

Executive – 15 June 2011

- Present:** Councillor Williams (Chairman)
Councillors Mrs Adkins, Cavill, Hayward, Mrs Herbert, Mrs Stock-Williams and Mrs Warmington
- Officers:** Shirlene Adam (Strategic Director), Joy Wishlade (Strategic Director), Ralph Willoughby-Foster (Planning Policy Advisor), Simon Lewis (Strategy and Corporate Manager), Roger Mitchinson (Strategy Lead), Nick Bryant (Strategy Lead), Tonya Meers (Legal and Democratic Services Manager) and Richard Bryant (Democratic Services Manager)
- Also present:** Councillors Mrs Allgrove, Beaven, Bishop, Bowrah, Coles, Denington, Ms Durdan, Farbahi, Mrs Floyd, Gaines, Hall, Henley, C Hill, Mrs Hill, Horsley, Hunt, Miss James, Ms Lisgo, Meikle, Mrs Messenger, Morrell, Mullins, Nottrodt, Ms Palmer, Prior-Sankey, Reed, Mrs Reed, Gill Slattery, Slattery, Mrs Smith, P Smith, Stone, Swaine, Tooze, Watson, Mrs Waymouth, Ms Webber, A Wedderkopp, D Wedderkopp and Wren Stephen Walford (Transport Policy Manager, Somerset County Council and Mrs Anne Elder (Chairman of the Standards Committee)

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm.)

46. Apology

Councillor Edwards.

47. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 13 April 2011, copies of which had been circulated, were taken as read and were signed.

48. Public Question Time

Councillor A Wedderkopp drew attention to the recent construction of the “Willow Cathedral” on land at Longrun Meadow, Bishops Hull. He felt this structure was a real credit to Taunton Deane but feared it might be targeted by vandalism in a similar way as the original Willow Man alongside the M5 Motorway. He asked whether a CCTV camera ought to be installed at Longrun Meadow as a deterrent.

The Chairman, Councillor John Williams, reported that the Green Cathedral had been made from living willow which he understood was difficult to ignite. However, he would bring Councillor Wedderkopp’s concern to the relevant officers as to whether any security measures should be installed.

49. Declaration of Interests

As a farmer who both owned and rented land in the Monkton Heathfield area, Councillor Cavill declared a prejudicial interest in the following Core Strategy item. He left the meeting before any discussion on the item took place. Councillor Mrs Adkins declared a personal interest as an employee of Somerset County Council.

Councillor Farbahi declared a personal interest as the owner of an area of land at Cotford St. Luke.

50. Taunton Deane Core Strategy and Infrastructure Delivery Plan

Considered report previously circulated, regarding whether the Taunton Deane Core Strategy, the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and the Sustainability Appraisal should be published in July/August for public consultation and submitted to the Secretary of State in October 2011.

The Core Strategy was the key plan within the Local Development Framework and sustainable development was a statutory objective. Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Spatial Planning (PPS12) stated that spatial planning was a process of place shaping and delivery which aimed to:-

- Produce a vision for the future of places based on evidence, a sense of local distinctiveness and community derived objectives;
- Translate this vision into a set of policies and land allocations together with the public sector resources to deliver them;
- Create a framework for private investment and regeneration that promotes economic, environmental and social well being for the area;
- Coordinate and deliver the public sector components of this vision with other agencies and processes;
- Create a positive framework for action on climate change; and
- Contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development.

Adequate infrastructure planning was an essential process in developing a sound Core Strategy and PPS12 recommended that the infrastructure planning process should identify:-

- Local infrastructure needs and costs;
- The phasing of development;
- Sources of funding; and
- Responsibilities for delivery.

The Core Strategy set out a vision for Taunton Deane and eight strategic objectives together with indicators to measure success. For each objective there was a core policy:-

- (1) Climate Change;
- (2) Economy;
- (3) Town and other Centres;
- (4) Housing;
- (5) Inclusive Communities;
- (6) Accessibility;
- (7) Infrastructure; and
- (8) Environment.

The plan set out an employment-led strategy, with homes balanced to jobs. The priority was to regenerate Taunton Town Centre, with the majority of the remainder

of growth being accommodated in sustainable mixed use urban extensions served by public transport corridors. Existing green wedges would be enhanced and new green wedges created.

The employment led strategy sought to provide at least 11,900 jobs and 17,000 homes over the period up to 2028.

Taunton was the strategic focus for this growth with about 13,000 homes (of which over 3,000 would be affordable), Wellington was a secondary focus with about 2,500 homes (of which about 625 would be affordable) and the rural areas up to 1,500 homes. The Core Strategy only allocated strategic sites.

The subsequent Site Allocations Development Plan Document would allocate smaller sites in Taunton, Wellington and the rural centres. Wiveliscombe and Bishops Lydeard were identified as major rural centres for up to 200 additional homes. Cotford St Luke, Creech St Michael, Milverton, North Curry and Churchinford were identified as minor rural centres for up to 50 homes.

Central to the delivery of the Core Strategy's proposals were a number of sustainable mixed use allocations. At Taunton about 5,000 homes and 22.5 hectares of employment would be provided at Monkton Heathfield and about 900 homes and 1 hectare of employment at Priorswood Nerrols. About 10 hectares of employment land was identified as a long term reserve at Walford Cross.

Further broad locations for growth after 2016 had been identified at Comeytrowe/Trull for between 1,000 and 2,000 homes and at Staplegrove for between 500 and 1,500 homes.

Taunton Town Centre was the focus for shopping, leisure and office development and would also provide about 2,000 homes. At Taunton a broad location would be sought for a strategic employment opportunity after 2016.

Strategic sites for sustainable mixed use urban extensions at Wellington would provide for about 900 homes and the relocation of the two main employers at Longforth together with a Northern Relief Road and reopened railway station and a further 900 homes at Cades/Jurston. At Chelston a strategic inward investment employment site of 8.67 hectares was allocated for a single user.

Six strategic development management policies were proposed for general requirements, development in the countryside, gypsy and traveller site selection criteria, design objectives and delivery, and use of resources and sustainable design.

The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) gave details of the infrastructure that local service providers and the Council had identified as key to supporting growth in Taunton Deane and in meeting the objectives of the Core Strategy.

Local authorities could choose to charge Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) on new developments in their area. The money could be used to support development by funding infrastructure that the local community needed. It applied to most new

buildings (residential and non-residential) and charges were based on the size and type of development.

The IDP had been prepared to reflect the level of growth proposed in the emerging Core Strategy. It took account of the number of dwellings which had already received planning permission and the infrastructure requirements arising out of the development allocated in the Core Strategy. Since the Core Strategy did not account for the timing and location of every single dwelling that contributed towards meeting strategic housing requirements, the IDP could not similarly account for all the infrastructure requirements arising.

Whilst the IDP covered the whole of the Core Strategy timeframe, the emphasis was on the first five years (2011-2016). To allow for uncertainty that attached to longer-term requirements, it was proposed to review the IDP annually in consultation with other service providers.

The IDP had identified that the level of infrastructure required to support development was unlikely to be funded fully from developer contributions. With this in mind, the document identified the following actions which should be taken in order that the growth outline in the Core Strategy was accompanied by sufficient infrastructure:-

- The Council should not take an overly optimistic view about public funding;
- An appropriate balance should be struck in identifying the maximum level of developer's contributions that could be achieved without making development unviable;
- Opportunities should be maximised to secure funding from other sources (such as the New Homes Bonus);
- Clear priorities should be determined for the use of funding that might become available; and
- Mechanisms such as deferred payments and sharing in value uplift should be explored.

Securing contributions from developers would be key to the delivery of infrastructure and services and preliminary analysis suggested that contributions in the region of £15,000 per dwelling (excluding affordable housing) would need to be sought.

The majority of the IDP consisted of an analysis of infrastructure needs, grouped under the following headings:-

- Physical Infrastructure (e.g. Flood alleviation, transport);
- Utilities (e.g. electricity, gas, water, sewage treatment and telecommunications);
- Social and Community Infrastructure (e.g. education, health, faith, sports and recreation, arts and culture, children's play, community halls); and
- Green Infrastructure (e.g. green wedges, country parks, open spaces and links).

The IDP did not deal in any detail with affordable housing, although the need for this had been taken into account when assessing the level of contributions that developers were likely to have to make. This viability assessment indicated that

with about £15,000 per dwelling contribution package, 25% affordable housing was possible.

The principles of sustainable development were at the heart of the planning system. The Sustainability Appraisal (SA) process was intended to ensure that through plan-making, Local Planning Authorities had considered social, environmental and economic concerns when producing Local Development Frameworks. The carrying out of SA was mandatory on any new or revised Development Plan Document.

The SA process was divided into five stages:-

- Stage A: Setting the context, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope;
- Stage B: Developing and refining options and assessing effects;
- Stage C: Preparing the SA Report;
- Stage D: Consulting on the Core Strategy and SA Report; and
- Stage E: Monitoring the significant effects of implementing the plan.

Noted that, to date, the first three of these stages had been achieved.

Resolved that:-

- (1) Full Council be recommended to approve for publication the Core Strategy, Infrastructure Delivery Plan and Sustainability Appraisal; and
- (2) The relevant Executive Councillor be authorised to agree any minor changes that might be necessary prior to publication.

51. **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 7.19 pm.)

Executive – 21 June 2011

- Present:** Councillor Williams (Chairman)
Councillors Mrs Adkins, Hayward, Mrs Herbert, Mrs Stock-Williams and Mrs Warmington
- Officers:** Shirlene Adam (Strategic Director), Maggie Hammond (Strategic Finance Officer), Dan Webb (Client and Performance Lead), Mark Leeman (Strategy Lead), Paul Fitzgerald (Financial Services Manager), Tracey Healy (Principal Accountant), Tonya Meers (Legal and Democratic Services Manager) and Richard Bryant (Democratic Services Manager)
- Also present:** Councillors Gaines, Horsley, Ms Lisgo, Morrell, Prior-Sankey, Ross and A Wedderkopp.
Steve Read, Somerset Waste Partnership

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm.)

52. Apologies

Councillors Cavill and Edwards.

53. Public Question Time

Councillor Morrell asked the following question:-

“Please could the Executive inform me of the Gross National Product indexes within Taunton Deane for Social Housing occupants vis-a-vie Private Housing Sector occupants. I would be grateful for specific data relating to economic productivity produced for the local economy, even if the figures include negative sums.”

The Chairman, Councillor John Williams, stated that he would contact the appropriate officers as to obtaining the information that Councillor Morrell was seeking.

54. Windfall Value Added Tax (VAT) Receipt

Considered report previously circulated, concerning a one off windfall VAT receipt of £577,364.23.

Some time ago, a national claim had been made to HM Revenue and Customs on the basis that the United Kingdom had interpreted the European VAT Regulations incorrectly in respect of tuition fees at Leisure Centres.

The claim had been upheld and, as a result, Pricewaterhouse Coopers had again been engaged on a “no win no fee” basis to recover the overpaid VAT.

The amount received was £325,698 with interest of £396,005.23 making a total receipt of £721,703.23.

The charge made by Pricewaterhouse Coopers for this work was £144,339 resulting in a net receipt of £577,364.23.

This receipt was a one off receipt that had been accounted for in 2010/2011 and could not be used in respect of ongoing budget issues. It was therefore recommended that this receipt should be moved into the General Fund Reserves

Resolved that Full Council be recommended to approve the transfer of the one off receipt of £577,364.23 to the General Fund Reserves in 2010/2011.

55. **Performance Monitoring – Outturn Report 2010/2011**

Considered report previously circulated, which outlined the final performance data of the Council for the 2010/2011 Financial Year.

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 key successes and/or improvements in 2010/2011 included:-

- Council Tax and National Non Domestic Rate debit collection rates achieved the 2010/2011 target and the outturn results were an improvement on the same period last year;
- 99.4% of calls to the Customer Contact Centre were resolved at the first point of contact;
- The speed of processing Benefits claims (new claims) achieved the 2010/2011 target and was an improvement on last year;
- Landlord services – the latest survey result showed 99% satisfaction with repairs;
- The Environment Health service achieved its key targets for the year, with some significant improvements from last year;
- ‘Investors in People’ accreditation was successfully achieved; and
- 96% of all staff had a ‘Performance Review and Employee Development’ (appraisal) in the year (compared to only 76% in the previous year).

Areas either off course or where objectives were not being met included:-

- Levels of deprivation within Taunton Deane were worsening (according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010) with pockets of deepening deprivation in North Taunton and Taunton East;
- The 10% Carbon savings target had not been achieved;
- Procurement benefits were behind the original forecast;
- The Local Development Framework/Core Strategy had not met the planned timetable for publication and adoption;
- The recycling and residual household waste targets had not been met;
- ‘Major’ planning applications – the target for speed of processing had not been met; and
- Equality Action Plans and Equality Impact Assessments were not yet fully

embedded into the Council's procedures.

Members sought detailed information as to what measures were in place to address those objectives which were shown on the Performance Scorecard as "red alerts".

Where the information could not be provided, the Client and Performance Lead, Dan Webb, undertook to circulate the information outside of the meeting.

Resolved that the report be noted.

(Councillor Ross, as one of the Council's representatives on the Somerset Waste Board, declared a personal interest during the discussion of the above item.)

56. **2010/2011 Budget Outturn Report**

Considered report previously circulated, on the outturn position of the Council on revenue and capital expenditure for the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and trading services for 2010/2011.

A key feature of well-regarded Councils was their ability to manage performance effectively. Effective financial management therefore formed an important part of the Council's overall performance management framework

The outturn position reported for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and General Fund (GF) contained some estimated figures for Government subsidies on Housing and Council Tax Benefit. The final figures for these would not be available in time for the final accounts to be produced.

Should the final figures differ significantly from those used in closing down the accounts for 2010/2011, a further report would be presented to Members giving the updated position on subsidy and the implications for the Council's reserves.

The following outturn figures were provisional at this stage. The final outturn, once confirmed, would be used to prepare the Council's Statement of Accounts, which were due to be approved by the Section 151 Officer on 30 June 2011.

There had been a number of significant challenges faced by the Council this year, and these had had an impact on the overall financial position for the authority. These included:-

- The continuing general economic climate and the recession in the United Kingdom, which had been the worst seen in this country for over 60 years;
- The Emergency Budget implemented by the new Coalition Government in June 2010.
- The continued work on management and collection of debt, and impairment of historic debts no longer considered collectable.

Despite these challenges the Council had been in a position to improve the General Reserves position. There had also been significant items of 'good news' in the form of a VAT Refund windfall, cost efficiency savings arising from the continued roll out

of Sort It Plus and surplus earmarked reserves which have been returned to General Reserves.

Overall, net spending had been contained below budget on the General Fund. Although the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was reporting a deficit in the year, largely due to the final subsidy estimates exceeding the amount provided in the budget, the working balance for the HRA remained healthy.

Regular budget monitoring information had been presented to Members, with quarterly performance reports submitted to the Executive and the Corporate Scrutiny Committee during the year.

Noted however, that the Council had continued to operate within the framework of its Budget Strategy and the overall financial standing at the end of the financial year was sound.

The following provided a summary of the 2010/2011 outturn and reserves position for GF and HRA services:-

- (1) The 2010/2011 Provisional GF Revenue Outturn was an underspend of £492,000 against the Final Budget for the year. The Final Budget included a transfer to General Fund Reserves of £1,110,000 and, combined with the underspend for the year, the General Fund Reserves as at 31 March 2011 stood at £3,166,000 (subject to audit). This was above the minimum reserves expectation within the Council's Budget Strategy;
- (2) The 2010/2011 GF Capital Programme total expenditure for the year amounted to £4,884,000, which was £2,146,000 below the total budget for the year. Taking into account slippage of project expenditure of £2,179,000, the 'real' position was a small overspend of just £33,000. The Council had made good use of external funding to support its capital investment, not least related to Project Taunton. A budget carry forward of £2,179,000 related to committed expenditure was recommended;
- (3) The HRA Outturn for 2010/2011 had resulted in an overspend on final budget of £758,000. This was largely due to negative subsidy being much higher than Budgeted, as previously reported. The final budget included a transfer from working balances of £296,000 and, combined with the overspend, the HRA Reserves position (or "working balance") carried forward into 2011/2012 was a credit balance of £1,593,000 (subject to audit);
- (4) HRA Capital Programme total expenditure in 2010/2011 totalled £6,653,000 related largely to the Council's continued investment in maintaining the Decent Homes standard of the housing stock. This outturn resulted in an overspend against the HRA Capital Programme budget of £195,000, which had been funded from HRA Earmarked Capital Reserves.
- (5) The Deane DLO had reported an overall trading surplus of £74,895. The budgeted contribution of £73,500 had been made to the GF with the residual balance being transferred to the Trading Account Reserve which now stood at £570,000; and

- (6) The Deane Helpline had made a net deficit of £120,000 which was an overspend of £98,000 against the Final Budget. This was higher than previously anticipated largely due to support service recharges being above the original budget. Other reasons for the shortfall were outlined in the report.

The reported outturn position remained subject to external audit as part of the annual audit of the Statement of Accounts.

Resolved that:-

- (a) the draft outturn position for General Fund and Housing Revenue Account revenue and capital budgets for 2010/2011 be noted; and
- (b) Full Council be recommended to approve:-
- (i) the transfer of the net underspend on the General Fund Revenue Account to General Fund Reserves and the transfer of the net overspend on the Housing Revenue Account to HRA Working Balance Reserves;
 - (ii) the net transfer of £431,000 from earmarked reserves for use on General Fund services and capital financing and £956,000 from earmarked reserves for use on Housing Revenue Account services and capital financing, as set out in the report; and
 - (iii) the Carry Forward of the General Fund Capital Programme Budget totalling £2,179,000 for slippage into 2011/2012 as set out in the report.

57. **Executive Forward Plan**

Submitted for information the Forward Plan of the Executive over the next few months. It was noted that the Halcon Regeneration would now come before the Executive in September 2011, rather than August.

Resolved that the Forward Plan be noted.

(The meeting ended at 8.14 pm.)