

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

Taunton Deane Borough Council

At a meeting of the Taunton Deane Borough Council held in the Principal Committee Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton on 17 April 2007 at 6.30 pm.

Present: The Mayor (Councillor Hindley)

The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Hayward)

Councillors Mrs Allgrove, Beaven, Mrs Biscoe, Bishop, Bone, Bowrah, Mrs Bradley, Cavill, Miss Cavill, Clark, Coles, Croad, Davies, Denington, Durdan, Edwards, Govier, Guerrier, Hall, Henley, C Hill, Mrs Marie Hill, Mrs Marcia Hill, House, Lees, Leighton, Mrs Lewin-Harris, Lisgo, Meikle, Morrell, Mullins, Phillips, Miss Priscott, Slattery, Stuart-Thorn, Vail, Watson, Weston, Mrs Whitmarsh, Williams and Mrs Wilson.

1. Minutes

The Minutes of the meetings of the Council held on 20 February 2007 and 20 March 2007, copies having been sent to each Member, were signed by the Mayor.

2. Apologies

Councillors Garner, Murphy, Paul and Prior-Sankey.

3. Declarations of Interest

Councillors Govier and Henley both declared personal interests as Members of Somerset County Council in the item relating to Team Somerset and potential Local Government Reorganisation.

4. The Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) Order 2007

David Baker OBE, Chairman of the Standards Committee, reported that the Committee had recently considered the Government's proposals to put in place a clearer, simpler and more proportionate Code of Conduct for Members of local authorities which would include changes to rules on personal and prejudicial interests.

Both Taunton Deane Borough Council and its Standards Committee had been very supportive of the ethics and probity regime that had resulted since the introduction of the existing Code of Conduct in 2002.

The Code had helped raise the profile of ethics and probity, both within the Council and within the Parish Councils that operated in the district. As a

result, Councillors were now fully aware of their responsibilities in relation to standards of behaviour in public life.

The aim of making the new Code clearer, more understandable and more enabling was laudable and were sentiments fully supported by the Standards Committee. However, there were parts of the new version which had caused some concern, details of which were submitted.

In summary:

- The Standards Committee was very supportive of a Code of Conduct and the discipline it introduced to the role of those in public life;
- It was now an accepted part of Local Government and the Committee was happy that it should continue as such;
- The proposed revised Code, as currently drafted was too imprecise. It contained too many opportunities for different interpretations and would lead to an inconsistent approach;
- It required clearer definitions and detailed guidance as to its operation.

Despite these misgivings, the Standards Committee believed that the Council should adopt the Code as soon as possible in anticipation that guidance would be provided on how the Code should be interpreted and administered.

RESOLVED that the Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) Order 2007 (a copy of which was attached to the report) be adopted with effect from 3 May 2007.

5. Gambling Fees

Reported that with effect from 21 May 2007, the Council would be accepting applications for gambling premises. In order to do this, a decision had to be made as to what fees to charge these premises. Unfortunately, the Regulations and method of calculating the fees had only recently become available.

The Somerset Authorities had agreed that each Council should set the same level of fees, details of which were set out in the report. In order to comply with the necessary legislation the proposed fees had to be agreed by Council.

RESOLVED that the scale of fees, set out in the appendix to these Minutes be agreed.

6. Recommendations to Council from the Executive

(a) Team Somerset and Potential Local Government Reorganisation

The Executive had given consideration to the Team Somerset Outline Business Case and associated actions which would enable its further development.

Following the short listing of the proposal submitted by Somerset County Council for the creation of a single Unitary Council for the whole of Somerset, a 12 week period of 'stakeholder consultation' would now take place. Following this, the Government would announce those areas that would be restructuring into Unitary Councils in early July 2007.

The Council had previously decided to oppose the unitary bid for the whole county and all the other districts in Somerset had also rejected the proposal.

As a positive alternative to any unitary option, the Somerset Districts had co-operated to produce a prospectus on how the aims of the White Paper could be achieved without structural reform of Local Government in the County. This enhanced partnership approach, termed 'Team Somerset', had received the formal support of Taunton Deane Borough Council and all other Somerset Districts. The Team Somerset prospectus was a clear 'direction of travel' for Local Government in Somerset, based on:

- Strong leadership at strategic planning level;
- Joined up local political engagement and strategic decision making;
- Efficiencies through shared services: Improved satisfaction and joined up customer access; and
- Equity of service for Somerset citizens.

Since approval by Council, the District Councils had worked together to further develop the Team Somerset approach, establishing clear proposals that would bring the aspirations of the prospectus into reality. The Team Somerset Outline Business Case proposed a fresh approach to delivering better outcomes and more efficient services across Somerset within a renewed and re-invigorated system of County, District, Town and Parish Councils. A copy of the Outline Business Case was submitted for the attention of Members.

The following were the main proposals contained in the Outline Business Case:

- Strong, effective and accountable leadership;
- Neighbourhood flexibility and empowerment; and
- Value for money and equity.

The Team Somerset Model provided a robust alternative to a single unitary council and offered the best and most appropriate solution for the citizens of Somerset.

The key benefits featured in the Outline Business Case were set out in the report and included maintenance of existing levels of democratic representation across the County and proposed annual efficiency savings in excess of £22 million from 2012.

Implementing the Team Somerset Business Case would require further work by all local authorities. Members would be informed at regular intervals of significant progress made.

Also, following the short listing of the County wide proposal, the local authorities in all affected areas had been encouraged to bring the consultation exercise to the attention of all stakeholders. The Executive was of the view that to do this effectively, the District Councils in the County should join together to fund a programme of consultation which would possibly include a referendum. Any such exercise would be dependent on all the districts agreeing to contribute a similar sum to the funding.

On the motion of Councillor Williams, it was resolved that:

- (i) The Team Somerset Outline Business Case, be agreed;
- (ii) The Chief Executive and Leader be authorised to take decisions as required for the further development of the Team Somerset Outline Business Case;
- (iii) A further report on progress be submitted in August 2007; and
- (iv) A Supplementary Estimate of £60,000 be made to fund a programme of consultation, possibly including a referendum, subject to all District Councils in Somerset agreeing to contribute a similar sum.

(b) **Restructure of the Housing Service**

Following the decision not to proceed with the Housing Stock Transfer, consideration had been given by the Executive to the reorganisation of the Housing Service and the consequent redundancies.

The 2007/2008 Housing Revenue Account budget included indicative budgets that covered the four years to the Decent Homes Target Date of 2010.

As part of the budget setting process, it had been necessary to find savings of £1.85m per year for each of these years to ensure that Decent Homes could be delivered.

The budget setting report outlined how these savings would be achieved. This included an outline of a Housing restructure that would save the service some £550,000.

The Executive was now recommending cuts in the management and support roles, details of which were submitted. In total, 16 posts had been shed through natural wastage, voluntary redundancy and reorganisation. The ongoing savings of these deleted posts equated to £550,000 per year.

The reorganisation had allowed the Executive to reinstate the post of Energy Efficiency Officer from 1 May 2007, which would give the Council proper focus to this important area of work.

The total cost of the 16 redundancies was estimated at £619,000. As far as possible, these redundancies had been mitigated through the removal of vacant posts after a total of four posts had been deleted from the proposed new establishment.

The restructure was necessary in order for the Council to achieve the savings necessary to deliver Decent Homes. The savings of £550,000 per annum would be diverted to fund the Decent Homes capital works. The overall payback period of the costs was 1.1 years, however the money would not be realised in the Housing Revenue Account until after the Decent Homes deadline.

As nine of the redundancies would have already taken place in 2006/2007, the cost to be paid in that year amounted to £147,000 with the remaining £472,000 to be paid in 2007/2008. It was proposed that the costs in the current year were funded from 2006/2007 underspends which had been already reported. The costs in 2007/2008 would be funded in part from these underspends and in part from the working balance.

On the motion of Councillor Edwards, it was RESOLVED that the proposed restructure of the Housing Service be agreed and a supplementary estimate from Housing Revenue Account Reserves of £472,000 to fund one off costs in 2007/2008 be made.

(c) **Corporate Strategy 2007-2010**

The Corporate Strategy was the Council's principal policy document. It established the outcomes that the Executive wanted to achieve in the community and provided an important lead for budget setting and service planning activities.

The Corporate Strategy 2007-2010 had been modelled on last year's Strategy, which had been formulated after extensive consultation.

The most recent community consultation, seeking views and preferences on future priorities and budget-setting choices had also been taken into account.

The Corporate Strategy 2007-2010 was outcome-focussed and aligned closely to delivering the Council's stated priorities. It provided a framework for future decisions over budget and resource allocation and reflected national recommended best practise in its design.

On the motion of Councillor Mrs Lewin-Harris, RESOLVED that the Corporate Strategy be adopted.

7. Reports of the Leader of the Council and Executive Councillors

The following reports were made to the Council on the main items of current and future business:

(i) Leader of the Council (Councillor Williams)

Councillor Williams' report covered the following topics:

- A look back over the achievements of the Conservative administration over the past four years.
- Local Government Reorganisation.
- The appointment of a Preferred Bidder for the ISIS Programme.
- Project Taunton.
- Proposed Upgrading of the A358.
- Norton Fitzwarren Dam Construction.

Councillor Williams also thanked those Councillors not standing at the forthcoming Borough Council elections for their support and commitment. He drew particular attention to Councillor Mrs Bradley who was standing down after 20 years service as a Councillor.

(ii) Planning Policy and Transportation (Councillor Bishop)

Councillor Bishop submitted his report which drew attention to the following:

- Statements of Community Involvement – Adoption subject to the Inspectors recommended changes
 - Local Development Scheme – Joint Working.
 - Local Development Scheme – Monitoring and Review.
 - Planning Gain Supplement.
 - Commission for Architecture and Built Environment (CABE) Actions for Housing Growth: Creating a Legacy of Great Places.

(iii) Environmental Services (Councillor Mrs Bradley)

The report from Councillor Mrs Bradley drew attention to development in the following areas:

- Environmental or Green Agenda.
- Environmental Health.
- Waste Collection and Recycling.
- Networking.

(iv) **Economic Development, Asset Management and Tourism (Councillor N P Cavill)**

The report from Councillor Cavill covered:

- Economic Development.
- Rural and Community Development.
- Tourism Development.
- Creative Services.

(v) **Leisure, Arts and Culture (Councillor Clark)**

The report from Councillor Clark dealt with activities taking place in the following areas:

- Parks Developments.
- Sports Strategy.
- Tone Leisure.
- Forthcoming Events.
- Sports and Health Development.
- Arts.

(vi) **Housing Services (Councillor Edwards)**

Councillor Edwards' report focussed on the reorganisation of Housing Services following the Housing Stock Transfer ballot and the resulting reduction in the number of homes having planned exterior painting/maintenance. He also referred to the possibility of closer working links with the Housing Corporation.

(vii) **Resources (Councillor Hall)**

The report from Councillor Hall provided information on the following areas within his Portfolio:

- Democratic Services.
- Personnel.
- Financial Services.
- Revenues and Benefits.
- Corporate Support Services.
- Corporate Property Services.
- Information Technology.

(viii) **Communications (Councillor Leighton)**

Councillor Leighton's report covered the following areas:

- Public Relations.
- Web Content and Marketing.
- Consultation and Information.

(ix) **Community Leadership (Councillor Mrs Lewin-Harris)**

Councillor Mrs Lewin-Harris' report focussed on the following areas within her portfolio:

- Sustainable Community Strategy.
- Community Partnerships.
- Effective Democracy for Sustainable Communities.
- Halcon Clean-Up and Community Clean-Up Partnership.
- South West Regional Assembly Meeting.

(The meeting ended at 8.02 pm.)

Appendix to the Minutes

Applications

	New Regional Casino	New Large Casino	New Small Casino	Bingo	Betting – not on course	Track Betting (on course)	Adult Gaming Centre	Family Entertainment Centre
Transition Fast Track	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Max. Permitted	300	300	300	300	300	300	300	300
Suggested fee	255	255	255	255	255	255	255	255
Transition – non Fast Track	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Max. Permitted				1750	1500	1250	1000	1000
Suggested fee				1500	1275	1100	850	850
New Application	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Max. Permitted	15000	10000	8000	3500	3000	2500	2000	2000
Suggested fee	12750	8500	6800	2975	2550	2125	1700	1700
New Application - with Provisional Statement	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Max. Permitted	8000	5000	3000	1200	1200	950	1200	950
Suggested fee	6800	4250	2550	510	510	400	510	400
Provisional Statement	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Max. Permitted	15000	10000	8000	3500	3000	2500	2000	2000
Suggested fee	12750	8500	6800	2975	2550	2125	1700	1700
Transfer	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Max. Permitted	6500	2150	1800	1200	1200	950	1200	950
Suggested fee	5525	1830	1530	1020	1020	800	1020	800
Re- instatement	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Max. Permitted	6500	2150	1800	1200	1200	950	1200	950

Suggested fee	5525	1830	1530	1020	1020	800	1020	800
Variation	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Max. Permitted	7500	5000	4000	1750	1500	1250	1000	1000
Suggested fee	6375	4250	3400	1500	1275	1100	850	850
Annual Fees	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Max. Permitted	15000	10000	5000	1000	600	1000	1000	750
Suggested fee	12750	8500	4250	850	510	850	850	650