

Executive – 2 February 2010

Present: Councillor Henley (Chairman)
Councillors Coles, R. Lees, Paul, Prior-Sankey, Slattery,
A Wedderkopp and Mrs Wilson

Officers: Penny James (Chief Executive), Joy Wishlade (Strategic Director), Kevin Toller (Strategic Director), Tonya Meers (Legal and Democratic Services Manager), Maggie Hammond (Strategic Finance and Section 151 Officer), Ian Jamieson (Deputy Section 151 Officer), Paul Fitzgerald (Financial Services Manager), Paul Carter (Financial Services Manager), John Williams (Chief Housing Officer), Gill Stratford (Corporate Finance Assistant), Mark Leeman (Strategy Lead) and Richard Bryant (Democratic Services Manager).

Also present: Councillors Beaven, Bishop, Brooks, Mrs Court-Stenning, Farbahi, Hall, Horsley, Mrs Lewin-Harris, McMahon, Morrell, Mrs Stock-Williams, Stuart-Thorn, Swaine, Mrs Waymouth, Mrs Whitmarsh and Williams

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm.)

9. Apology

Councillors Mrs Smith.

10. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2010, copies of which had been circulated, were taken as read and were signed.

11. Public Question Time

(a) Councillor McMahon referred to the proposal to either transfer to the Parish Council the responsibility for looking after the public toilets in Milverton or see their possible closure. As these facilities were well used, their closure would be a further erosion of local services. He understood that the public conveniences in Wiveliscombe had originally also been targeted but that they had now been spared the cuts. He asked on what basis this decision had been made? He also enquired whether it was fair to expect the Parish Council to take on the unexpected costs of cleaning the toilets having now set its precept?

One further observation from Councillor McMahon was in respect of the proposed closure of the toilets in Station Road, Taunton. These were the only conveniences now north of the town centre and their closure ought therefore to be reconsidered.

In response, the Chairman (Councillor Henley) commented that he understood that consultation with the Parish Councils over the transfer/closure

of toilets had taken place in sufficient time for decisions over the level of precepts to be made. He also stated that given the current financial situation, most of the other districts in Somerset had already passed the responsibility for cleaning toilets outside of the main urban areas to their Parish Councils.

As to Councillor McMahon's other points, the Chairman promised to send him a written response in due course.

(b) Councillor Morrell reported that he had been informed that up to the beginning of December 2009, the costs of the Somerset Square works had totalled approximately £798,000. Design costs alone had accounted for £100,000.

He asked whether it was felt this was value for money and, if not, whether the Executive was willing to investigate this level of expenditure.

The Chairman also promised Councillor Morrell a written response.

12. **Declarations of Interest**

Councillors Henley, Paul and Prior-Sankey declared personal interests as Members of Somerset County Council. Councillor Prior-Sankey also declared personal interests as she rented a garage from the Council and as a Member of the Supporting People Advisory Board. Councillor Coles declared a personal interest as a Director of Southwest One. Councillor Slattery declared personal interests both as a Member of the Somerset Waste Board and as an employee of Sedgemoor District Council.

13. **Draft Corporate Strategy 2010-2013**

Considered report previously circulated concerning the Draft Corporate Strategy for 2010-2013.

As well as providing direction for the Council, the Corporate Strategy 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.

Four new Corporate Aims (Priorities) were included in the Strategy to replace the Council's ETCHED (Economy, Transport, Crime, Healthy Living, Environment and Delivery) aims. These new aims were:-

- Tackling Deprivation and Sustainable Community Development;
- Regeneration (economic development and housing growth);
- Affordable Housing; and
- Climate Change.

These aims were all directly related to the growth agenda and, as a result, an amendment had been suggested to the Council's Vision to reflect the importance of the growth agenda and the possibilities that it will provide. The Vision was now intended to read:-

"Taunton Deane will be recognised nationally as a place that is developing in a sustainable way, securing a better life and future for its people, businesses and communities".

Supporting the Corporate Aims were nine Corporate Objectives and a list of key activities. Noted that the number of Objectives had been reduced from 20 and that there had been a similar proportionate reduction in the number of key activities.

Performance would be monitored against the Corporate Strategy to understand how effective the Council was at delivering the aims and objectives. This would be done in the following ways:-

- Activity monitoring: Managers would be contacted on a quarterly basis for an update against each of the activities; and
- Performance Indicators had been selected that would provide statistical evidence to support an assessment of performance. The chosen National Indicators were within the Local Area Agreement. Data collection for most of the National Indicators was on a yearly basis. Locally defined Indicators would need more work in order to define data sources, baselines and targets.

In preparing the new Strategy, a 'Profile of Services' exercise has been undertaken to determine what Taunton Deane's future priorities should be.

Councillors had considered the community priorities, central Government requirements and what had already been committed to in partnership with the Local Area Agreement, Sustainable Community Strategy and other local agreements.

Councillors then used this context to consider in which of 75 different service areas the Council should increase, decrease or maintain investment.

The headline results for the increase/decrease areas were captured as follows:-

Service Area	Increase Investment	Decrease Investment
Climate Change	Yes	
Tackling Deprivation	Yes	
Growth and Economic regeneration	Yes	
Affordable Housing	Yes	
Tourist Information Centre		Yes
The Town Centre Company		Yes

Golf and Tennis	Yes
Pest Control	Yes
Conservation and Heritage	Yes
Licensing	Yes
Food Control	Yes
Scrutiny	Yes

This profile of services had been fed into the Core Council Review and had helped shape the Council's restructure. This would ensure that the Council was 'fit for purpose' and could effectively deliver against the new priorities from 2010 to 2013.

Reported that delivering the Corporate Aims would be achieved through the development of a 'Strategic Aims Delivery Plan'. This would be the equivalent of a service plan and would outline time-scales, key actions, risks, resource requirements, expected outcomes and key performance indicators.

It was acknowledged that to assist delivery, the Council needed to develop an enthusiastic and flexible workforce that could move between priorities. This would involve the "thematic working" which the Core Council Review had introduced.

The quality of service delivery would be considered and different ways of delivering the same service at less cost would be investigated. Services would be reviewed to identify opportunities for income generation and further streamlining.

A thorough review of assets would be undertaken and would be led by Southwest One aimed at exploring potential new revenue streams.

Public consultation on the Corporate Strategy would take place in Spring 2010. The Equalities Impact Assessment that had been undertaken would be used to inform this consultation. Primarily, the Council wanted to challenge whether the right key activities had been chosen and whether there were any alternative suggestions.

The Corporate Scrutiny Committee had considered the Corporate Strategy on three separate occasions since last October and had contributed widely to its new format.

Resolved that:-

- (1) the Draft Corporate Strategy 2010-2013 be approved; and
- (2) Full Council be recommended to adopt the Corporate Strategy.

14. **General Fund Revenue Estimates 2010/2011**

Considered report previously circulated regarding the Executive's final

2010/2011 budget proposals, prior to submission to Full Council on 16 February 2010 for approval.

Each year the Council set an annual budget which detailed the resources needed to meet operational requirements. The Council's approach followed key objectives of the Budget Strategy which were to:-

- Maintain an affordable and sustainable Council Tax position;
- Run an inclusive, open and transparent budget setting process;
- Ensure budgets were realistic, balanced, sustainable, and supported Corporate Priorities;
- Maintained a strong balance sheet position;
- Managed spending within budgets;
- Delivered year on year cash and non-cash efficiency savings in line with Government targets;
- Continued to improve on Financial Management, Use of Resources and Value for Money assessments;
- Maintained General Fund Reserves at a minimum of £1,250,000 (or £1,000,000 if being replenished via invest to save initiatives); and
- Maintained Housing Revenue Reserves at no less than £150 per dwelling.

The Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) was set out within the Financial Strategy Framework, which was a key link between the Corporate Strategy and financial planning and recognised the difficult issues and challenges facing this Council.

The annual budget was also prepared within the context of the MTFP and was essentially focussed on setting the budget for the first year of a 5-year rolling financial plan.

Budget setting this year had been considerably influenced by the overall economic climate and the major changes faced by Taunton Deane such as the Core Council Review. The investment in services and consideration of savings targets and delivery plans aimed to ensure that the Council was directing resources towards its highest priorities.

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 good front line service provision.

The MTFP had been updated over the summer to reflect the latest estimates

of demographic, legislative and other known changes considered to be unavoidable.

The initial Budget Strategy for 2010/2011 was presented to Corporate Scrutiny on 29 October 2009, which set out to identify options to close the General Fund Budget Gap which at that time stood at close to £1.4m.

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, the remaining expenditure was funded by the Government through the Revenue Support Grant and National Non-Domestic Rates and by the Council Tax payer.

In 2009/2010 the Council received a total of £8,536,000 from the Government via the Finance Settlement. The final figure for 2010/2011 was £8,721,220, an increase of 2.17%.

As 2010/2011 was the final year of the current three-year settlement, the Council did not have draft figures from the Government for future years. However, for the purposes of the MTFP a fall in funding during the next three year financial settlement period had been predicted.

Noted that the Government had indicated that they did not expect to see Council Tax increases above 3%.

Reported in detail on the unavoidable increases in costs together with a series of initiatives and savings proposed by the Executive for inclusion in the 2010/2011 budget. These could be summarised as follows:-

	£'000	£'000
Budget Requirement 2009/10 (excluding parishes)		14,216
General Inflationary increases	386	
Unavoidable increases		
Ongoing impact of 2009/10 pressures/savings	271	
Loss of car parking income (impact of P&R / Project Tauntor)	257	
Waste service contract inflation / reduced Recycling Credits	136	
Removal of DLO contribution to general fund (2009/10 only)	112	
Impact of VAT increase from 15% to 17.5%	73	
Loss of income from market site	21	
Repayment of capital borrowing (MRP)	10	
New initiatives / spending on services		
Waste service enhancements and withdrawal of bring banks	84	
Reinstatement of 'frozen' staff posts	133	
Removal of grant income for posts removed in the CCR	100	
Removal of vacancy factor	50	
Software licences for system enhancements (QAS/GIS)	26	
Castle Green maintenance	22	
Youth initiatives (includes £15k one-off)	30	
Statutory BV Place Survey	11	
Tree planting (one-off)	10	
Parish precepts	13	
Other	25	
Revenue Financing of Capital Programme	49	
Savings		
Core Council Review	(450)	
Income generation - fees and charges	(478)	
Savings Delivery Plans	(315)	
HB Administration Subsidy	(71)	
Reduction in Discretionary Rate Relief budget	(49)	
Concessionary travel demand	(40)	
Removal of Deprived Areas Fund	(36)	
Reduced maintenance following cremator enhancements	(44)	
Other Savings	(98)	
Net change in interest costs and investment income	58	
Increase in Net Operating Costs		<u>296</u>
Budget Requirement 2010/11		<u>14,512</u>
Net increase to be met by:		
Government grants and taxation base budget		14,216
Government grant increase	185	
Increase/decrease in Collection Fund surplus / (deficit)	(48)	
Impact of change in Tax Base	(2)	
Parish Precepts and Special expenses	30	
Council tax	<u>131</u>	
		<u>296</u>
		<u>14,512</u>

As part of the Budget Strategy for 2010/2011, savings targets had been issued to managers to identify options for savings within services. These Savings Delivery Plans (SDP's) had been widely reported and debated,

culminating in the latest proposals totalling £352,890 being submitted to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee for comment earlier this month.

Noted that three changes to the proposals presented to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee had been made which reduced the overall savings proposals to £315,140. These were:-

- (a) Grass cutting: The Executive had confirmed its intention not to support the proposals to seek to transfer grass-cutting services back to Somerset County Council. This potential £41,000 saving had therefore been removed from the SDPs;
- (b) Public conveniences: The costing for the savings related to potential transfer to parishes or closure of public conveniences had been finalised, with the saving increased by £13,250, to £20,100 in total; and
- (c) Parking: The option to introduce parking charges in Wiveliscombe had not been recommended by the Executive. Therefore the potential saving of £10,000 through additional income had been removed from the SDPs.

Reported that following much work to identify efficiencies and savings, the Budget Gap reported to the Corporate Scrutiny Board on 21 January 2010 for the draft proposals under consideration was a £23,000 surplus.

However, the budget proposals had been updated further as expenditure and income estimates and budget proposals had been finalised. The changes to the Budget Gap since the report was submitted to Scrutiny in January were shown in the table below. The overall impact of the proposed changes resulted in a nil budget gap.

	£000	£000
Budget Gap Reported to Scrutiny 21 January 2010		-23
Collection Fund Deficit – updated forecast	18	
Grass Cutting – savings option not recommended	41	
Public Conveniences – estimated savings updated	-13	
Concessionary Travel – updated forecast	-150	
DLO – Remove one-off item from Base Budget	112	
Tree Planting – one-off item from GF reserves	10	
Youth Projects – one-off item from GF reserves	15	
Youth Initiatives in unparished area of Taunton	15	
Car parking – Remove proposal to introduce parking fees in Wiveliscombe	10	
One-off transfer from GF Reserves	-20	
Increase Special Expenses for Youth Initiatives	-15	
Net impact of changes		23
Budget Gap		0

In order to balance the budget for 2010/2011, it was recommended that Council Tax was increased by 2.5%.

Noted that 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 £3.30 on 2009/2010. This represented an increase of 6 pence per week. The Band D taxpayer would receive all the services provided by the Council in 2010/2011 at a cost of £2.59 per week.

The following table compared the 2010/2011 proposed budget with the 2009/2010 original budget, based on the information contained in the report:-

	Original Estimate 2009/10	Proposed Budget 2010/11
	£	£
Total Spending on Services	15,280,880	15,500,550
Capital Charges Credit	(1,930,000)	(1,930,000)
Interest payable on Loans	266,090	226,430
Minimum Revenue Provision	332,910	342,500
Interest Income	(167,000)	(69,000)
Contribution from G Fund Balances	0	(20,000)
AUTHORITY EXPENDITURE	13,782,880	14,050,480
Less: Revenue Support Grant	(1,600,772)	(1,105,826)
Less: Contribution from NNDR Pool	(6,935,368)	(7,615,394)
Surplus/Deficit on Collection Fund	81,600	130,210
Expenditure to be financed by District Council Tax	5,328,340	5,459,470
Divided by Council Tax Base	40,399.85	40,384.49
Council Tax @ Band D	£131.89	£135.19
Cost per week per Band D equivalent	£2.54	£2.59

Noted that the General Fund Reserve position showed the predicted balance of £1,418, 876.

This figure included a worst case scenario for the costs of Core Council Review (CCR) implementation in 2009/2010 and the forecast outturn deficit as at Quarter 2 budget monitoring. With regard to the CCR, the actual costs were unlikely to be known with certainty until March 2010, which would be

after the budget had been set. However current cost estimates were very close to the £592,000 worst case.

Whilst the forecast position was currently above the minimum amount in the budget strategy, maintaining a strong general reserves position was prudent in the current economic climate.

Although a review of Earmarked Reserves was to be undertaken shortly, at this point in time there was no reason to suggest these funds were not required for the purposes for which they were originally set aside.

As stated above, the Council prepared its annual budget within the context of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). This provided estimates of the budget requirement and budget gap into future years. The following table provided a summary of the current indicative MTFP and the General Reserves forecast:-

Indicative MTFP Summary

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Expected Budget Requirement	14.513	15.109	16.763	17.268	17.820
<i>Financed By:</i>					
External Government Support	8.721	7.849	7.457	7.457	7.457
Council tax (increase assumed 2.5% each year)	5.922	6.058	6.198	6.342	6.489
Predicted Budget Gap	0	1.289	3.152	3.470	3.875

Note: Negative budget gap figure equals a surplus.

General Reserves Forecast

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Estimated Balance B/F	-1.419	1.703	0.515	2.596	5.991
Planned Transfers to / from Reserves	-0.284	0.101	0.04	0	0
Predicted Budget Gap	0.000	1.289	3.152	3.470	3.875
Estimated Balance C/F	-1.703	-0.515	2.596	6.066	9.941

Note: Negative reserve figures equal amounts in hand.

The above table had been prepared on the assumption of a 2.5% increase in Council Tax each year within the MTFP period.

The MTFP also assumed that Government support would be hit hard in the next 3-year financial settlement, due to the overall state of the economy and pressures on Government spending and debt. The Council was therefore planning on the basis of a 10% reduction in 2011/2012 followed by a further 5% reduction in 2012/2013. A clearer idea of funding prospects was likely in the latter part of 2010.

Further reported that it was proposed to increase expenses chargeable to the non-parished area of Taunton in 2010/2011 to £47,050 - an increase of 50% on the Band D equivalent. This formed part of the total expenditure of the Council. The precept in 2009/2010 was £30,620. The proposed increase incorporated enhanced funding for youth initiatives in the Taunton Unparished Area.

Also reported that detailed budgets for 2010/2011 had been produced for the Deane DLO. Figures for Highways, Grounds Maintenance, Building Maintenance, Cleansing, the Nursery and Transport were reported but these were very much an estimate at this time due to the uncertainty as to their income sources.

The Executive was minded to support a number of further proposals, as follows:-

- **Brewhouse Theatre Grant / Carbon Neutral Projects:** An additional £50,000 one off budget in 2010/2011 for each of these topics (£100,000 in total). Although not included within the proposed Budget, further reports would be submitted after the 2009/2010 accounts, to confirm the need for funding and the availability of Council funds to support this cost.
- **Taunton East and Taunton North:** The Council was in the early stages of developing proposals, subject to the development of 3-year service level agreements (SLAs), to provide support to the Taunton East Development Trust and the North Taunton Partnership. The total funding sought was in the region of £130,000 over the three year period. As well as funding from the Housing Revenue Account and the existing Community Leadership budget, opportunities to obtain contributions for the balance from other partner organisations through the Local Strategic Partnership were being explored. The Executive was also minded to allocate a further £35,000 in total from existing Economic Development budgets to support specific and related projects.

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, Maggie Hammond had stated that she believed the Council's reserves to be adequate and the budget estimates used in preparing the 2010/2011 budget to be as robust as possible.

Resolved that Full Council be recommended to agree the budget for General Fund Services for 2010/2011 as outlined in the report and that:-

- (a) the transfer for any potential underspend in 2009/2010 back to General Fund Reserves be agreed;
- (b) the proposed 2010/2011 budget, being Authority expenditure of £14,050,480 and Special Expenses of £47,050 be agreed in accordance with the Local Government Act 1992;
- (c) the predicted General Fund Reserve balance at 31 March 2010 of £1,419,000 be noted;
- (d) the forecast budget position within the Medium Term Financial Plan be noted;
- (e) the Prudential Indicators for 2010/2011 as set out in the report be agreed.

15. Housing Revenue Account, Revenue Estimates and Rent Levels and Deane Helpline for the 2010/2011 Financial Year

Considered report previously circulated, which set out in detail the proposed Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for 2010/2011 which showed a working balance of £2,545,800.

Reported that last year the Council had originally set a rent increase of 6.2%. This was subsequently reduced to 2.95% following a last minute review by the Government of average national rent levels.

For 2010/2011 the Government, through the subsidy mechanism, had requested that average rents should increase by no more than 3.1%. It was therefore recommended that the average weekly rent increase would be £1.93 per week or 3.1%. The average weekly rent (excluding service charges) would increase from £62.10 to £64.03.

All housing fees and charges had already been considered and on average the majority of fees had been increased by 2.5%.

For 2010/2011 the expected Supported People income was estimated at £405,000. 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) Increase in provision for bad debts;
- (d) Revenue Contribution to Capital;
- (e) Surplus/Deficit;
- (f) Working Balance

Further reported on the main expenditure changes relating to HRA Maintenance, Management and Supervisory Expenditure.

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

Reported that the forecast surplus for 2009/2010 was £30,490 leaving a projected working balance of £43,154 at the end of the financial year. The forecast position for 2010/2011 was an estimated surplus of £48,640 leaving a working balance of £91,794 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.

The Corporate Scrutiny Committee had considered the 2010/2011 draft budget at its meeting on 21 January 2010. The Committee had noted the proposals and also requested that details of the Deane DLO budget were provided. This information had been included in the report concerning the General Fund Revenue Estimates (Minute No.14 above).

Resolved that Full Council be recommended to agree the Housing Revenue Account budget for 2010/2011.

16. **Capital Programme 2010/2011 Onwards**

Considered report previously circulated, together with an addendum report circulated at the meeting, which detailed the proposed General Fund (GF) and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programmes for the period 2010/2011 to 2014/2015.

All Capital expenditure had to be financed from borrowing, capital receipts, capital grants and contributions or from revenue funds set aside for capital purposes.

The table below provided an overview of the gross estimated resources available for capital investment at the start of 2010/2011, plus an indicative forecast of additional resources made available during the year:-

	Estimated Balance 1 April £'000	Estimated Additional Resources £'000	Estimated Total Resources 2010/11 £'000
GF Capital Reserve (RCCO funding)	238	249	487
Usable Capital Receipts - General	65	0	65
Usable Capital Receipts - Housing	417	100	517
Grants and Contributions	0	742	742
Supported Borrowing - Housing	0	620	620
General Fund Capital Resources	720	1,711	2,431
HRA Capital Reserve (RCCO funding)	108	735	843
Major Repairs Allowance	0	3,785	3,785
Grants and Contribution	40	0	40
HRA Capital Resources	148	4,520	4,668
Overall Total Capital Resources	868	6,231	7,099

Where the overall amount of capital expenditure exceeded the available resources, the Council would be required to undertake prudential borrowing for the difference. The Executive had previously recommended approval to borrow £770,000 related to a proposed General Fund investment in the Crematorium. If the scheme was approved this, plus any further new loan debt required if capital approvals exceeded all other available resources, would only be taken after full consideration of the Council's Treasury Management Strategy and the indicators prescribed by the Prudential Code.

General Fund Capital Programme

The Council had approved a Capital Programme for 2009/2010 General Fund schemes totalling £1,954,930, in February 2009. Slippage from the previous year plus supplementary approvals during the current year had increased the estimated programme expenditure in 2009/2010 to £3,088,000.

The draft Capital Programme proposed for 2010/2011 totalled £2,852,000. At this stage, this assumed nil slippage from 2009/2010.

Reported that two schemes had been supported by the Executive at its meeting on 2 December 2009. These schemes which related to the Taunton Deane Crematorium Mercury Abatement Scheme (£1,000,000) and Play and

Youth Projects in Taunton (£93,000) had been included in the Capital Programme for 2010/2011.

Details of a number of one-off schemes which the Executive was not minded to approve were submitted.

Recurring Schemes

The Executive was minded to fund recurring capital schemes through a specific revenue contribution to capital (RCCO), continuing the policy of recent years, and from external grants where these were received.

The specific RCCO-funded schemes proposed for 2010/2011 totalled £165,000 as shown in the following table:-

	General Schemes	Approved Budget 2009/10 £000	Proposed Budget 2010/11 £000
1	Leisure Grants to Clubs	45	45
2	Play Equipment – grants to parishes	20	20
3	Replacement Play Equipment	10	10
4	New Play Equipment	10	10
5	Desktop Hardware Replacement	17	60
6	Replacement Car Parking Pay & Display Machines	5	5
7	Replacement Car parking Hand Held enforcement equipment	5	5
8	Taunton Canal Grant (sustainable transport scheme)	10	10
	Totals	122	165

In addition, recurring funding was proposed for General Fund (Non-HRA) Housing schemes which had previously been funded by a combination of specific Government grants, supported borrowing and use of capital receipts from the sale of housing stock.

Noted that at this stage the Council's grant allocations for 2010/2011 had not yet been confirmed. The proposals included within the programme, for the same amount of capital expenditure as in 2009/2010, were set out as provisional estimates on the assumption that resources available for financing would also continue at the same level as the current year.

	General Fund Housing Schemes	Approved Budget 2009/10 £000	Proposed Budget 2010/11 £000
1	Disabled Facility Grants	450	450
2	Private Sector Renewals Grants	335	335
3	Grants to Residential Social Landlords (RSLs)	809	809
	Totals	1,594	1,594

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.

Details of the proposed Capital Programme for 2010/2011 to 2014/2015 were reported. Indicative allocations had been included in later years to provide Members with a longer term perspective on potential future capital investment and the implications on estimated available resources.

Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme

Reported that the levels of resources available to finance the proposed Housing Capital Programme for 2010/2011, totalled £4,668,000. This ensured that the HRA would not have to meet any unsupported borrowing costs (that is, debt repayment and interest costs).

The proposed HRA Capital Programme for 2010/2011 totalled £4,560,000. Submitted for the information of Members a breakdown of the proposed programme. This programme would leave resources available to carry forward, to support the future Housing Capital Programmes, of £108,000.

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.

The Corporate Scrutiny Committee had considered the draft programme at its meeting on 21 January 2010 and made no formal suggestions for any changes to the programme.

As well as providing details of the proposed Capital Programme for 2010/2011, a revised Capital Programme budget for 2009/2010 had been recommended for approval.

The original budget for the year for the General Fund Capital Programme was £1,954,930. It was now proposed to increase this budget to £3,161,310 to take account of decisions made by the Executive before Christmas relating to the new Building Control IT System (Acolaid) and in respect of proposed investment in new play and youth facilities. The figure also included slippage

on various schemes from 2008/2009.

The following table provided a summary of the proposed changes:-

	£	£
Original Budget for 2009/2010		1,954,930
Slippage from 2008/2009 – Various schemes	546,480	
Play and Youth Facilities Projects	562,240	
New Building Control IT System (Acolaid)	72,900	
Total Changes		1,206,620
Proposed Revised Budget for 2010/2011		3,161,550

Noted that there was no impact on the availability of resources to the position included in the main Capital Programme 2010/2011 or the Revenue Budget Estimates.

Further reported that the HRA Capital Programme's original budget for 2009/2010 totalled £5,555,000. It was proposed to increase this budget to £6,724,000 due entirely to slippage on the various schemes from the previous financial year. This did not affect the overall cumulative expenditure – it was a timing difference between financial years.

Resolved that:-

- (1) Full Council be recommended to agree the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Capital Programmes for 2010/2011;
- (2) The revised 2009/2010 General Fund Capital Programme budget of £3,161,550 be approved; and
- (3) The revised 2009/2010 Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme budget be also approved.

17. **Council Tax Setting 2010/2011**

Submitted report previously circulated, which made recommendations on the level of Council Tax for 2010/2011.

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

Noted that at this stage, the precept figures for the Somerset County Council, the Avon and Somerset Police Authority and the Devon and Somerset Fire Authority were not available. It was likely this element of the total Council Tax determination would have to be advised to Members at the meeting of Full Council on 16 February 2010.

The estimated expenses chargeable to the non-parished area of Taunton in

2010/2011 amounted to £47,047 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 £1,248,350. Taunton Deane's share of this amounted to £130,210 and this was reflected in the revenue estimates.

The Council's budget requirement was £14,512,850 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 £1,105,826 and the Non Domestic Rates Distribution (NDR) from the pool, amounting to £7,615,394.

The net amount, having taken the collection fund position into account, of £5,921,840 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 on 13 January 2010.

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 2009/2010 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 and the Police and Fire Authorities, which was to be advised:-

That it be noted that at its meeting on 13 January 2010 the Executive calculated the following amounts for the year 2010/2011 in accordance with the regulations made under Section 33(5) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended):-

- (1) 40,384.49 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	76.05	Neroche	255.85
Ashbrittle	97.07	North Curry	742.96
Bathealton	84.57	Norton Fitzwarren	826.06
Bishops Hull	1,072.38	Nynehead	156.55
Bishops Lydeard / Cothelstone	1,937.47	Oake	333.46

Bradford on Tone	283.61	Otterford	168.39
Burrowbridge	204.78	Pitminster	459.04
Cheddon Fitzpaine	648.71	Ruishton/ Thornfalcon	615.34
Chipstable	124.72	Sampford Arundel	131.90
Churchstanton	331.27	Staplegrove	714.77
Combe Florey	122.01	Stawley	131.00
Comeytrowe	2,086.27	Stoke St Gregory	387.38
Corfe	134.15	Stoke St Mary	206.72
Creech St Michael	950.07	Taunton	16,087.45
Durston	59.02	Trull	1,025.28
Fitzhead	121.87	Wellington	4,631.59
Halse	144.75	Wellington (Without)	304.46
Hatch Beauchamp	261.29	West Bagborough	163.62
Kingston St Mary	446.32	West Buckland	446.17
Langford Budville	238.40	West Hatch	143.28
Lydeard St Lawrence/ Tolland	200.64	West Monkton	1,115.05
Milverton	600.46	Wiveliscombe	1,112.28

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 2010/2011 in accordance with Sections 32 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992:-
- (a) £79,952,444 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) £65,439,594 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) £14,512,850 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) £8,591,010 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 estimated 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) £146.64 $\frac{(c) - (d)}{9.2.1(1)} = \frac{14,512,850 - 8,591,010}{40,384.49}$

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) £462,370 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 $\frac{(e) - (f)}{(1) \text{ above}} = \frac{146.64 - 462,370}{40,384.49}$

being the amount at (e) above less the result given by dividing the amount at (f) above by the amount at (1) 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	135.19	Neroche	149.07
Ashbrittle	147.55	North Curry	157.40
Bathealton	142.28	Norton Fitzwarren	164.15
Bishops Hull	153.84	Nynehead	157.55
Bishops Lydeard / Cothelstone	152.10	Oake	149.43
Bradford on Tone	154.58	Otterford	135.19
Burrowbridge	158.47	Pitminster	151.57
Cheddon Fitzpaine	144.44	Ruishton/ Thornfalcon	156.32
Chipstable	149.22	Sampford Arundel	168.85
Churchstanton	158.19	Staplegrove	149.18
Combe Florey	148.30	Stawley	153.51
Comeytrove	147.17	Stoke St Gregory	150.68
Corfe	146.37	Stoke St Mary	149.74
Creech St Michael	153.35	Taunton	138.11
Durston	135.19	Trull	148.85
Fitzhead	166.86	Wellington	151.72
Halse	147.28	Wellington (Without)	151.28
Hatch Beauchamp	152.41	West Bagborough	147.41
Kingston St Mary	148.63	West Buckland	153.12
Langford Budville	151.97	West Hatch	150.06

Lydeard St Lawrence / Tolland	151.14	West Monkton	161.90
Milverton	154.34	Wiveliscombe	153.17

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 (2) 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

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 by the number which is that proportion applicable to dwellings listed in Valuation Band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands. (Council Tax for Individual Parishes and the Borough)

18. 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 8.50 pm.)

(a)

2010/11 by Parish by Band at 2.5%

Shaded figures represent indicative data only

Valuation Band	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Ash Priors	90.13	105.15	120.17	135.19	165.23	195.27	225.32	270.38
Ashbrittle	98.37	114.76	131.16	147.55	180.34	213.13	245.92	295.11
Bathealton	94.86	110.67	126.48	142.28	173.90	205.52	237.14	284.57
Bishops Hull	102.56	119.65	136.75	153.84	188.03	222.21	256.40	307.68
Bishops Lydeard/Cothelstone	101.40	118.30	135.20	152.10	185.90	219.69	253.49	304.19
Bradford on Tone	103.06	120.23	137.41	154.58	188.93	223.29	257.64	309.17
Burrowbridge	105.65	123.26	140.87	158.47	193.69	228.91	264.12	316.95
Cheddon Fitzpaine	96.29	112.34	128.39	144.44	176.54	208.63	240.73	288.88
Chipstable	99.48	116.06	132.64	149.22	182.38	215.54	248.70	298.44
Churchstanton	105.46	123.04	140.62	158.19	193.35	228.50	263.65	316.39
Combe Florey	98.87	115.35	131.83	148.30	181.26	214.22	247.17	296.61
Comeytrowe	98.12	114.47	130.82	147.17	179.88	212.58	245.29	294.35
Corfe	97.58	113.84	130.11	146.37	178.90	211.43	243.95	292.74
Creech St Michael	102.23	119.27	136.31	153.35	187.42	221.50	255.58	306.69
Durston	90.13	105.15	120.17	135.19	165.23	195.27	225.32	270.38
Fitzhead	111.24	129.78	148.32	166.86	203.94	241.02	278.10	333.72
Halse	98.19	114.55	130.92	147.28	180.01	212.74	245.47	294.56
Hatch Beauchamp	101.61	118.54	135.48	152.41	186.28	220.15	254.02	304.82
Kingston St Mary	99.09	115.60	132.12	148.63	181.66	214.69	247.72	297.27
Langford Budville	101.31	118.20	135.08	151.97	185.74	219.51	253.28	303.94
Lydeard St Lawrence/Tolland	100.76	117.55	134.35	151.14	184.73	218.31	251.90	302.28
Milverton	102.89	120.04	137.19	154.34	188.64	222.94	257.24	308.68
Neroche	99.38	115.94	132.50	149.07	182.19	215.32	248.44	298.13
North Curry	104.93	122.42	139.91	157.40	192.38	227.35	262.33	314.80
Norton Fitzwarren	109.43	127.67	145.91	164.15	200.63	237.11	273.58	328.30
Nynehead	105.03	122.54	140.04	157.55	192.56	227.57	262.58	315.09
Oake	99.62	116.23	132.83	149.43	182.64	215.85	249.06	298.87
Otterford	90.13	105.15	120.17	135.19	165.23	195.27	225.32	270.38

Executive – 9 February 2010

Present: Councillor Henley (Chairman)
Councillors Coles, R. Lees, Paul, Prior-Sankey, Slattery,
and Mrs Wilson

Officers: Penny James (Chief Executive), Joy Wishlade (Strategic Director), Brendan Cleere (Strategic Director), Tonya Meers (Legal and Democratic Services Manager), Maggie Hammond (Strategic Finance and Section 151 Officer), Tim Burton (Growth and Development Manager), Brian Yates (Building Control Manager), Stephen Boland (Housing Estate Manager), Christine Thompson (Sheltered Housing Manager), Martin Griffin (Retained HR Manager) and Richard Bryant (Democratic Services Manager).

Also present: Councillors Beaven, Cavill, Mrs Court-Stenning, Gaines, Hall, Hayward, Ms Herbert, Horsley, Mrs Lewin-Harris, Morrell, Mrs Stock-Williams, Stuart-Thorn and Williams.

Ian McCulloch and Oliver Foster-Burnell from UNISON.
Chris Vaughn from Turner and Townsend, Consultants
Alan Cottrell, Independent Member of the Standards Committee

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm.)

19. Apology

Councillor A Weddekopp.

20. Declarations of Interest

Councillors Henley, Paul and Prior-Sankey declared personal interests as Members of Somerset County Council. Councillor Coles declared a personal interest as a Director of Southwest One. Councillor Slattery declared personal interests both as a Member of the Somerset Waste Board and as an employee of Sedgemoor District Council.

21. Building Control Scheme of Charges for 2010/2011

Considered report previously circulated, concerning proposals to amend the Building Control charges.

The proposals were for a Scheme of Charges for 2010/2011 to meet the financial requirements of the Building (Local Authority Charges) Regulations 1998, and for further scheme amendments and adaptations to meet the objectives of the Communities and Local Government Implementation Plan "The Future of Building Control" published in September 2009.

The Building Control Service was provided jointly with Sedgemoor District Council and the same fees were applied by both authorities.

The Council was required to set a scheme of charges in connection with its functions under Building Regulations, such that the income from charges was equal to the anticipated costs of providing the service during the relevant period.

Examination and approval of plans of work and inspection of works in progress on site were how the Council met its statutory duty to enforce Building Regulations.

This work was carried out in competition with private sector Approved Inspectors. The Council, therefore, had to set charges for its service to enable recovery of the costs of service provision, whilst remaining competitive.

In the general recession affecting the economy, the construction sector had been hardest hit and would probably be the last to recover.

In January 2009, a scheme of charges and reduction in staffing had been proposed to manage a potential 15% drop in activity and income. However, the downturn was forecast to continue into and probably throughout 2010.

Savings in staff costs had continued to be made. In addition, further savings had been made through sharing a Building Control Surveyor with Sedgemoor District Council.

Proposals from the Communities and Local Government as to "The Future of Building Control" had moved to the 'Implementation Plan' stage. Further consultation was planned for 2010 in respect of these proposals. The establishment of a basis for the assessment of individual fees in conjunction with the Section 151 Officer and the South West Audit Partnership had also been proposed.

Fees for one or two dwellings remained unchanged from 2009/2010. With larger developments (in excess of ten dwellings) it was proposed that the Building Control Manager should have the option of a risk assessed service framework and tailored fee quotation in accordance with principles to be agreed.

This could result in the reduction of charges for repetitive work schemes or repeat house types by major house builders and improve the ability of Building Control to compete for this class of work.

Charges for minor works were unchanged from 2009/2010 and were reduced substantially for domestic garages.

Charges for medium and large extensions and loft conversions would increase by 4% on average, to reflect the greater cost of controlling such works, due to the increasing complexity of the Regulations and the greater reliance of small builders and self-builders on advice and guidance from the Building Control Service.

Fees for work in the lowest cost band (up to £5,000) were unchanged from 2009/2010, in order to improve value for money perceptions.

Middle range works (costing £25,000 to £50,000) would increase from between 2.8% and 6.8%. It was anticipated that income from this schedule would increase by 4% on average.

Works estimated to cost in excess of £100,000 whilst still encompassed by the Charging Scheme would, at the discretion of the Building Control Manager, be subject to the service framework and tailored fee quotation mentioned above. The ability of the Service to compete effectively for major development projects would be enhanced by this.

The fees had been set in conjunction with Sedgemoor District Council and it was hoped that both Local Authorities would operate the same fees with effect from 1 April 2010.

Resolved that:-

- (1) the Scheme of Charges as shown in the Appendix to these minutes be approved; and
- (2) the Building Control Manager, in conjunction with the Section 151 Officer and South West Audit Partnership be authorised to design and implement a framework for the risk-assessment and fee-setting of larger schemes of work.

22. Approval for Capital Spend – Digital Compliance : Deane Helpline

Considered report previously circulated regarding a proposal to allocate sufficient capital investment, using existing revenue resources, for the purchase and installation of new equipment in order to ensure that all Lifeline equipment operated by the Deane Helpline was digitally compliant.

The Council had been taking advice from the IT suppliers Tunstall and the Telecare Services Association for some time on this issue, so that managers had a good idea of the current position.

All sheltered housing schemes were upgraded from analogue to digital approximately 10 years ago, but it was estimated that approximately 173 properties (hard-wire schemes or dispersed alarms) within Taunton Deane required upgrading.

The approximate cost of £35,000 would include the installation of new helplines and the removal of obsolete equipment from hardwire schemes. The Deane Helpline would ensure that the service to customers would not be disrupted when telephone services were converted to digital.

Resolved that:-

- (1) a capital allocation of £35,000 to this project from existing revenue resources be approved; and
- (2) Full Council be recommended to approve this change to the capital programme.

23. Core Council Review : Taunton Tourist Information Centre

Considered report previously circulated, concerning proposals to reduce staffing

levels at the Taunton Tourist Information Centre (TIC) as well as looking again at possible relocation options.

The Core Council Review had included a saving of £50,000 through a review of the Taunton Tourist Information Service.

The TIC was based in accommodation within the Taunton Library in Paul Street and was leased from Somerset County Council. It provided a tourist information service, as well as selling maps, guides and local crafts. It also acted as a ticket agency and sold tickets for many local cultural events.

The net cost of the TIC service in the budget was £63,610, although the actual cost had been considerably higher over the last three years. The major costs were accommodation (£23,000) and staff (£103,000) comprising 3.7 full time equivalent (FTE) posts. The ticket agency was the major source of income.

The TIC had been identified as an area where investment should be reduced and accommodation and staff costs inevitably needed to be addressed if the £50,000 savings target was to be met. It was widely accepted that opportunities for further income generation were very limited.

Current TIC staffing comprised six staff amounting to 3.7FTE. Whilst the most important element of the service was provided for visitors to the area, the greatest income was generated from selling tickets to local residents.

It was therefore concluded that there would be an overall negative impact if the ticket agency function was to cease. However, any substantial reduction in opening hours, or relocation to a more peripheral site, would inevitably result in loss of income.

Whilst there needed to be significant savings from the staff budget if the savings target was to be met, adequate resource had to be retained to maintain reasonable opening times so as to avoid significant loss of income. It was considered that 2FTE was the absolute minimum to retain 5 or 6 day opening. This staff reduction would result in a saving of approximately £47,000.

Further reported that in terms of relocating the TIC, the following locations had been considered:-

Taunton Library – Remaining at the Library would avoid one-off relocation costs, although the space currently rented was larger than needed. Somerset County Council had indicated a willingness to reduce the rent from £23,000 to £12,000 per annum. However, with reduced staffing, issues would need to be resolved in respect of security with a single staffed office as the TIC was accessed separately from the Library;

The Market House – There was an area in the Market House which would be ideal in terms of footfall and prominence. However, as this was already leased, the Council would lose its current rental income meaning that in financial terms there would be no material benefit and sharing resources would not be possible.

An existing town centre retail business – This option had been discounted as not being commercially viable.

County Museum – There would be clear advantages from co-location with one of the town's major tourist attractions. Space would however be limited and the timescales for reopening the museum would prevent relocation until early 2011.

The Deane House Reception – This option would avoid paying any accommodation costs and would involve minimal set up costs. Although it would open up the future option of management of the service as part of the Southwest One contract, The Deane House was poorly located and opening at weekends could prove problematic.

The Brewhouse Theatre and Arts Centre – Sufficient space would be available within the theatre's existing Box Office which, subject to financial assistance being provided, was to be refurbished.

The two uses were complimentary and would enable a shared service to be provided, leading to enhanced footfall at the Box Office potentially improving the viability of the venue. The location was in the town centre and the developments associated with Project Taunton would raise the profile of the area. It was accepted that relocation of the TIC to the Brewhouse would inevitably reduce custom in the short term and the overall savings took account of some loss of income.

A number of letters of representation, including one from the Taunton Chamber of Trade, had been received details of which were reported. All took the view that the TIC should remain in its present location although the Chamber of Trade did say that relocation should be considered when the Firepool and town centre redevelopments had taken place.

Representations had also been received from the Taunton Deane Branch of UNISON. Its view was that relocation combined with a reduction in staff would render the service unviable. The UNISON representative, Ian McCulloch, reiterated the union's points at the meeting.

Further reported that the issue had been considered by the Community Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 26 January 2010 where the following recommendations to the Executive were made:-

- That the TIC should be retained in its current location;
- That a detailed review of possible locations for a TIC in Taunton should be undertaken; and
- That staffing levels should be reduced in line with the Core Council Review.

In order to achieve the target savings, it would be necessary to radically reorganise and reduce the Tourist Information service. The only real options for savings were in staffing and location costs.

The staffing reduction proposed was essential as relocation would currently not achieve accommodation savings higher than the amended rental now to be charged by the Somerset County Council for the TIC at the Library. However, it also had to

be recognised that the proposed staff reduction would have some impact in terms of the level of service to be provided.

Whilst remaining at the Library would avoid relocation costs and possible reduced income from a decrease in footfall, with the proposed staff reduction there continued to be obvious benefits from co-location with a similar function such as The Brewhouse Box Office or Museum Reception in the longer term.

Resolved that:-

- (1) the proposed staff reduction from 3.7FTE to 2FTE be approved; and
- (2) the Tourist Information Centre should remain at its current location in the short-term (at least until after the 2010 Summer season) whilst the preferred longer-term options of relocation to The Brewhouse Theatre or other suitable premises was explored further.

(Councillor Prior-Sankey declared a personal interest during the discussion of the above matter as her son was employed by Berrys Coaches whose tickets were sold from the TIC.)

24. Independent Review of Deane DLO

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the independent review of options for the future of services provided by Deane DLO.

Full Council had approved an alternative approach to completing the Core Council Review in April 2009. The alternative approach included the commissioning of independent external expertise to advise the Council on Theme 3 of the Core Council Review – to develop options for the future of services provided by Deane DLO.

Turner and Townsend PLC had been appointed to carry out the review after a rigorous procurement and selection process, culminating in an interview and presentation to a cross-party panel of elected Members, officers and a UNISON representative.

Turner and Townsend had worked to a brief, details of which were submitted. The review carried out by the company had been completed and its report, which was also submitted for the information of Members, set out the work that had been undertaken to establish the feasibility of six main options:-

- Outsourcing – Where the Council contracted with a private sector company to provide services on the Council's behalf. Under this option, staff would transfer to the private sector provider under their current terms and conditions;
- Joint Venture – Where the Council formed a new organisation with a private sector partner to deliver services. Under this option, staff would also transfer to the private sector provider under their current terms and conditions;

- Shared Service – Where the Council joined with other local authorities or public sector partners to deliver services;
- Lead Authority – Where the Council transferred activities to another Local Authority who delivered services on the Council's behalf. Alternatively, other Local Authorities could transfer services to the Council to provide services on their behalf;
- Internal Transformation – Where the Council invested in services to achieve large scale improvements and efficiency; and
- As Is – Where services continued as now and were subject to continuing financial pressure requiring annual incremental change.

Turner and Townsend had recommended that the Council followed a detailed procurement process with full outsourcing to a private sector supplier as the preferred way forward.

In recommending outsourcing as the preferred option, Turner and Townsend were proposing an implementation process which provided scope to implement potential alternatives of joint venture or internal transformation, if the business case for outsourcing did not meet the Council's requirements. This would be possible because much of the project work required to implement outsourcing could be re-used if necessary to support these potential alternatives.

Turner and Townsend had also made two further service specific recommendations which applied to all options:-

- A clearer separation should be created between the Housing Client and contractor functions. Both of these functions were currently based in Theme 3 at Priory Depot, overseen by the Housing Property Services Manager. The Community Services Manager would be looking into this recommendation further, exploring all options and bringing forward proposals to separate Housing Client functions from their current location; and
- The stores function should cease being operated from the Deane DLO site and a 'just in time' approach should be adopted for buying and supplying in the future. This issue would be looked into further during the Deane DLO transformation process, with a solution ready to begin operating at the inception of whichever model was selected by Members.

Turner and Townsend had carried out extensive consultation with a variety of different groups, including:

- Deane DLO Managers and staff;
- UNISON;
- Corporate Management Team;
- Taunton Deane Tenants' Forum;
- Elected Members;
- Other Local Authorities; and
- Potential private sector partners.

Formal consultation on Turner and Townsend's report had started on 13 January 2010 and ended on 5 February 2010. The Strategic Director, Brendan Cleere, reported that a resume of the responses received to this consultation had already been circulated to Members.

These had included representations from the Taunton Deane Branch of UNISON whose representative, Ian McCulloch, re-iterated the union's points at the meeting.

All options, except 'As Is', had one-off cost implications for implementation, with details provided in the consultant's report. In the case of the recommended outsourcing option, the one-off cost would be up to £200,000, with an implementation timescale of 12 months from a decision by Members. These one-off costs could be found from the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and Deane DLO Reserve funds.

Turner and Townsend had advised that one-off costs for implementing alternative options of joint venture and internal transformation would be up to £300,000 and £600,000 respectively. Noted that the reserves position for both the General Fund and Deane DLO were such that the funding required to implement these options would put the reserves below their minimum level.

The potential annual savings arising from the recommended outsourcing were indicated at £278,000, achieved within 24–36 months of decision by Members to pursue the outsource option.

Reported that the above figures and timescales were indicative and were likely to change through a full procurement process and business case. Members would be kept informed and involved as appropriate in any procurement process to select a private sector supplier.

In the event of the Council selecting the recommended option, any savings required of Deane DLO services during the transition to a fully outsourced service would need to be made using the savings plan mechanism that Members were familiar with.

The Section 151 Officer had verified that the financial information and assumptions used up to this stage by Turner and Townsend PLC were sound and that any formal sign up to an outsource arrangement in future would need to be subject to Member approval of the business case emerging from a full procurement process.

Reported that the consultants' report had been discussed in detail by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee at a special meeting on 28 January 2010 and the views expressed at that meeting were submitted.

It had been made clear to the Scrutiny Committee that any decision by Full Council in February 2010 to pursue the recommended outsourcing option would be subject to a due diligence process, including detailed financial analysis of all Deane DLO functions, as well as Member approval of a full business case. The whole process leading up to a final decision by Members would take approximately twelve months.

Further reported that the approach proposed by Turner and Townsend gave scope for Members to select an alternative option if the business case for the recommended outsource option did not meet the Council's requirements.

Resolved that:-

- (i) The outcomes of the consultation process and the views and recommendations of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee be noted;
- (ii) Full Council be recommended to:-
 - (a) adopt the consultants' recommended approach, starting from the position that full outsourcing was the preferred way forward for Deane DLO services;
 - (b) approve the further development of internal transformation as a benchmark comparison option, to be presented to Members alongside results from (a) for further scrutiny and final decision;
 - (c) approve a sum of £225,000 (£113,000 from the Housing Revenue Account Reserve; £84,000 from the General Fund Reserve; and £28,000 from the Deane DLO Reserve) to pursue the approach outlined in (a) and (b) and to recognise the potential requirement for further implementation funds, the amount being dependent on the option ultimately agreed by Members;
- (iii) It be noted that implementation work would be overseen by the Change Programme Members Steering Group, with decisions to be taken at key stages of the project by the Executive and Full Council as appropriate; and
- (iv) further work to implement the consultants' recommendations in respect of Deane DLO stores and Housing Client functions be undertaken.

25. Somerset Waste Board Business Plan 2010-2015

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the Somerset Waste Partnership's (SWP) Draft Business Plan and Action Plan.

The SWP Constitution required the single client unit to prepare a Draft Business Plan with an accompanying Action Plan on an annual basis.

The Somerset Waste Board had approved a draft for consultation, to provide each partner authority with the opportunity to comment on the plan by the end of February 2010.

The Board could, by majority vote, amend the Business Plan in order to accommodate any unforeseen circumstances and to assist the Board to achieve its Aims and Objectives. Any partner Council could request such an amendment at any time.

The Draft Business Plan was submitted for the information of Members and this included:-

- A background to the SWP and a resume of recognition of its work in 2009;
- Principal objectives;
- Analysis of the operating environment;
- Governance Management;
- Principal Functions of the SWB;
- Equalities issues;
- Performance;
- Local Area Agreement;
- Financial Summary and Budget;
- Strategic Risk Register; and
- Key Action Plan.

The plan spanned a five year period but had a particular emphasis on key actions for the next 12 months.

Resolved that the Draft Business Plan be approved.

26. **Taunton Growth Board**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the formation of a Taunton Growth Board.

The growth of Taunton over the next decade needed to be over-seen by a range of relevant agencies, organisations and the private sector. Without the strategic buy-in of partners, either the growth would not happen, or would occur in a way which would be detrimental to the eventual outcome. The support of regional agencies was also required and could be hugely beneficial.

The existing Project Taunton Advisory Board had had its terms of reference extended to include the growth of Taunton and the regeneration of the town centre. A Memorandum of Understanding existed between the three key parties for the delivery of Project Taunton – Somerset County Council, the South West Regional Development Agency and Taunton Deane Borough Council – but this had to be reviewed in March 2010.

It was felt that extending the remit of the Project Taunton Advisory Board would not provide the clarity and status required to deliver the economic and housing growth of Taunton.

In 2005, Taunton had been designated as a Growth Point which meant that the town would take a higher than average growth in housing, a position which the Council had accepted.

However, for a Growth Board to succeed, Taunton Deane, as the key local democratically accountable organisation, needed to give its full support.

It was therefore proposed that the existing Project Taunton Advisory Board should be dissolved with the inauguration of a Taunton Growth Board whose responsibility would encompass both the regeneration of the town centre and the wider economic and housing growth.

The suggested remit of the Taunton Growth Board was as follows:-

- To champion the regeneration of the town centre and the growth and economic development of Taunton;
- To oversee the growth and development of Taunton to ensure that key outcomes were delivered;
- To ensure strategic planning and delivery issues were addressed by relevant partners; and
- To identify and recommend funding priorities and oversee any jointly held partnership budget that the Growth Team might attract.

Details of the suggested Membership of the Growth Board were reported.

It was envisaged that the Taunton Growth Board would meet quarterly. Noted that the current delivery of the Advisory Board was supported by an Executive Group made up of senior officers from key agencies. It was proposed to retain and extend this Executive Group and its remit would be to:-

- Provide liaison between partner organisations;
- Ensure the co-ordination of resources;
- Identify priorities;
- Support the Growth Board;
- Raise the profile at Executive level within their own organisations;
- Take responsibility for managing delivery; and
- Agree expenditure of any partnership funding.

Details of the suggested membership of the Executive Group were also reported.

It was proposed that the Executive Group should meet monthly and that the independent Chairman of the Board should Chair these implementation meetings.

Under the current arrangements, a Co-ordination Group met monthly to update all relevant officers on progress and to ensure that activity was co-ordinated. It was suggested that this particular Group should be retained with its membership changed to that outlined in the report.

The Project Taunton Director would Chair the Co-ordination Group which would also meet on a monthly basis.

Reported that this matter had been discussed by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 21 January 2010. The Committee had formally recommended that a further private sector representative should be added to the Growth Board. However, discussion had also taken place as to whether two Members from each of the two main political Groups should be appointed to the Growth Board instead of the current proposal for just the Leader and Leader of the Opposition.

Resolved that:-

- (1) the proposals for the formation of a Taunton Growth Board be supported; and
- (2) the proposed membership of the Growth Board be increased by the addition of a further representative from the private sector and one further Councillor from each of the two main political Groups of the Council.

27. **Petitions – Response to Consultation**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the requirements of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

The Act included requirements for every principal Local Authority to respond to petitions. These provisions had yet to be brought into force and the Government was now consulting on the implementation of these provisions. The main statutory requirements were as follows:-

- To have an on-line petition facility which allowed anyone to set up a petition on the Council's system, and allowed anyone to sign the petition on-line;
- To adopt a petition scheme which set out how the Council would acknowledge receipt of petitions and advise the petition organiser how the petition would be dealt with. The Act required that the petition scheme defined three categories of petition and set a minimum number of signatures for each type;
- To come within the scheme, the petition had to relate to a function of the Council or, for all Councils other than non-unitary District Councils, to "an improvement in the economic, social or environmental well-being of the Council's area to which any of the Council's partner authorities could contribute";
- The Authority could delegate to an appropriate officer the power to reject petitions which he/she considered to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate; and
- The new petition scheme did not apply to petitions received under other statutory procedures, such as petitions for a Mayoral constitution and the Secretary of State proposed to make provision that petitions in response to some statutory consultations, such as Planning or Licensing applications, should also remain outside the new system.

For 'ordinary petitions', the Authority would be given wider flexibility to set the threshold number of signatures as high or low as it wished and to determine how such petitions would be dealt with.

'Petitions requiring debate' would have to be reported to Full Council and the Council could set a higher number of signatures as the threshold as opposed to ordinary petitions.

'Petitions to hold an officer to account' could name a senior officer and would trigger an open meeting of the appropriate Scrutiny Committee where the officer would be

questioned in relation to his actions on a particular matter. Again the Authority could set a different threshold for signatures.

Where the petition organiser was not satisfied by the actions taken by the Authority in response to a petition, they had to be given the right of appeal.

The draft guidance and Consultation Paper was reported and comments had to be submitted to the Department for Communities and Local Government by 24 February 2010.

The Consultation Paper incorporated a draft model petition scheme which authorities could adapt for their own use, and set out 12 questions on which the Government sought a response. The questions and a draft response to each of them was submitted for the information of Members.

The Act set out a general framework for Local Authorities to deal with petitions and a range of possible difficulties that might be encountered were highlighted.

Resolved that the proposed responses to the questions contained within the Government's Consultation Paper on Petitions be submitted to the Department for Communities and Local Government.

28. **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 8.26 pm.)

Appendix to the Minutes

(Note: The fees shown as “existing charges” are those approved by Executive for implementation from 1st April 2009. Fees currently being charged are slightly higher because of the change in the rate of VAT.)

Schedule 1 – New Dwellings			
No.	Existing Charge (Inc. VAT at 15%)	Proposed Charge (Inc. VAT at 17.5%)	Variation (Net fee before VAT)
1	£700	£700	(-2.13%)
2	£1050	£1100	2.5%
3	£1250	£1350	5.7%
4	£1450	£1550	4.62%
5	£1650	£1750	3.8%
6	£1850	£1950	3.16%
7	£2050	£2150	2.65%
8	£2250	£2300	0.05%
9	£2400	£2450	(-0.09%)
10	£2550	£2600	(-0.21%)
11 - 29	Add to the above £150 per unit	Add to the above £150 per unit	-
30 +	£5550 Plus £100 per unit above 30.	£5600 Plus £100 per unit above 30	-

Schedule 2 – Domestic Works			
Type of Work	Existing Charge (Inc. VAT at 15%)	Proposed Charge (Inc. VAT at 17.5%)	Variation (Exc. VAT)
Partial glazing	£75	£75	(-2.13%)
Total glazing	£150	£150	(-2.13%)
Electrical installation	£150	£150	(-2.13%)
Small garage or carport	£180	£180	(-2.13%)
Large garage or carport	£320	£300	(-8.24%)
Small extension	£340	£350	0.75%
Medium extension	£500	£540	5.7%
Loft conversion	£500	£540	5.7%
Large extension	£620	£660	4.19%

Schedule 3 – Other Works			
Estimated Cost £	Existing Charge £(VAT at 15%)	Proposed Charge £(VAT at 17.5%)	Variation (Exc.VAT)
Up to 2,000	150	150	(-2.13%)
2,001 – 5,000	225	225	(-2.13%)
5,001 – 10,000	280	300	4.86%
10,001 – 15,000	355	375	3.39%
15,001 – 20,000	430	450	2.42%
20,001 – 25,000	500	525	2.77%
25,001 – 30,000	550	600	6.77%
30,001 – 35,000	600	650	6.03%
35,001 – 40,000	650	700	5.40%
40,001 – 45,000	700	750	4.86%
45,001 – 50,000	750	800	4.40%
50,001 – 55,000	800	850	3.99%
55,001 – 60,000	850	900	3.63%
60,001 – 65,000	900	950	3.31%
65,001 – 70,000	950	1000	3.02%
70,001 – 75,000	1000	1050	2.77%
75,001 – 80,000	1050	1100	2.53%
80,001 – 85,000	1100	1150	2.32%
85,001 – 90,000	1150	1200	2.13%
90,001 – 95,000	1200	1250	1.95%
95,001 – 100,000	1250	1300	1.79%
100,001 – 1 Million	Rate of increase £50 per £10,000	Rate of increase £50 per £10,000	-
1 Million – 3 Million	Rate of increase £25 pr £10,000	Rate of increase £25 per £10,000	-
Over £3 Million	Rate of increase £12.50 per £10,000	Rate of increase £12.50 per £10,000	-