

Executive – 15 July 2009

- Present:** Councillor Wedderkopp (Vice-Chairman) (In the Chair)
Councillors Coles, R Lees, Prior-Sankey, Slattery and Mrs Smith
- Officers:** Penny James (Chief Executive), Joy Wishlade (Strategic Director),
Brendan Cleere (Strategic Director), Maggie Hammond (Strategic
Finance Officer), Phil Sharratt (Economic Development Manager) and
Richard Bryant (Democratic Services Manager)
- Also present:** Councillors Mrs Court-Stenning, Farbahi, Hall, Horsley,
Mrs Lewin-Harris, Morrell, Mullins, O'Brien, Mrs Stock-Williams and
Mrs Whitmarsh
Steve Read and Dave Mansell from the Somerset Waste Partnership
Councillor Parsley (South Somerset District Council and a Member of
the Somerset Waste Board)

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm.)

56. Apologies

The Chairman (Councillor Henley) and Councillors Paul and Mrs Wilson.

57. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 17 June 2009, copies of which had been circulated, were taken as read and were signed.

58. Public Question Time

- (1) Councillor Mrs Whitmarsh, as a member of the public, referred to the presentation Mr Jim Laflin had made to the Overview and Scrutiny Board on 19 March 2009 in connection with the former Gaumont Theatre, currently the Mecca Bingo Hall, in Corporation Street, Taunton.

Mrs Whitmarsh's recollection was that Members had been generally supportive of Mr Laflin's proposals to bring the Gaumont back into use as a multi-purpose cultural, arts and entertainment centre. Mr Laflin had asked the Council to support his ideas in writing before he attempted to contact the owners of the venue, the Rank Organisation, to discuss them further. He felt that such support would add credibility to his approach to the company.

Mrs Whitmarsh asked whether the Executive would consider giving the support requested by Mr Laflin.

In response, Councillor Mrs Smith stated that she would be happy to provide a letter of support on behalf of the Executive.

(2) Councillor Morrell, as a member of the public, referred to the presentation given to Full Council the previous evening by Professor Mark Hepworth. He had been particularly interested in Professor Hepworth's view that far stronger political leadership was needed to meet Taunton Deane's economic challenges in the future. Councillor Morrell asked:-

- (a) Would Professor Hepworth be re-employed by the Council to provide further guidance?
- (b) Could an urgent meeting of Full Council be arranged to address the "lack of political leadership"? and
- (c) Did the Executive have the moral courage to look at the situation afresh with a "blank piece of paper"?

Councillor Mrs Smith confirmed that Councillor Morrell's questions would be considered at the Executive's next agenda setting meeting and a response would be sent to him following that meeting.

(3) Councillor Mrs Lewin-Harris, as a member of the public, referred to an e-mail she had received some time ago from Simon Lewis concerning possible help the Council could give to businesses during the current recession.

It appeared possible that a National Non-Domestic Rate (NNDR) Hardship Scheme could be introduced which would provide eligible businesses with rate relief for up to a year. The cost of the scheme would be met by the Government (75%) and the Council (25%).

She asked whether the Executive had considered introducing this scheme.

Councillor Mrs Smith confirmed that a scheme had been developed and that she would have further discussions with Councillor Mrs Wilson, who held the Resources Portfolio, as to its possible introduction.

59. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Prior-Sankey declared personal interests as a Member of Somerset County Council and a former Member of the Somerset Waste Board. Councillor Coles declared a personal interest as a Director of Southwest One. Councillor Mrs Smith declared a personal interest as an employee of Somerset County Council. Councillor Slattery declared personal interests as a Member of the Somerset Waste Board and as an employee of Sedgemoor District Council. Councillor Mullins declared a personal interest as a Member of the Somerset Waste Board.

60. Implementation of Sort It Plus (+) Recycling Collections

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the introduction of a kerb side collection of plastic bottles and cardboard known as Sort It +.

The Somerset Waste Board instituted trial rounds with differing collection frequencies of plastic bottles and card in 2008.

The results of the trial had been previously discussed by the Overview and Scrutiny Board and it had been agreed that Service Package 2 (SP2) appeared to be the best value in terms of performance versus cost. However, it was recognised that SP5 would produce a higher level of performance if it could be made to be affordable.

A new "one pass" vehicle was used for further SP5 trials early in 2009 and these proved successful and significantly lowered the cost. This package meant that food waste, paper, cans, glass, card and plastic bottles could be collected weekly and residual rubbish collected fortnightly.

Somerset County Council had increased the Recycling Credit Payments to District Councils who planned to implement Sort It +, as the increase in recycling would reduce the amount of waste sent for disposal in landfill. Noted that additional recycling would lower the risk of incurring higher tax costs for residents in landfill tax.

The outcome of the trials and final costs of Sort It + were submitted. The Somerset Waste Partnership felt that SP5 should be adopted as its extra costs were relatively low, compared to the improvement in recycling and customer satisfaction.

Reported that there was currently no solution available for providing the enhanced recycling service to communal properties. May Gurney and the Somerset Waste Partnership were considering options for these properties. Whatever solution was eventually found would mean an increased cost.

The total annual costs for the Council if SP2 or SP5 were implemented across the County with all Districts participating was as follows:-

SP2 - £181,600

SP5 - £210,100

These prices were based on 2009/2010 costs and were net of Recycling Credit Payments. However, with fewer authorities participating at the outset, the costs would rise. All Somerset District Councils were considering introducing SP5, although only Taunton Deane and Sedgemoor were likely to implement it in the current financial year.

If both decided to go forward, the annual cost to Taunton Deane would be £269,300. The roll out would be phased over the 2009/2010 and 2010/2011 period. There was currently £145,000 in the budget for 2009/2010 and £189,000 in the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2010/2011. It would therefore be possible to reduce the requirement in the MTFP by £64,700. If only Taunton Deane went ahead, the Somerset Waste Partnership and May Gurney had confirmed that there would be no added costs.

As the Sort It + services were rolled out it was recommended that the bring bank sites should be removed. The Executive had agreed to remove bring banks in line with the implementation of the Sort It + services. A further £40,000 had been taken out of the 2009/2010 budget and £46,200 from 2010/2011 in the MTFP. As part of the roll out programme, the Somerset Waste Partnership would provide a strategy for the removal of the bring banks that fell within the budgetary constraints of the overall programme.

Further reported that there were capital costs of £163,400 for the purchase of extra recycling bins. However, Somerset County Council was in receipt of Waste Infrastructure Grant and had agreed to assist District Councils in these purchases by offering 75% of the cost. The cost to Taunton Deane was £40,900 which was available from residual waste reserves.

Taunton Deane would enter into a legal agreement with May Gurney to deliver kerbside card and plastic bottle collections throughout the Borough.

A detailed roll out plan that was most operationally and cost effective would be provided by the Somerset Waste Partnership and May Gurney. A communication plan would also be implemented prior to each part of the roll out for both Ward Members and the public involved in that particular area.

Resolved that:-

- (1) Service Package 5 (SP5) for Sort It + collections with roll out commencing in 2009/2010 and completing in 2010/2011 be adopted;
- (2) a strategy for the removal of bring banks be developed as part of the implementation of the Sort It + services;
- (3) the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan be amended for 2010/2011 onwards to reflect the actual costs of Sort It +;
- (4) recommendations and options for servicing communal properties be developed as soon as possible;
- (5) Full Council be recommended to approve an increase to the capital programme of £40,900 for the estimated shortfall in capital funding needed to purchase additional recycling bins, to be funded from uncommitted Waste Services Reserves; and
- (6) any further comments be submitted to the Somerset Waste Board for consideration.

61. Review of Deane DLO – Brief of External Advisors

Reported that Full Council had approved an alternative approach to completing the Core Council Review in April 2009. This included the commissioning of independent external expertise to advise the Council on

Theme 3 of the Core Council Review and develop options for the future of services provided by Deane DLO.

An outline of the timetable for Theme 3 of the Core Council Review was submitted as follows:-

Activity	Indicative Deadline
Challenge of current activities by Members and identification of priority outcomes the Council wanted to deliver for residents and the communities of Taunton Deane, from this theme. Staff and a number of key stakeholders would also be engaged in this process.	End June 2009
Detailed brief agreed by Members, outlining the requirements of independent advisors commissioned to develop options for the future of services provided by Deane DLO.	Early July 2009
Independent and external specialist advice commissioned to develop options against the brief agreed by Members.	End July 2009
Interim feedback on emerging options provided to Members. Members to provide guidance on which options to be developed in more detail.	End September 2009
UNISON would consider steer given by Members, with opportunity to provide input prior to decision on preferred option.	October 2009
Members sign off preferred option(s). (Corporate Scrutiny, Executive and Full Council if necessary).	November 2009
Corporate Management Team produce proposals to implement the preferred option(s), with timetable.	December 2009

A copy of the brief, which had already been considered by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 2 July 2009, was submitted for discussion. It was vital that the brief that external advisors would work to accurately reflected the wishes of Members.

The brief which had been prepared following consultation with UNISON, senior management and the Change Programme Member Steering Group had already been sent to bidders to enable them to prepare detailed tenders in advance of the interview. Any significant changes to the brief made by the Executive would be notified to the bidders.

Resolved that the brief, as submitted, be approved.

62. **Local Authority Business Growth Incentives (LABGI) Scheme : Awards 2009/2010**

Reference Minute No. 180/2008, considered report previously circulated, which provided an update on the LABGI allocations made last year and the proposed awards for the current and next financial years.

The Executive had previously agreed that funding amounting to £410,200 should be retained within Economic Development and allocated against three blocks over a three-year period of activity as follows:-

- Pioneer Somerset integration £ 85,500
(Into Somerset; Inward Investment Support and Aftercare; Creative Industry Support)
- Economic Development activity £244,700
(Economic Development Planning; Business Improvement District (BID) Shop Front Grant; BID Core Costs; BID Levy; Taunton Tourist Information Centre; Wellington Economic Partnership; Rural Business Support; Rural Projects Support)
- Deprived Area Regeneration £ 80,000
(Taunton Deane Young Enterprise Primary Programme; Enterprise Gateways; Feasibility Studies)

Total £410,200

Submitted for the information of Members a detailed report on expenditure against each of the above allocations during 2008/2009. In some instances the available finance had not been used and it had either been accrued into the current financial year or reallocated to another topic.

Also reported that the retrospective LABGI Award for Taunton Deane for 2008/2009 had been confirmed as £69,310, which was significantly less than in previous years:-

Taunton Deane LABGI Awards

2005/2006	£138,171
2006/2007	£245,327
2007/2008	£319,051
2008/2009	£69,310

It was generally felt that the Award would continue for this funding cycle to year 2010/2011, the final payment being received at the beginning of 2011/2012, but it was not known with any certainty what the level of the Award would be for future years.

It was therefore proposed that a 'commitment only' strategy should be adopted for expenditure during 2009/2010 to allow expenditure prioritisation of this year's Award to be made against the new Economic Development Strategy (EDS) and planning for economic recovery with the creation of a Reserve, with expenditure proposals being brought back to the Executive in a future report.

As a result, the summary of proposed changes to allocations for 2009/2010 and

2010/2011 was as follows:-

LABGI Allocations 2009 - 2011			
	2009/2010	2010/2011	
Pioneer Somerset	£	£	
Into Somerset	20,000	20,000	
Inward Investment Support & Aftercare	12,000	6,000	
Creative Industry Support			
Totals	32,000	26,000	
Economic Development			
Economic Development Planning	10,000	0	£20,000 Learning and Skills Council match funding
BID Shop Front Grant	0	0	
BID Core Costs	0	0	
BID Levy	4,300	8,600	
Taunton TIC relocation	60,000		
Wellington Economic Partnership	0	0	
Rural Business Support	0	0	
Rural Projects Support	10,000	10,000	
Totals	84,300	18,600	
Deprived Area Regeneration			
Taunton Deane YE Primary Programme	5,000	2,500	
Enterprise Gateways	20,000	20,000	
Feasibility Studies	0		
Totals	25,000	22,500	
Future EDS Priorities*	88,810		LABGI Reserve
* Exact figure subject to reconciliation			

Resolved that:-

- (1) a strategy of commitment only expenditure for the Local Authority Business Growth Incentives funds during 2009/2010 as shown in the above table be agreed; and
- (2) the creation of a reserve of funds for future expenditure to support economic and business growth priorities identified within the new Economic Development Strategy, be also agreed.

(Councillor O'Brien declared a personal interest during the discussion of this item.)

(The meeting ended at 7.57 p.m.)