

Present: Councillor Williams (Chairman)
Councillors Bishop, Mrs Bradley, Mrs Bryant, Cavill, Garner, Hall and
Mrs Lewin-Harris

Officers: Mrs P James (Chief Executive)
Mr S Rutledge (Chief Architect)
Miss M Rumsey (Review Support Officer)

(The meeting commenced at 6.15pm)

58. Apologies

Councillor Edwards

59. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of the Executive held on 22 September 2004 and 28 September 2004 were taken as read and were signed.

60. Public Question Time

Councillor Mrs Bradley as a member of the public raised a query about a housing allocation in Kingston St Mary.

A written answer would be provided for her.

61. Disability Discrimination Act 1995 - Strategy

Considered report previously circulated, which outlined the strategy the Council would adopt to achieve compliance with The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995.

The DDA had been introduced to prevent discrimination against disabled people. It was based on the principle that disabled people should not be treated less favourably, simply because of their disability, by those providing goods, facilities or services to the public or by those selling, letting or managing property.

The report gave details of the additions that had been made to the Act since its introduction in November 1995.

The Council had been pro-active on disability issues not necessarily covered by the Act. This included the Equality Policy and the Equality Improvement Plan 2003-2006. Details of the relevant sections of the Plan relating to disability issues were submitted together with a progress report.

The Community Leadership Review Panel had considered the DDA Strategy in September 2004 and recommended that the Executive support the strategy and that it be adopted by Council on 14 December 2004.

New refurbishment work undertaken to Council property had complied with the relevant Building Regulations and the opportunity had been taken to include elements of work to ensure compliance with the Act.

The report gave details of how the Council intended to implement the DDA Strategy together with details of the following:-

- Properties that the Council owned or had a responsibility to ensure compliance with the DDA and Council's Equality Improvement Plan. These were listed in priority order and work would be arranged to follow this;
- Preliminary costs for the Council's major buildings only;
- Quick fix items; and
- The Housing Revenue Account properties that the Council were responsible for in ensuring compliance with the DDA.

An existing officer had been given the responsibility for disability audits and he was in the process of producing "Access Audits" and "Action Plans" for the Council's properties. The action plans would form the brief as to what actions would be undertaken.

Submitted details of the criteria that would be used in assessing the priority order/work to be undertaken.

A considerable amount of work needed to be done to ensure compliance with the Act and the Council's Equality Policy/Equality Improvement Plan. Work was likely to cost more money that was currently available. If this was the case, additional finance would be requested in future years.

RESOLVED that the Executive supported the Disability and Discrimination Act Strategy for Taunton Deane and recommended that it be formally adopted by Council.

62. Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the item numbered 5 on the agenda 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.

63. Request for Early Retirement

Considered report previously circulated, which sought approval for the early retirement of an employee.

The report gave details of how the early retirement had been sought under the "85 year rule" which was applied at the Council's discretion. It allowed employees to retire early if their pensionable service and age together reached 85 or more.

The implementation phase of the project upon which the officer was employed was now largely complete and it was therefore no longer necessary to maintain this post.

The report gave details of the financial cost and savings to the Council.

RESOLVED that:-

- 1) the request by the officer to retire early under the “85 year rule” be agreed; and
- 2) the use of General Fund Reserves to fund the one-off costs associated with this early retirement be approved.

(The meeting ended at 6.30pm)