

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 on 17 July 2007 at 6.30 pm.

Present The Mayor (Councillor Hayward)
The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Slattery)
Councillors Mrs Allgrove, Beaven, Bishop, Bowrah, Brockwell, Brooks, Cavill, Coles, Mrs Copley, Mrs Court-Stenning, Critchard, Denington, Durdan, Edwards, Farbahi, Floyd, Govier, Guerrier, Hall, Henley, Ms Herbert, C Hill, Mrs M Hill, Horsley, House, Miss James, R Lees, Mrs Lees, Leighton, Mrs Lewin-Harris, McMahon, Meikle, Morrell, Mullins, Murphy, Paul, Prior-Sankey, Mrs Smith, P Smith, Mrs Stock-Williams, Stone, Stuart-Thorn, Thorne, Watson, Mrs Waymouth, Ms Webber, D Wedderkopp, A Wedderkopp, Williams, Miss Wood and Woolley.

1. Minutes

The minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Council held on 16 May 2007 copies having been sent to each Member were signed by the Mayor.

2. Apologies

Councillors Bone, Mrs Whitmarsh and Mrs Wilson.

3. Declarations of Interest

Councillors Brooks, Govier, Henley, Paul and Prior-Sankey all declared personal interests as Members of Somerset County Council. Councillor Prior-Sankey also declared a prejudicial interest in relation to an item on Councillor Henley's report relating to Park charges, as her husband was actively involved in the promotion of the Taunton Flower Show. Councillor Mrs Allgrove declared a personal interest as Chairman of the Somerset Association of Local Councils and a Representative on the South West Regional Association. Councillor Leighton declared a personal interest as Chair of the West Monkton Community Engagement Panel and Councillor Miss James declared a personal interest in the Environmental Services Report.

4. Written questions to Members of the Executive

Councillor Edwards asked the following question:- Can Councillor Prior-Sankey inform the Council how many kitchens and bathrooms have had to be cancelled in the year 2007/2008 in Council properties and further to this how many will be postponed in the following financial year to assist in the

necessary cuts in the budget to help the Council attempt to reach the Decent Homes Standard by 2011. Further that, can she inform the Council how she sees the funding of general maintenance and other improvements being funded from 2012 onwards, and how she intends to put in place the necessary funding to cover the major maintenance and replacement kitchens, bathrooms and windows over the next 30 years which compounded could be in excess of £300 million pounds.

Councillor Prior-Sankey replied that the Council had not had to actually cancel any kitchen or bathroom refurbishments due to lack of funds. Any that were listed to be done, and had been surveyed and ordered, would have been seen through to completion. Any kitchens or bathrooms that might have been cancelled would have been for reasons other than finance.

Before this year and the need to make savings we had been installing kitchens and applying the Decent Homes guidance to a Taunton Deane standard, which was the best that we could do with the finance available. This exceeded the Decent Homes Standard. From this year onwards to 2010/2011 we are having to rigorously apply the standard guidelines as closely and as tightly as possible. This allows for the minimum only and has no scope for niceties or extras. With this tightening of the application of the Standard it means that less properties require remedial work to meet the Decent Homes Standard.

This should ensure that we still clear the same number of properties each year for the next four years as previously to meet the target, but we will be refurbishing less of those properties visited.

Members will remember that as part of the 2007/2008 budget setting exercise Officers produced a Medium Term Financial Plan for the Housing Revenue Account which covered the four financial years from 2007/2008 to 2010/2011. This Plan looked at both Revenue and Capital and was an important piece of work as it ensured that the Council was able to meet its Decent Homes target by the end of 2010. This Plan also included savings which the Council had to achieve in order to meet the Decent Homes Standard of around £1.85 million per year.

Some Members will be aware that our Consultants through the Stock Options process some two years ago projected (using Council commissioned Stock Condition survey) that we would have an even more significant financial problem some 15 to 20 years into the long term plan when a number of our dwellings would need large scale modernisation.

Although the Council's medium term financial plan did also look further into the future including a revenue projection over the next 25 years this has not been fine tuned to a position where we can state what this capital funding deficit is. In addition to this we need to further analyse and scrutinise the Stock Condition Survey in order to satisfy ourselves that our assumptions regarding Stock Condition post Decent Homes matches those made by the firm commissioned to complete the survey.

Officers will be working with Members into the future to both accurately identify these issues and to suggest possible solutions. Members should note that this is not a short term issue however, and this is one that the Council will be working on, for in all probability years to come.

5. 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:

(1) Leader of the Councillor (Councillor Henley)

In his first report as Leader of the Council Councillor Henley drew attention to the big learning curve he was having to negotiate and felt that without the support of the staff it would not have been possible. He felt that the Council would only succeed by working together. A new regime of co-operation and of partnership was what everyone should work towards in a balanced Council situation. His report covered the following topics:

- Local Government Review.
- ISiS.
- Park charges.
- Job Evaluation.
- Partner meetings.
- Priory housing.

(Councillor Prior-Sankey, having previously declared a prejudicial interest, left the meeting during discussion and answers in relation to the item relating to Park charges.)

(2) Planning Policy and Transportation (Councillor Coles)

Councillor Coles submitted his report which drew attention to the following:-

- Statement of Community Involvement.
- Local Development Scheme.
- Regional Spatial Strategy.
- Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan.
- Review of Policy EC9; Protection of employment land.
- Carbon reduction.
- Former Taunton Cider factory, Norton Fitzwarren.
- Procurement of New Development Management IT system.
- Development Management staffing.
- Monkton Heathfield major planning application.
- Tone Mill.
- Taunton East goods yard.

(3) **Economic Development, Asset Management and Tourism (Councillor Horsley)**

The Report from Councillor Horsley covered:

- Project Taunton.
- Somerset Inward Investment Company.
- Employment land.
- Wellington Economic Partnership.
- Bio Energy Developments.
- Taunton town centre.
- Creative Industries.
- Inter-departmental working.

(4) **Leisure, Arts and Culture (Councillor R Lees)**

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

- Parks development.
- Park Rangers.
- Get Growing.
- Play Strategy.
- Galmington and Hamilton Gault Pavilions.
- Tour of Britain.
- Skate park.
- Tone Leisure.
- Sports and Health Development.
- Taunton Cultural Consortium.
- Arts.

(5) **Environmental Services (Councillor Mullins)**

The Report from Councillor Mullins drew attention to developments in the following areas:

- Environmental Health.
- Cemeteries and Crematorium.
- Waste collection and recycling.

(6) **Housing Services (Councillor Prior-Sankey)**

Councillor Prior-Sankey's report focussed on the following areas:

- Water heaters.
- Decent Homes.
- Choice based lettings.

- Respect agenda.
- The Association of Retained Council Housing.
- Sheltered Housing and Deane Helpline.
- Affordable Housing Day.
- Enabling Seminar.
- Tenants Conference.
- Completions.
- Energy efficiency.
- Retirement of Malcolm Western.
- Re-Organisation.

Councillor Prior-Sankey was joined by the rest of the Council in paying tribute to Malcolm Western's contribution to the Council's Housing Service and to the community during a distinguished career in public service spanning 37 years with this Authority.

(Councillor Horsley declared a personal interest in this matter, as Chairman of the Taunton Association for the Homeless.)

(7) Resources (Councillor Mrs F Smith)

The report from Councillor Mrs Smith provided information on the following areas within her portfolio:

- Democratic Services.
- Personnel.
- Corporate Support Services.
- Organisational development.
- ICT Service.
- Revenues and Benefits Service.
- Financial Services.

(The Council supported Mrs Smith in recording her thanks to Craig Morse, Electoral Services Manager, for the way in which he had administered the recent Elections.)

(8) Community Leadership (Councillor Alan Wedderkopp)

Councillor Wedderkopp's report focussed on the following areas within his portfolio:

- Grants to voluntary organisations.
- Improving youth provision.
- Community Restorative Justice project.
- Neighbourhood voluntary service.
- Engaging with minority groups.
- Taunton Deane Community Strategy for 2007-2017.

(9) **Communications (Councillor Brooks)**

Councillor Brooks' report covered the following areas:

- Public Relations.
- Consultation and information.
- Website update.

(Councillor Thorne declared a personal interest in relation to the Communications Report.)

6. **Affordable housing in Priory, Wellington**

Considered the following motion, moved by Councillor Williams, seconded by Councillor Edwards.

In order to allow works to start and provide desperately needed affordable housing for the people of Wellington the Council resolves that:

- (1) The delay in implementing approved schemes for 23 units of affordable housing in Priory, Wellington be deplored.
- (2) The necessary legal agreements with the housing provider Raglan Housing Association be finalised immediately for the two sites with planning consent (at Baker Lane/Priory and at Gay Close).
- (3) Raglan be requested to re-instate the planning application for the third site (at Humphreys Road) to allow full and proper consideration through the democratic planning process.
- (4) A report be submitted to the Executive as to the progress made in implementing these resolutions.

Councillor Williams, seconded by Councillor Edwards requested that a formal roll call of votes be taken and recorded in the minutes in accordance with Standing Order 19(2). This request was supported by the votes of at least a quarter of the Councillors present. The motion was put, and was carried, the voting being 27 for and 25 against with 1 abstention:-

For

Councillors;
Mrs Allgrove
Beaven
Bishop
Bowrah
Brockwell
Cavill
Mrs Court-Stenning
Denington

Against

Councillors;
Brooks
Coles
Mrs Copley
Critchard
Farbahi
Floyd
Henley
Mrs Hill

Durdan
Edwards
Govier
Guerrier
Hall
Hayward
Ms Herbert
C Hill
House
Leighton
Mrs Lewin-Harris
McMahon
Meikle
Stuart-Thorn
Thorne
Watson
Mrs Waymouth
Miss Webber
Williams

Horsley
Miss James
R Lees
Mrs S Lees
Mullins
Murphy
Paul
Prior-Sankey
Slattery
Mrs Smith
P Smith
Mrs Stock-Williams
Stone
D Wedderkopp
A Wedderkopp
Miss Wood
Woolley

The motion was put and was carried.

7. **Urgent Business**

The Mayor certified the following item as urgent business which could not have been included on the agenda and was therefore prepared to allow it to be considered at this meeting.

8. **Unitary Council**

Moved by Councillor Williams, seconded by Councillor Henley.

Other District Council's in Somerset have brought a motion to full Council calling upon Somerset County Council to withdraw its Unitary bid in the light of the overwhelming public opposition to it as witnessed by the recent poll. This Council wishes to add its support and instructs the Chief Executive to write to the County Council informing them of this view.

Councillor Meikle, seconded by Councillor Mrs Allgrove requested that a formal Roll Call of votes be taken and recorded in the minutes in accordance with Standing Order 19(2). This request was supported by the votes of at least a quarter of the Councillors present. The motion was put and was carried, the voting being 46 for, 2 against and 3 abstentions as follows:

For

Councillors;
Mrs Allgrove
Beavan
Bishop

Against

Councillors:
Paul
Prior-Sankey

Bowrah
Brockwell
Brooks
Cavill
Coles
Mrs Court-Stenning
Critchard
Denington
Durdan
Edwards
Farbahi
Guerrier
Hall
Hayward
Henley
Ms Herbert
C Hill
Mrs Hill
Horsley
House
Miss James
R Lees
Mrs Lees
Leighton
Mrs Lewin-Harris
McMahon
Meikle
Morrell
Mullins
Murphy
Slattery
Mrs Smith
P Smith
Mrs Stock-Williams
Stuart-Thorn
Thorne
Watson
Mrs Waymouth
Ms Webber
D Wedderkopp
Williams
Miss Wood
Woolley

The motion was put and was carried.

(The meeting ended at 10.26 pm.)

