

Executive – 5 September 2005

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

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

Also Present: Councillors Mrs Biscoe, Clark, Coles, Davies, Denington, Lees, Lisgo, Meikle, Morrell, Paul, Phillips, Mrs Smith, Stuart-Thorn, Vail and Wedderkopp. County Councillor Mrs C Bakewell, Mr A Jones (Chief Executive, Somerset County Council and Jenny Hastings (Project Manager, SCC)

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm.)

86. Apologies

Councillors Mrs Bradley and Cavill.

87. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 August 2005 were taken as read and were signed.

88. Joint Venture Arrangements for Corporate Services

Reference Minute 81/2005, submitted report previously circulated which built on the first three drafts of the Outline Business Case previously presented to the Executive at its meetings on 22 June, 20 July and 24 August 2005. It summarised the further joint work carried out by this Council and the County Council and set out the two Council's Joint Vision and ambitions for the ISIS programme. A summary position was also set out on the programmes affordability of the programme.

The report added to the Outline Business Case presented to the Executive on 24 August 2005 on the future direction of the Council in respect of:

- Customer access to services and service improvement;
- Corporate and transactional services (including Revenues and Housing Benefits)

by summarising the two Council's joint ambitions for the proposed ISIS programme. If the programme were to succeed it was considered crucial that both Council's shared the same vision and expectations about what this proposed strategic partnership would achieve.

The programme objectives were as follows:

- To make customer facing services more accessible and to improve their delivery.
- To modernise, reduce the cost of and improve corporate transactional and support services.
- To help modernise and transform the overall workings of Taunton Deane Borough Council and the County Council.
- To invest in new world class technologies to improve productivity.
- To create an excellent working environment and a more sustainable employment future for staff.
- To generate economic development by attracting a partner willing to invest in Taunton Deane.

These objectives were set against the need to provide better access for customers to improve the services to achieve efficiencies and provide better value for money for the tax payer.

The Draft 3 Outline Business Case previously approved by the Executive on 24 August included an outline of the financial case to support the Overall Business Case. The outline business case which had previously been dealt with as an exempt item was now submitted as the joint position.

RESOLVED that

1. the joint objectives and end goals as set out in Appendix 1 to the report be agreed;
2. the joint summary financial position as shown at Appendix 2 of the report be noted;
3. the joint scoping table shown at Appendix 3 of the report be noted.

(The meeting ended at 7.17 pm)

Executive – 21 September 2005

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

Officers: Mrs P James (Chief Executive), Ms S Adam (Strategic Director), Mr P Carter (Financial Services Manager), Mr D Thompson (Chief Valuer), Mr P Harding (Revenues and Benefits Project Officer), Mr K Toller (Head of Corporate Services), Mr S Rutledge (Corporate Property Officer), Mr R Sealy (Revenues Manager) and Mr G P Dyke (Member Services Manager)

Also Present: Councillors Henley, Lisgo and Wedderkopp.

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm.)

89. Apologies

Councillors Mrs Bradley and Cavill.

90. Public Question Time

(a) Councillor Henley, as a member of the public, asked the following questions:-

1. How much sponsorship has so far been found for the proposed Christmas Ice Rink ?

Councillor Williams replied that there were some sponsorship deals already available. He had asked the Town Centre Manager to summarise these and submit a report showing the latest position. Attempts were now being made to achieve a major sponsor for this facility.

2. With regard to the proposed relocation of Taunton Market to Chelston, why were the Council anticipating financially subsidising a commercial organisation.

Councillor Williams replied that the Council were in negotiation with SWRDA to determine the value of the existing site before this matter was brought before members. No agreement would be made with the Taunton Market Auctioneers without going through the proper procedure. The principle had previously been accepted that it would be necessary to assist the market to relocate if the Council wanted it to remain in Taunton Deane. Finance would only be made available to support the local economy.

3. Councillor Henley gave notice that he intended to include "Plastics Recycling" on a future agenda of the Review Board. He wanted an investigation into the possibility of increasing plastics recycling in rural areas and in creating an opportunity to recycle plastic more easily.

Councillor Edwards replied that it had always been intended to replace glass bottle banks with plastic recycling banks. However this would not be possible until the "Sort It" scheme was fully operational.

Councillor Williams added that the best way forward would be for a report to be submitted to the Health and Leisure Review Panel in the first instance. Councillor Henley felt that there would be an opportunity for a useful discussion on this matter at the Review Board itself.

4. Whilst supporting the various CCTV initiatives Councillor Henley asked if consideration could be given to installing a fixed CCTV camera in South Car Park, Wellington. This was something supported by the Town Council which would be willing to make a financial contribution.

Councillor Mrs Lewin-Harris suggested that the Wellington Town Council submit a formal application and indicate how much they would be prepared to contribute to the cost. The scheme would need to be looked at as part of the overall CCTV Strategy having taken the advice of the Police.

- (b) Mr Harris drew attention to a letter he had received from the Chief Executive. The letter referred to an enclosure which he claimed he had not received. He felt that his questions had not been answered and asked that he be dealt with properly and his questions answered promptly.

Councillor Williams stated that he would investigate the missing enclosure but confirmed that the Council would not enter into correspondence on matters which had already been dealt with.

91. Sale of Hamilton Road Public Conveniences

At its meeting on 9 March 2005, the Executive had considered and agreed a review of public conveniences. One of the recommendations agreed within the review was the sale of Hamilton Road public conveniences.

The site was suitable for development and it was anticipated that two semi-detached houses could be built on it. It was estimated that, on the open market, the sale of the site would generate a capital receipt of £80,000 which would be wholly attributable to the General Fund. This value assumed that part of the garden of a Council house in Lambrook Road would be included in the sale. This represented 30% of the value.

Discussions had subsequently taken place with Knightstone Housing Association, who were keen to purchase the site for social housing purposes. In normal circumstances, the sale of housing land required a proportion of the capital receipt to be “pooled” and paid back to the ODPM, however, land which the Council designated as being for social housing purposes was exempt from any pooling liability. Therefore if the Council were to do this it would retain 100% of the capital receipt, part of which could be used to support future housing capital schemes.

The Housing Association had indicated that they would be prepared to pay £35,000 for the whole site. Whilst this was below the open market value it was felt that it represented a fair value for the site for its potential future use for social housing purposes only. The Council had the ability to sell land to Registered Social Landlords at less than open market value.

If the Executive were to agree to the sale of the whole site the capital receipt would be shared with £24,500 going to the General Fund and £10,500 to the Housing Revenue Account. Although this was less than expected for the General Fund, it would represent a windfall for Housing Capital Resources and would also support one of the Council's key priorities, namely increasing affordable housing.

RESOLVED that the sale of this site be agreed and

1. the previous decision to sell the site on the open market be rescinded;
2. the site be designated for social housing purposes;
3. the whole site (Hamilton Road Conveniences and the parcel of land at Lambrook Road) be sold to Knightstone Housing Association for £35,000 in order to support the Council's social housing priorities under the usual provisions of the General Disposal Consent of Section 25 of the Local Government Act 1998.

92. Capital Strategy 2005-2008

Reported that the ODPM had removed the requirement for the Council to submit to Regional Government Offices the annual Capital Strategy and Asset Management Plan. However, it was considered to be good practice to continue to prepare an AMP and Capital Strategy annually.

The Capital Strategy was a summary of the Council's approach to capital investment and included:

- The Council's aims for capital investment.
- Development and ongoing management of the Capital Programme.
- Partnership working on capital projects.
- Performance measurement.

The revised draft Strategy for 2005-08 was submitted. It had been updated from the last year's version by taking recent updates provided by CIPFA on its ideal content and from other developments being undertaken by the Council.

The Review Board had already considered the draft strategy and had made no amendment to the document.

RESOLVED that Council be recommended that the draft Capital Strategy for 2005-2008 be agreed.

93. Asset Management Plan 2005

Reported that Asset Management Plan for 2005/2006 had now been completed.

The Plan had been updated and indicated progress that had been made against the original objectives agreed. The main thrust of the Plan, as in previous years, was geared to showing what had been achieved in the past and what was planned for the future. It also showed how those achievements had contributed to the Council's Corporate Priorities and, in particular, the Vision for Taunton through the delivery of the Council's Capital Strategy.

The Asset Management Plan was primarily concerned with how the Council's assets were performing and how they could be improved/disposed of. Elsewhere within the Authority, work was being undertaken with regard to its local development framework.

The opportunity had also been taken to include elements of work undertaken in compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 as it affected the physical elements of the Council's buildings.

It was noted that the Plan should be read in conjunction with the Council's Capital Strategy. The report had previously been submitted to, and considered by, the Review Board and its recommendations had been incorporated in this report.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

94. Acceptance of a Tender for Revenues and Benefits Software

Submitted report, previously circulated, which gave details of the outcome of the procurement exercise undertaken to buy a new suite of Revenues and Benefits software to replace the present in-house systems.

Details were submitted of the procurement process and the evaluation of the tenders received. After following a methodical and objective approach to evaluation, the evaluation team and project board had both recommended that the proposal put forward by International Business Systems (Public Services) Ltd represented the best value for money in terms of price and in meeting the Council's business needs.

RESOLVED that:

1. the tender submitted by International Business Systems (Public Services) Ltd to supply this software and to maintain it for a five year period be accepted, subject to contract;
2. Capital expenditure of £358,000 to enable this project to proceed be agreed.

95. Comprehensive Performance Assessment 2 - Value for Money and Use of Resources Self Assessments, Direction of Travel Assessment

Reported that although the full requirements of CPA2 had yet to be decided for District Councils, there were three self-assessments that must be completed during the autumn 2005:-

- Value for Money Self-Assessment.
- Use of Resources Self-Assessment.
- Direction of Travel Assessment.

The report submitted provided an overview of the requirements, and detailed how this piece of work was being delivered. This matter had also been reported to and considered by the Review Board at its meeting in September 2005.

Details of the assessments were submitted.

RESOLVED that:

1. the immediate requirements of CPA2 and the work that was currently underway to deliver the self-assessments and Direction of Travel Report be noted;
2. the latest version of the self-assessment returns be noted and the Strategic Director and Chief Executive be authorised to submit the Council's final self-assessment prior to the appropriate deadline.

96. Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED that the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting for the items numbered 8 and 9 on the Agenda because of the likelihood that exempt information would otherwise be disclosed relating to Clauses 1 and 9 respectively of Schedule 12(a) of the Local Government Act 1972.

97. Old Municipal Buildings Invest to Save

Submitted report, previously circulated, regarding an Invest to Save bid enabling the redundancy of the Caretaker of the Old Municipal Buildings.

RESOLVED that a Supplementary Estimate of £37,560, as an Invest to Save bid, be made to fund the redundancy and pension costs of the Old Municipal Buildings' Caretaker. The cost to be recovered through the salary savings of the post in 2.6 years.

98. Proposed Acquisition of Part of Land at Blackbrook, Taunton

Following the decisions of the Executives made on 22 December 2003 and 23 June 2004, negotiations had taken place to acquire the freehold interest in part of the land leased to the Council at Blackbrook, Taunton.

Terms and conditions had now been provisionally agreed by the Chief Valuer, details of which were submitted.

RESOLVED that:

1. the terms and conditions provisionally agreed by the Chief Valuer for the acquisition of the freehold interest in the land, as shown on the plan attached to the report, be agreed;
2. Council be recommended that a Supplementary Estimate be made from unallocated reserves of £65,000 in order to fund the purchase of the freehold interest in the land.

(The meeting ended at 8.00 pm.)