

## TAUNTON DEANE BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE – 17 NOVEMBER 2004

### Report of Chief Executive

#### Profiling and Prioritising of Taunton Deane Borough Council Services

##### 1. Executive Summary

Full Council 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.

This report follows on by setting out a profile of services. Once agreed by the Executive this will be used to develop targets for the 05/06 budget setting process. Services will either see investment increased, maintained or reduced according to their relative priorities.

The Executive is asked to consider the views of the Review Board and approve the profile of services.

##### 2. The Proposed Profile of Services

###### 2.1 Introduction

We are currently delivering many of our services to standards well above national performance averages. This is due to a hard working and skilled workforce, dedicated to excellent customer service.

However, like many other councils we are in a situation where our costs are rising and our income is remaining steady. This is not financially sustainable and our predicted budget gap for 2005/06 is £1.2 million.

Although rated as an excellent council, one of the weaknesses identified in our recent CPA inspection was a need to explicitly identify and communicate our 'non-priority' areas. The inspection report highlighted a lack of consistent understanding of non-priority areas from staff and members, resulting in a potential loss of clarity and focus, as managers and staff try to deliver on conflicting priority areas.

It is important to prioritise our services because:

- The Council has considerable resources and huge skills and knowledge. We need to focus these on delivery of our Corporate Priorities.
- No organisation can do everything. The Council does not have limitless resources so we must chose to do less in some areas.
- We want to maintain our 'excellent' status and continue on a path of improvement.
- It makes good business sense, regardless of our financial position.

## 2.2 Our Corporate Priorities

The Council has approved a Corporate Strategy 2005-2008, which identifies four top priorities, based on what matters to local people:

- **Delivering the Vision for Taunton**
- **Improving transportation and tackling congestion**
- **Reducing anti-social behaviour**
- **Promoting affordable housing**

## 2.3 Priority Services

Priority Services are those which have the most impact on achieving our Corporate Priorities or have a particular local significance to our community.

Our Priority Services for 2005-2008 are:

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

Not all priority services will receive new investment – this will depend on past investment decisions and current levels of service and performance. Priority services that are already performing to an excellent standard will see investment maintained at current levels. Priority services that are not currently attaining high standards will have first call on resources to help them improve performance. In all but exceptional cases, resources will be diverted from lower priority service areas to achieve such improvements.

## 2.4 Lower Priority Services

The remainder of the Council's activities, whilst still important, cannot be high priorities. They include front-line services as well as support services that are essential to the smooth running of the Council.

All have dedicated and professional staff who are important to the Council and the community and have played a major part in achieving our CPA 'excellent' status. We need their continued enthusiasm and expertise to achieve financial stability and a renewed focus on delivering our priorities.

Council services that are not high priorities will not receive new investment. Heads of Service have been asked to identify how these services could be delivered differently, or with less direct use of Taunton Deane's own resources, or in some cases, stopped altogether in order to save our own resources.

Consideration of impact on standards of service needs to go hand in hand with decisions to maintain or reduce levels of investment in the future. In some cases, we will choose to reduce standards because we cannot continue to provide 'Rolls-Royce' services everywhere. In other cases, we believe that standards can be maintained or improved with investment at the same or lower levels.

We are working to define, and where possible quantify, clear performance standards for *all* services (high priority and lower priority). The following table establishes a prioritised profile and medium term investment pattern for services.

## 2.5 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	✓		
<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			✓

## 2.6 Support Services

Support services on the whole are not listed in the above table. These include services such as:

- Financial Services
- Information Services
- Legal Services
- Geographical Information Services
- Personnel
- Central Office Services.

These support services underpin priority services and play a key role in the smooth running of the organisation.

All support services are being reviewed to identify where possible savings could be made through greater efficiencies, trading activities, outsourcing and partnerships with other agencies. This review will conclude by March 2005. Support Services will reduce in some areas to reflect a new smaller front-line customer base.

## 2.7 Efficiency

All services, even those identified as priorities will be subject to efficiency savings reviews. All services will also be encouraged to seek external funding, and to explore opportunities to generate income for the corporate pot and or to increase service quality.

## 2.8 Implementing the Strategy

This is not a static Strategy. It will need to be kept under annual review to take account of changing local priorities and the Council's financial position. At this stage, several key steps are required:

- Agreement of high, medium and low priority services (November 2004).
- Consideration of plans to deliver savings in lower priority services (December 2004).
- Consideration of plans to deliver savings in support services (March 2005).
- Defining and quantifying (where possible) clear standards for all services, on the understanding that we cannot provide a 'Rolls-Royce' standard everywhere (March 2005).

## 3. Alternative Courses of Action

An alternative profile of services could be adopted. This is entirely a matter of choice for the Council. However, a profile that does not reflect the Council's stated Corporate Priorities or focus on the community's aspiration could arguably be difficult to justify.

Do nothing is an option. However, this would mean partners, the community and staff are less clear about the Council's priorities and strategic decisions around the allocation of resources would continue to be difficult to make.

4. Impact on Corporate Priorities and Finance

Agreeing a profile of services is crucial to ensuring this Council delivers a priority led budget for 2005/2006 and beyond.

5. Review Board Views

This report was presented to the Review Board on 4<sup>th</sup> November, 2004. The Board heard representation from various organisations and individuals.

The Board 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 feed back their views on the profile. To date, three responses have been received and passed on to the Executive for consideration.

The Executive have given further consideration to Arts. It is their informal view that the Arts make a cross-cutting contribution to many of our objectives and it would be wrong to view it as a pure service delivered by the Council, especially given that the majority of our resources in this area are used to fund key stakeholders and grants rather than our own officer(s). For this reason consideration of Arts will be on the basis of its contribution to different aspects of our priorities. The priority impact will be expected to be on economic development, regeneration and crime and disorder.

6. Recommendation

The Executive is asked to approve the profile of services.

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