

Executive – 8 February 2006

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

Officers: Mrs P James (Chief Executive), Ms S Adams (Strategic Director), Ms J Wishlade (Strategic Director), Mr M Western (Head of Housing), Mr B Cleere (Head of Policy and Performance), Mr P Carter (Financial Services Manager) and Mr G P Dyke (Member Services Manager)

Also Present: Councillors Bowrah, Henley, House, Lisgo and Prior-Sankey.

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

9. Apologies

Councillors Edwards and Garner.

10. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2006 were taken as read and were signed.

11. Public Question Time

- (i) Mrs Diana Wilson of the Taunton and Wellington Pensioners Forum, asked which services provided by the Council were statutory and which discretionary? She felt this information would be helpful in future budget documents.

Shirlene Adams, Strategic Director, explained that services were described in a way which they could be understood. It was difficult to split services in the way requested because they were, at times, blurred. Any feedback on how to make budget publications clearer would be welcomed.

- (ii) Mr Geoffrey Mitchell of the Taunton and Wellington Pensioners Forum asked how much Council Tax remained uncollected this year and how much was forecast for 2006/07.

Councillor Hall replied that this matter would be discussed by the Resources Review Panel the following day.

Paul Carter, Financial Services Manager, said the general trend of the collection rate was around 99.5%. Full details would be supplied to Mr Mitchell.

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

- (a) How much would Taunton Deane pay in relation to the Taunton Ice Rink.

Councillor Williams replied that a full report would be submitted in due course. Paul Carter confirmed that there would be a cost to the Council of £30,000 against an estimate of £36,000.

- (b) In the light of the Council's favourable financial settlement would car parking charges be reviewed? Also, had correspondence received from Taunton Town Centre Ltd and others been replied to?

Councillor Williams replied that this question had already been asked by Councillor Henley at the previous meeting and he therefore referred to the answer given at that time (Executive Minute 3(ii) 11 January 2006).

Councillor Williams also confirmed that he had replied to all correspondence and written subsequently to the Town Centre Limited in the light of additional information contained in a survey of car park charges.

- (c) Churchinford and Bishopswood had not been included in the latest roll out of the Sort-It scheme. Councillor Henley also asked if efforts could be made to include working people and those not available in the day in the consultation process.

Councillor Williams replied that the Council had a duty to consult and would try and reach as many people as possible within the resources available. He would discuss the matter further with the appropriate officers.

(iv) Councillor Prior-Sankey asked the following questions:-

(Councillor Prior-Sankey declared a personal interest as a member of Somerset County Council).

- (a) Could additional dog bins be provided, particularly in the Chestnut Close, Taunton area where she had identified a particular need. She had been informed that no funding was available.

Councillor Williams undertook to investigate this matter further with the appropriate officers.

- (b) Equipment at the Play Area in Rowan Drive had been removed without consultation with Ward Members. Could funding be made available to replace it.

Councillor Bradley undertook to make further enquiries, particularly in light of the current, apparent position of the Play Area budget.

- (c) The rate levied for the unparished area of Taunton was insignificant. Could action be taken to raise additional funding by increasing this rate.

Councillor Williams confirmed that this matter had been raised by the Review Board and would form the basis of further discussion by the Board.

- (d) The use of the Supporting People “windfall” of £400k for the provision of kitchens and bathrooms was not appropriate. Could an explanation be given as to how it was used.

Malcolm Western, Head of Housing, explained the historical position and said that this was a way of funding areas not covered by the Housing Revenue Account.

Councillor Williams confirmed that officers had been asked by the Review Board to provide a briefing on this matter (following a request from Councillor Lisgo it was agreed that any such report be circulated to all Councillors).

- (e) The Department of Culture, Media and Sport website indicated that Taunton Deane had expressed an interest in having a Casino in Taunton. When was this decision made and should there have been consultation with Members.

Councillor Williams confirmed that the Council had only asked for further information in response to a letter from the DCMS. No decision had been made. A report would be brought forward to the appropriate Panel in due course.

12. Travel Plan Development

Reported that improving transport and travel within Taunton Deane was a priority of the Council and it therefore had a community leadership role to ensure everything was being done to support the management of congestion in the area both through implementation of policy and through managing the travel of its own workforce. The issues and targets contained in the final document had been the subject of discussion at previous meetings of the Executive (August 2005) and the Review Board (July and November 2005). There had been no further amendments or additions to those outlined at the

meeting of the Review Board in November when consultants gave a presentation on their findings of the proposals.

The final document would be updated each year. Many of the actions were under way already but it was important to get the support measures in place prior to making changes to staff parking arrangements. These should be in place during the late spring/early summer 2006.

RESOLVED that the actions and priorities identified within the Travel Plan be agreed.

13. General Fund Revenue Estimate 2006/07

Considered report previously circulated regarding the Executive's final 2006/07 budget proposals prior to submission to Council on 21 February 2006 for approval. The report contained details on

- (i) The General Fund Revenue Budget proposals for 2006/07 including the proposed Council Tax increase and the Prudential Indicators and
- (ii) Draft figures on the predicted financial position of the Council for the following four years.

The report had been considered in detail by the Review Board and details of its views were submitted. Consultation on the budget had taken place and all Members had had an opportunity to contribute to the budget setting process.

Details were submitted of the General Fund budget proposals for 2006/07. The proposals would result in a total Council Tax increase of 3%.

It was now a requirement for the Council to prepare not only budgets for the following financial year but to also provide indicative figures for the two years after that. The provision of an indicative future Government grant settlement for 2007/08 helped considerably towards providing Members with more reliable forecasts than had been possible in the past. Details of the main cost pressures faced by the Council in future years were submitted. The Medium Term Financial Plan provided an indication of the expected budget gap going forward into 2007/08. 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 £125.54 an increase of 3% on the previous year. This represented an increase of 7p per week. The Band D taxpayer would receive all the services provided by the Council in 2006/07 at a cost of £2.41 per week.

The estimated expenses chargeable to the non parished area of Taunton for the forthcoming year amounted to £27,320 an increase of 3% and this formed part of the total net expenditure of the Council. The precept in 2005/06 had been £26,520.

As part of the Prudential Code for Capital Finance there was a requirement for Council to approve the indicators set out in the report. These included the borrowing limits which were previously detailed in a separate report to the Executive. Details of the various indicators were submitted.

Legislation imposed a duty on the Council's Section 151 Officer to comment as part of the budget setting process upon the robustness of the budget and the adequacy of reserves. Shirlene Adam, Strategic Director the Council's 151 Officer, had thoroughly reviewed the procedures, outputs and outcomes of the budget setting process and felt that the Council's reserves were adequate and that the budget estimate used in preparing the 2006/07 budget were sufficiently robust.

RESOLVED that the Council be recommended that the budget for General Fund services for 2006/07 as outlined in the report be agreed and that

- (a) the transfer of any underspend in 2005/06 back to General Fund reserves be agreed
- (b) the proposed 2006/07 budget being authority expenditure of £12,699,820 and Special Expenses of £27,320 be agreed in accordance with the Local Government Act 1992
- (c) the predicted General Fund Reserve balance at 31 March 2007 of £1,407,088 be noted
- (d) the Prudential Indicators for 2006/07 as set out in the report be agreed
- (e) the revised forecast position for 2007/08 onwards as outlined in the report be noted.

14. Housing Revenue Account, Revenue Estimates and Rent Levels Deane Helpline and Deane Building DLO Account 2006/2007

Submitted report previously circulated which outlined the proposed Housing Revenue Account for 2006/2007. It also included details of the new rent level, service charges and other housing related charges such as garage rents. Finally it provided information on the Deane Helpline trading account and the Deane Building DLO trading account. Both the Housing Review Panel and the Review Board had considered the 2006/2007 budget report and had made no amendments or suggestions or changes to the proposed budget.

RESOLVED that Council be recommended that the Housing Revenue Account budget for 2006/07 be agreed.

15. Capital Programme 2006/2007 to 2008/2009

Submitted report which detailed the proposed General Fund (GF) and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) capital programmes for the period 2006/07 to 2008/09.

For the General Fund the estimated unallocated resources available for this period amounted to £739,000. The proposed capital programme amounted to £407,500 leaving £331,500 of unallocated capital resources available for future schemes.

For all housing schemes both GF and HRA the estimated resources available for 2006/07 amounted to £5,966K. The proposed capital programme for 2006/07 used all available resources.

Details were submitted of the schemes that were currently in the Capital Programme and those which the Executive proposed to make a priority for the new programme.

RESOLVED that Council be recommended that both the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account capital programmes be agreed.

16. Council Tax Setting 2006/2007

Submitted report which made recommendations to the Council on the proposed level of Council Tax for 2006/2007. The Council was required to make an annual determination which set its gross expenditure (including the Housing Revenue Account and balances brought forward) and gross income (also including the Housing Revenue Account and balances brought forward) with the difference as its budget requirement. This determination is set out in the resolution.

The estimated expenses chargeable to the non parished area of Taunton in 2006/07 amounted to £27,320 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 surplus of £34,086. Taunton Deane's share of this amounted to £3,709 and this was reflected in the revenue estimates.

The Council's budget requirement including parish precepts and non parish special expenses was £13,065,305. This was then reduced by the amount notified in respect of the Borough Council's Revenue Support Grant of £1,254,774 and the Non Domestic Rates distribution from the pool which amounted to £6,500,220.

The net amount having taken the Collection Fund position into account of £5,306,601 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 in December 2005.

The Council Tax for the Borough (excluding parish precepts and special expenses for the non parished area) was £125.54 an increase of £3.66 (3%)

compared to the 2005/06 Council Tax. The total Council Tax including the County Council and Police Authority precepts was still subject to confirmation.

RESOLVED that Council be recommended that subject to final determination including the Council Tax for Somerset County Council and the Police Authority which was still to be advised.

(i) That it be noted that at its meeting on 7 December 2005 the Executive calculated the following amounts for the year 2006/07 in accordance with the regulations made under Section 33(5) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended):-

(1) 39,358.90 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	71.85	Neroche	242.82
	Ashbrittle	89.30	North Curry	707.64
	Bathealton	82.42	Norton Fitzwarren	689.40
	Bishops Hull	1,068.44	Nynehead	151.51
	Bishops Lydeard/ Cothelstone	1,914.26	Oake	325.22
	Bradford on Tone	276.07	Otterford	162.43
	Burrowbridge	199.58	Pitminster	447.92
	Cheddon Fitzpaine	635.09	Ruishton/Thornfalcon	614.37
	Chipstable	117.71	Sampford Arundel	129.59
	Churchstanton	307.09	Staplegrove	706.51
	Combe Florey	120.30	Stawley	116.52
	Comeytrowe	2,073.08	Stoke St Gregory	381.55
	Corfe	131.85	Stoke St Mary	201.61
	Creech St Michael	935.78	Taunton	15,726.14
	Durston	58.53	Trull	990.12
	Fitzhead	123.83	Wellington	4,509.64

Halse	143.16	Wellington (without)	292.29
Hatch Beauchamp	251.30	West Bagborough	157.62
Kingston St Mary	451.55	West Buckland	405.49
Langford Budville	213.25	West Hatch	139.97
Lydeard St	196.08	West Monkton	1,095.98
Lawrence/Tolland			
Milverton	585.69	Wiveliscombe	1,118.34

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 relate.

(2) That the following amounts be now calculated by the Council for the year 2006/07 in accordance with Sections 32 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992:-

(a) £64,426,789 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 32(2)(a) of the Act.

(Gross Expenditure including amount required for working balance).

(b) £51,361.484 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates 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) £13,065,305 being the amount by which the aggregate at (a) above exceeds 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) £7,758,704 being the aggregate of the sums which the Council estimates will 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 estimates will 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 estimates will 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) £134.83

$$\frac{(c) - (d) = 13,065,305 - 7,758,704}{3.2.1(1) \quad 39,358.90}$$

being the amount calculated at (c) above less the amount at (d) above, all divided by the amount at 3.2.1(1) 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) £365,485

being the aggregate amount of all special items referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act. (Parish Precepts and Special Expenses).

(g) £125.54

$$\frac{(e) - (f) = 134.83 - 365,485}{3.2.1(1) \quad 39,358.90}$$

being the amount at (e) above less the result given by dividing the amount at (f) above by the amount at 3.2.1(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 relate. (Council Tax at Band D for Borough Excluding Parish Precepts and Special Expenses).

(h)	Ash Priors	125.54	Neroche	145.45
	Ashbrittle	140.10	North Curry	143.91
	Bathealton	132.82	Norton Fitzwarren	142.53
	Bishops Hull	139.58	Nynehead	145.34
	Bishops Lydeard/ Cothelstone	139.17	Oake	135.99
	Bradford on Tone	140.03	Otterford	125.54
	Burrowbridge	148.09	Pitminster	138.82
	Cheddon Fitzpaine	131.84	Ruishton/Thornfalcon	141.82
	Chipstable	134.89	Sampford Arundel	159.80
	Churchstanton	149.15	Staplegrove	137.22
	Combe Florey	140.50	Stawley	135.84
	Comeytrove	136.63	Stoke St Gregory	141.27
	Corfe	133.88	Stoke St Mary	139.25
	Creech St Michael	140.73	Taunton	127.28
	Durston	126.22	Trull	135.64
	Fitzhead	146.09	Wellington	143.28
	Halse	137.76	Wellington (without)	140.25
	Hatch Beauchamp	137.88	West Bagborough	138.23
	Kingston St Mary	138.83	West Buckland	145.27
	Langford Budville	133.98	West Hatch	139.83

Lydeard St Lawrence/Tolland	135.79	West Monkton	136.49
Milverton	136.64	Wiveliscombe	141.28

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 3.2.1(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 relate. (Council Taxes at Band D for Borough, Parish and Special Expenses).

- (i) See overleaf.

17. Somerset Local Area Agreements

Reported that Local Area Agreements (LAAs) enabled localities to determine outcomes for their area and negotiate with the Government a range of freedoms and flexibilities to ensure achievement of these.

Somerset was in the second phase of the national roll out of LAAs. The process of developing the Somerset LAA started in July 2005 and would be signed off by the Government in March 2006. The Council had played an important part in the development of the LAA with Officers and Members giving input at various stages along the way.

Final scrutiny of the LAA had taken place by the Review Board at its meeting on 26 January 2006. The Board had requested a greater emphasis on the importance of culture within the LAA and proposed that the following wording be forwarded to the Project Team.

“Since the tourism industry in all areas of Somerset is important and depends to a great extent on the cultural aspects of the County these need to be supported”.

The final draft of the LAA would be presented to the Somerset Strategic Steering Group for sign off on 14 February 2006. Final agreement with GOSW would be sought immediately after the 14 February and a ministerial decision was anticipated by 24 March 2006. The LAA would be live on 1 April 2006.

RESOLVED that

- (i) The proposal of the Review Board to improve the reference to culture within the LAA be agreed and the wording suggested by the Board be forwarded to the Project Team
- (ii) The LAA be agreed and the Council be committed to apply its best endeavours to ensure its delivery.
- (iii) The ongoing work required in respect of governance and performance management arrangements, reward grant criteria and alignments of budgets be agreed and the Chief Executive or appropriate delegated officer represent the Council in future discussions about these issues.

18. Corporate Strategy 2006 to 2009

Submitted report previously circulated regarding the draft Corporate Strategy 2006 to 2009 which provided direction for the Council and set its objectives and desired outcomes for the next three years.

The Corporate Strategy was the Council's principal Policy document which established the outcomes that it wanted to achieve in the community. It provided an important lead for budget setting and service planning activities.

Extensive public consultation had taken place in May 2005 when views were sought on future priorities and budget setting choices. The outcomes of the consultation had been considered by the Review Board in November 2005 and the draft Corporate Strategy which was submitted reflected the findings from this exercise.

The Corporate Strategy 2006 to 2009 was outcome focused and aligned closely to delivering the Council's stated priorities. It provided a framework for future decisions over budget and resource allocation and reflected national recommended best practice in its design. The strategy had been challenged and scrutinised during its development through a number of different means.

It would be necessary for Council to approve the strategy but before this was done it was felt that Members of the Executive needed to take a final look at the details of the proposal prior to consideration by Council. It was indicated that information was still outstanding particularly relating to leisure and arts. It was also felt that objective 2 within the Economy aim should be amended slightly to read "30 additional new businesses".

RESOLVED that subject to further final detailed discussions at a meeting of PLG plus Executive the Council be recommended to approve the Corporate Strategy as amended.

(The meeting ended at 8.15 pm)