

Executive – 14 July 2010

Present: Councillor Williams (Chairman)
Councillors Cavill, Mrs Court-Stenning, Hall, Hayward, Mrs Herbert and Mrs Lewin-Harris

Officers: Penny James (Chief Executive), Joy Wishlade (Strategic Director), Tonya Meers (Legal and Democratic Services Manager), Maggie Hammond (Strategic Finance and Section 151 Officer), Claire Bramley (Business Development Manager), Simon Lewis (Strategy and Corporate Manager), Lisa Redston (Strategy Officer), Ann Rhodes (Strategy Officer), Paul Rayson (Cemeteries and Crematorium Manager/Registrar) and Richard Bryant (Democratic Services Manager).

Also present: Councillors Morrell, Slattery and A Wedderkopp.

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm.)

66. Apology

Councillor Edwards.

67. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of the Executive held on 16 June 2010 and 24 June 2010, copies of which had been circulated, were taken as read and were signed.

68. Declaration of Interest

Councillor Mrs Court-Stenning declared a personal interest as an employee of Somerset County Council.

69. Southwest One Customer Contact : Development of Customer Access to include 24 hour Automated Telephony Payments

Considered report previous circulated, concerning the proposed implementation of a 24 hour, 365 days automated telephone payments solution.

The Customer Access Strategy adopted by Taunton Deane in August 2005 stated that customers wanted both 'contact when it was convenient to them' and 'easy methods of contact to suit them'. Since moving into Southwest One, a new citizen portal plus an integrated CRM system had been implemented which provided customers with enhanced access and the ability to obtain information electronically whenever required.

Customer Contact had recently embarked on a programme of work to develop and improve customer access and this included the possibility of taking payments via the telephone outside the traditional working hours of 8am and 6pm, Monday to Friday.

In addition, consideration was being given to taking payments in line with the new Payment Card Industry debit card standards, as encrypting phone call recordings

would no longer be an acceptable method of protecting customer's payment card details.

Currently, Customer Service Advisors took payments for a variety of services, including:-

- Council Tax;
- Housing Rent;
- Penalty Charge Notices for parking; and
- Waste.

The options available for introducing automated telephony services to the Contact Centre were both based on forms of Interactive Voice Recognition – one a traditional 'press one' followed by a series of push button commands or a fully voice recognised system with push buttons for entering card details only.

If the system proved to be cost effective, implementation would start on the Council Tax and Payments lines, moving to 356356 if the system proved successful. The set up costs would be borne by Southwest One. During working hours, customers would be able to choose to speak to a Customer Services Advisor if there was a problem.

Noted that the Customer Services Advisors would be retrained to move the payment element of any call to the automated service once any other queries had been resolved.

Swale Borough Council had recently implemented a similar service and details were submitted for the information of Members.

Resolved that the proposed development of the Southwest One Customer Contact, to include 24 hour automated telephony payments, be supported.

70. **Corporate Equality Scheme 2010-2013**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the Corporate Equality Scheme 2010-2013 (CES) which would provide direction for the Council as to how to meet its statutory public duties to promote equality and to eliminate all forms of direct or indirect discrimination.

Legislation required public bodies to produce a Race Equality Scheme, a Disability Equality Scheme and a Gender Equality Scheme. The CES brought these requirements into one document.

The purpose of the CES was to:-

- Demonstrate the need to be proactive rather than reactive in meeting the needs of service users and employees;
- Pull together the Council's commitments to equality;

- Provide direction for the Council and Service Managers and employees through clear equality objectives;
- Provide the basis for meaningful actions (to be embedded within individual Service Plans) to ensure delivery of Council services in an equitable way; and
- Set out how the Council would meet its statutory public duties.

Reported that the Somerset Chief Executive's Group had agreed that all Local Authorities in Somerset should reach the 'Achieving' level of the Equality Framework for Local Government by 2011. Meeting the CES objectives would ensure that the Council achieved this target.

Taunton Deane now took the approach that Equalities and Diversity should be mainstreamed within all service areas and should not be the sole responsibility of one officer. The CES reflected this approach and the following six objectives which were included in the document aimed to support Equalities throughout the Council's services, policies and decision making processes:-

- Objective 1 – Know our communities and improve engagement;
- Objective 2 – Provide responsive services;
- Objective 3 – Work with partners to ensure equal access and fair life chances;
- Objective 4 – Improve challenge and scrutiny;
- Objective 5 – Promote equality of opportunity as an employer; and
- Objective 6 – Promote inclusion in the community and participation.

These objectives would be implemented through Equality Action Plans. Individual Services would produce Equality Action Plans and include these in their Service Plans. The actions within these plans would be identified from the following:-

- Objectives within the Corporate Equality Scheme;
- Results of equality impact assessments; and
- Listening to the views expressed by service users, non service users, staff and key stakeholders.

The resource implications of Equality Action Plans would need to be considered by service areas as part of their budget setting process.

Corporate Aims Delivery Plans would also include Equality Risks and take direction from the CES.

Monitoring of all relevant plans would be undertaken on a regular basis.

Public consultation on the CES had been carried out through the Limehouse website, and through direct contact with partners, representative equality groups and other key stakeholders.

The CES had been favourably received by the Taunton Deane Disability Discussion Group with high regard for the Council's approach and commitment to fair and accessible services and encouraging communities to participate.

Further reported that although compliance with the six objectives in the CES would result in the Council reaching the 'Achieving' level of the Equalities Framework for Local Government, it would require a Peer Assessment to be undertaken at a cost of approximately £5,000 to receive formal recognition of reaching this level.

Members expressed the view that as long as the Council would be operating at the 'Achieving' level there was no justification, especially in the current economic climate, for spending money on a Peer Assessment. In the circumstances, it was agreed that the CES should be amended to reflect this.

Resolved that:-

- (a) subject to the necessary amendments being made to the Corporate Equality Scheme 2010-2013, the document be approved for adoption; and
- (b) Expenditure for the proposed Peer Assessment against the Equality Framework for Local Government be not authorised.

71. Update on the Allotments, Green Space, Play Pitch and Sports Facilities Strategies for Taunton Deane Borough Council

Reference Minute Nos 109, 110, 111 and 112/2009, submitted report previously circulated, concerning the proposed Strategies for Allotments, Green Space, Play Pitch and Sports Facilities.

When the four documents had been considered last December, the Executive:-

- Reviewed and Adopted the Strategies including the Visions, Aims, Objectives, Policies and Action Plans;
- Accepted the Strategies as technical documents to be weighed in the decision-making process for the determination of development proposals;
- Approved wider consultation on the Strategies to make them more robust and enable them to be considered for adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document; and
- Delegated approval of any minor alterations to the Strategy resulting from the consultation and the outcomes for the Action Plan as they were developed to the Executive Councillor for Sport, Parks and Leisure.

The Strategies were intended to guide plan-making and be used as part of the Local Development Framework (LDF) evidence base. It was possible that they might ultimately become a Supplementary Planning Document which would develop the current approach to calculating Leisure facilities requirements arising from new developments.

To become part of the LDF it had been necessary to consult more widely on the documents to make them more robust to challenge. The consultation process had run from 20 January 2010 for eight weeks. It included statutory consultees such as the Environment Agency and the Strategic Health Authority, other national and regional stakeholders, local stakeholders and interested parties, including sports pitch users and the voluntary sector.

As a result of the comments received from the consultation:-

- There were no amendments to the substance of the Allotment Strategy.
- Similarly, there were no amendments to the substance of the Green Space Strategy.
- An amendment to the calculation of rugby and hockey pitch capacity in the Playing Pitch Strategy was required. This was a technical alteration following advice from Sport England. The result was that the strategy now showed a slight deficit in the number of junior rugby pitches at peak times and a slight reduction in the surplus of available hockey surfaces. All other pitches remained in their original deficit or surplus category. No changes to key findings, considerations, standards, policies and actions were needed.
- An amendment to Sports Facilities Strategy future requirements list was needed to reflect the technical alteration in calculation of rugby and hockey pitch capacity in the Playing Pitch Strategy. However, the standards, policies and actions remained unchanged.

Reported that it was clear from national legislation that local authorities were required to provide a robust and credible evidence base of need and set local provision standards to address sports, recreation and open space provision. This would enable the Council to plan and make provision for future sports facilities through developer contributions, partnership working and national funding streams.

Adoption of the Strategies as technical documents was a key decision that would:-

- Inform the preparation of policy;
- Inform the decision making process for the determination of development proposals;
- Provide an adequate supply of facilities for current and future populations;
- Improve the overall quality of facilities;
- Improve participation and satisfaction levels; and
- Achieve an accessible distribution of facilities.

During the discussion of this item, it was reported that the Allotments Strategy had already received national recognition as an example of best practice. This particular strategy had been produced with the assistance of Mr Alan Cavill, the Chairman of the Taunton Allotments Association, and it was agreed that a letter of appreciation should be sent to him.

Resolved that:-

- (1) The adoption of the Allotments, Green Space, Play Pitch and Sports Facilities Strategies be reaffirmed; and
- (2) Approval of minor amendments to the Strategies resulting from changes in the evidence base and the outcomes of the Action Plans as they developed, be delegated to the Portfolio Holder for Sports, Parks and Leisure.

72. Mercury Filtration and New Cremators at Taunton Deane Crematorium

Reference Minute No 72/2009, considered report previously circulated, concerning the tenders that had recently been received for three new cremators and Mercury abatement equipment for Taunton Deane Crematorium.

The Crematorium was a Grade II Listed Building and a busy service. The Council's tender had specified that the new equipment should be fitted within the existing building and that the Crematorium should remain operational throughout the installation period.

A total of four tenders for the work had been received and reviewed, with one tender clearly superior to the other three.

Tender 1 was priced much higher than the other three both in terms of equipment and service maintenance costs. This tender also required a major extension to the Crematorium building which would increase the overall project costs by approximately £100,000.

The designs submitted with Tender 2 sought to locate all of the abatement plant onto the Crematorium's flat roof. Although this was the lowest priced bid, the use of the flat roof was not conducive to the listed building status of the Crematorium as it would be highly visible from a wide area.

Tender 3 provided the most comprehensive tender and was the only company which complied with the requirement to house the majority of the equipment within the existing building. They were currently the market leader to both the public and private sector and their equipment was already operational locally at both Bath and Exeter Crematoria.

In addition, this particular supplier had provided a timetable for installation between March and November 2011, which was ideal for the Crematorium service as it covered the quieter summer period with long daylight hours enabling more work to be completed after funeral services had finished.

The fourth tenderer had submitted an inferior bid with major omissions such as technical drawings and details of service provision.

A summary of the tenders received was shown in the table below:-

Manufacturer	Supply of three new Cremators and Mercury Abatement	Servicing over 5 years and maintenance
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Tenderer 1	£1,192,250	£376,050
Tenderer 2	£989,960	£322,000
Tenderer 3	£1,020,937	£312,883
Tenderer 4	£993,000	£250,000 excludes spares and key equipment.

Further reported that by installing the new cremators and the Mercury filtration equipment, Taunton Deane would be fully complying with the requirements of the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Government's PG5/2 legislation.

Abating 100% of cremations annually, Taunton Crematorium would join a national emissions trading scheme for crematoria and receive an estimated £30,000 in the first year of trading from those crematoria that were not abating.

Resolved that subject to the receipt of satisfactory references, the tender of Tenderer 3 (Facultative Technologies) for the supply of three new Cremators and a Triple Mercury Abatement System together with ancillaries, be accepted.

73. **Allocation of Growth Points Funding**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the allocation of Growth Points Funding.

Growth Point Funding was partnership funding between Somerset County Council and Taunton Deane Borough Council, which had funded the capital elements of the work of Project Taunton. Indicative funding had been announced last year at £2,243,000 capital and £300,798 revenue for 2010/2011. Although the revenue amount had been received, due to the current economic situation there was uncertainty as to whether the capital amount would be forthcoming.

It was proposed that the revenue funding continued to support the Delivery Team for Project Taunton. If no further funding was found, the Delivery Team would be funded until approximately December 2011.

It was assumed that further capital funding would prove difficult to find, which would mean that the Delivery Team had a finite existence. However, it was recognised that in these circumstances the Council had to plan to ensure that the basic ingredients for the growth of Taunton were put in place.

Submitted for information a spreadsheet (Appendix A) which showed expected and suggested expenditure of the remainder of the New Growth Points capital funding allocation for Taunton. A table showing the use of Growth Points funding that was previously agreed by the Executive (Minute No 87/2009 refers) was also submitted. This showed income in 2010/2011 that would now be discounted.

The allocations continued to prioritise the first phase at Firepool, the creation of key linkages within the town, the planning for a new retail scheme and some public realm works.

Given the uncertainty of Government Funding, the Project Taunton Steering Group and the Project Taunton Board had concluded that even if the Growth Points allocation for 2010/2011 was received, the new suggested programme should be followed as a matter of urgency. If the Council could not demonstrate positive use of the capital funds, Taunton Deane risked criticism for non delivery and the prospect of the Government trying to recover funds already received.

Resolved that the Growth Points capital spending plan set out in Appendix A (attached to these Minutes) and the use of the revenue funding to support the Project Taunton Delivery Team, be approved.

74. **Executive Forward Plan**

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

Resolved that the Forward Plan be noted.

(The meeting ended at 7.10 pm.)