

## **Executive - 17 November 2004**

Present: Councillor Williams (Chairman)  
Councillors Mrs Bradley, Edwards, Garner, Hall, Leighton and Mrs Lewin-Harris

Officers: Mrs P James (Chief Executive), Ms J Wishlade (Strategic Director - Operations), Ms S Adam (Head of Resources), Mr C Brazier (Head of Housing), Mr N T Noall (Head of Development) and Mr G P Dyke (Member Services Manager)

Also Present: Councillors Mrs Biscoe, Guerrier, Henley, Lisgo, Slattery, Stone and Wedderkopp.

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm.)

### 64. Apologies

Councillor Bishop and Cavill.

### 65. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of the Executive held on 20 October 2004 were taken as read and were signed.

### 66. Public Question Time

- (i) Chris Fogg of Take Art, Angela Dawson, also of Take Art and Nick Brace of Action Track asked questions regarding continuing funding for the arts, particularly for Take Art and those events that engaged young people.

They were pleased that Councillors had listened to previous representations and had acknowledged the importance of arts in the community. It was hoped that when making future decisions the arts would not be affected by cuts.

Particular reference was made to the valuable role that Take Art played in smaller, rural communities. It was of benefit to the whole community. It would adversely affect those communities if funding for Take Art was reduced in any way. Emphasis was also placed on the value of arts to young people. The arts, in a variety of forms, was used to engage young people and it was very important that this continued.

Councillor Williams replied that although the Council faced a serious budget position, the value to Taunton Deane of the arts was acknowledged. A great contribution to the cultural life of the Deane was made by the arts in general and Take Art in particular - all for a relatively small amount of money.

Although no guarantees were possible, the representations made were acknowledged and would be borne in mind during the budget setting process.

- (ii) The Chairman refused to accept a question from Daniella Robins in view of an outstanding issue that had arisen during a previous Public Question Time.
- (iii) Trinity Robins asked why the Council liked making peoples lives miserable.

Councillor Williams replied that the Council endeavoured not to. Solutions had been offered but problems were difficult to resolve when they were not taken up.

- (iv) Mr Harris asked a series of questions in relation to 47 South Street, many of which had been covered a number of times before.

Councillor Williams replied that answers had been provided in previous correspondence to Mr Robins. Solutions had been offered but not taken up. Further inspections of the property had also been offered in an effort to overcome the problems but Mr Robins had repeatedly denied Council Officers access to the property to carry out inspections. Despite repeated requests, a suitable NIECC Certificate in respect of the fire alarm system had not been provided. It was not up to the Council to design Mr Robins' safety precautions. It was his responsibility to meet with experts and resolve the issues.

Full details of the questions asked were handed in but the Chairman emphasised that it was unlikely that any further reply would be forthcoming.

- (v) Councillor Henley, as a member of the public asked the following questions:
  - (a) If the arts were so important to the Council why was it proposed to reduce the budget by £25k?
  - (b) What action was being taken regarding a disturbance caused at a recent event at the Wellsprings Centre.
  - (c) Previous questions had been asked regarding the Housing Stock Options process and the cost to the taxpayer if a "No" vote was returned and the ballot was re-run. No reply had yet been given.

The following replies were given.

- (a) Councillor Williams pointed out that this question was premature. No such decision had yet been made. There would be an opportunity to consider this matter in detail at the meeting of the Review Board on 25 November.
- (b) Councillor Mrs Bradley replied that the operation of the Wellsprings Centre was the responsibility of Tone Leisure and therefore the question would be more appropriately addressed to its Chief Executive.

Councillor Williams said that it was always sad when a very small minority ruined what was otherwise a successful evening.

- (c) Councillor Williams replied that this was a hypothetical questions. It was not possible to say what the cost would be. As he replied at the meeting on 22 September, any decision to re-run the ballot would be as directed by Government regulation and not the Council.

67. Housing Stock Options

Received a presentation from David Curtis of the Government Office for the South West and Mr Nigel Minto from the Community Housing Task Force which was part of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister who provided an update on the Government's position as to Housing Stock Transfers and answered questions that Members submitted on this topic.

68. Taunton Transport Strategy Review and the Third Way

Reported that the Taunton Transport Strategy Review had been subject to development over the course of the past 18 months. This had involved a comprehensive public consultation exercise. The response to the consultation was one of general support although opinion was split on whether to pursue the inner relief road or to drop the proposal in favour of delivering a cultural quarter in the vicinity of Wood Street. Work had since progressed on the "Third Way" which was a compromise solution.

Jeremy Callard, Transport Studies Manager, Somerset County Council, submitted a detailed presentation on the content of the Review and the proposed Third Way compromise.

Within the Third Way option, the inner relief road had been realigned in order to reduce environmental impacts and to maximise development opportunities including the provision of a new theatre complex off Wood Street. It was intended that it would be designed as an urban street rather than a freeway.

A presentation on the Third Way option had already been made on 5 October 2004 at County Hall and the Taunton Transport Structure Review/Third Way had been considered by the County Council's Environment and Transport Review Panel on 25 October 2004 when support was provided for its content. This Council's own Strategic Planning, Transport and Economic Development Review Panel had considered the matter on 27 October 2004 and supported the content of the Review and the proposals for the Third Way in principle subject to further information being provided and consideration being given to the impact of the third way on the junction of Bridge Street and associated junctions along its route.

RESOLVED that the content of the Taunton Transport Strategy Review and the proposals for the Third Way be supported in principle subject to further information being provided and consideration being given to the impact of the Third Way on Bridge Street and associated junctions on its route.

69. Profiling and Prioritising of Taunton Deane Borough Council Services

Reported that the Council had agreed the financial strategy in April 2004. The Review Board were updated on 7 October 2004 regarding the Council's budget position and the strategy being adopted to address the budget gap.

Submitted report which set out a profile of the Council's services. The agreed Profile of Services would be used to develop targets for the 2005/06 budget setting process. Services would either see investment increased, maintained or reduced according to their relative priorities.

The recent CPA inspection had identified a need for the Council to explicitly identify and communicate its non-priority areas. This had led to a lack of consistent understanding of non-priority areas which resulted in potential loss of clarity and focus. It was therefore important to prioritise the Council's services. The Council's Corporate Strategy for 2005-2008 identified four top priorities. Priority services were those which had the most impact on achieving the Council's Corporate Priorities or had a particular local significance to the community. The priority services for 2005-2008 were:

- Economic Development and Regeneration;
- Planning (including Transportation);
- Community Safety;
- Licensing;
- Street Cleaning and associated cleansing services;
- Housing Strategy and enabling (affordable housing); and
- Homelessness.

The remainder of the Council's activities, whilst still important, could not be high priorities. Work had been undertaken to define and, where possible, quantify clear performance standards for all services. The following table established a prioritised Profile and medium term investment pattern for services:

Profile of Services and Future Investment by TDBC (2005-2008)

Service	Increase Direct Funding	Maintain Direct Funding	Reduce Direct Funding
<b>High Priority</b>			
Economic Development and Regeneration	✓		
Planning (including Transportation)	✓		
Community Safety	✓		
Licensing	✓		
Street Cleaning	✓		
Affordable Enabling/Housing	✓		
Homelessness	✓		

Service	Increase Direct Funding	Maintain Direct Funding	Reduce Direct Funding
<b>Medium Priority</b>			
Britain in Bloom		✓	
Car Parks		✓	
CCTV		✓	
Cemeteries and Crematorium		✓	
Communications		✓	
Customer Services		✓	
Democratic Services (including Members, Mayoral, Electoral Services and Parish Liaison)		✓	
Building Control		✓	
Emergency Planning		✓	
Heritage and Landscape		✓	
Land Charges		✓	
Pest Control and Dog Wardens		✓	
Policy and Performance		✓	
Sport and Leisure		✓	
Tourism		✓	
Training and Development		✓	
Waste collection and recycling		✓	
<b>Low Priority</b>			
Consultation activities			✓
Environmental Health (except Licensing and Dog Warden)			✓
Grants (in lower priority areas)			✓
Highways			✓
Flooding and drainage works			✓
Parks and Open Spaces			✓
Private Sector Housing (except enabling)			✓
Property (Deane Building Design Group/Valuation etc)			✓
Revenues and Benefits			✓

It would be important to keep this strategy under annual review to take account of changing local priorities and the Council's financial position. A report on the profiling of services had also been presented to the Review Board at its meeting on 4 November 2004 but the Board had found it difficult to give a response to the Profile in the absence of further information on each service. It was left for each Member to feedback their views on the Profile and details were submitted of the responses that had been received.

It was recognised that the Arts made a cross cutting contribution to many of the Councils' objectives and was not a pure service. For this reason, consideration of the Arts would be on the basis of its contribution to different aspects of the Council's

priorities. The priority impact was expected to be on economic development, regeneration and crime and disorder.

RESOLVED that the Profile of Services, as submitted, be agreed.

(The meeting ended at 9.03 pm.)