

Executive – 15 October 2008

Present: Councillor Henley (Chairman)
Councillors Brooks, Coles, Horsley, Prior-Sankey, Mrs Smith and
A Wedderkopp

Officers: Shirlene Adam (Strategic Director), Tonya Meers (Legal and
Democratic Services Manager), Steve Murphy (Principal Accountant),
George Stark (Maintenance and Design Manager), John Lewis
(Parking and Civil Contingencies Manager), Ralph Willoughby-Foster
(Forward Plan Manager) and Richard Bryant (Democratic Services
Manager)

Also present: Councillors Bishop, Mrs Court-Stenning, Farbahi, Morrell, O'Brien,
D Wedderkopp and Williams.

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm.)

204. Apologies

Councillors R Lees and Mullins.

205. Declarations of Interest

The Chairman (Councillor Henley) and Councillors Brooks and Prior-Sankey declared personal interests as Members of Somerset County Council. Councillor Prior-Sankey also declared a personal interest as a Member of the Local Strategic Partnership. Councillor Mrs Smith declared a personal interest as an employee of Somerset County Council. Councillor Coles declared a personal interest as a Director of Southwest One.

206. Treasury Management Update 2008/2009 and Minimum Revenue Provision

Submitted report previously circulated, on the Treasury activity of the Council in the first six months of the current financial year which focussed primarily on debt and investments.

The Council's Debt, as at 30 September 2008, stood at £23,003,000. It was anticipated that £2,003,000 would be repaid to the Public Works Loans Board in March 2009 which would leave a closing position of exactly £21,000,000.

It was noted that the Bank of England base rate was currently 4.5% with the expectation that it would rise further in the short term.

One of the effects of the "credit crunch" was the reluctance of banks to lend to one another. This had resulted in lending rates being increased to between 6.15% - 6.50%, well in excess of the base rate.

Reported that current outstanding investments amounted to £24,185,000, details of which were submitted. The average rate of interest achieved had been in the range of 4.10% - 6.38% which equated to approximately £720,000 in interest income.

Further reported that the Government had introduced amended legislation to deal with the statutory requirement for authorities to make an annual provision from revenue, for the repayment of borrowing undertaken for the purposes of financing capital expenditure. This annual provision, known as Minimum Revenue Provision (or MRP), was a largely technical calculation.

Rather than prescribe an approach, the Government had offered the following four options - two for situations where borrowing was undertaken with support from Central Government and a further two options where borrowing was undertaken without this support:-

- For supported borrowing Councils could choose between the technically demanding and cumbersome method in current use (Option 1) or a simple 4% on outstanding debt (Option 2).
- For unsupported borrowing however, the options were the Asset Life Method which was debt associated with asset purchased / created, divided by the expected life of the asset (Option 3) or use depreciation as a proxy for the provision to be made (Option 4).

It was recommended that Options 2 and 3 were selected as the most appropriate methods for Taunton Deane given that they were the simplest to understand and calculate and that there was no material impact on the Council's 'bottom line'.

Resolved that:-

- (1) The Treasury Management position for the first six months of 2008/2009 be noted; and
- (2) As far as the Minimum Revenue Provision was concerned, Full Council be recommended to adopt Options 2 and 3 (detailed above).

207. Asset Management Plan Review : September 2008

Reference Minute No. 132/2008, considered report previously circulated, concerning the Asset Management Plan (AMP) which was a key corporate planning document that was refreshed on an annual basis.

A thorough review of the format and content of the AMP had now been completed, details of which were submitted.

Noted that in pursuit of its priority outcomes, the Council was continuing an exercise where it was reviewing all the property that it owned. It had to decide whether it was still relevant to own. Policy also needed to be reviewed in

order to achieve consistency of objectives over the long term and strategic decisions would particularly be required in order to drive asset development.

Future AMP's would continue to reflect best practice. The Council recognised the corporate and strategic importance of good management of its land and property estate, whilst ensuring the property portfolio was suitable for the delivery of the Council's responsibilities.

It was the intention to ensure sustainable capital returns and revenue income could be achieved. Regular systematic reviews of all Council assets would be undertaken, with all opportunities being reviewed via options appraisals and life cycle costs.

Resolved that the September 2008 review of the Asset Management Plan be approved.

208. **Revisions to the Residents' Parking Scheme in Taunton**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning proposed revisions to the Residents' Parking Scheme in Taunton.

The former Strategic Planning, Transportation and Economic Development Review Panel had previously considered taking action on congestion and the potential for abuse of permits, revisions to Carers' Permit provisions and assisting businesses based within Residents' Parking Zones.

These topics had again been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Board at a meeting held on 10 September 2008, together with proposed departures from existing policies regarding permit availability, allocation and cost base and the introduction of a new policy of discounting the price of Residents' Permits for vehicles liable to either Band A or B Vehicle Excise Duty due to low CO2 emissions.

The Overview and Scrutiny Board had decided to support a number of proposals, details of which were submitted, and had recommended these to the Executive for further consideration.

Resolved that:-

- (1) (a) the change in emphasis in the Residents' Parking Scheme in moving away from administrative cost recovery in recognition of the need to better manage parking congestion;
- (b) the adoption of the ban on permit allocation to additional dwellings created in existing Residential Parking Zones;
- (c) a reduction from two to one Residents' Permits for properties with a driveway or vehicle hardstanding;
- (d) the introduction of a price differential for second Residents'

Permits and setting the charge for 2009/2010 for these at £50 (the price for the first Residents' Permit to remain at £35);

- (e) the removal of the non-charged status of the first Visitor Permit if applied for with a Residents' Permit (that is, all Visitor Permits will be charged for);
- (f) the increase of £5 to £20 for Visitor Permits for 2009/2010;
- (g) the introduction of scratchcards to replace the present second Visitor Permit. These to be sold in books of 10 for £2 subject to a maximum of 100 cards per household per annum;
- (h) the principles of annual renewal, charging and time limits for Carers' Permits;
- (i) the introduction of Business Permits and scratchcards for use by businesses based within Residents' Parking Zones with operating hours and charges as outlined in the report;
- (j) the introduction of 'Work Permits' for use within Residents' Parking Zones - these to be charged for at the all-day Shopper 2 tariff;
- (k) the availability of Visitor scratchcards for purchase by Houses in Multiple Occupation landlords subject to an annual maximum of 50 cards for any one Zone in which properties were owned; and
- (l) the introduction of environmental discounts of 100% and 50% on Residents' Permit charges for cars liable to Bands A and B Vehicle Excise Duty respectively,

all be approved; and

- (2) the approved proposals be advertised as amendments to the Traffic Regulation Orders with a view to the new arrangements coming into effect from the beginning of the next financial year.

209. Draft Revised Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West incorporating the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes

Considered report previously circulated, setting out the Councils' proposed response to the Government Office for the South West to the consultation on the Draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) Proposed Changes. The deadline for the response was 24 October 2008.

Following the Examination in Public into the draft RSS in 2007, the Panel Report was published in January 2008. The Somerset Strategic Planning Conference (SSPC) subsequently wrote to the Secretary of State expressing strategic concerns about the Panel report.

Reported that in July 2008 the Secretary of State published the draft RSS Proposed Changes for consultation. Borough and County Councillors were briefed about these changes and the implications for Taunton Deane's Core Strategy. The changes had also been considered at the Local Development Framework Steering Group.

The SSPC had agreed a consultation response that repeated and elaborated the strategic concerns raised previously.

As far as Taunton Deane was concerned it was suggested that objections should be raised to the following parts of the Proposed Changes:-

- The deletion of so much of the previous content that reflected the local distinctiveness of the region in Chapters 2, 3 and 4;
- The deletion of all the sub-regional infrastructure proposals;
- The undeliverable annual average dwelling requirements proposed for Taunton and the lack of phasing to give a lower rate for the first decade of the plan period;
- In the context of the limit to the capacity of Taunton to accommodate additional growth, the inflexibility of the RSS to allow Wellington to have a greater role in accommodating growth;
- The potential harm to the self-containment of Taunton from a housing requirement that exceeded the potential for employment growth;
- The deletion of the proposals for a Second Strategic Route; and
- The inaccuracies in relation to the Taunton Housing Market Area text, policy and key diagram.

Noted that the justifications for raising the above objections were set out in the report.

During the discussion of this item, Councillor Horsley suggested that if the Second Strategic Route was definitely not going to be constructed, every effort should be made to persuade the Somerset County Council and the Government to provide the Henlade By-pass and dualling of the A358 between Junction 25 and Thornfalcon.

Councillor Prior-Sankey felt that a letter seeking support for improvements to the A358 should also be sent to the South West Regional Assembly.

Resolved that:-

- (1) the recommended response to the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to the Regional Spatial Strategy be submitted to the Government Office for the South West on behalf of the Borough Council;
- (2) Councillor Horsley's comments relating to the A358 be supported; and
- (3) A letter be sent to the South West Regional Assembly on the lines sent out above.

210. **Task and Finish Review into the Co-ordination of Services for Older People**

Submitted for information, comment and approval the recommendations of the Co-ordination of Services for Older Persons Task and Finish Group.

During the next decade, an increasing proportion of the population would be retired or elderly. Many of the services for those people were not co-ordinated and it was the Group's aim to ensure that with proper co-ordination, services could be provided to those who needed them.

At its first meeting, the Task and Finish Group had agreed that for the purpose of the review, older people would be defined as anyone over the age of 65, or 55 if economically inactive. However, the review group was conscious that this definition could change as evidence was gathered.

The Task and Finish Group also defined co-ordination as:-

- Being best able to reach the target group whoever they were; and
- Effectively creating links between the target group and the organisation providing the service.

The Task and Finish Group had also agreed that its terms of reference should be:-

- To identify the current services for older people;
- To understand the challenges that lay ahead for the providers of services for older people in Taunton Deane; and
- To investigate whether there was a problem with the co-ordination of services for older people and, if so, to recommend how those services could avoid duplication or gaps in provision.

A series of meetings of the Task and Finish Group had been held and evidence had been collected from a number of sources including Age Concern, Neighbourhood Care, the National Health Service and Somerset County Council services.

In the past few months, the Task and Finish Group had discussed the recommendations it wished to make to the Executive. These were as follows:-

Recommendation 1

This Task and Finish report should be presented to the Taunton Deane Local Strategic Partnership to demonstrate the importance of considering the needs of older people in its work.

Recommendation 2

The Council should recognise the potential of the voluntary sector to add value to the services provided by the statutory sector, and would look at

establishing better mechanisms for working with the voluntary sector and promoting and encouraging their work.

Recommendation 3

The Council should provide an officer representative to the Local Implementation Team.

Recommendation 4

The Council should ensure that Taunton Deane Neighbourhood Care continued to be appropriately and sufficiently funded to provide its service to all who needed it, particularly those who could not use the service without financial assistance.

Recommendation 5

The Council should continue to respect the rights of elderly tenants to remain in their homes, even if they were under-occupying. Incentives should be used when attempting to persuade elderly tenants to downsize or move into sheltered housing.

Recommendation 6

The Council should support a Member Champion who would promote and represent the needs of older people, particularly those who were 'hard to reach'. This person must be someone who not only understood the issues relating to older people, but could also intelligently and effectively challenge projects, initiatives and day-to-day operations of the Council.

Recommendation 7

The review group wished to re-iterate the importance of equalities impact assessments that took account of the needs of older people, and to provide training to officers and Councillors on older people's equalities issues, where appropriate.

Noted that with regard to Recommendation 4, continued funding for Neighbourhood Care would need to be considered through the forthcoming Budget Setting exercise.

Resolved that subject to the above comment, the recommendations of the Co-ordination of Services for Older People Task and Finish Group be accepted.

(The meeting ended at 7.21 p.m.)