

Present: Councillor Horsley (Chairman)
Councillors Bulgin, Croad, Henley, Lees, Lisgo, Mullins and Stone

Officers: Mr S Fletcher (Chief Executive), Mr A Hartridge (Director of Development),
Ms S Adam (Financial Services Manager), Mr D Thompson (Chief Valuer)
Mrs N Heal (Public Relations Officer) and Mr G P Dyke (Member Services
Manager).

Also Present: Councillors Mrs Allgrove, Dawson, Denington, House, Mrs Lewin-Harris and
Williams

(The meeting commenced at 6 pm.)

74. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 11 December 2002 were taken
as read and were signed.

75. Apologies

Councillor Partington

76. Public Question Time

Councillor Mrs Lewin-Harris, as a member of the public, asked the following
question:

Since the Leader and the Chairman of the Health and Leisure Panel on behalf of
Taunton Deane Council, wrote to the Leader of the County Council seeking a
discussion of the matter of Hunt's Court, please may we have an explanation as to
why the Liberal Democrat and Labour Councillors who also sit on the County
Council did not recommend at the meeting of the Scrutiny Panel on 10 January, a six
month delay in the proposed sale in order to facilitate such a discussion?

Why did no Member of the Lib/Lab Ruling Group following the request put to
Councillor Henley at full Council on 17 December to attend, actually appear on behalf
of Taunton Deane at the Meeting of the County Council Executive on 18 December?

Councillor Horsley advised Councillor Mrs Lewin-Harris to address the first part of
her question to the relevant County Councillors.

Councillor Henley repeated the explanation he had previously given at Council
meeting on 17 December 2002. No appropriate Executive Councillor had been able
to attend because of work and other commitments. He assured Councillor
Mrs Lewin-Harris that the County Council had been left in no doubt about this
Council's position and views relating to the sale of Hunts Court.

77. Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED that the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting for the item numbered 4 on the Agenda, because of the likelihood that exempt information would otherwise be disclosed relating to clauses 7 and 9 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

78. Proposed Sale of Industrial Units at the Old Paper Mill Creech St Michael

Submitted report regarding the proposed sale of existing industrial units at the Old Paper Mill, Creech St Michael. The report also considered the possible future development of new, small industrial units for future letting by the Council.

This matter had arisen following consideration in the Asset Management Plan of Performance Indicators relating to these properties. The report suggested why these should possibly be sold at this time when the property market was buoyant. The capital receipt could help fund new developments within the Borough. The report also considered the future provision by the Council of small industrial units.

The Old Paper Mills at Creech St Michael was performing a valuable function in economic development terms but now required a significant injection of investment to maintain it to an acceptable standard. The Five Arch Bridge which adjoined this parcel of land was also owned by the Council. The Bridge was of no benefit to the Council and therefore it was felt that it should be included in the sale.

The Private Sector had not always been keen to provide small industrial units of this type and as a result both Councils and Regional Development Agencies had developed and provided this type of premises as an economic development initiative. It was recognised that further demand for small industrial units continued to exist within the area.

Consideration was given to a number of options regarding the future of the Old Paper Mill. It was clear that this was a poorly utilised capital asset and that the best option would be to offer it for sale.

It was noted that the Asset Management Plan Action Plan required the Council to consider whether the proceeds of any sale might be ring-fenced for economic development purposes. A brief financial appraisal was submitted.

With the Council's current demands for capital monies, any receipts from sale would have to be returned to the Capital Pot. However the situation regarding the impact of any external funding to meet a capital shortfall would be clearer later in the year. At that time it might be that sympathetic consideration could be given to a Project Approval Report for a suitable employment scheme.

RESOLVED that:-

- (1) the existing industrial units at the Creech Paper Mills be offered for sale at a national public auction, subject to a reserve price being agreed by the Chief Valuer and approved by the appropriate Executive Councillor;

- (2) the tenants of the industrial units at the Creech Paper Mills be advised of the position and given an assurance that any sale would only take place subject to their existing leases;
- (3) the receipt of any sale be returned to the Capital Pot and the use of that amount for employment purposes be considered later in 2003;
- (4) a possible scheme as set out in the report be investigated further to determine feasibility/funding arrangements together with partnership sources to be available later in 2003.
- (5) the proposed sale include the Five Arch Bridge which adjoined the site.

(The meeting ended at 6.55 pm.)