

Executive – 13 April 2010

Present: Councillor Henley (Chairman)
Councillors Coles, R. Lees, Paul, Prior-Sankey, Slattery, Mrs Smith and
A Wedderkopp

Officers: Joy Wishlade (Strategic Director), Tonya Meers (Legal and Democratic
Services Manager), Maggie Hammond (Strategic Finance and Section 151
Officer), Adrian Priest (Asset Holdings Manager) and Richard Bryant
(Democratic Services Manager).

Also present: Councillors Brooks, Critchard, Farbahi, Gaines, Govier, Ms Herbert, Morrell,
P Smith, Mrs Stock-Williams, Stuart-Thorn and Mrs Whitmarsh.

(The meeting commenced at 5.15 pm.)

42. Declarations of Interest

Councillors Henley, Paul and Prior-Sankey declared personal interests as Members of Somerset County Council. 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. Councillor Slattery declared personal interests both as a Member of the Somerset Waste Board and as an employee of Sedgemoor District Council.

42. Executive Forward Plan

Submitted for information the Forward Plan of the Executive over the next few months.

Resolved that the Forward Plan be noted.

43. Exclusion of the Press and Public

Resolved that the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting for the following item because of the likelihood that exempt information would otherwise be disclosed relating to Clause 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12(A) to the Local Government Act 1972 and the public interest in withholding the information outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information to the public.

44. Potential Purchase of Capital Asset, Taunton

Reference Minute No 8/2010, submitted report previously circulated, which detailed a proposal to purchase a capital asset in Taunton.

There were a number of reasons as to why it is felt the Council should purchase the site including:-

- Jobs would be retained in Taunton Deane;

- The current business already on the site could be offered the opportunity to remain and develop on the site;
- There would be employment space available to other businesses; and
- The purchase would provide an investment for the Council which, in the medium term, would produce a good return.

A valuation of the site had been carried out in March 2009 and an update was reported at the meeting.

Details of the estimated capital costs involved, proposed funding streams and the revenue implications were submitted for the information of Councillors. An analysis of the risks of making the purchase was also submitted.

Taunton was currently short of employment land and the purchase of the site would enable the Council to fulfil a number of its key priorities – in particular safeguarding the economy and, to a lesser degree, the provision of some affordable housing.

During the discussion of this item, Members felt that the Council should be in receipt of letters of intent from potential lessees before proceeding to the signing of a contract and that no development work should be carried out on the site by the Council, unless a suitable partner was found.

Resolved that:-

- (1) The purchase of the site be agreed with the aim of completing by the summer of 2010 subject to negotiation and letters of intent from the potential lessees;
- (2) During the negotiating period, the Leader and Shadow Leader be given the authority to sign off the final deal;
- (3) Full Council be recommended to approve an appropriate supplementary estimate for the 2010/2011 Capital Programme for this capital project, including approval to borrow for costs that could not be met from other public funding available, up to the maximum reported;
- (4) Full Council be also recommended to approve supplementary estimates for the 2010/2011 revenue implications, subject to final confirmation of the budget implications and capital financing adopted;
- (5) If the purchase was agreed, a small group of officers and Members be set up immediately to develop a strategic plan for the use of the site;
- (6) If the site was purchased, commercial agents be engaged to market the site to potential occupiers;
- (7) The income from the site be used in the following priority order:-
 - To service any debt arising from the purchase;
 - To replace the current annual income to the Council;
 - To support the General Fund;

- (8) Other assets in the Council's ownership be considered for sale with the resulting capital receipts to be set aside to pay off the debt incurred; and
- (9) Development work should not be carried on the site by the Council, but through a suitable development partner.

(The meeting ended at 5.52 pm.)