was an appropriate approach.

- (3) County Councillor Steve Brooks asked if any action was being taken in relation to the alleged inappropriate use of facilities at Hamilton Park, Taunton. He also referred to the Housing Stock Transfer process and asked if the Council intended to discontinue action on this scheme if tenants voted 'no'.

Councillor Clark assured County Councillor Brooks that he was prepared to look into the alleged problems at Hamilton Park together with County Councillor Brooks.

Councillor Garner replied in relation to the Housing Stock Transfer process and confirmed that the aim was to lay the facts before the tenants in order that they could decide. All local authorities were going through this expensive process, however, the comments made by County Councillor Brooks were noted.

- (4) Mr P Harris referred to the outstanding disputes between the Council and Mr S Robins and asked why the Council had continued to take legal action against Mr Robins when Mr Harris was in the process of resolving some of the outstanding issues.

Councillor Garner replied that he was aware of the latest court case and its outcome and that this situation had continued for a number of years. He felt that the only way it could be resolved was through the judicial process.

4. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Prior-Sankey declared personal interests as a Member of Somerset County Council, the Strategic Planning Conference and the Regional Assembly. Councillor Henley also declared a personal interest as a Member of Somerset County Council.

5. Councillor Bryan Denington

On behalf of the Council the Mayor (Councillor Hindley) welcomed Councillor Denington back to the Council meeting after a long period of incapacity.

6. **Taunton Cultural Quarter**

Council received a presentation on the development framework for the Taunton Cultural Quarter. Details were given of the proposed framework, its main elements and the opportunities presented by the proposal.

7. **Recommendations to Council from the Executive**

Funding to Support the 2006 Westival

Submitted a request for a Supplementary Estimate to add to the marketing budget and to support the efficient administration of this event.

This particular request had been submitted to the Executive in July but the timetabling of meetings had meant that confirmation of this funding was now required by the Council.

RESOLVED that a Supplementary Estimate of £19,000.00 from General Funds, to provide a grant in support of the Westival 2006, be confirmed.

8. **Bridge at Taunton Railway Station**

Councillor Brenda Weston asked Councillor Mrs Bradley what was the estimated cost of replacing or making good the netting beneath the railway bridge and the cost of repainting the bridges to improve their appearance. How much longer did she anticipate the current conflict with Network Rail about this would continue and were there any contingency plans in place to deal with this problem.

Councillor Mrs Bradley replied that she had recently attended a site meeting and confirmed that the netting under the bridge was no longer effective and problems were being caused by feral pigeons. The netting had originally been installed by Taunton Deane with the consent of Network Rail and discussions were now continuing with Network Rail regarding the best way to deal with the problem. The repainting of the bridge was in Network Rail's forward programme and it was hoped that they would work together with the Council to solve the problems.

9. **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, Councillor Williams

Councillor Williams' report covered the following topics:-

- The regeneration of Taunton
- New growth point funding programme from DCLG

- Proposed Housing Transfer Ballot
- Wellington and the Livestock Market
- Improving Services in Somerset project
- Bishop Fox's School Education Business Partnership
- Regional Spatial Strategy
- Affordable Housing

(ii) Planning Policy and Transportation (Councillor Bishop)

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

- Statement of Community Involvement
- Blackdown Hills
- The Neroche Scheme
- Environmental Impact Assessments
- Introduction of Standard Planning Application Form
- Planning Legislation
- Time limits for Planning Permission
- Housing Appeal

(iii) Environmental Services (Councillor Mrs Bradley)

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

- Licensing
- Health and Safety
- Environmental Protection
- Waste Collection and Recycling
- Somerset Waste Partnership Procurement
- Cemeteries and Crematorium

(iv) Economic Asset Management and Tourism (Councillor Cavill)

The report from Councillor Cavill covered:-

- Asset Management
- Wellington Food Town
- Tourism and TIC
- Economic Development

(v) Leisure, Arts and Culture (Councillor Clark)

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

- Britain in Bloom
- Events
- Community Grants
- Tone Leisure Limited activities
- Somerset Art Week
- Museum Heritage Lottery Bid

(vi) Housing Services (Councillor Garner)

Councillor Garner's report focussed on two areas. First was the usual update on the Housing Stock Transfer project and second was an update on Energy Efficiency.

With regard to the Housing Stock Transfer, the end of this process was now in sight and a snapshot of recent Housing Stock Transfer project activity was submitted. Details were also submitted of the work that was planned for the next three months.

Working with British Gas for just over a year, the Council had achieved the highest number of cavity wall insulation installations in the country. Following this success the Council sought to continue this scheme but in addition were also actively looking to introduce further initiatives that were similarly cost-effective and environmentally beneficial.

(vii) Resources (Councillor Hall)

Councillor Hall submitted his report which covered the following areas within his portfolio.

- Print and Design
- Customer Services
- Wellington Community Office
- ISIS
- Procurement
- Member Services
- Financial Services
- Revenues
- Benefits
- Information Systems

(viii) Communications (Councillor Leighton)

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

- The Best Value General Survey
- Your Council, Your Views
- Information Management
- Corporate Complaint's Procedure

- Public Relations and Media Relations
- Deane Despatch

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

Councillor Mrs Lewin-Harris's report drew attention to the following:-

- Policy Commission
- Local Strategic Partnership which included the Apprenticeship Scheme, Somerset Gateway, Sustainable Community Strategy and LSP Review
- Crime and Disorder Partnership
- Equalities Survey
- CPA Inspection
- Corporate Strategy

10. **Standards Committee**

Reported that there had, for a little while, been two vacancies for independent members on the Council's Standards Committee. Following public advertisement and circulation of details to as many voluntary and community organisations as possible, two candidates had been interviewed for the vacancies.

The interviews had been carried out by David Baker, Chair of the Council's Standards Committee and Councillor Mrs Mary Whitmarsh, the Independent Councillor on the Committee. The two candidates were David Gollin and Harold Inder, both of whom appeared to be useful additions to the Standards Committee. The Interviewing Group had therefore recommended that they be appointed. Details of these two candidates had also previously been circulated to Group Leaders and they had raised no objection to their appointment. In order to comply with the terms of the Council's Constitution, these appointments had to be formally made by Council.

RESOLVED that David Gollin and Harold Inder be appointed as independent members of the Council's Standards Committee.

(Councillor Denington declared a personal interest in this issue as he was currently the subject of an investigation by the Standards Board for England.)

(Councillor Miss Cavill left the meeting at 9.25 pm and Councillor Murphy at 9.30 pm.)

(The meeting ended at 9.45 pm.)