

Executive – 18 August 2010

Present: Councillor Williams (Chairman)
Councillors Cavill, Mrs Court-Stenning, Edwards, Hall and Hayward

Officers: Penny James (Chief Executive), Joy Wishlade (Strategic Director), Shirlene Adam (Strategic Director), Tonya Meers (Legal and Democratic Services Manager), Adrian Gladstone-Smith (Performance and Client Lead), Fiona Gudge (Principal Accountant), Jayne Hares (Community Development Officer), Simon Lewis (Strategy and Corporate Manager) and Richard Bryant (Democratic Services Manager).

Also present: Councillors Bishop, Coles, Henley, Morrell, A Wedderkopp and Mrs Wilson.
Mr Maurice Stanbury, Independent Member of the Standards Committee.

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm.)

75. Apologies

Councillors Mrs Herbert and Mrs Lewin-Harris.

76. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 14 July 2010, copies of which had been circulated, were taken as read and were signed.

77. Declaration of Interests

Councillor Mrs Court-Stenning declared a personal interest as an employee of Somerset County Council. Councillor Cavill, as someone who owned land at Monkton Heathfield, declared a prejudicial interest and stated that he would leave the room if any discussion took place in relation to this land when the item covered by Minute No. 82 was considered. Similarly, Councillor Hayward, as someone who lived in a property which overlooked land at Ford Farm, Norton Fitzwarren, declared a prejudicial interest and stated that he would also leave the room if any discussion took place on this site in connection with the item covered by Minute No. 82 below.

78. Task and Finish Review into Promoting Cycling in Taunton Deane

Submitted for information, comment and approval the recommendations of the Promoting Cycling in Taunton Deane Task and Finish Group.

The Task and Finish Review had been set up to consider how best to encourage more cyclists to make use of the cycling network. As well as being relatively inexpensive to fund, cycling offered high return benefits in tackling traffic congestion, air quality and improving the health of local residents.

At its first meeting, the Task and Finish Review had agreed that its terms of reference should be as follows:-

- To identify what level of infrastructure existed for cyclists (such as cycle routes, bicycle parking and signage);
- What the take-up was: Who cycled? How many people cycled and why?
- What the genuine need was: What did cyclists need? Who would cycle but did not?
- What Project Taunton and other developments would provide for Cyclists;
- To Identify gaps between provision and need, and to propose solutions to fill these gaps; and
- To make recommendations to the Executive.

Subsequently, the Task and Finish Group agreed that the following additional terms of reference should be included to enable further research to be undertaken and points to be clarified:-

- (1) To carry out the review in two strands – What Taunton Deane could initiate and what Taunton Deane could do in Partnership with Somerset County Council and developers;
- (2) An overview of the effectiveness of travel plans and incentives prepared by employers and schools to encourage cycling;
- (3) An examination of the marketing and publicity material that was currently available and if it was suitable and effective;
- (4) How the promotion of cycling was incorporated in the Local Development Framework (LDF), Core Strategy and NHS Somerset; and
- (5) The type and extent of funding that was available for the promotion of cycling including funding from sources other than the County and Borough Councils.

A series of meetings of the Task and Finish Group had been held and evidence had been collected from a number of sources including Sustrans, Cycle Somerset, Project Taunton, The Road Safety Partnership, officers from Somerset County Council and Mr Carl Smith who had originally proposed the review.

The Task and Finish Group had discussed the recommendations it wished to make to the Executive. These recommendations had initially been considered by the Community Scrutiny Committee on 27 April 2010 when all of the recommendations had been supported.

The Corporate Management Team had received the report during July 2010 to enable officers to comment on the recommendations. These comments were detailed in the report.

The Task and Finish Group's recommendations were therefore as follows:-

Recommendation 1

Future agreement on the maintenance of established cycle way proposals needed to be clearly established from the onset. A policy needed to be in place for these agreements by the end of 2010.

Recommendation 2

That the need for bye-laws regarding cycling, currently in place with regard to Vivary Park, Hamilton Park and Goodland Gardens and all other Taunton Parks, be considered by Taunton Deane.

Recommendation 3

Any future consultants engaged to consider transport issues needed to ensure that the methods for future delivery and maintenance of cycle routes be fully included and explored in their recommendations.

Recommendation 4

The future arrangements for the cycle park facility which previously adjoined the St James Street Medical Centre in Taunton, needed to be formalised to ensure it was available for use or other options explored.

Recommendation 5

That a "wish list" of cycle related requirements be compiled to close the current gaps in cycle provision in Taunton. Additional requirements to be delivered through the LDF, Project Taunton or other transport related Plans.

Recommendation 6

That a joint Taunton Deane and Somerset County Council website be introduced, which would promote the use of cycling and include links to local cycle groups within three months from the date of the agreed final report.

In discussing the recommendations, the Executive felt that Recommendations 1 and 5 should be amalgamated to make the future provision of new routes and improvements to existing cycling facilities more likely to occur.

The following wording for this recommendation was proposed:-

"That although it was recognised that new cycle routes would be delivered over forthcoming years through the LDF, Project Taunton or other transport related plans, Somerset County Council and Taunton Deane Borough Council should jointly identify and maintain a list of future requirements aimed at closing the current gaps in the existing cycle provision in Taunton. Such a list would be used by the County Council to plan future works to the cycle network through its Cycling Strategy and by Taunton Deane's Development Management to ensure intended route improvements were not prejudiced by planning decisions. In addition, it was recommended that when any new routes or improvements were planned, particular regard should be given to their design to encourage usability, and arrangements for their future maintenance should be secured prior to physical works on the ground taking place."

Resolved that the recommendations of the Promoting Cycling in Taunton Deane

Task and Finish Group, as amended above, be accepted.

79. Financial and Performance Monitoring – Quarter 1 2010/2011

Considered report previously circulated, which provided an update on the financial position and performance of the Council to the end of Quarter 1 of the 2010/2011 financial year (as at 30 June 2010).

The monitoring of the Corporate Strategy, service delivery, performance indicators and budgets was an important part of the overall performance management framework.

Reported that a high level summary of successes and/or improvements in Quarter 1 included:-

- The General Fund Revenue showed a potential underspend of £62,000 (0.4%) against the budgeted net expenditure of £14,428,000;
- Progress was largely on course for the objectives and key activities identified in the new Corporate Strategy (especially 'Tackling Deprivation' and 'Affordable Housing');
- Council Tax and National Non-Domestic Rates debit collection rates were on course for the 2010/2011 target and the Quarter 1 results were an improvement on the same period last year;
- The speed of processing planning applications had improved
- 99.5% of calls to the Customer Contact Centre were resolved at the first point of contact;
- The speed of processing Benefits claims (new and change of circumstances) were on course for the 2010/2011 target and an improvement on the same period last year;
- Vivary Park, Victoria Park, French Weir Park and Wellington Park had all achieved Green Flag status, plus Swains Lane Nature Reserve in Wellington had gained a Green Pennant for the first time;
- Four key Council projects were all reported as being on course (Local Development Framework Core Strategy, Housing Inspection Project, Core Council Review and SAP implementation); and
- Staff sickness was on course to achieve the improvement target (9 days per FTE).

Further reported that areas either off course or where objectives were not being met included the Housing Revenue Account which was forecast for a £366,000 overspend for the year, procurement benefits which were behind the original forecast, Environmental Protection Team planned inspections which were only 48% completed in Quarter 1, Planning appeals allowed were 50% (but on low numbers) and swim visits (Tone Leisure) had declined by 2% in Quarter 1 compared to the previous year.

Resolved that the report be noted.

80. Allocation of Housing and Planning Delivery Grant

Reference Minute No 52/2010, considered report previously circulated, concerning the proposed allocation of some of the remaining Housing and Planning Delivery Grant (HPDG) funding.

The HPDG had been given to Local Authorities based on their performance in Development Control, plan making and delivery of housing. The Coalition Government had scrapped the HPDG for future years, so the money that had been received in April 2010 was the last funding allocation through this particular funding stream. The Council sought to allocate this funding to deliver improved planning, forward planning and housing delivery services.

Following the approval of a number of allocations earlier in the year, reported that there was £3,573 capital and £526,828 revenue left unallocated. However, due to a number of underspends from previous years there was currently a total of £11,573 capital and £529,228 revenue which could be allocated.

The allocations now requested were:-

Revenue Items	
Infrastructure Delivery Plan	£30,000
Core Strategy Appropriate Assessment	£17,000
Strategic Housing Market Assessment update (affordable housing viability and thresholds in rural areas)	£9,250
Review of housing growth projections	£6,000
Core Strategy Appropriate Assessment surveys	£600
Development Management efficiency review of planning processes	£7,120
Total	£69,970

If the above were agreed, it would leave £459,258 revenue and £11,573 capital.

Resolved that the allocation of the Housing Planning and Delivery Grant as detailed above, be approved.

81. **Proposed Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership Merger**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the proposed merger of the East and West Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRP) into one countywide structure. The aim of the merger was to streamline governance and leadership in the community safety structure, allowing for more effective community engagement at a local level.

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (as amended) placed a duty on responsible authorities to work together and with other agencies within the community to tackle crime and disorder and the misuse of drugs.

The legislation had required the formation of a CDRP and the Council had fulfilled this requirement with the formation of the Taunton Deane CDRP. The Police and Justice Act 2006, required minimum standards to be placed on all CDRPs. Details of these standards were submitted.

In light of these minimum standards which placed significant obligations on single authorities, the decision was taken in 2007 for the Taunton Deane CDRP to informally merge with Sedgemoor and West Somerset CDRPs to form the Safer Somerset West Partnership. This Partnership had evaluated its success against the Government's Hallmarks of Effective Partnership and whilst significant progress had been made, there were still areas to be improved on.

Funding allocated to Taunton Deane's CDRP had shrunk markedly over the years so that it now formed part of the area based grant given to Somerset County Council. In the current financial year across Somerset West there was a total of £23,000 revenue funding, which was being used to fund a seconded post from the Fire Service to look at streamlining issues such as how anti-social behaviour and relocatable CCTV systems should be dealt with. Noted that there was also £42,000 of capital funding which was currently unallocated. This was unlikely to be available in 2011/2012.

Further reported that the Safer Communities Group, a sub-group of the Somerset Strategic Partnership, had approved a proposal in January 2009, to carry out a review of the community safety structures in Somerset. The review was carried out by the Community Safety Network (CSN) and its recommendations were submitted to the Safer Communities Group in December 2009.

One of the recommendations made was that the Safer Communities Group should become the CDRP for Somerset as all the statutory agencies already attended this meeting. It was also felt that further work should be undertaken by the CSN to develop the structure beneath, reflecting the need for both tactical and operational local delivery.

Both West Somerset and Sedgemoor District Councils had already agreed to this proposed merger on an informal basis for a period of 12 months

Member representation in the proposed new structure would be at portfolio holder level. This reflected how Members had historically been represented on the CDRP.

Scrutiny of this new group could be achieved through the structure previously agreed by the Community Scrutiny Committee which recommended two Members from each of the districts, Taunton Deane, Sedgemoor and West Somerset, to be co-opted to look at community safety scrutiny issues.

Resolved that:-

- (1) Full Council be recommended to agree and approve the proposed merger of the Safer Somerset West Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership with the Mendip and South Somerset Community Safety Partnership (Somerset East) to form a County-wide Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, currently operating as the Safer Communities Group; and
- (2) The proposed merger to be on an informal basis for a period of 12 months, in line with decisions already taken by West Somerset and Sedgemoor District Councils.

82. **Setting Strategic Housing and Employment Targets for the Taunton Deane Core Strategy**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the need to identify strategic housing and jobs targets for Taunton Deane's emerging Core Strategy, which would deliver growth for the period up to 2026.

The abolition of all adopted and emerging Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) by the Coalition Government had presented both an opportunity and a threat to communities. Although it had handed lower tier authorities the opportunity to establish the scale of housing and jobs they wished to see come forward rather than to plan towards meeting potentially undeliverable numbers, it had also placed the burden of evidencing targets on Local Planning Authorities where previously it had lain elsewhere.

The Draft Revised Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West had identified a requirement for at least 21,800 new homes in Taunton Deane, with at least 18,000 in Taunton. The report also introduced employment land targets. The requirement for employment was 16,500 jobs.

The Council had expressed concern that this Strategy was both undeliverable and unsustainable.

The Council had moved quickly to fill the void left by the abolition of the RSS and the report set out in detail an approach to calculating realistic and deliverable housing targets for the Plan period. These figures would be underpinned by the Council's ambitious plans for delivering jobs-led growth and would be set out within the emerging Core Strategy as well as to make any future calculations about housing land supply.

Prior to the abolition of the RSS, Roger Tym and Partners had been commissioned to undertake masterplanning of the Taunton area to inform the Core Strategy. The company's work had centred upon employment and jobs forecasts.

Through this work, the company had now been tasked with establishing a realistic and deliverable jobs target for the Core Strategy. Although the work was not yet complete, it suggested a target of 11,000 jobs for Taunton Deane between 2008 and 2026.

Although this figure related to Taunton Deane as a whole, in terms of the Economic Strategy the Plan would focus on enabling and providing employment in the Taunton urban area. A significant proportion of economic growth would be around non-traditional forms of employment, including health, retail and education rather than offices and distribution and warehousing.

The Tym's target was considered to be both challenging and realistic and, as such, consideration would need to be given to revisiting specific elements of Taunton Deane's Economic Development Strategy, to ensure consistency across Council documents.

In recognition of the need for future growth in Taunton Deane to be essentially 'job's led', it was felt that a housing target should be based on job creation and should be locally generated. Fordham Research had therefore been commissioned to undertake this task, having previously prepared the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) for the Housing Market Area.

Household data had been combined with existing Office for National Statistics population and household projections. The 11,000 jobs target from Tym's work had been factored in to allow a housing target to be formulated. The methodology used was reported.

The result was a target of 15,000 houses for Taunton Deane between 2008 and 2026. However, it was recommended that provision should be made for the phasing of any residualised target between 2011 and 2026. This would allow the Council sufficient latitude to build its way up to what would be a challenging target.

Whilst further work was required, the following phasing bands were suggested:-

- 01/04/2011 – 31/03/2016: proposed target of at least 3,500 (equivalent to 700 dwellings per annum);
- 01/04/2016 – 31/03/2021: proposed target of at least 4,500 (equivalent to 900 dwellings per annum); and
- 01/04/2021 – 31/03/2026: proposed target of at least 5,500 (equivalent to 1,100 dwellings per annum).

Adopting the suggested housing targets and the associated proposed phasing requirements would result in Taunton Deane being able to demonstrate an improved housing land supply.

The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) Review would take a more robust judgement about supply, taking into account the current market conditions. Indications were that the supply of deliverable sites would be markedly reduced from that previously reported in the 2009 SHLAA.

The supply had been reduced to reflect current market conditions and in particular the achievability of such sites. It was therefore appropriate for the Council to adopt a phasing approach to the Core Strategy which reflected the difficulties in delivering large scale growth over the next five years. This approach would not preclude further planning permissions being granted on sustainable sites which met the provision of current and emerging policy and general sustainable criteria.

Reported that in order for the emerging Core Strategy to still come forward in a timely fashion, it was important that the strategic targets were agreed as soon as possible. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan, Retail Capacity Study as well the Urban Initiatives Masterplanning Commission were all dependent on the establishment of strategic targets in order for them to be progressed.

As mentioned above, Fordhams had previously worked on the SHMA and its latest commission provided the opportunity to revisit some of its key findings from 2008,

particularly that new housing should contribute towards a target of 40% affordable housing.

Fordhams had since reconsidered the need for affordable housing, taking into account the Council's significant plans for employment and job creation. The key assumption made was that a significant proportion of the anticipated in-migrant population would be employed: 55% as opposed to 45%.

Reflecting the Council's jobs-led strategy, the company's draft report concluded that 74% of new accommodation should be market, around 16% social rented dwellings and around 10% intermediate housing. This represented a significant step change for the Council and had key implications for the formulation of the affordable housing policy.

The findings in the draft report also reflected that the ageing population would require specialist accommodation - a need for around 1,500 specialist units (of which approximately 48% should be market and 52% affordable).

Noted that the Community Scrutiny Committee had considered this item at its meeting on 17 August 2010. Whilst fully supportive of the recommendations, Members requested that the proposed percentage mix of new accommodation, social rented and intermediate housing be brought back to a future meeting of the Community Scrutiny Committee for further consideration.

Resolved that the following strategic targets for use in the Core Strategy and supporting documents be agreed:-

- (a) 11,000 jobs for the period 2006 – 2026;
- (b) 15,000 homes over the period 2008 – 2026; and
- (c) Appropriate phasing of housing targets between the following five year time bands – 01/04/2011 – 31/03/2016; 01/04/2016 – 31/03/2021; and 01/04/2021 – 31/03/2026.

83. **Executive Forward Plan**

Submitted for information the Forward Plan of the Executive over the next few months.

Resolved that the Forward Plan be noted.

(The meeting ended at 7.41 pm.)