

## **Executive – 4 February 2009**

**Present:** Councillor Henley (Chairman)  
Councillors Brooks, Coles, Horsley, R. Lees, Prior-Sankey and  
A Wedderkopp.

**Officers:** Penny James (Chief Executive), Shirlene Adam (Strategic Director),  
Brendan Cleere (Strategic Director), Tonya Meers (Legal and  
Democratic Services Manager), Paul Carter (Financial Services  
Manager), John Williams (Chief Housing Officer), Phil Webb (Housing  
Manager – Property Services), Emily Collacott (Principal Accountant),  
Lydia Baker (Housing Accountant), Peter Jenkins (Accountant), Brian  
Yates (Building Control Manager), Mark Leeman (Corporate  
Performance Officer) and Richard Bryant (Democratic Services  
Manager).

**Also present:** Councillors Bishop, Bowrah, Cavill, Mrs Court-Stenning, Critchard,  
House, Meikle, Morrell, Mrs Stock-Williams, Stuart-Thorn, Williams  
and Mrs Wilson. Mr P Lyons (Southwest One)

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm.)

### **7. Apologies**

Councillors Mullins and Mrs Smith.

### **8. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2009, copies of which had  
been circulated, were taken as read and were signed.

### **9. Public Question Time**

Ms. Liz Fothergill the Manager of Taunton's Citizen's Advice Bureau referred  
to the current economic downturn which had led to a significant increase in  
requests for advice from people who were experiencing difficulties. In  
addition, the Chancellor had asked Citizen's Advice to consider introducing  
"euro opening hours" to meet the demand for advice and Taunton Deane  
Borough Council had itself asked for the organisation's assistance to promote  
the Mortgage Rescue Scheme. She was aware that within the budget  
proposals £58,000 was going to be allocated for "Credit Crunch Initiatives".  
She asked whether Citizen's Advice could apply for additional funding from  
this money to meet the additional demand on the services they provided.

In reply the Leader of the Council, Councillor Henley, confirmed that the  
budget proposals had been amended in recent days and that the "Credit  
Crunch Initiatives" would no longer be included. Some of the money that had  
been earmarked would be targeted at the deprived areas of Taunton.  
Councillor Henley stated how much the services provided by Citizen's Advice  
were valued and undertook to write to Ms. Fothergill to fully explain what level

of support funding was proposed to be awarded for the 2009/2010 financial year.

#### 10. **Declarations of Interest**

The Chairman declared a personal interest as a Member of Somerset County Council. Councillors Brooks and Prior-Sankey declared personal interests as Members of Somerset County Council and as Members of the Somerset Waste Board. Councillor Prior-Sankey also declared a personal interest as a Member of the Supporting People Commission. Councillor Coles declared a personal interest as a Director of Southwest One. Councillor Williams declared a personal interest as his company was currently undertaking work on behalf of Ms. Fothergill (see Minute No. 9 above).

#### 11. **Fees and Staffing Proposals for Building Control in 2009/2010**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the provision of Building Control Services that were provided by the Council in conjunction with Sedgemoor District Council.

The Building Control service was required by Regulation to be operated on self-financing principles and operated in competition with the private sector.

Difficult trading conditions in the construction sector were anticipated and fee increases were needed to counter normal cost inflation. However, these fees needed to remain competitive.

Income streams had been analysed and details were submitted. Alterations to the Scheme of Charges would be targeted at maximising income from the areas of principal workload and making the low value work more economic.

The detailed scheme, with current scheme comparisons and percentage movements was submitted. The significant changes were:-

- Schedule 1 – the previous sharp reduction in fees from a single dwelling to two or more had been smoothed out into a more progressive sequence of fee increases, averaging 5% above current levels up to 10 units and diminishing to around 2% for 30 dwellings or more;
- Schedule 2 – fees for small garages, previously uneconomic, were raised, but remained virtually unchanged for larger garages. Fees for small extensions were raised for the same reason as for small garages. Fees for medium extensions, the largest single category, were raised by what was expected to be the average amount, approximately 6%. Fees for large extensions were raised to preserve the proportional link with fees for single dwellings; and
- Schedule 3 – the bottom categories, replacement glazing and works under £5,000 remained virtually unchanged as fees would become

disproportionate in relation to the cost of work. Above £5,000, fees were banded in £5,000 cost-of-work increments instead of £1,000 increments as previously. The effect was to produce a simplified scheme with average fee increases that were highest in the lower work-cost bands and reduced progressively as work values increased.

Direct costs, of which staff cost was the major element, also needed to be addressed. Current staffing levels at both Councils had been considered and following a major downturn in construction activity, sustainable staffing levels had also been calculated.

The proposed staffing structure was submitted, which included the following proposals:-

- (1) Sedgemoor District Council's Building Control Support Officer to become the Joint Support Team Manager for both Building Control Services. The cost of this post would be shared equally between the Councils;
- (2) The administrative support strength to be adjusted to provide two full-time equivalents; and
- (3) The agreed shared Surveyor post with Sedgemoor District Council and current establishment shortfalls, to be held vacant until workloads justified recruitment.

Details of the financial implications of these proposals were submitted.

**Resolved** that the:-

- (1) Scheme of Charges for Building Control set out in the report be adopted;
- (2) The services of Sedgemoor District Council's Building Control Support Team Manager be shared between Sedgemoor and Taunton Deane Borough Council, with the salary, benefits and other costs of employment being shared equally between the two Authorities;
- (3) The indemnity resolution approved in connection with the shared management of Building Control be extended to also include the new shared working arrangements described in the report; and
- (4) The previously agreed shared Building Control Surveyor post be held Open until it could be justified by workload requirements.

## 12. **Draft Corporate Strategy 2009-2012**

Considered report previously circulated concerning the Draft Corporate Strategy 2009-2012.

The Corporate Strategy was the Council's principal policy document. It contained the Council's Vision, Business Principles and Core Values and

described the key outcomes that the Council intended to achieve in the community over the next three years. These outcomes would be delivered by achieving Objectives that were closely aligned to the Council's ETCHED (Economy, Transport, Crime, Healthy Living, Environment and Delivery) aims. It provided an important lead for budget setting and service planning activities and was updated on an annual basis to ensure that it remained 'fit for purpose'.

The proposed direction and timetable for refreshing the Corporate Strategy had been submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Board's meeting in December 2008.

Since then the Corporate Management Team, Specialist Officers and Executive Councillors had fed into the document any changes required, taking account of:-

- National, regional and local priorities / targets;
- Councillor's Priorities;
- The Budget position;
- The community's priorities;
- Local Area Agreement;
- Sustainable Community Strategy; and
- Comprehensive Area Assessment.

Noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Board had considered a draft of the Strategy at its meeting on 22 January 2009 and a number of comments had been made which had now been incorporated into the draft. Two particular comments relating to the introduction of free swimming for the under 16's and the over 60's and a possible delay to the introduction of plastics and cardboard recycling were made for consideration by the Executive in relation to the budget setting.

Submitted the latest draft of the Corporate Strategy for the consideration of Members. It outlined the Council's ETCHED aims, the 21 corporate objectives and a set of key activities under each of these to deliver those objectives. This would provide a clear steer for the Council's focus in the years ahead.

The key areas of change to the Corporate Strategy, resulting from the recent consultation, feedback, challenge and scrutiny were:-

- Various changes to reflect the Local Area Agreement;
- A new objective relating to 'Skills Development';
- A merging of Objectives relating to Job Creation and Business Growth;
- Amendment of Objective 12 (affordable housing) to now include delivery of private housing and affordable housing;
- Consideration of the 'credit crunch' resulting in a reassessment of delivery targets (economic development and housing delivery);

- Significant amendments to Objective 14 to include support to vulnerable groups and a wider focus on healthy lifestyles (play and sport);
- A commitment to deliver free swimming for the under 16s and over 60s; and
- A merging of objectives relating to climate change and flooding to create a new objective relating to Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability.

Reported that the aims and objectives of the Strategy were focused entirely on achieving outcomes for the area in line with the Council's community leadership responsibilities, which would prepare the Council well for the forthcoming Comprehensive Area Assessment. Achieving the outcomes would also be dependent on close partnership working with other agencies.

**Resolved** that:-

- (1) the Draft Corporate Strategy 2009-2012 be approved; and
- (2) Full Council be recommended to adopt the Corporate Strategy.

### 13. **General Fund Revenue Estimates 2009/2010**

Considered report previously circulated, together with an addendum report circulated at the meeting, regarding the Executive's final 2009/2010 budget proposals, prior to submission to Full Council on 17 February 2009 for approval.

Each year the Council set an annual budget which detailed the resources needed to meet operational requirements. The annual budget was prepared within the context of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

Previous MTFPs had predicted an ongoing budget shortfall. A Financial Strategy had been approved in 2008 to set the framework for resolving this. The Strategy was a key link between the Corporate Strategy and the MTFP and recognised that there were difficult issues for the Council to tackle. The key principles of the Financial Strategy were outlined.

Reported that there were two main aims of this budget setting process – to ensure the increase in Council Tax was minimised and, at the same time, to try and maintain excellent front line service provision.

The Profile of Services and subsequent Savings Targets and Delivery Plans had ensured that the Council was directing its limited resources towards its Corporate Objectives.

Although the General Fund Reserve did offer a small amount of flexibility in the budget funding decision, the over-riding principle of ensuring the Authority's underlying expenditure was not reliant on reserves remained.

As with earlier years, there was no contingency built into the 2009/2010 budget. Therefore, all requests for new funding had to be presented as supplementary estimates from the General Fund Reserve.

Reported that the MTFP had been updated over the course of last summer to reflect the latest estimates on unavoidable costs.

Noted that no changes to the Profile of Services for 2009/2010 were proposed. The profile reflected the priorities set out in the current Corporate Strategy.

Using the Profile of Services as the framework for ensuring that resources would be matched to priorities in the 2009/2010 budget, a number of savings targets had been issued to Managers, who had then prepared a Savings Delivery Plan for each of the targets.

Changes to the Savings Delivery Plans had since been made, details of which were reported. The financial impact of the Savings Delivery Plans were set out in the following table:-

<b>Public Savings Category</b>	<b>Amount Generated (Public Category) £000</b>	<b>Cumulative Amount £000</b>	<b>Forecast Budget Gap £000</b>
Current Gap			1,548
Category 1	264	264	1,284
Category 2	165	429	1,119
Category 3			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning: D1 (reduction in Heritage &amp; Landscape grants)</li> <li>• Environmental Health: D6 (reduction in dog bin budget)</li> <li>• Policy: D3 (relocatable CCTV)</li> </ul>	1 2 4	436	1,112

Consultations had been undertaken on the budget with the Taunton Chamber of Commerce and the Taunton Town Centre Company and their comments and concerns were reported.

The General Fund Revenue Account was the Council's main fund and showed the income and expenditure relating to the provision of services.

Although the Council made charges for some of its services which reduced the net cost of providing them, much of the remaining expenditure was funded by the Government through the Revenue Support Grant (7%) and National Non-Domestic Rates (54%). The shortfall (39%) was funded by the Council Tax payer.

In 2008/2009 the Council received a total of £8,369,000 from the Government via the Finance Settlement. The final figure for 2009/2010 was £8,536,000, an increase of 2%.

Noted that the Government had indicated that they expected to see Council Tax increases substantially below 5%.

Reported in detail on a series of initiatives and savings proposed by the Executive for inclusion in the 2009/2010 budget.

The Overview and Scrutiny Board had considered the Executive's draft budget proposals at its meeting on 22 January 2009. The Board made comments on some of the savings and new initiatives but had made no formal request for changes to the budget proposals.

Reported that the Executive wished to present the following as the proposed budget for 2009/2010. In addition to a 2.5% increase in Council Tax, the Executive had also received further information on the budget gap which had predicted a surplus of £74,000. This information had resulted in the following further changes having to be included:-

- Concessionary Travel – A further £5,000 needed to be added to the budget to reflect further growth assumptions;
- Pay Award Provision – This had been reduced from 3% to 2.5%, reducing the budget by £24,000;
- Debt Restructuring – The expected benefit was likely to be £33,000;
- Recycling Service – Because the final prices for the recycling service were still being negotiated, it was possible the predicted cost could rise. A further £27,000 had been added to the budget;
- Participatory Budgeting – This proposal was no longer going to proceed. £28,000 could therefore be added back;
- Amendments to Corporate Grants – Increased by £6,000;
- Removal of the proposed budget of £58,000 for “Credit Crunch” Initiatives;
- Sustainable Transport – The current budget contained £22,000 for pump priming rural bus services. This funding was no longer required;
- Deprived Areas – The inclusion of a new budget of £36,000 to support specific projects; and
- The inclusion of a new post not previously included in the Core Council Review proposals within the Planning Policy Team. Funded from external sources.

Taking into account a Council Tax increase of 2.5% and the other items

mentioned above, the budget had been balanced as shown in the table below:-

<b>Budget Surplus after draft Finance Settlement</b>	<b>(74)</b>
New information/Budget Decisions:-	
Concessionary Travel	5
Pay Award Provision	(24)
Debt Restructuring	(33)
Recycling Service	27
Participatory Budgeting Provision removed	(28)
Corporate Grants	6
“Credit Crunch” Budget	58
Removal of the “Credit Crunch” Budget proposal	(58)
Sustainable Transport budget reduction	(22)
Council Tax – 2.9%	85
Change in Council Tax increase from 2.9% down to 2.5%	22
Additional post within the Planning Policy Team	60
External funding for the above post	(60)
New budget for deprived areas to support specific projects	36
<b>Budget Gap</b>	<b>0</b>

The following table compared the amended proposed budget with the original budget for the current year:-

	<b>Original Estimate 2008/09</b>	<b>Forward Estimate 2009/10</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Total Spending on Services	15,908,420	15,414,080
Capital Charges Credit	(2,205,700)	(1,930,000)
Interest payable on Loans	380,880	266,090
Minimum Revenue Provision	280,670	332,910
Interest Income	(750,000)	(167,000)
Contribution from G Fund Balances	0	0
<b>AUTHORITY EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>13,614,270</b>	<b>13,916,080</b>
Less: Revenue Support Grant	(1,022,665)	(1,600,772)
Less: Contribution from NNDR Pool	(7,346,300)	(6,935,368)
Surplus/Deficit on Collection Fund	50,486	81,600
<b>Expenditure to be financed by District Council Tax</b>	<b>5,295,791</b>	<b>5,461,540</b>
Divided by Council Tax Base	40,153.07	40,399.85
<b>Council Tax @ Band D</b>	<b>£131.89</b>	<b>£135.19</b>

<b>Cost per week per Band D equivalent</b>	<b>£2.54</b>	<b>£2.60</b>
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Noted that the General Fund Reserve position showed the predicted balance of £1,301,155.

The Council Tax calculation and formal tax setting resolution was to be considered separately. The proposed budget for Taunton Deane would result in a Band D Council Tax of £135.19, an increase of £3.20 (2.5%) on 2008/2009. This represented an increase of 6 pence per week. The Band D taxpayer would receive all the services provided by the Council in 2009/2010 at a cost of £2.60 per week.

It was a requirement for the Council to prepare not only budgets for the following financial year but to also provide indicative figures for the two years after that. The Medium Term Financial Plan provided an indication of the expected budget gap going forward into 2010/2011 and a summary of this position was submitted.

It was noted that these figures had been prepared on the assumption of a 4.5% increase in Council Tax each year, including 2010/2011. Government support was based on the draft figures. The figures took into account the ongoing impact of all of the Executive's budget proposals and the 2009/2010 proposed Council Tax level.

The estimated expenses chargeable to the non-parished area of Taunton in 2009/2010 amounted to £30,620, an increase of 4.9%, and this formed part of the total net expenditure of the Council. The precept in 2008/2009 was £29,190.

Also reported that detailed budgets for 2009/2010 had been produced for the Deane DLO. Figures for the Building Maintenance, Highways, Grounds Maintenance and Cleansing DLOs were reported but these were reliant on winning contracts and it was, therefore, very much an estimate at this time.

As part of the Prudential Code for Capital Finance there was a requirement for Full Council to approve the indicators as set out in the report. These were important as they detailed the expected borrowing requirement for both the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account. They also set the operational boundaries for both the borrowing/investment levels and interest rate exposures for the Council.

The Council's S151 Officer had a duty to comment, as part of the budget setting process on the robustness of the budget plans. In her response, Shirlene Adam had stated that she believed the Council's reserves to be adequate and the budget estimates used in preparing the 2009/2010 budget were as robust as possible.

**Resolved** that Full Council be recommended to agree the budget for General Fund Services for 2009/2010 as outlined in the report and that:-

- (a) the transfer for any potential underspend in 2008/2009 back to General Fund reserves be agreed;
- (b) the proposed 2009/2010 budget, being Authority expenditure of £13,916,080 and Special Expenses of £30,620 be agreed in accordance with the Local Government Act 1992;
- (c) the predicted General Fund Reserve balance at 31 March 2009 of £1.3m be noted;
- (d) the Prudential Indicators for 2009/2010 as set out in the report be agreed;
- (e) the forecast budget position for 2010/2011 onwards as outlined in the report be noted.

**14. Housing Revenue Account, Revenue Estimates and Rent Levels, Deane Helpline and Deane Building DLO Account for the 2009/2010 Financial Year**

Considered report previously circulated, which set out in detail the proposed Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for 2009/2010 which showed a working balance of £2,646,570.

Reported that the rent cap on average rent increases at 5% that the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) had set for 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 had been removed for 2008/2009. For 2009/2010, rent capping had been reintroduced and had limited rent increases to no greater than 7%. Under the formula for rent setting, rents would increase by a maximum of the Retail Price Index (5%) plus 0.5% plus £2 per week, subject to the 7% cap. Taunton Deane's recommended average rent increase would therefore be £4.21 per week or 6.99%.

The majority of housing fees and charges had already been considered and had been increased by RPI plus 0.5% (5.5%). This was in line with the final housing subsidy determination for 2009/2010.

For 2009/2010 the expected Supported People income was estimated at £397,000. However, this had not been finalised as a result of continuing negotiations with Somerset County Council.

The report gave details of the main expenditure changes relating to the HRA resource accounting. These included:-

- (a) Housing Subsidy;
- (b) Rents;
- (c) Transfer to Earmarked Reserves;

(d) Revenue Contribution to Capital;

(e) Surplus/Deficit;

(f) Working Balance

Further reported on the main expenditure changes relating to HRA maintenance. These involved specialist works.

The Deane Helpline Trading Account was maintained separately from the HRA as a 'stand alone' enterprise. Details of the charges were submitted.

Reported that the forecast surplus for 2008/2009 was £17,150 leaving a projected working balance of £19,890 at the end of the financial year. The forecast position for 2009/2010 was an estimated surplus of £30,490 leaving a working balance of £50,380 at the end of the financial year. These budgets also included a contribution to the General Fund of £30,000 as agreed in previous years.

Forward estimates had been prepared for the Building Maintenance arm of Deane DLO. Estimated expenditure for 2009/2010 was forecast at £4,200,000.

The Overview and Scrutiny Board had considered the 2009/2010 draft budget at its meeting on 22 January 2009. The Board had formally suggested that the rent increase should be reduced to 6.2% and had asked the Executive to consider this.

**Resolved** that Full Council be recommended to agree the Housing Revenue Account budget for 2009/2010.

#### 15. **Capital Programme 2009/2010 Onwards**

Considered report previously circulated, which detailed the proposed General Fund (GF) and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programmes for the period 2009/2010 and beyond.

All Capital expenditure had to be financed from borrowing, capital receipts or other revenue funds.

The current position on the amount of unallocated resources available for both the GF and the HRA was set out below:-

	<b>2009/10 General Fund £000</b>	<b>2009/10 Housing £000</b>
Current Balance	15	7,716

The GF figure reflected the uncommitted balance on Capital Reserves. There were some future capital receipts expected from the sale of the existing

Nursery site in Mount Street and the sale of South Street Car Park in Wellington. Resources for Housing included the Major Repairs Allowance, Supported Borrowing, useable capital receipts and any Revenue Contributions to Capital.

Noted that for the GF and HRA no additional borrowing was assumed. For Housing, the only borrowing that was included was that borrowing for which central Government would provide revenue support via subsidy to meet debt costs. This was known as Supported Borrowing and amounted to £620,000 in 2009/2010.

Any new loan debt would only be taken after full consideration of the Council's Treasury Management Strategy and the indicators prescribed by the Prudential Code.

Reported that the funding for the programmes in 2010/2011 onwards was anticipated to be broadly similar to 2009/2010, although it was not possible at this stage to accurately identify these. However, once details were known the programme would be amended to reflect the actual level of funding available.

### **General Fund Capital Programme**

The current approved Capital Programme totalled £11,800,000. This included any slippage in schemes rolled forward and any subsequent supplementary estimates. The programme also indicated the GF Housing Capital Programme, a summary of which was shown below:-

	<b>2009/10 £000</b>	<b>2010/11 £000</b>	<b>2011/12 £000</b>
Renovation Grants	335	335	335
Disabled Facilities Grants (Private Sector)	450	450	450
Grants to Housing Associations	809	809	809
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,594</b>	<b>1,594</b>	<b>1,594</b>

Due to the limited amount of resource currently available, the Executive was minded to approve no new one off schemes. For recurring capital schemes, the Executive were minded to fund these through specific revenue contribution to capital, totalling £112,000.

Future General Fund projects could be undertaken when resources became available. This could be through either borrowing, revenue contributions or through the sale of assets. The detailed GF Capital Programme now totalled £12,700,000.

### **Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme**

Noted that by limiting the borrowing necessary for the programme to the amount of supported borrowing would ensure the HRA would not have to meet any unsupported borrowing costs. Included within this sum was a contribution to capital from the HRA of £1,700,000 and estimated useable capital receipts from the sale of Council houses of £1,200,000.

The General Fund Housing Programme required the use of £1,594,000 of these resources leaving £6,122,000 available for the HRA Capital Programme.

Reported that the proposed HRA Capital Programme for 2009/2010 projected a programme of £5,555,000. This programme would leave resources available to carry forward of £567,000. These resources would be used to support the future Housing Capital Programmes.

Further reported that for both the GF and HRA, any new schemes which emerged during the lifespan of the programmes would be funded through existing unallocated resources or through new resources, such as capital receipts. Bids for additional schemes to those set out above would be made through the Executive, using the Project Approval Report format.

The Overview and Scrutiny Board had considered the draft programme at its meeting on 22 January 2009 and made no formal suggestions for any changes to the programme.

**Resolved** that Full Council be recommended to agree the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Capital Programmes.

## 16. Review of Earmarked Reserves

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the review of earmarked reserves.

A review of major earmarked reserves had identified that some of these reserves were no longer required and could be returned to the General Fund reserve.

The table below showed the current forecast position on the General Fund reserve for 2008/2009:-

	£
Opening Balance 1.4.08	644,640
Less / Amount Used To Support 2008/09 Budget	0
Less / Supplementary Estimates Agreed To Date	(59,121)
	<hr/> 585,519
Add earmarked reserves returned to general balances (April 08 Exec Report refers)	595,265
Add repayments to reserve for early retirements granted in previous years (invest to save)	164,621
Add repayment to reserves for new Christmas lights	<hr/> 4,750

supplementary estimate

**Predicted Balance Before Budget Setting**

**1,350,155**

The Financial Strategy stated that General Fund Reserves should be maintained at a minimum of £1,250,000 (or £1,000,000 if being replenished via invest to save initiatives).

The Core Council Review would need to be used to fund the one off costs associated with the Review.

The table below identified those major reserves that were no longer required:-

<b>Reserve</b>	<b>Amount no longer Required £000</b>
<p>1.1 Self Insurance Fund</p> <p>The Council maintained a self-insurance fund, which was used to cover some Council assets against fire and other risks. The fund stood at £1.044m at 31 March 2008. A recent review by the Council's insurance broker had identified that the reserve only needed to remain at £750k given the current level of risks that it covered. Therefore Officers recommend that £250k could be returned to balances.</p>	250
<p>1.2 Waste Services</p> <p>When the Somerset Waste Partnership was created the Council made savings on the basic cost of the service. These savings, in both 2007/2008 and 2008/2009, were set-aside in a reserve to fund an enhanced recycling service across Taunton Deane. This service would not be introduced in the current financial year, so these funds could be returned to general fund reserves. The amount available totals £311k.</p>	311
<p>1.3 Job Evaluation</p> <p>The Council set aside a reserve to fund the expected additional salary costs of the recent Job Evaluation scheme – now that the final results of the scheme were known the remaining funds were no longer required. The amount available was £390k.</p>	390

1.3.1 Total	<b>951</b>
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The transfer of this amount to General Balances would be an increase of the General Fund to a forecast level of £2,301,000 as at 31 March 2009.

**Resolved** that the return of £951,000 to the General Fund Reserve be approved.

#### 17. **Council Tax Setting 2009/2010**

Submitted report previously circulated, which made recommendations on the level of Council Tax for 2009/2010.

The Council was required to make an annual determination, which set its gross expenditure (including the Housing Revenue Account and balances brought forward) and gross income (also including the Housing Revenue Account and balances brought forward), with the difference as its budget requirement. This determination was set out in the resolution.

The estimated expenses chargeable to the non-parished area of Taunton in 2009/2010 amounted to £30,620 and this formed part of the total net expenditure of the Council. Details were also submitted of the parish precepts levied and the appropriate Council Tax at Band D.

The estimated balance on the Council Tax Collection Fund was a deficit of £783,745. Taunton Deane's share of this amounted to £81,600 and this was reflected in the revenue estimates.

The Council's budget requirement was £14,349,693 including draft Parish Precepts and non-parished Special Expenses. This amount was then reduced by the amount notified in respect of Taunton Deane's Revenue Support Grant (RSG) amounting to £1,600,722 and the Non Domestic Rates Distribution (NDR) from the pool, amounting to £6,935,368.

The net amount, having taken the collection fund position into account, of £5,895,153 was used to calculate the Council Tax at Band D, reflecting the Parish Precepts by dividing it by the total of the Council Tax Base as approved by the Executive in December 2008.

The Council Tax for Taunton Deane (excluding Parish Precepts and Special Expenses for the non-parished area) was £135.19, an increase of £3.20 (2.5%) compared to the 2008/2009 Council Tax. The total Council Tax, including the County Council, Police and Fire Authorities precepts was still subject to confirmation.

**Resolved** that Full Council be recommended that subject to final determination including the Council Tax for Somerset County Council, Police and Fire Authorities, which was to be advised:-

(i) That it be noted that at its meeting on 4 December 2008 the Executive calculated the following amounts for the year 2009/2010 in accordance with the regulations made under Section 33(5) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended):-

(1) 40,399.85 being the amount calculated by the Council, in accordance with Regulation 3 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992, as its Council Tax Base for the year.

(2)

Ash Priors	76.70	Neroche	252.56
Ashbrittle	91.34	North Curry	730.57
Bathealton	81.32	Norton Fitzwarren	807.63
Bishops Hull	1,072.93	Nynehead	156.97
Bishops Lydeard / Cothelstone	1,942.94	Oake	334.07
Bradford on Tone	288.20	Otterford	166.56
Burrowbridge	202.22	Pitminster	457.35
Cheddon Fitzpaine	639.44	Ruishton/ Thornfalcon	618.09
Chipstable	126.92	Sampford Arundel	130.44
Churchstanton	323.50	Staplegrove	725.08
Combe Florey	122.10	Stawley	130.96
Comeytrove	2,087.85	Stoke St Gregory	382.12
Corfe	133.16	Stoke St Mary	204.74
Creech St Michael	947.91	Taunton	16,154.15
Durston	58.80	Trull	1,006.54
Fitzhead	125.72	Wellington	4,658.68
Halse	144.89	Wellington (Without)	299.17
Hatch Beauchamp	262.64	West Bagborough	162.97
Kingston St Mary	448.44	West Buckland	441.31

Langford Budville	235.70	West Hatch	141.84
Lydeard St Lawrence/ Tolland	201.80	West Monkton	1,113.54
Milverton	597.33	Wiveliscombe	1,112.63

being the amounts calculated by the Council, in accordance with Regulation 6 of the Regulations, as the amounts of its Council Tax Base for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items related.

(3) That the following amounts be calculated by the Council for the year 2009/2010 in accordance with Sections 32 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992:-

- (a) £77,464,588 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimated for the items set out in Section 32(2)(a) of the Act.  
*(Gross Expenditure including amount required for working balance).*
- (b) £63,114,895 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimated for the items set out in Section 32(3)(a) to (c) of the Act.  
*(Gross Income including reserves to be used to meet Gross Expenditure).*
- (c) £14,349,693 being the amount by which the aggregate at (a) above exceeded the aggregate at (b) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 32(4) of the Act, as its budget requirement for the year.
- (d) £8,454,540 being the aggregate of the sums which the Council estimated would be payable for the year into its General Fund in respect of redistributed Non-Domestic Rates, Revenue Support Grant, additional grant or SSA reduction grant (increased by the amount of the sums which the Council estimates would be transferred in the year from its Collection Fund to its General Fund in accordance with Section 97(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 (*Council Tax Surplus*) and increased by the amount of

any sum which the Council estimated would be transferred from its Collection Fund to its General Fund pursuant to the Collection Fund (Community Charge) directions under Section 98(4) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 made on 7 February 1994 (*Community Charge Surplus*).

(e) £145.92  $\frac{(c) - (d)}{9.2.1(1)} = \frac{14,349,693 - 8,454,540}{40,399.85}$

being the amount calculated at (c) above less the amount at (d) above, all divided by the amount at 9.2.1(a) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 33(1) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year. (*Average Council Tax at Band D for Borough including Parish Precepts and Special Expenses*).

(f) £433,613 being the aggregate amount of all special items referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act. (*Parish Precepts and Special Expenses*).

(g) £135.19  $(e) - \frac{(f)}{10.2.1(a)} = 145.92 - \frac{433,613}{40,399.85}$

being the amount at (e) above less the result given by dividing the amount at (f) above by the amount at 9.2.1(a) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no special items related. (*Council Tax at Band D for Borough Excluding Parish Precepts and Special Expenses*).

(h)

Ash Priors	138.45	Neroche	148.65
Ashbrittle	148.33	North Curry	157.09
Bathealton	143.18	Norton Fitzwarren	164.15
Bishops Hull	153.83	Nynehead	157.17

Bishops Lydeard / Cothelstone	152.10	Oake	148.66
Bradford on Tone	152.54	Otterford	135.19
Burrowbridge	158.99	Pitminster	150.59
Cheddon Fitzpaine	144.57	Ruishton/ Thornfalcon	153.39
Chipstable	149.77	Sampford Arundel	169.23
Churchstanton	158.74	Staplegrave	147.60
Combe Florey	148.29	Stawley	150.46
Comeytrowe	145.73	Stoke St Gregory	150.89
Corfe	146.45	Stoke St Mary	149.88
Creech St Michael	153.39	Taunton	137.09
Durston	135.87	Trull	147.11
Fitzhead	154.59	Wellington	151.69
1.3.2 Halse	145.54	Wellington (Without)	151.57
Hatch Beauchamp	151.11	West Bagborough	141.33
Kingston St Mary	148.57	West Buckland	153.32
Langford Budville	154.28	West Hatch	150.21
Lydeard St Lawrence / Tolland	149.56	West Monkton	161.77
Milverton	154.44	Wiveliscombe	152.59

being the amounts given by adding to the amount at (g) above, the amounts of the special item or items relating to dwellings in those parts of the Council's area mentioned above divided in each case by the amount at 9.2.1(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(3) of the Act, as the basic amounts of its Council Tax for

the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items related.

*(Council Taxes at Band D for Borough, Parish and Special Expenses).*

- (i) See overleaf

(a)

Shaded figures represent indicative data only

Valuation Band	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Ash Priors	92.30	107.68	123.07	138.45	169.22	199.98	230.75	276.90
Ashbrittle	98.89	115.37	131.85	148.33	181.29	214.25	247.22	296.66
Bathealton	95.45	111.36	127.27	143.18	175.00	206.82	238.63	286.36
Bishops Hull	102.55	119.65	136.74	153.83	188.01	222.20	256.38	307.66
Bishops Lydeard/Cothelstone	101.40	118.30	135.20	152.10	185.90	219.70	253.50	304.20
Bradford on Tone	101.69	118.64	135.59	152.54	186.44	220.34	254.23	305.08
Burrowbridge	105.99	123.66	141.32	158.99	194.32	229.65	264.98	317.98
Cheddon Fitzpaine	96.38	112.44	128.51	144.57	176.70	208.82	240.95	289.14
Chipstable	99.85	116.49	133.13	149.77	183.05	216.33	249.62	299.54
Churchstanton	105.83	123.46	141.10	158.74	194.02	229.29	264.57	317.48
Combe Florey	98.86	115.34	131.81	148.29	181.24	214.20	247.15	296.58
Comeytrowe	97.15	113.35	129.54	145.73	178.11	210.50	242.88	291.46
Corfe	97.63	113.91	130.18	146.45	178.99	211.54	244.08	292.90
Creech St Michael	102.26	119.30	136.35	153.39	187.48	221.56	255.65	306.78
Durston	90.58	105.68	120.77	135.87	166.06	196.26	226.45	271.74
Fitzhead	103.06	120.24	137.41	154.59	188.94	223.30	257.65	309.18
Halse	97.03	113.20	129.37	145.54	177.88	210.22	242.57	291.08
Hatch Beauchamp	100.74	117.53	134.32	151.11	184.69	218.27	251.85	302.22
Kingston St Mary	99.05	115.55	132.06	148.57	181.59	214.60	247.62	297.14
Langford Budville	102.85	120.00	137.14	154.28	188.56	222.85	257.13	308.56
Lydeard St Lawrence/Tolland	99.71	116.32	132.94	149.56	182.80	216.03	249.27	299.12
Milverton	102.96	120.12	137.28	154.44	188.76	223.08	257.40	308.88

Neroche	99.10	115.62	132.13	148.65	181.68	214.72	247.75	297.30
North Curry	104.73	122.18	139.64	157.09	192.00	226.91	261.82	314.18
Norton Fitzwarren	109.43	127.67	145.91	164.15	200.63	237.11	273.58	328.30
Nynehead	104.78	122.24	139.71	157.17	192.10	227.02	261.95	314.34
Oake	99.11	115.62	132.14	148.66	181.70	214.73	247.77	297.32
Otterford	90.13	105.15	120.17	135.19	165.23	195.27	225.32	270.38
Pitminster	100.39	117.13	133.86	150.59	184.05	217.52	250.98	301.18
Ruishton/Thornfalcon	102.26	119.30	136.35	153.39	187.48	221.56	255.65	306.78
Sampford Arundel	112.82	131.62	150.43	169.23	206.84	244.44	282.05	338.46
Staplegrove	98.40	114.80	131.20	147.60	180.40	213.20	246.00	295.20
Stawley	100.31	117.02	133.74	150.46	183.90	217.33	250.77	300.92
Stoke St Gregory	100.59	117.36	134.12	150.89	184.42	217.95	251.48	301.78
Stoke St Mary	99.92	116.57	133.23	149.88	183.19	216.49	249.80	299.76
Taunton	91.39	106.63	121.86	137.09	167.55	198.02	228.48	274.18
Trull	98.07	114.42	130.76	147.11	179.80	212.49	245.18	294.22
Wellington	101.13	117.98	134.84	151.69	185.40	219.11	252.82	303.38
Wellington Without	101.05	117.89	134.73	151.57	185.25	218.93	252.62	303.14
West Bagborough	94.22	109.92	125.63	141.33	172.74	204.14	235.55	282.66
West Buckland	102.21	119.25	136.28	153.32	187.39	221.46	255.53	306.64
West Hatch	100.14	116.83	133.52	150.21	183.59	216.97	250.35	300.42
West Monkton	107.85	125.82	143.80	161.77	197.72	233.67	269.62	323.54
Wiveliscombe	101.73	118.68	135.64	152.59	186.50	220.41	254.32	305.18

Being the amounts given by multiplying the amounts at (h) above by the number which, in proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided



(Prior to the consideration of the report covered by Minute No. 19 below, Mr McCulloch read out a statement on behalf of UNISON. The statement detailed the views of UNISON and their concerns about the Core Council Review Proposals.)

**18. Exclusion of 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 1 of Schedule 12(A) 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.

**19. Core Council Review Proposals**

Considered report previously circulated concerning the Core Council Review proposals.

The aim of this review was to introduce a new structure and ways of working that would enable the Core Council to:-

- Be fit for purpose, delivering the Council's vision, widened roles and ways of working; and
- Deliver substantial efficiency savings for 2009/2010 and beyond.

Thematic working would mean:-

- Stronger co-operation and greater inter-play between different service areas and disciplines, to address particular organisational and/or community issues;
- Greater use of 'task and finish' working, with opportunities for people to bring their expertise, interest and capacity to a project not traditionally perceived as part of their 'day job';
- A wider framework of accountability for individuals, who would report to different managers for the different projects they were involved in. Within this framework, individuals would still receive day-to-day support from a single manager, who would carry out regular performance reviews and facilitate personal/career development. This was a fundamentally different way of working for all Council staff;
- Greater responsiveness to urgent and/or important issues ('hotspots') that arose in communities and localities across Taunton Deane;
- More generic working, where professionalism and technical expertise would be highly valued, but not to the extent that wider issues affecting the Council and community were perceived as 'somebody else's department';

- Greater sharing of knowledge and expertise across different themes. There would be opportunities for individuals to gain experience, develop their career and bring new perspectives to achieve better outcomes for the organisation, local residents and communities; and
- Convening and working closely with partner organisations to tackle complex community issues that required the input of more than one agency.

The Core Council staff would be grouped into one of the following four themes:-

- Strategy and Corporate;
- Growth and Development;
- Business (DLO); and
- Operations and Regulation.

The themes would provide the 'home-base' for staff within the new structure. However, in keeping with the approach outlined for thematic working, staff would frequently find themselves working closely with those in other thematic groups on particular issues or projects.

Structural diagrams of the existing and proposed new organisational structures were submitted.

Implementation of the Core Council Review would occur in phases over 2009/2010. This phased approach would provide the time and capacity necessary to manage the transition to the new Core Council, enable appropriate support to be provided for all staff affected and ensure continuity of service to residents over a period of major organisational change. Details of the proposed phasing was provided.

Standards of service provided to the Council's customers would be an important consideration in proposals emerging from this review. The level of officer resources proposed would have an impact on service levels.

The overall role of the Corporate Management Team (CMT) within the new Core Council structure remained as envisaged in the original proposal implemented in April 2007.

CMT would be responsible for Area Working, Themes, Projects and Priorities and Partnerships.

During the transition to the new Core Council structure, no change to the existing CMT membership was proposed.

The role and membership of CMT would be reviewed again in January 2010.

The Legal and Democratic Services Manager sat on CMT as the Council's Monitoring Officer. The current structure of the Legal and Democratic service had been approved by Full Council in November 2007. With the exception of a move to a thematic working model, no further changes to the current structure or staffing within the Legal and Democratic service were proposed.

A number of post-holders affected by the first phase of this proposal had been formally notified as being at risk of redundancy. Details of the posts and ring-fencing arrangements that would apply in respect of recruitment to posts within the proposed new structure were submitted.

The actions taken by the Council to identify, address and support staff in dealing with these implications would have a significant impact on whether the new ways of working and management structure were successful.

As part of the consultation with UNISON, Members, managers and staff, the Council had identified a series of actions that had already or would need to be put in place.

A Corporate Support Plan had been developed as a consequence of this consultation.

Recruitment to new posts in the Strategy and Corporate theme would be completed by 1 April 2009.

The financial implications of the proposal had been based on indicative job evaluation results. A formal evaluation exercise would be completed prior to the recruitment exercise.

It was proposed not to offer Salary protection to staff who applied for and were recruited to a lower grade post.

A People Management Framework, Charter and set of managerial competencies had been developed.

The Council would need an adequately resourced Organisational Development plan to ensure the success of the overall review and ultimately the Council itself.

Effectively three substantive teams would be formed within the Strategy and Corporate theme. They would be required to work closely together and to work with and support other staff in the organisation.

The two new teams would be headed by a senior manager. The two new posts of Strategy Manager and Performance and Client Manager would operate at a level between the existing Directors and Core Council Managers. This was equivalent structurally to the current Legal and Democratic Services manager.

The two Managers would be supported by four Strategy and three Performance and Client Lead Officers who would be senior professionals. The posts would bring a blend of skills and experiences that would allow all of the functions moving into the teams to be delivered.

The Lead Officers would be supported by six Strategy and two Performance and Client Officers who would be professional and technical experts in the range of activities needed to support the functions. These teams would share administrative support from three Support Staff.

The existing structure charts for the affected areas of the organisation and the proposed structure for the Strategy and Corporate theme were submitted.

Some staff would be direct transfers into the new structure and some would be put at risk as their current posts were substantially affected by this proposal. The latter group had been put at risk and would be ring fenced to a certain level of post commensurate to the level of their existing post in the organisation.

There were a number of post holders who were currently seconded from other partners to whom the Council owed a duty of care. There were other post holders on temporary or fixed term contracts. The Council owed only some of these staff a duty of care. If such a duty existed, those particular individuals would be included in the appropriate ring fence.

The duty of care assumptions and the ring fencing proposals would be subject to specific consultation with staff and UNISON.

The aims of this review were submitted. In order to deliver substantial efficiency savings for 2009/2010, the first phase of the review was not being done on an "invest to save" basis. Therefore the one-off costs associated with this review would be funded from General Fund Reserves, with no payback to reserves over future years.

The ongoing savings generated by the first phase of this review (Strategy and Corporate) would generate ongoing savings of £342k per annum. This would therefore contribute £342k towards the Councils budget gap position for 2009/2010 onwards.

One of the key assumptions in this proposal was that one "lead" post within the Performance and Client area would be funded from savings generated by the Southwest One Procurement Project.

The other key assumption was around job evaluation. The proposal had been costed based on "indicative" job evaluation results for the new structure.

The one-off costs associated with this proposal would not be known with certainty until the recruitment process had been completed. The one-off costs

would be funded from the General Fund Reserves and would be in the range of £300k - £1.2m.

Reported that a recent review of the Council's major reserves had been undertaken. This had resulted in a forecast General Fund Reserve position of £2.35m. This minimised the risk associated with the uncertainty of the one-off costs and meant the Council was in a position where this first phase of the review is affordable and deliverable. Future phases of the review would be assessed.

The Core Council would work in a way to shape the further development of Pioneer Somerset proposals and respond to these as they emerged.

The formal consultation period on the first phase of this proposal ran from 15 January 2009 until 15 February 2009. Informal consultation and dialogue had taken place with staff and members of the Council over a considerable period of time. This process has informed the proposal, and was summarised below:-

- An officer project team lead by Kevin Toller and Steve Hughes had been set up during the summer of 2008, and input had been sought from Members, managers and staff across the Council. The project team had established the main vision and drivers for the Core Council Review, concluding that a thematic approach would be the most appropriate working model for the Council;
- A Project Director (Brendan Cleere) had been appointed in October 2008 and he has attended numerous one-to-one and team meetings to discuss the Core Council Review. A set of Frequently Asked Questions had been launched in October 2008 and circulated to Members and staff. Staff briefings about the Core Council Review also took place in October, December 2008 and January 2009. These would continue throughout the year;
- Fortnightly meetings of the UNISON Change Forum had been taking place since October, including regular updates on the Core Council Review alongside the Council's other major change projects;
- Elected Members of all parties had provided input on the Core Council Review, both through the Change Programme Member Steering Group and through Group briefings; and
- External views had been sought at an early stage from bodies such as the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA), Audit Commission and Government Office for the South West (GOSW). A separate briefing for Members and senior managers on the external challenges facing Local Government would be taking place on 5 February 2009. This would be delivered by Stephen Fletcher, Regional Associate of the IDeA.

Further reported that it was proposed that the Council's political management arrangements should be reviewed separately with Members, under a project led by the Council's Monitoring Officer, Tonya Meers.

This project would deliver a proposal for Members to consider by the end of March 2009 with the aim of achieving implementation in the new Municipal Year.

The development of this proposal, and the approach proposed for recruitment activities, was in accordance with all relevant equalities legislation. Managers within each of the proposed thematic groups would be responsible for carrying out detailed Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) of their respective service areas. Actions arising from these EIAs would be included within the appropriate service operational plan, or the Council's Corporate Equality Scheme.

The recruitment to the new posts within the Strategy and Corporate theme would begin in early March. Staff at risk would have an opportunity to express a preference for jobs. Noted that the post of Strategy Manager and Performance and Client Manager would be Member appointments.

Reported that the Overview and Scrutiny Board had considered the proposals for the Core Council at its meeting on 22 January 2009. Although Members had agreed to support the proposals, the Executive was requested to consider an additional 'lead' post in the Strategy and Corporate theme to overcome the concerns expressed by the Overview and Scrutiny Board about capacity to deliver on priorities (particularly the Local Development Framework (LDF) and the Core Strategy).

Whilst a further 'lead' post was an option for consideration, another option was the creation of a specialist post at the current Service Unit Manager grade to provide planning expertise and capacity on LDF and Core Strategy related matters.

Noted that either of these options would be affordable over a 2.5 year period, funded from external funding such as the Housing and Planning Delivery Grant.

As well as hearing the verbal submission of Mr McCulloch at the beginning of this item, the written comments from UNISON were also submitted. The Strategic Director, Brendan Cleere, also provided Members with a detailed summary of the comments and representations that had been received from members of staff and his comments in response.

**Resolved** that Full Council be recommended to approve:-

- (a) The overall proposal for the new Core Council structure, including the establishment of four themes covering all Core Council staff;
- (b) The detailed proposal for the Strategy and Corporate theme,

described in the report;

- (c) The approach proposed in the report for phasing the implementation of the overall structure;
- (d) The timetable for the proposed phasing, described in the report;
- (e) The proposals for recruitment to the Strategy and Corporate theme, outlined in the report;
- (f) That salary protection would not be offered to staff who applied for and were recruited to lower grade posts throughout all phases of the Core Council Review;
- (g) That a sum of £1,000,000 be “ring-fenced” from the General Fund Reserves to fund the one off costs of this proposal. Any earmarked fund remaining at the end of this first phase would be returned to the General Fund Reserve at the end of March 2009;
- (h) That the Council’s political management arrangements be reviewed separately with Members by the end of March 2009, with the aim of achieving implementation in the new Municipal Year; and
- (i) That a specialist post at the current Service Unit Manager grade and funded from external sources such as the Housing and Planning Delivery Grant be created to provide planning expertise and capacity on Local Development Framework and Core Strategy related matters.

(The meeting ended at 8.50 pm.)