

Present: Councillor Henley (Chairman)
Councillors Brooks, Coles, Horsley, R Lees, Mullins, Prior-Sankey,
Mrs Smith and A Wedderkopp

Officers: Penny James (Chief Executive), Brendan Cleere (Strategic Director),
Maggie Hammond (Strategic Finance Officer) and Richard Bryant
(Democratic Services Manager)

Also present: Councillors Bishop, Cavill, Mrs Copley, Mrs Court-Stenning,
Critchard, Denington, Farbahi, Mrs Floyd, Gaines, Hall, Ms Herbert,
Miss James, Mrs Lees, Meikle, Morrell, Paul, P Smith, Mrs Stock-
Williams, Stuart-Thorn, Thorne, Mrs Waymouth and Williams.

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm.)

41. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of the Executive held on 1 April 2009, copies of which had been circulated, were taken as read and were signed.

42. 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 Prior-Sankey also declared a personal interest as a Member of the Somerset Strategic Housing Partnership. Councillor Mullins also declared a personal interest as a Member of the Somerset Waste Board. Councillor Coles declared a personal interest as a Director of Southwest One. Councillor Mrs Smith declared a personal interest as an employee of Somerset County Council.

43. Core Council Review – Alternative Approach

Reference Minute No. 19/2009, considered report previously circulated, concerning a proposed alternative approach to completing the Core Council Review.

The original aim of the Core Council Review was to introduce a new structure and ways of working that would enable the Core Council to:-

- Be fit for purpose, deliver the Council's vision, widened roles and ways of working; and
- Deliver substantial efficiency savings for 2009/2010 and beyond.

Proposals for new ways of working and a new structure for the Core Council were approved by Full Council on 17 February 2009. The Core Council staffing structure was based on four themes:-

- Theme 1 – Strategy and Corporate;
- Theme 2 – Growth and Development;
- Theme 3 – DLO Business; and
- Theme 4 – Operations and Regulation.

The detailed structure for Theme 1 became operational on 1 April 2009.

The remaining Themes were due to come forward at different times during 2009/2010, in accordance with the agreed phasing timetable. However, having implemented Theme 1 and reflected on the Council's decision to attach particular importance to Theme 3, the Corporate Management Team (CMT) had developed an alternative approach to completing the Core Council Review.

It was proposed that Themes 2 and 4 should be brought together onto the same implementation timetable. This would involve the early recruitment of two permanent manager posts for the Growth and Development Theme and one permanent manager post for the Operations and Regulation Theme.

The level of responsibility on the Theme Manager posts would be significantly higher than existing Core Council Managers and remuneration would therefore be the same as set for the Theme Manager posts in the Strategy and Corporate Theme.

Initially, these Theme Managers would work with the relevant Strategic Director and bring forward detailed structural proposals for Themes 2 and 4, for consultation and consideration. All other structural arrangements for these Themes would remain.

Internal applications would be sought in the first instance for the Theme Manager posts and if necessary, temporary back-filling arrangements would be made to cover vacancies arising from internal promotion to these posts. External recruitment would follow if any posts remained unfilled.

It was also proposed that the existing temporary post of Project Taunton Delivery Manager was made permanent. The post had been wholly funded from external sources, but if this ceased, the Council would need to consider funding this post as part of its staff establishment.

CMT had considered the Council's resolution to give Theme 3 priority and detailed their proposals. These included discussions with UNISON and Members and commissioning independent and external specialist advice to develop options.

CMT believed that a robust and independent approach was required to fully explore the options for this Theme, applying best value principles of challenge, comparisons, consultation and competition.

A final review of the working structure, including CMT would be undertaken in 2010, six months after the four Themes were fully operational.

The current political managements would be reviewed when detailed proposals for the new Core Council structure had been agreed. This would coincide with the new Municipal Year in 2010.

Theme 1 would generate savings of £342,000 per annum. The one-off costs of implementation were £750,000, which fell within the sum of £1,000,000 from General Fund Reserves. Noted that the balance of £250,000 would be returned to reserves, leaving a General Fund Reserve position of £1,550,000.

The proposed alternative approach had a number of financial implications. For Themes 2 and 4, there would be a one-off additional cost in the range of £27,030 to £161,330, incurred as a result of having three new Theme Managers in post for a period of up to 9 months. The one-off costs would depend on whether the new Theme Managers were recruited internally or externally.

The alternative approach to Themes 2 and 4 had a number of significant benefits, including:-

- The early creation of additional capacity, in the form of new Theme Managers to develop detailed proposals and help the Council through a period of major structural and cultural change;
- The early establishment of a 'peer group' of Theme Managers to help embed the new ways of working that were critical to the success of the new Core Council;
- Retention of key staff and levels of service in Themes 2, 3 and 4 during the proposal and implementation phase;
- A simpler, more coherent and 'joined up' approach to consultation, achieved by bringing the timetable for Themes 2 and 4 together. This would save time and energy for all staff, unions and Members involved in the process;
- The ability to make connections between Themes as they were working over the same timetable; and
- Implementation of all three remaining themes within the 2009/2010 financial year.

A supplementary estimate of £148,000 from General Fund Reserves would be required to fund one-off costs. Similarly, a sum of £13,400 would be required from the Housing Revenue Account Reserve.

The main cost for the DLO Theme would arise from commissioning independent external advice. A sum of £80,000 would be required to be earmarked from DLO reserves to fund this part of the Core Council Review.

Savings from Themes 2, 3 and 4 would not be known until proposals were published later in the year. It was hoped that any savings identified could be used to replenish reserves and fund posts in the new theme structures.

If the alternative approach was not supported, the original approach would stand. The original approach had the benefit of reduced one-off costs, but had some potential risks, which included:-

- Lack of capacity to complete the Core Council Review to timetable and/or maintain 'business as usual'; and
- Loss of key staff who might seek opportunities elsewhere while the review was rolled out.

Consultation with UNISON, staff and Members had taken place in previous stages of the Core Council Review. UNISON and staff representatives had been asked to give feedback on the consultation that had taken place with suggested improvements for later stages of the Review.

The latest views of UNISON on the alternative proposals were circulated for consideration.

Formal consultation would take place with staff and Members when detailed proposals for the remaining Themes for the Core Council had been published. This would be in addition to informal consultation through staff briefings, workshops and attendance at team meetings.

Resolved that:-

- (1) the proposed amended approach to completing the Core Council Review, be endorsed, including:-
 - (a) the making permanent the post of Project Taunton Delivery Manager;
 - (b) a supplementary estimate of £148,000 from General Fund Reserves to cover the costs involved;
 - (c) £13,400 being taken from the Housing Revenue Account Reserve also towards the overall costs; and
 - (d) the sum of £80,000 being earmarked from the DLO Reserves to fund the commissioning of independent external advice; and
- (2) Full Council be recommended to approve the alternative approach to

completing the Core Council Review.

(Councillor Horsley left the meeting at 6.40 p.m.)

(The meeting ended at 6.57 p.m.)