

Executive – 14 January 2009

- Present: Councillor Henley (Chairman)
Councillors Brooks, Coles, Horsley, R. Lees, Mullins, Prior-Sankey,
Mrs Smith and A Wedderkopp
- Officers: Shirlene Adam (Strategic Director), Joy Wishlade (Strategic Director)
Tonya Meers (Legal and Democratic Services Manager), Mark
Leeman (Corporate Performance Officer), Jane Chipp (Change
Manager – Pioneer Somerset), Jill Sillifant (Acting Head of Client)
and Richard Bryant (Democratic Services Manager)
- Also present: Councillors Critchard, Morrell, Mrs Stock-Williams, Stuart-Thorne,
Mrs Wilson and Williams.
Mr S Read, Somerset Waste Partnership

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm.)

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 4 December 2008, copies of which had been circulated, were taken as read and were signed.

2. Declarations of Interest

The Chairman declared a personal interest as a Member of Somerset County Council. Councillors Brooks and Prior-Sankey declared personal interests as Members of Somerset County Council and as Members of the Somerset Waste Board. Councillor Coles declared a personal interest as a Director of Southwest One. Councillor Mullins declared a personal interest as a Member of the Somerset Waste Board. Councillor Mrs Smith declared a personal interest as an employee of Somerset County Council and a Member of the Planning Committee.

3. Somerset Waste Partnership – Plastic and Card Recycling

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the introduction of a kerb side collection service of plastic bottles and cardboard.

During 2008, the Somerset Waste Board (SWB) had instituted trial rounds with differing collection frequencies of plastic bottles and card (Sort It +).

The Overview and Scrutiny Board had discussed the interim results of the trial in September 2008 and agreed that Service Package 2 (SP2) appeared to be the best value in terms of performance versus cost although it was recognised that SP5 would produce a higher level of performance if it could be made to be affordable.

The final outcome of the trials had shown that SP5 would be significantly more expensive to implement. It was therefore recommended that SP2 should be introduced. This service package meant that food waste and current recyclables (paper, cans and glass) would be collected weekly while residual waste and card and plastic bottle recyclables would be collected fortnightly.

The current estimate of the annual revenue costs of SP2 was £292,000. However, this figure was based on 2008/2009 and prior to the annual price review with May Gurney which was currently being negotiated.

Reported that for budgetary purposes it was proposed to add a 5% contingency to this price until the final costs were known. The revenue amount requested for budgetary purposes was therefore £307,000.

Taunton Deane had already set aside its share of the savings arising from the procurement of a Somerset wide collection contract (£231,000) towards this cost. A further £150,000 had been included in the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan to cover the costs of providing this service. This meant that the Council's budget could be reduced by £74,000.

Further reported that there would also be capital costs for the purchase of extra recycling bins. The cost for Taunton Deane was £176,000. However, Somerset County Council was in receipt of Waste Infrastructure Grant and had agreed to assist District Councils in these purchases by offering 75% of the cost. The cost to Taunton Deane was therefore £44,000. This funding was available from residual waste reserves.

Noted that implementation of SP2 across the whole of the district would take up to 12 months and would commence in the 2009/2010 financial year.

Resolved that:-

- (1) The roll out of the Sort It + SP2 service commencing in 2009/2010 be agreed;
- (2) Full implementation of SP2 within 2009/2010 or a phased implementation over 2009/2010 and 2010/2011 be considered during the current Budget setting process;
- (3) The Council's draft budget for 2009/2010 be amended to reflect the current estimated cost; and
- (4) Full Council be recommended to approve an increase to the capital programme of £44,000 for the estimated shortfall in capital funding which is to be funded from uncommitted waste services reserves.

4. **Reducing Business Mileage by Private Vehicular Travel – Proposed 'Grey Fleet' Policy**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning a proposal to introduce a Grey Fleet Policy for Taunton Deane.

'Grey fleet' referred to business miles driven by employees in their own vehicles, and claimed back at a fixed rate mileage. In the 2007/2008 financial year almost 300 staff travelled 325,600 miles at a cost to the authority of £146,095.

There were a number of reasons why the Council needed to challenge the amount of grey fleet mileage:-

- Economic – We needed to be economically efficient;
- Staff Time – We needed to ensure that staff spent the minimum of time travelling necessary to deliver their services effectively;
- Climate Change – The Council was committed to reducing its carbon footprint;
- Health and Safety – We needed to reduce risk posed to staff when out on the road;
- Risk – Reduced 'corporate risk' to Taunton Deane and assisting in duty of care responsibility; and
- Travel Plan – The Taunton Deane Travel Plan promoted and supported sustainable travel.

Reported that grey fleet budgets had already been cut by 10% from 1 October 2008, and there was now a need for a policy to be introduced to guide a consistent approach across the Council to the reduction of grey fleet mileage.

Submitted for the information of Members a copy of the proposed policy. The basics of the policy were that all managers and staff should adopt a consistent and logical approach to decisions regarding business travel. The following hierarchy of decisions were proposed:-

(1) Was there a need to travel?

Could the need for the journey be removed by the use of a telephone conversation, teleconferencing or e-mail / letter?

(2) If travel was necessary, then the following should be considered in this suggested order of priority:-

- Walking / cycling;
- Bus or rail;
- Essential car users / lease car;
- Pool Car (feasibility currently being explored);
- Hire Car;
- Grey fleet.

(3) If grey fleet travel was authorised, did the driver have a full set of valid

documentation?

- Valid driving licence;
- Full business insurance (including passengers);
- Up to date MOT and vehicle in a 'roadworthy' condition; and
- Tax.

Managers would be required to check relevant documentation on an annual basis to reduce corporate risk. They would also be encouraged to embed the approach to grey fleet travel within their service planning. This would maximise benefits and reduce any potential for confusion among staff. The policy had been designed to be flexible to ensure business efficiency.

A communications plan would shortly be developed so that all staff were made aware of the requirements of this policy.

Reported that there was one area of this policy that would be subject to a feasibility assessment and further report to Members. At present it was unclear as to whether it would be viable to provide pool cars. Potentially there would be significant benefits.

Travel surveys pointed to the fact that staff would like to have pool cars, so that they were not reliant on having to drive to work. Somerset County Council had a pool car scheme and it was therefore intended to obtain a better understanding of the benefits / costs involved and how such a scheme worked in practice from the County Council.

Resolved that the draft Grey Fleet Policy be adopted.

5. **Pioneer Somerset - Update**

Submitted report previously circulated, concerning the Pioneer Somerset Programme.

Pioneer Somerset was a programme of work being undertaken by partner authorities to deliver the following outcomes:

- Efficiency – to achieve annual revenue savings arising from enhanced two-tier working of £20m, by 2012/2013;
- Customer Satisfaction – for every principal local authority in Somerset to achieve levels of overall resident satisfaction in the National top quartile, by 2013; and
- Reputation and Partnership Working – to achieve a marked improvement in the perception, reputation and recognition of Somerset and each of its Local Authorities, including positive direction of travel and use of resources ratings in the new Comprehensive Area Assessment of level 3 or above, by 2013.

The principal Local Authority partners were Somerset County Council and the five District Councils.

The original Project Initiation Document (PID) estimated an end to Phase 1 during November 2008. The aim of Phase 1 which was agreed by each authority was:-

- To deliver a comprehensive action plan for consideration by the Pioneer Somerset Board and each individual Council;
- The action plan would clearly establish the measures that would be needed to be undertaken to deliver the agreed vision, supporting principles and outcomes set out in Section 2 of the PID; and
- A series of further PIDs would be appended to the action plan, with further bids for LIFT South West funding as appropriate.

There were nine current workstreams and the report explored the interconnectivity between each and proposed how they could perhaps be re-phased to ensure effective delivery.

The Pioneer Somerset Programme had stimulated a huge amount of joint debate and activity. This had enabled the six Councils to build on the established track record of joint working.

The Leaders Group had recognised that the Pioneer Somerset Programme now needed to ensure that the benefits were recognised, tracked and spread across the six Councils. A more structured approach was required to deliver this and details of revised governance and management arrangements were detailed. It was also felt that the ultimate ambition contained in the original PID should be added to.

Current spend against the original spend profile was currently below that predicted due to the Programme Manager vacancy and the unused sum of money that had been set aside for the 'independent expert facilitation for Members and senior officers events'.

A list of achievements to date were submitted and these included the following:-

- The 'sign off' of the Programme by all partner Councils. Despite the disruption of the previous twelve months all Council's had responded positively to the aspirations of Pioneer Somerset and agreed the PID, not only in terms of its aspirations but also in committing significant resources from within each organisation. This was borne out by the organisational structure that had been put in place at a senior management level to support the programme;

- Regular Chief Executive, Leader, Deputy Leader and Director Meetings. Since the approval of the PID both senior managers and Councillors had met regularly to move forward and develop the detail of the PID;
- The innovative Somerset Summit saw the coming together of all Councillors, County and District, across the County for a joint conference on Pioneer Somerset. From this, greater joint working between portfolios of the partner authorities had been developed with a range of meetings and work streams developing from this;
- Development of a draft joint Communication Strategy for the Pioneer programme including the on-going development of a micro-site dedicated to internal communication of relevant information in relation to the programme. This site would give access to consistent information to all employees and Councillors in the partner authorities;
- Sector led support provided by Somerset County Council and Sedgemoor District Council to West Somerset District Council in respect of Section 151 responsibilities and accountabilities;
- An innovative partnership between Somerset County Council and Mendip District Council for the provision of support around key corporate support services, including performance management, risk management, value for money and strategic asset management;
- A partnership between Mendip District Council and West Somerset District Council for the provision of legal services;
- Enhanced joined up local community engagement with a number of Districts working together with the County on local area boards, clusters and Parish groupings;
- South Somerset District Council and Somerset County Council had agreed to establish Joint Area Committees at a sub-district level undertaking a range of Council and executive decision-making responsibilities of both authorities;
- A pilot series of local joint 'Council Question Time' events involving leading Members of each Council;
- Somerset Local Authorities were working to develop detailed proposals for a potential Somerset Civil Parking Enforcement Partnership (CPE). This would involve the creation of a new body to create a common notice processing and enforcement service;
- Exploration of East and West Building Control Partnerships : As far as the East of Somerset was concerned the principle of the partnership had been agreed by both South Somerset and Mendip District Councils'

Management Boards and Portfolio Holders. Similar exploratory work was taking place with the District Councils in the West of Somerset;

- Creation of more cost effective swimming provision - Building Schools for the Future – Sedgemoor District Council and the County Council were working closely together to achieve the benefits of the Building Schools for the Future projects. As part of this, both parties were exploring the most cost effective way in which to provide joint wet and dry leisure provision including the construction of a new pool for the District;
- Shared accommodation solutions: Somerset County Council and Sedgemoor District Council were currently exploring options to share office accommodation by releasing surplus assets and working more closely together;
- Joint working on clean surrounds: Taunton Deane Borough Council and Sedgemoor District Council had been working together on a pilot project to deliver a joint street cleaning and horticultural service between the two Councils;
- A joint approach across the six Councils to commission the Place Survey and its analysis; and
- The establishment of Choice Based Lettings in the District Councils' Housing Services. This involved not only establishing a shared IT system but also consistent lettings policies across the County.

These achievements provided an indication of the progress made, but these should be seen in the context of a number of delivery partnerships that were already in place before Pioneer Somerset such as Southwest One, the Somerset Waste Partnership and the South West Audit Partnership

Effective programme management was essential and following the early departure of the Programme Manager, alternative methods of programme management had been identified. SOLACE Enterprises had been commissioned to fulfil the role on a two day a week basis until March 2009. After this date, it was intended to appoint a Chief Executive or Director from one of the six Councils on secondment to the role.

Effective governance was essential and this was detailed in the proposed Governance Protocol. The protocol provided a framework within which decisions could be taken and progress made.

Each PID provided an indication of the resources required to deliver the outputs and these were summarised. These requirements supported the need to prioritise some elements of the workstreams in order to ensure progress was made effectively, with the greatest impact, but without compromising service delivery.

There were currently nine workstreams in total. The Directors Group had undertaken a review and the workstreams that scored highest were:-

- Shared Services;
- Customer Access; and
- Managerial Leadership.

It was felt that the delivery of services should be set within the context of an enhanced community leadership role and therefore the programme could be reshaped across the following three key themes or strands:-

- (1) Community Leadership;
- (2) Shared Services;
- (3) Customer Access.

Noted that other workstreams would be re-phased to ensure that the cross cutting issues were fully integrated within the revised programme.

The Pioneer Somerset Programme had committed to delivering efficiency savings in the region of £20m arising from joint working across the partners by 2012/2013.

The recently agreed Local Area Agreement (LAA) required all authorities to deliver 3% savings (NI 179) and an additional 0.5% stretch target (NI 179a). The Pioneer Somerset Programme savings fell within the overall LAA savings requirement, although partner authorities could have additional savings from joint working that would not qualify under the rules of the LAA.

In order to achieve these savings, targets needed to be identified for each component work stream. It was recommended that emerging PIDs should include target savings from the outset. In addition, PIDs should identify its individual contribution to the other Pioneer Somerset objectives in the areas of reputation and customer satisfaction.

The resource requirements required were estimated by each of the partners and details were submitted.

The Risk Register was submitted and it was explained that some of the risks associated with the programme had increased.

Resolved that the following recommendations be agreed:-

Recommendation 1 – Vision : to strengthen the vision of Pioneer Somerset through the inclusion of reference to the ultimate ambition of the programme to ‘deliver better services for all residents of Somerset’.

Recommendation 2 – Workstreams :

- to note the progress of the workstreams, as identified;

- to note the further work necessary to progress the next steps;
- to agree that the next phase of the programme should focus on the delivery of the agreed outcomes and be taken forward in accordance with Recommendation 6 for the re-phasing of the workstreams.

Recommendation 3 – Achievements : to note the update and instruct the Pioneer Somerset Directors Group to ensure that all of the achievements to date of Pioneer Somerset against the objectives were captured and publicised.

Recommendation 4 – Programme Management : to note the way forward agreed in respect of future programme management arrangements.

Recommendation 5 – Programme Governance : to approve the Governance Protocol.

Recommendation 6 – Programme Phasing :

- to re-phase the workstreams to concentrate on Community Leadership, Shared Services and Customer Access in order to allow resources to be concentrated on those areas most pivotal in delivering the agreed outcomes of the programme; and
- to agree that the Pioneer Somerset Directors Group developed an Action Plan and timetable on this basis for recommendation to the Pioneer Somerset Board.

Recommendation 7 – Enhanced Strategic Partnership workstream : to accept the need for work on enhancing strategic partnership working in Somerset to be 'owned' by a wider range of partners building in appropriate 'touch points' with Pioneer Somerset as necessary.

Recommendation 8 – Efficiency Target : to acknowledge each Council's individual requirement to deliver efficiency savings to meet NI 179 and agree the need for a joint approach under Pioneer Somerset to deliver the NI 179a stretch element through improved two-tier working. In addition, to authorise the Pioneer Somerset Directors Group to develop, regularly review and report to the Pioneer Somerset Board using a collective tracking tool to monitor the delivery of the efficiency savings.

Recommendation 9 – Development of Workstream PIDs : to agree that future PIDs coming forward under the umbrella of the programme should clearly identify their individual contributions to the overall Pioneer Somerset objectives of savings, reputation and customer satisfaction.

Recommendation 10 – Risk Management : to authorise the interim Programme Manager in conjunction with the Pioneer Somerset Directors Group to develop appropriate risk management approaches to ensure delivery of the programme objectives.

6. **Funding of Unauthorised Planning Issue – North Curry**

Considered report concerning the provision of additional funding to complete the action against the unauthorised occupation of land in North Curry.

In October 2004 a field at Oxen Lane, North Curry was occupied by 16 gypsy families who established an unauthorised residential site. A planning application was simultaneously submitted for the unauthorised use.

As the families involved owned the land concerned, the relatively quick procedure of taking possession proceedings was not available to the Council which had instead to embark on a lengthy enforcement action. The Council had also had to respond to a number of planning applications which had been submitted.

To date this had involved the Council in two public inquiries, both of which had been won, and lengthy injunction proceedings. A further public inquiry had only just been held.

Reported that four of the families who originally occupied the land, continued to pursue permission to remain on the site, by way of appeal against refusal of planning permission or by challenge to the outcome of the public inquiry.

The Council had earmarked £100,000 in the 2005/2006 budget to fund the costs of dealing with this unauthorised planning activity but this sum had now been fully committed.

The vast majority of the funds (approx £80,000) has been spent on Counsel's fees, with the remainder being spent on specialist planning witnesses, advisors on injunction proceedings and miscellaneous costs such as court fees and the hire of North Curry Village Hall.

In order to complete the action against the unauthorised incursion, the Council would incur further costs in the following areas:-

- The public inquiry which had just taken place;
- There were also the final injunction proceedings to be disposed of; and
- The Council might incur expenditure in clearing the site, if such costs could not be recovered.

Resolved that:-

- (1) the funding required to complete the action against the unauthorised incursion on land at Oxen Lane, North Curry be approved; and
- (2) Full Council be recommended to support a supplementary estimate from General Fund reserves of £50,000.

(The meeting ended at 7.20 p.m.)

