

Executive – 18 June 2008

Present: Councillor Henley (Chairman)
Councillors Coles, Horsley, R Lees, Mullins, Mrs Smith and
A Wedderkopp.

Officers: Penny James (Chief Executive), Brendan Cleere (Strategic Director),
Joy Wishlade (Strategic Director), Tonya Meers (Legal and
Democratic Services Manager), Paul Carter (Financial Services
Manager), Michelle Hale (Corporate Performance Officer),
Sarah Cooper (Policy Support Officer), Philip Sharratt (Economic
Development Manager), Mark Green (Project Taunton) and
Richard Bryant (Democratic Services Manager)

Also present: Councillors Bishop, Critchard, Edwards, Farbahi, Morrell, Stuart-
Thorn, Ms Webber and Williams

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm.)

161. Apologies

Councillors Brooks and Prior-Sankey.

162. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 May 2008, copies of which had been circulated, were taken as read and were signed.

163. Declaration of Interests

The Chairman (Councillor Henley), declared a personal interest as a Member of Somerset County Council. Councillor Coles declared personal interests as a Director of Southwest One and a Member of Somerset County Cricket Club. Councillor Mrs Smith declared a personal interest as an employee of Somerset County Council.

164. Somerset Local Area Agreement 2008-2011

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the new Somerset Local Area Agreement (LAA) which was due to be signed off by Government Ministers before the end of the month.

The draft LAA had previously been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Board at its meetings held in January and April 2008.

The final version comprised 34 issues and appropriate indicators from the National Indicator Set, together with 16 statutory education indicators. A "supporting tier" of indicators would also be included which would be used to

measure whether the issues in the LAA relating to Somerset were being achieved.

Noted that the Government Office for the South West (GOSW) had requested the inclusion of certain indicators such as:-

- People killed and seriously injured on the roads;
- Climate change;
- Affordable housing; and
- Improved efficiency through enhanced two-tier working in line with the Pioneer Somerset proposals in lieu of unitary status.

Baselines and targets for the chosen indicators had been negotiated with GOSW over recent months.

Reported that each of the public sector parties who had a duty to co-operate in delivering the LAA had stated the level to which they would contribute to the delivery of each of the indicators. The levels of co-operation were:-

- Level 1 - A leading or key partner;
- Level 2 - A contributory role; and
- Level 3 - The indicator was not particularly relevant to the organisation but support would be provided where required.

In the LAA, Taunton Deane was annotated as a named partner for the indicators to which it had indicated delivery at either Levels 1 or 2.

Further reported that the LAA had implications for the residents of Taunton Deane. It sought to address priorities for all age groups, the economy, the environment and community safety. It was seen as the means for marshalling the collective efforts of public sector agencies in Somerset to deliver an agreed set of outcomes and targets. The Government had introduced a “duty to co-operate” in the LAA which meant that the Council had to co-operate in delivering the targets in the LAA.

The LAA was all about delivery across agencies. It would therefore be important to extend partnership working across areas of Council activity where little currently existed. This could involve greater pooling of budgets between agencies.

Reported that there was no specific LAA funding from the Government. The Council would therefore have to decide how to fund LAA priorities.

Resolved that sign up to the delivery of the Somerset Local Area Agreement be agreed.

165. **Performance Monitoring - Outturn report on 2007/2010 Corporate Strategy, 2007/2008 Financial Outturn and 2007/2008 Performance Indicators.**

Reported that the monitoring of budgets, the Corporate Strategy Objectives and Performance Indicators was an important part of the Council's overall performance management framework. Submitted report previously circulated, which outlined the final data for 2007/2008.

In respect of budget monitoring, the General Fund Revenue outturn showed an overspend of £49,000 or 0.37% when compared with the current budget.

The General Fund Capital Programme expenditure for the year amounted to £3,762,000 against a total budget for the year of £4,655,000. This underspend was due to slippage in capital schemes and would be rolled forward into the 2008/2009 budget.

The Housing Revenue Account outturn showed a working balance carried forward into 2008/2009 of £3,046,000 which was £236,000 less than predicted in the most recent budget monitoring report. Members noted the reasons for this variance.

The Deane Helpline had made a deficit of £20,000 which was in line with budget monitoring predictions. The balance on the Deane Helpline Trading Account at 31 March 2008 amounted to £2,741.

Housing Revenue Account Capital expenditure amounted to £4,399,000 against the current budget of £5,656,000. This underspend had been identified via budget monitoring and would be slipped into 2008/2009 increasing the programme available.

During the year, the Deane DLO made an overall trading deficit of £3,000. The balance on the DLO Reserve as at 31 March 2008 would be £469,000. A summary of performance for both 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 was submitted.

The draft 2007/2008 outturn for the Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP) showed a net underspend of £295,000. As much of this amount related to waste disposal (a County Council function), Taunton Deane was due a repayment of only £22,000. However, it was proposed that this sum be retained by SWP specifically to be used to assist with the roll out of the "Sort It +" programme.

With regard to the Corporate Strategy 2007-2010, the Objectives of the Council together with the Key Actions to attain them had been listed within the Corporate Strategy which had previously been approved by the Executive.

Progress for the year against the 20 objectives was good and details were submitted. 50% of the Corporate Strategy objectives were on course with 45% either partially completed or with action pending.

Also reported that 59% of 90 statutory and local Performance Indicators for 2007/2008 were also on target.

Resolved that:-

- (1) The draft outturn positions on revenue and capital for both the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account for 2007/2008 be noted;
- (2) The retention of the Taunton Deane share of the Somerset Waste Partnership underspend within the partnership for use in the roll out of the "Sort It +" Programme be approved; and
- (3) The performance against targets for both the Corporate Strategy and Performance Plan for 2007/2008 be noted.

166. Treasury Management Outturn 2007/2008 and 2008/2009 update

Submitted report previously circulated, on the outturn position for Treasury Management Activities for 2007/2008 and the current position to date for the 2008/2009 Financial Year on Treasury Management issues.

The main points detailed in the report were:-

- External debt and temporary borrowing had increased by approximately £4,900,000 to just over £23,000,000;
- Economic worries and the "Credit Crunch" continued to impact on interest rates, with the Bank of England reluctant to move with any haste;
- Levels of investment (£22,482,000 as at 6 June 2008), and investment returns remained stable despite the economic turmoil;
- Refinancing opportunities were now limited by changes to the Public Works Loan Board lending arrangements; and
- Uncertainty was likely to remain until the economic horizon became clearer and market nervousness eased.

Resolved that the Treasury Management outturn for 2007/2008 be noted together with the position to date for 2008/2009.

167. Applications to register land as "Town Greens"

Reported that notification had been received from Somerset County Council that applications had been submitted by local residents for the registration of two areas of open space within Taunton and in the ownership of this Council to be registered as "Town Greens".

The two areas in question were an area of land at Holway known as Holway Green and an area of open space at Enmore Road, Taunton, to the south of Wellsprings Road.

The applications sought to have both areas of land registered as Town Greens on the basis that “a significant number of local inhabitants had indulged in lawful sports and pastimes on the land for at least 20 years”.

The effect of registration would be to protect the land from future development although, in certain circumstances, it was possible to apply to “de-register” land.

Resolved that the Solicitor to the Council be authorised to:-

- (1) Raise no objection in respect of the proposed registration of the land at Holway Green as a Town Green; and
- (2) Raise no objection in respect of the proposed registration of the land at Enmore Road as a Town Green.

168. **Parking Strategy**

Reference Minute No 59/2006, reported that the company Parsons Brinkerhoff had recently been requested to update the Taunton Parking Strategy review to take into account the revised estimates of the timing of closures of town centre car parks within the Project Taunton Regeneration areas.

The following table summarised the revised predictions for the years when the car parks would be fully closed:-

Car Park	Predicted year of closure	Current capacity	Unused spaces	Number of used spaces lost	
				Commuters	Shoppers/ Visitors
Old Gas Works	2007	350	151	150	50
Private Somerset County Council Car Park	2007	60	0	60	0
Castle Green	2009	64	0	0	64
Greenbrook Terrace	2009	155	31	34	90
Livestock Market	2009	95	35	60	0
Coal Orchard	2012	198	0	25	173
Crescent	2012	243	0	0	243
Cricket Ground	2012	200	42	105	53
High Street	2012	276	36	35	205
Old Market Centre	2012	600	120	168	312
Priory Bridge Road	2012	464	357	41	66
Tangier	2012	246	0	178	68
Castle Street	2015	76	0	42	34
Enfield	2015	188	51	97	40
Total	-	3215	822	995	1398

Noted that the redistribution of parked vehicles from the car park closures had been analysed by assuming that the “unused” spaces in the town centre would be utilised by vehicles that usually parked in the car parks that were proposed to be closed.

No allowance had been made for different car park charges, for the unused spaces being in an alternative location or in respect of modal shift. It was likely that a shortfall in town centre parking spaces would only come into effect in 2012.

The car park improvement proposals had been assumed to be the same as described in the document “Taunton Parking Strategy Review (2007)” apart from the following assumptions:-

- 1,500 parking spaces would be provided at the new multi-storey car park on Paul Street when it opened in 2015;
- Cambria Farm Park and Ride site would provide 1,000 spaces when it was completed in 2010; and
- 400 temporary parking spaces would be provided in the town centre during the years 2012, 2013 and 2014 whilst the new Paul Street Multi-Storey Car Park was being constructed.

Parsons Brinkerhoff had therefore concluded that:-

- (1) Under the current phasing plan, there was sufficient car parking for both commuters and shoppers until 2012.
- (2) A temporary solution for the years when the development of the retail area was taking place needed to be found. Phasing of the closure of the multi-storeys would need to be considered within the development plan.
- (3) The phasing of the developments on each site would need to be considered in the light of the impact of parking.
- (4) The building of a further car park, perhaps on one of the Tangier sites, needed to be considered for 2015 onwards.

Reported that the assessment of the Parking Manager on the predicted closure plan was that income from car parking in Taunton would remain stable until 2012. However, if all the closures then took place, the worst case scenario would be an on-going loss of income of £1,200,000 per annum.

The inevitable conclusion to this scenario would be for the Council to build further car parks and to take the income from them.

Although a ring of new multi-storey car parks was what was envisaged at the start of the Vision for Taunton, there were a number of reasons why this was

not now the answer, including the requirement to provide shopper spaces (not car parks on the periphery of the town) and the cost, which would be in the region of £10-£20m for a new multi-storey car park.

Further reported that the development appraisals of the retail area to date had shown that these would only be viable if the developer took the income from parking. However, with a much larger area for the development, it was felt the financial appraisals might look very different.

As part of the brief to developers, it would need to be made clear that one of the objectives would be to ensure that the Council received as much as possible of the parking income. Whilst this objective would need to be tested it would be correct, in the meantime, to assume that there was unlikely to be a return of income.

Reported that in order to give an on-going income to the Council, of £1,200,000 per annum, an investment in property of approximately £24,000,000 on a low risk type of investment would be required. There were a number of options which could be taken:-

- Taunton Deane had a property portfolio which could be used to generate further income. This would be mainly via sales of pieces of land for development and reinvesting the money in property that would bring an income;
- The Council could use some of the sites in Project Taunton differently than envisaged to bring in the highest receipt rather than achieving the current objective of employment development;
- An interest in a completed building on Firepool could be taken to give an ongoing income rather than taking the receipt;
- A further option would be to look at who and when we charged for parking; and
- A decision could be taken not to go forward with Project Taunton and, in particular, the retail development. However, the consequence of this decision would be very serious. With the housing growth that Taunton was expected to take during the period up to 2026 and without an improved and increased retail offer, Taunton would face the risk of its town centre slowly degenerating. It would also become increasingly difficult to attract the major employers into Taunton and this would put the Firepool development at risk in the longer term.

The above options all needed to be explored. The strategy to use some of the Council's current assets to produce income for the future was challenging as it would mean that the funds released would have to be "ring fenced" for this purpose and not used to meet other Council priorities. The Delivery Team would also need to work on the objectives for the retail development so

that the Council could go to the market with the brief and from there assess what the real impact on the parking income would be.

Resolved that:-

- (1) The Project Taunton Delivery Team be requested to prepare a brief for the retail development, for subsequent approval by the Executive, so that the assumptions around viability could be tested;
- (2) The Delivery Team, in conjunction with the Property Section of the Council, and as part of the asset management of the Council, be requested to prepare a list of sites in the current ownership of Taunton Deane that could be developed and the income ring fenced for re-investment to cover the shortfall in parking income in the future;
- (3) The phasing and impact on car parking be considered as each site was brought forward; and
- (4) The Delivery Team be requested to actively explore the opportunity for locating a new multi-storey car park in the Tangier Area of Taunton.

169. Exclusion of the Press and Public

Resolved that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item because of the likelihood that exempt information would otherwise be disclosed relating to Clause 7 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972 and the public interest in withholding the information outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information to the public.

170. Proposed Three Year Savings Plan for Tone Leisure (Taunton Deane) Limited

Considered report previously circulated, which set out Tone Leisure's proposals to deliver the annual revenue savings required by the Council over the next three years.

Reported in detail on one of the proposals which involved working with a funding partner. This proposed arrangement would enable investment works to be carried out, would make a major contribution to the savings required of Tone Leisure and would also assist the company's need to remain competitive. This arrangement also represented a low risk to the Council.

Noted that if this aspect of the Savings Plan was supported the Council, as owners of the Leisure Centres, would need to provide a "letter of security" giving consent for the work and agreeing to underwrite it.

Resolved that:-

- (1) The Savings Plan set out in the report be approved;

- (2) It be agreed that a "letter of security" be signed by an authorised representative of the Council; and
- (3) The potential financial benefits to the Council of Tone Leisure's proposed arrangement with a funding partner be further reviewed and built into budget setting deliberations for 2009/2010 and the Council's three year grant to Tone Leisure for the period 2009/2010 to 2011/2012.

(The meeting ended at 7.43 pm.)