

Executive – 20 July 2005

Present: Councillor Williams (Chairman)
Councillors Bishop, Mrs Bradley, Cavill, Garner, Hall and Leighton

Officers: Mrs P James (Chief Executive), Ms S Adam (Strategic Director),
Mrs J Sillifant (Joint Venture Project Manager), Mr G P Dyke (Member
Services Manager)

Also Present: Councillors Bowrah and Wedderkopp

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm.)

74. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 22 June 2005 were taken as read and were signed.

75. Apologies

Councillors Edwards and Mrs Lewin-Harris

76. Public Question Time

Carolyn Redfern of the Revenues and Benefits Section referred to the proposed Joint Venture Agreement for Corporate Services. She drew attention to the previous problems when the service was privatised and explained that as a result, the staff of Revenues and Benefits felt that they could not be reassured.

She asked if the views of the staff would have any effect on the final decision, how much would be saved by entering into the project and what plans were there to explain to the public that the service would again be controlled by a private company.

Councillor Williams replied that he hoped staff would continue to voice their concerns so that they could be properly addressed. It was important that the Council knew what the staff were thinking. Every effort would be made to be transparent and give answers where possible.

It was impossible at this stage to say how much would be saved. There was an option to withdraw from the project if there was anything the Council were unhappy with. However, this Council was an active partner with the County Council.

The Council were currently unable to deliver the efficiency savings being demanded by the Government.

Although the Council were seriously looking at this project, the final decision was by no means a foregone conclusion.

Penny James, Chief Executive, added that this proposal was not about contracting out to a private company – it would be a company owned by partners. She hoped staff would get involved in the debate. It was too early to talk about financial savings although the project was more about improving services and access to services.

This would be a way of positioning services for the future and was currently the preferred way forward.

No final decision had been made, there was no hidden agenda. It was intended that it would be staffed by Taunton Deane and located within Taunton Deane. The Council welcomed staff involvement, and although no final decision had yet been made the proposal was the preferred way forward for the services involved.

77. Joint Venture Arrangements for Corporate Services - Outline business case Draft 2

Further to Minute 69/2005 submitted report which was built on the first draft of the Outline Business Case presented to the Executive at its meeting on 22 June 2005. It reflected the development of the Council's emerging customer strategy addressed in more detail which services were proposed to be "in scope" and highlighted further progress on the project.

Since the last report significant progress had been made to further develop the work of the potential joint venture arrangement.

- (i) Work had been completed through the Officer Steering Group to determine which services should be "in scope". This included an in depth analysis of those services and related costs.
- (ii) The Governance and Project Management arrangements agreed with the County Council were in place and working well.
- (iii) The Chief Executive had held a number of staff briefing sessions which had been well attended.
- (iv) A Communications Strategy and Action Plan was being developed through the Officer Steering Group.
- (v) The Steering Group had produced and rated a risk management register for the project.
- (vi) A Member Steering Group was now in place for the project and would meet regularly to debate some of the more detailed aspects of the project prior to consideration by the Executive.

Details were also submitted of new information which was contained in the Outline Business Case (Draft 2).

RESOLVED that

1. the Outline Business Case (Draft 2) for the potential Joint Venture arrangement as submitted be noted.
2. the potential of a Joint Venture arrangement with the County Council continue to be explored.
3. further consideration be given at the next meeting of the Executive in August to a final Outline Business Case for the Joint Venture which would include details of the customer access strategy together with affordability modelling of the services proposed to be in scope.

(The meeting ended at 7.15 pm)

(No members of the press were present)