

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Executive – 9 February 2012

2012/2013 Further Savings Plans and Fees and Charges Proposals

Report of the Financial Services Manager, Southwest One

(This matter is the responsibility of the Leader of the Council, Councillor John Williams)

1 Executive Summary

Further to the Budget Update and Savings Plans Report to Corporate Scrutiny 24 November 2011 and updated report to Executive 7 December 2011, work has continued to identify additional savings options to close the projected budget gap for 2012/13.

Other information related to the overall budget has been included within the proposed budget, and these are included in the separate General Fund Revenue Estimates 2012/13 report on the agenda for this meeting. This report recommends the Executive approves the Further Savings Plans for 2012/13.

2 Background

- 2.1 This report provides an update to Budget Savings Plans and proposed Fees & Charges for 2012/13, further to the reports regarding the same that were presented to Corporate Scrutiny on 24 November 2011 and the Executive on 7 December 2011.
- 2.2 The full details of the proposed budget for 2012/13 are included in a separate report later on the agenda for this Executive Meeting.
- 2.3 This report was published to Corporate Scrutiny on 11 January, well in advance of meeting date, to allow good time for consultation and consideration by Members of the additional proposals.
- 2.4 This report should also be read by Members in conjunction with the internal Budget Consultation Pack issued to all Members at the end of December, and directly impacts on the subsequent General Fund Revenue Estimates 2012/13 on the agenda for this meeting.

3 2012/13 Further Savings Plans

- 3.1 The savings previously presented in the Initial Savings Plans total £453,000, and are included in the main budget report.

- 3.2 As reported previously there is still a budget gap to address for 2012/13, and Officers have continued to work with the Executive to prioritise additional savings options. The proposals were presented to Corporate Scrutiny for comment on 26 January. Comments are provided in section 5 below. Full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA), where required, is included in Appendix C.
- 3.3 The additional proposed savings and fee increases total £198,000, as summarised in the following table.

Ref	Proposed Savings	£'000
1	Reduced maintenance of general open spaces	64
2	Reduction of discretionary Arts Development Grants	8
3	Cease discretionary contribution to Somerset County Council re Slinky Bus service	30
4	Cease discretionary top up of SCC highways maintenance (grass, hedgerows)	17
5	Parking Strategy additional fee income	75
6	Pest Control Fees	4
	Total	198

- 3.4 Supporting information regarding the further savings plans (Ref 1-4 above) is included in Appendix A. Information regarding the fee income is included below and in Appendix B.
- 3.5 In addition to the Fees & Charges approved by Full Council on 13 December 2011, items Ref 5 and 6 above include further proposals to update Fees & Charges during 2012/13 and these are expected to generate additional income which, if approved, can be included within the 2012/13 Budget.

Parking Strategy

- 3.6 The updated Taunton Car Parking Strategy 2011-2021 was approved by the Executive in October 2011. The accepted Package 2 included a number of options to increase car park efficiency and manage the potential shortfall in short-term parking during any central retail redevelopment scheme. The full range of these will be progressed over the Strategy's ten year lifespan, with work commencing now on the following
- Adjusting the charging scheme by moving to two tariffs from three
 - Restricting some car parks to short-stay only (maximum 5 hours)
 - Increasing fees for long-stay parking (continuation of the previous Strategy)
 - Changing the management and charging criteria for designated disabled spaces.
- 3.7 All these options are subject to the formal public consultation processes required to amend the Off-Street Parking Places TRO (Traffic Regulation Order). Detailed proposals are planned to be

published for consultation during March, with possible implementation dates, if approved, in June 2012.

- 3.8 The proposals within the Strategy to adjust the charging scheme and continue the previous policy in relation to long-stay parking are intended to affect driver behaviour. It is anticipated the effect of this will result in an additional income of £150,000 in a full financial year. However, for 2012/13 Budget it is proposed to only increase the parking income budget by £75,000 to allow for the part year effect and a risk adjustment of driver behaviour projections.

Environmental Health – Pest Control Fees.

- 3.9 The proposals outlined in Appendix C will yield an estimated additional £11,300 per year; however Pest Control has not met its income budget figure in the last few years. This increase in income if achieved will reduce the income budget gap for this service and provide an increased budget by an additional £4,000 in 2012/13.

4 Implications for Budget Gap

- 4.1 As referred above, the purpose of issuing this report well in advance of the meeting is to allow ample time for Members to consider the Further Savings Plans and Fee Income proposals. The full budget estimates will be included in a separate report for this meeting, and this will provide a full reconciliation of the above savings as part of the Executive's final Proposed Budget for 2012/13.
- 4.2 Members will note that the above savings exceed the estimated Budget Gap included within the internal Budget Consultation Pack issued late December. It was also stated in the Pack that there are some residual areas of uncertainty for the final budget (e.g. Support Service recharges) that could also impact on the gap, as well as concerns over funding for capital requirements such as car parks and Deane House. Again, this will be covered as part of the Executive's final Proposed Budget for 2012/13.

5 Corporate Scrutiny Comments

- 5.1 Corporate Scrutiny Committee considered the Further Savings Plans at its meeting of 26 January 2012. The following areas were debated.
- Concerns were raised about the impact of the proposed reductions to maintenance of general open spaces.
 - Concerns were raised about the potential impact on highways maintenance undertaken by Somerset County Council following the proposed cessation of this Council's contribution to enhance the SCC service level.
 - Clarification was sought and given at the meeting regarding the current recipients of funding through Arts Development Grants, and noted that grant allocations are based on annual Service Level Agreements and based on assessment of applications received.

Concerns were raised about potential impact on groups ability to raise funds from other sources.

- Parking Strategy proposals were debated. The formal consultation around the implementation of approved strategy will be conducted through the TRO Panel planned for March.

5.2 There were no formal recommendations from the Committee to the Executive to change the Further Savings Plans.

6 HR Implications

6.1 The proposals within the Further Savings Plans result in the deletion of two vacant posts; no existing employees are affected and UNISON has been advised of this.

7 Finance Comments

7.1 This is a finance report and there are no additional comments.

8 Legal Comments

8.1 S.32 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 sets out in detail how the Council must calculate its budget by estimating gross revenue expenditure, net income, and the council tax needed to balance the budget; s.25 of the Local Government Act 2003 requires the Chief Finance Officer (Strategic Director/S151 Officer for this Council) to report on the robustness of the budget-setting estimates and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves.

9 Links to Corporate Aims

9.1 The proposals in this report have been prioritised in line with corporate priorities.

10 Environmental and Community Safety Implications

10.1 Environmental and community safety implications have been assessed for relevant options included in the savings plans, with explanations included in the appendices to this report where significant.

11 Equalities Impact

11.1 Each savings option has been screened in relation to the elimination of discrimination, the advancement of equality or opportunity and promoting community relations. The outcome of initial screening is shown against each option within Appendix A. Ensuring the Council meets its statutory obligations, where a full and detailed assessment is required, this is included in Appendix C.

12 Risk Management

12.1 Risks and opportunities have been considered throughout the Budget

Review and Budget Setting process, and in relation to the savings plans, with risk analysis previously provided to all members in the Budget Packs. Significant risks are commented on within the appendices to this report.

13 Partnership Implications

13.1 See Comments in Appendix A.

14 Recommendations

14.1 The Executive recommend Full Council approves the Further Savings Plans and incorporates into the General Fund Revenue Budget 2012/13.

Background Papers

Full Council 5 October 2010 – Budget Strategy

Corporate Scrutiny 21 July 2011 – Budget Strategy and the Way Forward

Executive 14 September 2011 – Budget Review Project: High Level Principles

Corporate Scrutiny 27 October 2011 – Budget Setting 2012/13

Corporate Scrutiny 24 November 2011 – 2012/13 Budget Gap Update and Budget Savings Plans; Fees & Charges

Executive 7 December 2011 – 2012/13 Budget Gap Update and Budget Savings Plans; Fees & Charges

Corporate Scrutiny 26 January 2012 – 2012/13 Further Savings Plans and Fees and Charges Proposals

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TAUNTON DEANE BOROUGH COUNCIL - 2012/13 FURTHER BUDGET SAVINGS PLANS (JANUARY 2012)

Ref	Description of Saving	Lead Officer	Amount Ongoing £'000	Amount One Off £'000	Comments	How	Impact	Equalities Impact
A26	Reduction in Maintenance of General Open Spaces	Chris Hall	64			Reduced frequency of general openspace maintenance including grass cutting, shrub bed maintenance, and various other changes.	Two vacant post exist and will not be filled in the new year if this option is taken.	See Note 1 below - No negative impact
A27	40% Reduction of Arts Development Grant Funding	James Barra	8		We currently have SLAs with 6 organisations, in receipt of this funding. These SLAs are single year only and are, or can be, renewed annually.	Reduce current budget of £20K by 40%.	Reduced funding to each organisation either on a pro rata reduction on the amount they currently receive or by the allocation of specific amounts linked to their current award, to each organisation to fit the reduced budget.	See Note 1 below - No negative impact
A28	Cease Discretionary Contribution to County Slinky Bus Service	James Barra	30		The purpose of this budget is to provide discretionary grant funding to support the Somerset County Council Community Transport "Slinky Bus" service operating within Taunton Deane. The Borough Council's 2011/12 contribution was aimed at making the service more available by funding additional journeys over and above the baseline service funded by the County Council.	Cease discretionary funding.	The Slinky Bus service is available to anyone who qualifies for an English National Concessionary Transport Scheme Pass, who is unable to use a normal bus service and does not have their own transport. The funding is non-statutory and provided at the discretion of the Borough Council. Removal of the funding does not affect anyone's eligibility for the Slinky bus service, but reduces the extent of availability of the service to that existing prior to April 2011. The funding has been for only the current financial year. Evidence of additional use and services from April 2011 are awaited from the County Council.	A detailed Impact Assessment is included in Appendix D
A29	Cease discretionary subsidy of SCC highways maintenance in Taunton	Chris Hall	17		Handback contract to cut SCC highways grass verges. This is a discretionary 'top up' of SCC service levels. The DLO may offer to re-price service based on SCC requirements only.	Hand back Somerset County Council highways grass cutting to SCC and in doing so cease the current subsidy of £17K provided by TDBC.	Significant change to the appearance of the highways verges, but as this is an SCC function, and any complaints will also be passed to SCC.	See Note 1 below - No negative impact
SUBTOTAL - FURTHER SAVINGS PLANS			119	0				

Note

1 Equalities Impact: These options have been screened in relation to the elimination of discrimination, the advancement of equality or opportunity and promoting community relations. The outcome of the initial screening concluded that this option would not have a negative impact on those with the following protected characteristics, age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, marriage or civil partnership, "No negative impact" has been shown above.

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Appendix B

Environmental Health – Pest Control Fees

The proposals outlined in the table below will yield an additional £11,300, however Pest Control has not met its income budget figure in the last few years. This increase in income if achieved will reduce the income budget gap for this service and provide an additional £4,000.

Type of fee	Current charge	Proposed charge	Income	Comments
Commercial rodents and insects.	£51.40 +vat per hour for rodents. £51.40 +vat per hour for insects £42.60 +vat per hour for wasps.	Increase fees and apply minimum charge of 1 hour. £65+vnt per hour for rodents. £50+vnt per hour for all insects.	£300	Would be comparable with commercial providers.
Domestic rodents	£25.53 per treatment (up to 3 visits). No discount for those in receipt of:- Income Based Job Seekers Allowance, Income Support and Guaranteed Pensions Credit.	Increase fee to same as domestic wasps but provide 50% discount for those in receipt of specified benefits (£43.61 incl. vat) Income assumes 50% discount for 30% of clients (discounted rate would be £21.80); and assumes 10% drop in overall treatments.	£8,300	An increase in rodent fees to close to commercial rates for rodents does not compare with other LA's who on the whole do not charge for rats, and charge considerably less than the proposed fee for mice. However a subsidy of 50% would be offered to low income households. There is a risk that by increasing the fees for rodents the public would not treat the rodent problem, which may have ongoing public health consequences.
Payment in advance.		Introduce payment in advance for every domestic visit for a survey or treatment, refund only if unable to treat. For example an inaccessible wasps nest. The additional income relates to that lost from no access bookings.	£2,700	Taking payment in advance would be a procedural change and hopefully reduce the number of wasted visits where the homeowner fails to attend or cancels at the last minute and therefore no fee is collected. A trial undertaken since 1 st November has proved successful with no downturn in treatment take up.

Appendix C

Equality Impact Assessment – Discretionary Funding towards County Council Slinky Bus Service

Responsible person	John Lewis	Job Title – Parking & Civil Contingencies Manager
Why are you completing the Equality Impact Assessment? (Please mark as appropriate)	Proposed new policy or service	
	Change to Policy or Service	
	Budget/Financial decision – MTFP	✓
	Part of timetable	
What are you completing the Equality Impact Assessment on (which policy, service, MTFP proposal)	Removal of discretionary funding of £30k	
Section One – Scope of the assessment		
What are the main purposes/aims of the policy?	The aim of the MTFP proposal is to remove the discretionary funding provided to support the Somerset County Council Community Transport Slinky Bus service operating within the Taunton Deane area	
Which protected groups are targeted by the policy?	<p>1 Age – general benefit is statutorily determined by age as below</p> <p>2 Disabled – certain qualifying disabilities as below</p> <p>The Slinky Bus service is available to anyone who qualifies for an English National Concessionary Transport Scheme Pass, who is unable to use a normal bus service and does not have their own transport.</p> <p>The ENCTS eligibility criteria are</p> <p><i>“Residents of Somerset who are of pensionable age, or residents who are disabled and/or cannot drive for medical reasons, are entitled to a concessionary bus pass.</i></p> <p><i>If you were born before 5th April 1950 you are eligible from your 60th birthday.</i></p> <p><i>If you were born after 5th April 1950 the age of eligibility for women will be pension age and for men the pensionable age of a woman born on the same day. From April 2010 the government is gradually increasing the state pension age for women from 60 to 65 by April 2020.</i></p>	

	<p><i>If you are in any of the categories listed here, you could be entitled to concessionary bus travel:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>if you are blind or partially sighted</i> • <i>if you are profoundly or severely deaf</i> • <i>if you are without speech</i> • <i>if you have a disability, or have suffered an injury, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on your ability to walk</i> • <i>if you do not have arms or have long-term loss of the use of both arms</i> • <i>if you have a learning disability or</i> <p><i>if you have applied for the grant of a licence to drive a motor vehicle under Part III of the Road Traffic Act 1988, but your application was turned down because of section 92 of the Act (physical fitness) but not if it was because of persistent misuse of drugs or alcohol"</i></p>
<p>What evidence has been used in the assessment - data, engagement undertaken – please list each source that has been used</p>	<p>The Borough Council’s discretionary 2011/12 contribution was aimed at making the service more available by funding additional journeys across our area over and above the baseline service funded by the County Council.</p> <p>The County Council has provided usage figures covering the whole Somerset Accessible Transport (SAT) service. They are unable to provide figures relating specifically to the Slinky service. This is because they do not differentiate between Social Care Transport demands and the general public using the service. SAT management have also been actively promoting the service in the Taunton area. The figures provided do show an increased overall use from July onwards of around 1000 passengers per month. This is set against a background of major cuts in County Council funding this financial year. The usage figures provided are related only to the ‘Taunton and Wellington areas’. There is no detail about any increased usage or penetration into the rural areas.</p>
<p>Section two – Conclusion drawn about the impact of service/policy/function/change on different groups highlighting negative impact, unequal outcomes or missed opportunities for promoting equality</p>	
<p>The funding is non-statutory and provided at the discretion of the Borough Council. Removal of the funding does not affect anyone’s eligibility for the Slinky bus service, but reduces the extent of availability of the service to that provided by the County Council prior to April 2011. The funding has been for only the current financial year. The worst case scenario would be a reduction of 1000 passenger trips per month, although the number directly funded by this Council’s discretionary contribution would be only part of that.</p>	

I have concluded that there is/should be:	
No major change - no adverse equality impact identified	
Adjust the policy	
Continue with the policy	The removal of the discretionary funding will have an adverse impact on the two protected groups, but only so far as to reduce the level of service to that provided by the County Council prior to the additional funding provided for the 2011/12 financial year There is no unlawful discrimination
Stop and remove the policy	
Reasons and documentation to support conclusions	
Section four – Implementation – timescale for implementation	
The discretionary funding would not be renewed from April 2012	
Section Five – Sign off	
Responsible officer John Lewis	Management Team James Barra, Community Services Manager
Date 1 February 2012	Date 1 February 2012
Section six – Publication and monitoring	
Published on	
Next review date	Date logged on Covalent

