

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 Tuesday 14 October 2003 at 6.30 pm.

Present: The Mayor (Councillor Govier)
The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Mrs Allgrove)
Councillors Beaven, Mrs Biscoe, Bishop, Bone, Bowrah, Mrs Bradley, Mrs Bryant, N P Cavill, Miss Cavill, Mrs Cluff, Croad, Denington, Durdan, Edwards, Floyd, Garner, Gill, Hall, Hayward, Henley, Mrs Hill, Hindley, House, Mrs Jones, Lees, Mrs Lewin-Harris, Lisgo, Meikle, Morrell, Mullins, Murphy, Mrs Nixon, Paul, Phillips, Prior-Sankey, Ms Priscott, Slattery, Mrs Smith, Stone, Stuart-Thorn, Trollope, Vail, Watson, Wedderkopp, Weston, Mrs Whitmarsh, Williams and Mrs Wilson.

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of the Council held on 22 July, 6 August and 8 September 2003, copies having been sent to each member, were signed by the Mayor.

2. Apologies

Councillors Cluff, Davies, Guerrier and Miss Peppard.

3. Public Question Time

- (a) Mr J Walker, on behalf of David Ridgewell, asked if evening bus services that matched demand could be provided.

Councillor Bishop replied that this matter had been considered recently. It was not in the public interest to subsidise routes that were running at a loss but the Council would continue to look at bus services operating within Taunton Deane.

- (b) Mr J Walker, representing Rail Future, asked if the Council were aware that funding had been attracted to assist in establishing a rail link between Minehead and Taunton.

Councillor Bishop replied that he was not aware that funds had been found but he wished the organisation good luck and said that the Council would offer what support it could.

4. Recommendations to Council from the Executive

(a) Leisure Trust Virement

On the motion of Councillor Williams, it was RESOLVED that £60,000 be vired from the Partial Exemption VAT Reserve to the Leisure Trust Set Up Budget, subject to the successful completion of the scheduled VAT inspection in September 2003.

(b) Visual Arts and Crafts Improvements in Taunton Deane 2003

On the motion of Councillor Mrs Bradley, it was RESOLVED that the Council in exercise of its responsibility for the economic social and environmental well-being of the Deane, support a step by step approach to a cultural quarter around Castle Green, starting with Hunt's Court. Such support to include the formation of a consortium or working part to steer the development.

(Councillor Mrs Cluff declared a prejudicial interest in this item and left the meeting during its consideration).

(c) Updated Housing Strategy and HRA Business Plans

On the motion of Councillor Garner, it was RESOLVED that the updated Housing Strategy and HRA Business Plan documents be adopted.

5. Questions to and Reports from the Leader of the Council and Executive Councillors

(a) The following question was asked:-

Councillor Paul asked Councillor Williams, the Leader of the Council:

The North West Package proposals have recently received two potential setbacks in funding and timing.

- (i) The probable loss of about 0.5 million in developer's contributions were revealed in the Inspector's findings in the public inquiry into the Local Plan. Councillor Williams has been reported in the Press as being fully committed to securing the funding needed to complete the Project but also as saying that TDBC would make no further contributions.

Would he accept that it would be unwise at this critical stage to rule out further step by step capital contributions by TDBC in addition to those committed by the previous administration, especially in the context of the new borrowing facilities for capital projects available to TDBC.

- (ii) The unofficial "referendum" in Bishops Hull on the site of the Park and Ride conducted by Councillor Morrell seeks to reopen a decision made last year with all party support from both TDBC and SCC.

If this issue were to be reopened, it would mean going back to the central Government with a revised package, risking the loss of funding completely because of the dislocation between the Bridge and the site of the Park and Ride, with no chance of approval until early 2005, then having to start the process of implementation all over again.

In the light of this, would he confirm that the Executive of TDBC are fully committed to the existing proposals and will not change their view whatever the results of Councillor Morrell's survey.

Councillor Williams replied that he had not said that the Council would make no further contributions but that at the moment it could not find funding. He assured Councillor Paul that the Council were still committed to this project and absolutely committed to finding the funding and that the County Council would make a contribution.

The unofficial referendum referred to by Councillor Paul was in fact a survey and not a referendum. The survey highlighted concerns of residents but this did not mean that the Council did not support the Park and Ride proposals.

(b) Reports

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

(i) Leader of the Council (Councillor Williams)

After welcoming Penny James as the Council's new Chief Executive, the Leader submitted a report which gave an overview of what was happening within Taunton Deane at present. His report covered the Terence O'Rourke study, the Wellsprings Sports Centre, proposed improvements to the Station Road/Priory Bridge Road junction, duelling of the A358 and the budget process for 2004/05.

(ii) Planning Policy and Transportation (Councillor Bishop)

Councillor Bishop's report covered the recently received report of the Inspector in relation to the Taunton Deane Local Plan, Local Development Frameworks, Planning Policy Guidance Note 3 and housing and transportation issues in general.

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

Councillor Mrs Bradley gave an update on the current position regarding Wellsprings, the contribution made by Sports Development to health improvement, reduction in crime and disorder and the social inclusion agenda, developments at Wellington, Parks, Playing Pitch Strategy, Green Spaces Strategy and the Arts.

(iv) Communications (Councillor Mrs Bryant)

Councillor Mrs Bryant reported upon the work being done on a Communication Strategy for the Council, the development of the Council's new website, the role played by communications in the Local Plan and public consultation on the Taunton Vision and the budget setting process.

(v) Economic Development, Property and Tourism (Councillor Cavill)

Councillor Cavill's report drew attention to redevelopment of the Norton Fitzwarren Trading Estate, the Lyons Report regarding relocation of sections of the Civil Service and progress in the relocation of Taunton Market.

(vi) Environmental Services (Councillor Edwards)

Councillor Edwards submitted his report and referred to the Best Value Review of Environmental Health, progress made regarding waste management, litter and the street scene. Reference was also made to the cleaning of the River Tone, a review of public toilets in the Deane, out of hours noise and flooding.

(vii) Housing Services (Councillor Garner)

Councillor Garner drew attention in particular to Housing Stock Transfer Options and the Housing Best Value Review, both of which would have far reaching impacts on the housing and tenants of Taunton Deane.

(viii) Resources (Councillor Hall)

Councillor Hall drew attention to developments regarding e-government, proposed improvements to member services, the work of the Independent Members Allowances Panel and current and future developments within Financial Services and Revenue Services. Details were also given of the current and future position regarding Information Systems, Benefits, Fraud Investigations and Somerset Direct.

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

Councillor Mrs Lewin-Harris drew attention to the public consultation exercise currently being carried out in respect of the Council's corporate priorities. She also reported on crime and disorder issues, community planning and the need to find ways to make the Local Strategic Partnership work more effectively.

(Councillor Stone arrived at the meeting at 7.00 pm, Councillors Mrs Jones and Miss Cavill left at 8.20 pm and Councillor Mrs Nixon at 8.45 pm).

(The meeting ended at 8.55 pm).