

Draft minutes subject to approval at the next meeting of the Executive

Executive – 20 June 2007

Present: Councillor Henley (Chairman).
Councillors Coles, Horsley, R Lees, Prior-Sankey and Wedderkopp.

Officers: Mrs P James (Chief Executive), Ms S Adam (Strategic Director), Ms J Wishlade (Strategic Director), Mr K Toller (Strategic Director), Mr J J Thornberry (Strategic Director), Mrs E Collacott (Principal Accountant), Mr S Murphy (Principal Accountant), Mr S Haskell (Housing Accountant), Ms M Hale (Policy and Performance Officer) and Mr G P Dyke (Democratic Services Manager).

Also Present: Councillors Bishop, Edwards, Hall, Leighton, Stuart-Thorn, Waymouth and Williams.

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

60. Apologies

Councillors Brooks, Mullins and Mrs F Smith.

61. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 29 March and 4 April 2007, copies of which had been circulated, were taken as read and were signed.

62. Public Question Time

Councillor Edwards, as a member of the public, asked the following questions.

- (i) With reference to the proposed provision of affordable housing in the Priors area of Wellington would the appropriate Councillor please confirm that this development was proceeding as planned. Councillor Edwards expressed concern that damage was being caused to the Council's relationship between Raglan Housing Association and also that with the Housing Corporation. The need for affordable housing in this area was proven. Could confirmation also be given as to the next sites that would be brought forward for affordable housing.

Councillor Henley replied that he welcomed outside investment and that the current administration would do nothing to adversely affect relationships with all those involved. Indeed he was surprised to find that the sites previously identified had not been brought forward sooner. As a Ward Councillor he had expressed concern at the sites that had been chosen as there had been little public support for them. However he appreciated that proposals were sufficiently advanced and

that these schemes may still proceed. No schemes had been stopped. One site was being reviewed to see if it was possible to move it to another area. It was anticipated that these investigations would be concluded in the very near future.

- (ii) Councillor Edwards expressed concern that it was considered acceptable for Members of the Executive to sit on the Planning Committee. There was a public perception that any such Members might inadvertently come under political pressure when considering planning applications. In addition he was worried that Executive Councillors would be unable to find sufficient time to devote themselves fully to the work of the Executive and the Planning Committee. He hoped this matter would come forward for further discussion by the Strategic Planning Transportation and Economic Development Review Panel and if not as a motion to Full Council.

Councillor Henley expressed surprise at this view as he believed Planning Committee Members were all free thinking and did not use their position elsewhere to influence decisions. He was fully aware of the responsibilities both of Executive Councillors and Members of the Regulatory Committees and there was no constitutional issue to stop Members serving on both. He felt Councillor Edwards would be fully aware of the time pressures on all Councillors particularly as Councillor Edwards himself when an Executive Councillor had never managed to attend meetings of the relevant Review Panel. Councillor Henley was quite happy to leave this matter to the judgement of individuals.

Councillor Williams as a member of the public asked the following questions.

- (i) The ARK Consultancy report identified that it would be necessary for the Council to provide in the region of 564 affordable houses per annum. In addition following the recent affordable housing day 500 people had registered their interest in the provision of affordable housing. This was more than tangible evidence that dwellings were needed. Councillor Williams welcomed an update from the appropriate portfolio holder.
- (ii) With reference to the proposed skate park in Hamilton Road, Taunton could reassurance be given that this much needed facility would proceed as planned.

Councillor Henley replied that he and the current administration were committed to delivering affordable housing. It was hoped that the present rate of affordable housing provision would be more than surpassed.

Councillor Prior-Sankey stated that she was aware of the need for affordable housing and that the ability of the previous administration to deliver such housing had been lamentable. She agreed that this was an area that needed progressing. Negotiations were currently continuing which were confidential at this stage. The delivery of

affordable housing would be transparent during the decision making process and at the appropriate time meaningful consultation with Members and the relevant communities would be undertaken. Information would be supplied as and when it was appropriate.

With regard to the skate park at Hamilton Road Councillor Lees replied that he had discussed this with the relevant officers and he had asked them to look at Hamilton Park and the provision of facilities there in a holistic way.

Councillor Leighton asked which affordable housing sites the current administration were investigating. Councillor Henley reconfirmed the negotiations were ongoing and sites were being reviewed. Councillor Prior-Sankey also confirmed that there would be full and meaningful consultation at the appropriate time.

63. Declarations of Interests

Councillors Henley and Prior-Sankey both declared personal interests as Members of Somerset County Council.

64. Treasury Management Outturn 2006/07 and 2007/08 Update

Submitted report previously circulated which showed that the Council's debt position remained relatively benign in respect of costs and repayment profile. Interest rates were currently static but it was expected that they would move upwards in the future.

Debt costs and investment income showed positive variances for 2006/07. The Council's borrowing strategy remained unchanged as a review had shown no revenue benefit of further restructure. However with Taunton Project and ISiS Service Transformation on the horizon, this would be kept very closely under review.

RESOLVED that the Treasury Management Outturn for 2006/07 be noted together with the position to date for 2007/08.

65. Performance Monitoring – Outturn report on 2006/09 Corporate Strategy 2006/07 Financial Outturn and 2006/07 Performance Indicators

It was agreed that the monitoring of budgets, the Corporate Strategy Objectives and Performance Indicators was an important part of the Council's overall performance management framework. Submitted report previously circulated which outlined the final data for 2006/07.

In respect of budget monitoring the General Fund Revenue Outturn showed an overspend of £242k or 1.9% when compared with the current budget.

The General Fund Capital Programme expenditure for the year amounted to £6,064k the total budget for the year was £6.245k. The majority of this underspend would be slipped into the 2007/08 year.

The Housing Revenue Account outturn showed a working balance carried forward into 2007/08 of £2,659k which was £338k more than predicted in the most recent budget monitoring report. Members noted however that this underspend was caused primarily due to the timing of transactions rather than being a true underspend.

HRA Capital expenditure amounted to £4,618k against the current budget of £4,394k. This would reduce the programme in 2007/08.

During the year the Deane DLO broke even overall. The balance on the DLO reserve as at 31 March 2007 would be £447,936. A summary of performance for both 2005/06 and 2006/07 was submitted.

With regard to the Corporate Strategy 2006/09 the objectives of the Council together with the key actions to attain them had been listed within the Corporate Strategy and approved by the Executive at its meeting on 8 February 2006. Progress for the year against the 17 objectives was good and details were submitted. 76% of the Corporate Strategy Objectives were on course and 56% of performance indicators were on target.

The Council's performance had been slightly better than the previous year which showed continuous good progress as inevitably incremental improvements became more difficult over time as the scope for further improvement decreased.

It was also important to note that the performance met the improvement targets set for 61% of the Best Value Performance Indicators.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the draft outturn positions on revenue and capital for both the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account for 2006/07 be noted.
- (ii) the performance against targets for both the Corporate Strategy and Performance Plan for 2006/07 be noted.

(Councillor Horsley declared a personal but not prejudicial interest in the above item as Chairman of the Taunton Association for the Homeless).

(The meeting ended at 7.25 pm)