

## **Executive – 8 March 2006**

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

Officers: Mrs P James (Chief Executive), Ms S Adam (Strategic Director),  
Mr P Weaver (Head of Environment and Leisure), Mrs K Hughes  
(Leisure Development Manager), Mr S Murphy (Principal Accountant),  
Mr B Yates (Building Control Manager), Mr K Toller (Head of Corporate  
Services) and Mrs D Durham (Review Support Officer).

Also Present: Councillors Henley, House, Morrell, Phillips and Wedderkopp.

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

### **19. Apologies**

Councillors Garner and Mrs Lewin-Harris

### **20. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2006 were taken as read and were signed.

### **21. Public Question Time**

- (i) Colonel Homeshaw of the Taunton Flower Show read out a statement relating to the proposed framework for charging for the use of Vivary Park. He explained that the Flower Show was a voluntary, non-profit making, non-fund raising, charitable organisation. In the circumstances, it was requested that the Flower Show should be exempted from any charge.

Colonel Homeshaw asked two particular questions:-

- (a) Why was there an anomaly between the proposed Operational Day and Set-Up Day charges? A concession was given for Operational Days, but not for Set-Up Day charges.

Karen Hughes, Leisure Development Manager, explained that whilst the Operational Days were a benefit to Taunton Deane, bringing many visitors to the town, the Set-Up Days merely rendered the park unavailable for use by the public.

- (b) It had been suggested by the Flower Show that the Council's Economic Development Officer should be asked to calculate the financial benefit of the Flower Show to Taunton Deane. Why had this not been done?

Councillor Bradley replied that footfall figures were calculated on a monthly basis and would not have indicated how much the Flower Show contributed to this, as the show only took place over two days.

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

(a) When would Members receive an official briefing regarding the siting of the market at Chelston? The situation was looking bleak and he asked when an announcement would be made.

Councillor Cavill explained that no action could be taken until the auctioneers responded. He added that the Council had done all they could to assist them with their decision as to whether to move to Chelston.

(b) He had asked a question at Full Council and enquired as to why he had not received a reply yet from Executive Councillor Edwards. The question referred to the lack of consultation for the recent Sort It phase and the fact that roadshows were held during the day, when a restricted number of residents were able to attend.

Councillor Edwards replied that he had taken note of the comments. Changing the times of roadshows would be considered when the next phase was rolled out.

(c) When would lids be provided for the green recycling boxes?

Councillor Edwards confirmed that there were no plans at present to provide lids for the recycling boxes, but agreed to let Councillor Henley know if this position was likely to change.

(d) When would a decision be made regarding the sale of land at Holway Green for development purposes?

Councillor Williams replied that no decision had yet been made. He stressed however that although many people had complained about the loss of grass, the Council had a duty to provide affordable housing for the large number of homeless residents in the district.

Councillor Williams confirmed that he would properly examine any proposal which would offer homeless people somewhere to live.

## **22. Proposal to charge for holding events on public open spaces**

Submitted report previously circulated regarding proposals for a charging framework to determine the amount to be paid to the Council for hiring public open space to hold outdoor events.

Previous reports on this matter had been submitted to the Health and Leisure Review Panel on 31 March 2005 and 30 September 2005 when it was agreed to further develop a charging calculation framework and consult with organisations which would be significantly affected by the introduction of charging.

The basis of the proposal was that whilst an outdoor event was occupying public land members of the public were unable to use it for recreation and the event organisers should therefore compensate for this by way of a hiring fee.

It was intended that the calculation should be based on the area of land used, the length of time of occupation and the nature of organisation hiring the land.

Details of the proposals were submitted which included certain exclusions, inclusions, discounts and levies and a hiring fee based on operational days and set-up/take down days. The calculation for set-up and take down days was equal to the daily cost to the Council of those areas which were inaccessible to the public during set-up and take down. This was not necessarily the entire event area but the working areas used during the set-up and take down.

As far as the charge for operational days was concerned the calculation for those days on which the event was operating would be calculated as follows:-

- (a) The cost to the Council of the area occupied by the event. This was the Basic Daily Charge (BCD).
- (b) If the event was run entirely by volunteers the BCD was reduced to half to give a Voluntary Sector Daily Charge (VDC).
- (c) If the event was run by a commercial organisation the BCD would be multiplied by two to give a Commercial Sector Daily Charge (CDC).
- (d) If the event permitted "significant" commercial trading on site and/or charging for entry the VDC or CDC would be doubled for one of these and doubled if both applied. Significant meant more than suitable catering provision for the event audience.
- (e) If the event could prove it was contributing to corporate priorities the VDC or CDC could be reduced by up to 15%.

Taunton Flower Show occupied 50% of the Park, was organised by volunteers and was both trading and charging for entry. The Flower Show Organisation had objected to being charged for the use of Vivary Park. Its Chairman had accepted that some level of charge would be levied but had expressed an objection to the charge for having traders at an event, in addition to that made for selling tickets as both were elements essential to funding the event.

It was felt that this objection should be agreed and the calculation adjusted accordingly for 2006. This would be reviewed for future years in the light of the level of financial reserves held by the Taunton Flower Show which in 2004 was worth £37,218.

The Show had also requested a reduction to reflect its charitable objectives in furthering the education of the public in horticulture and in contributing to the economy of Taunton Deane. Details of a calculation were submitted which showed that if the Flower Show was allowed the full 15% discount for its contribution towards the Council's corporate priorities the final sum charged would be £1,224.

RESOLVED that the charging framework outlined in the report be adopted and used to determine charges for outdoor events held on the Council's land.

### **23. Treasury Management and Investments Strategy for 2006/2007**

Reported that the Local Government Act 2003 required the Council to have regard to the Prudential Code and to set Prudential Indicators for the next three years to ensure that the Council's capital investment plans were affordable, prudent and sustainable.

The Act also required the Council to set out its Treasury Strategy for borrowing and to prepare an annual investment strategy. This set out the Council's plans for managing its investments and for giving priority to the security and liquidity of those investments.

The suggested strategy for 2006/2007 was based on the Treasury Officer's views on interest rates supplemented with market forecasts provided by the Council's Treasury Adviser. The Strategy covered:-

- The current Treasury position;
- Prospects for interest rates;
- The Borrowing Strategy;
- The Investment Strategy; and
- Prudential Indicators.

RESOLVED that the proposed Treasury Management Strategies outlined in the report be agreed.

### **24. Fees for Building Regulations Applications**

Reported that under the Building (Local Authority Charges) Regulations 1998 the Council was authorised to fix a scheme of charges in connection with the performance of its functions under the Building Regulations. Income from the charges should be sufficient to meet the costs of the service provided and must always meet the costs over any three year rolling accounting period (the break even target).

Budget forecasts for 2006/07 indicated a potential shortfall in income against expenditure of 6%. Consideration was therefore given to an overall increase in the level of fees charged for Building Regulations applications sufficient to address the forecast imbalance.

Under the Local Government Association Model Scheme for Fees, charges were broken down into three principal categories.

- A - new dwellings
- B - domestic extensions
- C - domestic alterations and commercial and industrial work of all descriptions

Existing and proposed fees under each category were as follows:-

Schedule 1 – New Dwellings – fees in this category would remain unchanged.

This was a highly competitive market dominated by a private Approved Inspector, the National House Builders Council. Raising fees in this category would reduce local authority competitiveness and could be counter productive.

Schedule 2 – Domestic extensions, garages and car ports

	Existing	Proposed	%
	£	£	Increase
Small garages <40m <sup>2</sup>	110.64	127.66	15
Large garage >40<60m <sup>2</sup>	223.83	234.04	5
Small extension <10m <sup>2</sup>	223.83	234.04	5
Med Extension>10<40m <sup>2</sup>	327.66	361.70	10
Large extension >40<60m <sup>2</sup>	438.30	468.09	7

Schedule 2 Works accounted for 40% of total income but were not a profitable area of work. Medium extensions were the largest single category. It was expected that average income in this category would increase by 7% equivalent to a 2.8% increase in total income.

Schedule 3 – All other building works

	Existing	Proposed	%
	£	£	Increase
Replacement glazing: Partial	50.00	60.00	20
Full	100.00	110.00	10
Loft Conversions: Minimum charge	327.66	361.70	10

Estimated Cost of Work	Existing	Proposed	%
£	£	£	Increase
Up to 2,000	100.00	110.00	10

2,001 – 5,000	165.00	170.00	3
5,001 – 20,000	165.00	170.00	3
	plus 9.00 per 1,000 above 5,000	plus 10.00 per 1,000 above 5,000	3
20,001 – 100,000	300.00	320.00	7
	plus 8.00 per 1,000 above 20,000	plus 9.00 per 1,000 above 20,000	7
100,001 – 1,000,000	940.00	1040	10
	plus 3.50 per 1,000 above 100,000	plus 4.00 per 1,000 above 100,000	10
1,000,001 – 10,000,000	4090	4640	13
	plus 2.75 per 1,000 above 1,000,000	plus 3.00 per 1,000 above 1,000,000	13
10,000,001 upwards	28840	31640	10
	plus 2.00 per 1,000 above 10,000,000	plus 2.00 per 1,000 above 10,000,000	10

Schedule 3 works accounted for 50% of total income. The above increases were expected to produce an increase of between 7 and 8% or 3.5% to 4% on total income.

It was expected that the proposed charges would produce an increase in income of approximately 6.5% assuming that volume of work remained at the 2005/2006 levels. This level of increase was considered to be sufficient to ensure that the fee earning service did not fall into deficit.

RESOLVED that the proposed increase in Building Control fees as set out above be agreed with effect from 1 April 2006.

## **25. Business requiring to be dealt with as a matter of urgency**

The Chairman reported that he had certified that the item covered by Minute No. 27 below should be dealt with as an urgent matter.

## **26. Exclusion of Press and Public**

RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item because of the likelihood that exempt information would otherwise be disclosed relating to Clause 1 of Schedule 12 (a) of the Local Government Act 1972.

## **27. Ratification of Urgent Decision**

Submitted report concerning an urgent decision, relating to a member of staff, made by the Head of Corporate Services in consultation with the Leader of the Council.

RESOLVED that the decision taken be endorsed.

(The meeting ended at 7.29pm)