

Executive - 12 March 2003

Present: Councillor Horsley (Chairman)
Councillors Bulgin, Croad, Henley, Lisgo, Partington and Stone

Officers: Mr S Fletcher (Chief Executive), Mr J Thornberry (Director of Corporate Resources), Mr A Hartridge (Director of Development), Mrs P James (Director of Community Services), Ms S Adam (Financial Services Manager), Mr D Thompson (Chief Valuer), Mr A Gladstone-Smith (Principal Audit and Review Officer), Mr D Gary (Chief Revenues Officer), Mrs N Heal (Public Relations Officer) and Mr G P Dyke (Member Services Manager)

Also Present: Councillors Mrs Allgrove, Dawson, Denington, Gill, Mrs Lewin-Harris, House and Williams

(The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm.)

1. Apologies

Councillors Lees and Mullins.

2. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 12 February 2003 were taken as read and were signed.

3. Sure Start Development, Lyngford Park, Taunton

Considered report, previously circulated, regarding the principle of developing part of the Council's recreational open space at Lyngford Park, Taunton, as part of the Sure Start Taunton Programme to assist local pre-school children and their families.

The Council was part of the multi-agency Sure Start Partnership, and a presentation on the work of Sure Start was made by local representatives of this organisation.

The Council owned land at Lyngford Park, Taunton, which was currently used for recreational open space. Part of the land to the rear of the Priorswood Library currently had an existing toilet block and children's playground. It was this area where the County Council was interested in taking a ground lease for the development of a new Sure Start facility. Any such development would need to consider how best to deal with the provision of public conveniences within the area as well as the proposed relocation of the existing children's play area. Details were submitted of the implications of the loss of public open space, play equipment and youth shelter. The proposed site was located in an area where the Taunton Deane Local Plan prohibited development unless it conformed to certain planning criteria. There would be a need for sufficient consultation with the local community if this criteria were to be met.

A number of options were available to the Council, details of which were submitted.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) public consultation be undertaken to identify the value of this piece of Lyngford Park to the local community and the need to replace the toilets, play area, youth shelter and public open space;
- (ii) the public consultation exercise be carried out as an integral part of the Sure Start Programme by the end of March;
- (iii) any ground lease to be conditional upon the Council accepting that the community benefit was greater than the long term value of this piece of park land and that the replacement facilities being funded as part of the Sure Start Programme;
- (iv) subject to the relevant Councillors being satisfied with the outcome of the consultation exercise, the ground lease be granted subject to terms and conditions to be agreed.

4. Analysis of 2001/02 Statutory Performance Indicator

Reported that the 2001/02 Statutory Performance Indicators were released to Councils for comparative purposes early in 2003. This allowed the Council to consider its own performance across over 60 performance indicators. The full analysis had previously been circulated to all Councillors in February 2003.

The analysis of the statutory indicators revealed that overall this Council's relative performance was very good. Further details were submitted of how the indicators related to this Council's performance.

This was a significant step forward on the Council's already good 2000/01 performance of which the District Auditor recently stated that this Council was performing at a level well above average in most areas with service expenditure that was below average.

In preparing for the Council's inspection within the Government's proposed comprehensive performance assessment, it was important to demonstrate that not only was the Council aiming to be a top service performer but that there was clear evidence of success.

The report also included details of the Council's intention to improve a small number of lower quartile indicators.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the Council's very good performance in respect of the 2001/02 Statutory Performance Indicators be noted; and
- (ii) the Council's intention to improve the small number of lower quartile indicators be noted.

5. Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2003/04

Submitted report previously circulated, which set out details of the Treasury Management Strategy for 2003/04. The suggested strategy was based on anticipated interest rates supplemented with forecasts provided by the Council's Treasury advisors. The Strategy covered the current Treasury position, Treasury limits in force which would limit the Treasury risk and activities of the Council, prospect for interest rates, the borrowing strategy, the investment strategy, minimum revenue position and the extent of debt rescheduling opportunities.

RESOLVED that the Treasury Management Strategy for 2003/04 be approved.

6. Risk Management Strategy

Considered report previously circulated regarding the strategy for Risk Management within Taunton Deane Borough Council.

This Council already had a Risk Management Panel that dealt effectively with operational Risk Management. The new Risk Management Strategy, copies of which were submitted, expanded upon that focus and allowed the Council to encompass all business risks into a robust and consistent process. It concentrated on Strategic Risk Management and helped ensure the Council not only minimised risks but maximised opportunities and made the right decisions based on complete information.

The Risk Management Strategy set out the process adopted at this Council for identifying, evaluating and maintaining all significant risks.

RESOLVED that the Risk Management Strategy, as submitted, be agreed.

7. SomersetDirect

Submitted report which brought Members up to date with the progress being made on the SomersetDirect Partnership project. The SomersetDirect Project was a scheme where call centre technology would be used not only to provide a quicker and consistent service to telephone callers but also as a way of making better use of expensive technical staff. It aimed to provide the public with the best elements of a call centre.

Somerset County Council, together with the other five districts within the County, had been given substantial financial support by the Government to get this pilot project up and running in about one year's time. It was anticipated that the public would be given a single telephone number for all local services throughout the County irrespective of where they lived and who provided the service that they were enquiring about.

Details were submitted of the progress that had been made and the current issues which faced the Somerset board which had been formed to take this project forward. This Council also had its own project board, headed by the Chief Executive, and it would monitor the issues surrounding this project and report to Members on a regular basis.

It was acknowledged that there were a number of reasons why the project might not proceed. In the event of this happening, it was felt that this Council could build a solution for Taunton Deane alone and contingency plans were being developed in order to achieve this.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the report be noted and this Council's continued membership of the project be agreed subject to a robust business case; and
- (ii) in the event of a partnership failure the option of this Council adopting a system similar to SomersetDirect using the same technology for Taunton Deane continue to be pursued.

(The meeting ended at 7.50 pm.)

(Councillor Horsley left the meeting at 7.30 pm whereupon Councillor Henley took the Chair.)