

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Council Meeting – 14 July 2009

Part I

To deal with written questions to and receive recommendations to the Council from the Executive.

Councillor Henley

Pioneer Somerset – Moving Forward

Proposals for programme management arrangements for the Pioneer Somerset Programme and the associated resource requirements had recently been considered by the Executive.

Pioneer Somerset was a programme of work designed to radically transform and enhance the system of two tier local government across the County. It had three aims which were:-

- To achieve annual revenue savings arising from enhanced two tier working of £20m, by 2012/2013 (base year 2007/2008);
- For every principal authority in Somerset to achieve levels of overall resident satisfaction in the National top quartile by 2013; and
- To achieve a marked improvement in the perception, reputation and recognition of Somerset and each of its local authorities, including positive Direction of Travel and Use of Resources ratings in the new Comprehensive Area Assessment of level 3 or above by 2013.

Over the past few months, a number of meetings and workshops had been held involving the Pioneer Somerset Board, Deputy Leaders, Chief Executives and key officers from the Directors Group to agree how best the Pioneer Somerset Programme could be moved forward.

One of the main conclusions reached was that additional dedicated staff capacity was a necessity to achieve this and the Pioneer Somerset Board had therefore agreed to the appointment of the following:-

- a dedicated independent Chief Executive for the Programme;
- a dedicated Programme Manager; and
- additional dedicated professional and administrative support necessary to support the above appointments.

The full year estimated cost of these appointments was £350,000 and in the absence of any further funding from the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Programme, it was proposed that the costs should be proportioned across the six Councils as invest to save bids. The apportionment to Taunton Deane would be £13,400.

It was expected that funding beyond 2009/2010 for the remainder of the programme would come from savings made by the programme.

The proposals had been considered by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 8 June 2009 where it was decided not to support this suggested way forward. The Committee recommended that Pioneer Somerset should find alternative ways of creating meaningful savings without investing additional money.

Despite this view, the Executive felt that Pioneer Somerset had to be moved forward and that the proposals outlined were acceptable. The Executive was also aware that all of the other Districts and the County Council had already agreed to meet their proportions of the additional costs involved.

In the circumstances, it is **recommended** that an allocation of £13,400 from reserves to cover Taunton Deane's part of the Pioneer Somerset project management costs be approved on the basis of invest to save.