

## **Taunton Deane Borough Council**

At a meeting of Taunton Deane Borough Council held in the John Meikle Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton on 23 November 2009 at 6.30 pm.

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

### **1. Apologies**

Councillors Beaven, Bishop, Ms Durdan and Ms Herbert.

### **2. Borough Council By-Election – 15 October 2009**

The Democratic Services Manager, on behalf of the Returning Officer, reported that Councillor Ms Nicci Court of Buckland Road, Taunton had been elected as a Councillor for the Lyngford Ward.

### **3. Declarations of Interest**

Councillors Brooks, Govier, Henley, McMahon, Paul, Prior-Sankey, Mrs Waymouth and D Wedderkopp declared personal interests as Members of Somerset County Council. Councillors Mullins and Slattery declared personal interests as Members of the Somerset Waste Board. Councillor Slattery also declared a personal interest as an employee of Sedgemoor District Council. Councillor Coles declared a personal interest as a Director of Southwest One. Councillor Miss James declared a personal interest as an employee of Viridor. Councillors Mrs Court-Stenning, Mrs Smith and Stone declared personal interests as employees of Somerset County Council. Councillors Henley and Mrs Wilson declared personal interests as employees of Job Centre Plus.

### **4. Recommendations to Council from the Executive**

#### **Core Council Review Proposals – Themes 2 and 4**

The Executive had considered a number of proposals resulting from the review of the Core Council at its meeting on 11 November 2009.

The new structure for the Core Council had been approved by Full Council in February 2009 and was based on five themes:-

1. Strategy and Corporate;
2. Growth and Development;
3. Business (DLO);
4. Operations and Regulation (now Community Services); and
5. Chief Executive, Strategic Directors and support staff.

Theme 1 became operational from 1 April 2009 and Theme 3 of the Core Council Review was currently subject to an independent study by consultants.

The Review had identified the following three critical areas which had to underpin the whole organisation, its future direction and development:-

- Understanding of the drivers for change in the organisation;
- A clear overall vision for the authority; and
- New ways of working.

The Executive had given informal direction on the Review in terms of areas for investment and areas to explore reducing investment. Key projects included climate change, tackling deprivation and community development and affordable housing. Economic development priorities had also been addressed by looking at focussing resources on the delivery of the economic vision and decreasing investment in economic development.

**Theme 2** - The Growth and Development Theme comprised the Council's Development Management function, Planning Enforcement, Landscape and Heritage services, Housing Enabling, Building Control and Economic Development (including Tourist Information).

The proposals for this theme had been developed following discussions with managers, elected Members and the Change Programme Member Steering Group. The proposed structure sought to maximise the available resources in areas that would deliver the future growth agenda and to facilitate more project related working across themes.

The theme would be led by a single Theme Manager who would have direct line management responsibilities for seven lead officers, covering Landscape, Heritage, Development Management, Housing Enabling, Economic Development (2 posts) and Business Support.

The formal consultation process had generated comments from the Corporate Scrutiny Committee, staff and UNISON. As a result, a number of changes to the Theme 2 proposals had been made including Planning Enforcement to be incorporated in the Growth and Development structure, Building Control to be managed as part of the Growth and Development Theme and a reduction to

the Planning Officer resource to 3.5 Full Time Equivalents (FTE) instead of 3 FTE.

**Theme 4** – The Community Services (formerly Operations and Regulation) Theme encompassed the current services of the Cemeteries and Crematorium, Building Control, Environmental Health, Housing Operations and Car Parking and Civil Contingencies. The proposal also included the addition of Community Safety and Leisure Development.

Like Theme 2, the proposals sought to maximise the effectiveness of the available resources and to facilitate more project related working across themes. The diverse nature of the services in the theme meant that a range of external pressures and issues had to be taken into account.

The Community Services theme would be led by a single Theme Manager who would have direct line management responsibilities for four new lead officers for Housing Services, Community Development, Community Protection and Business Support.

The formal consultation process had again generated comments from the Corporate Scrutiny Committee, staff and UNISON. Several changes to the Theme 4 proposals had been made including Building Control and Planning Enforcement being moved to the Growth and Development Theme, the addition of posts into the Housing Services Structure towards assisting tenant empowerment and the addition of a Community Development Officer post.

The difficulty of being able to accurately assess the full impact on services and customers from these proposals was acknowledged by Members.

The proposals did include a significant reduction in management capacity and some reduction in front line resource that was likely to have a clear impact that would have to be effectively managed into the future.

Consultations had taken place with the UNISON Change Forum in respect of the proposed changes and a Staff Care and Support Plan has been developed. Staff affected by the proposals had been notified as being at risk of redundancy.

Reported that recruitment to all new posts in Themes 2 and 4 would be completed by the end of March 2010.

The continuing General Fund (GF) savings by the proposals for Themes 2 and 4 would be approximately £450,000 per annum. This entire sum would be used towards the Council's budget gap position for 2010/2011 onwards.

The net revenue cost to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was £130,000, but managers were working on savings plans to offset this cost.

The one-off costs to both the GF and the HRA associated with the Theme 2 and 4 proposals would not be known until the recruitment process was completed.

It was therefore proposed to ring-fence the maximum likely one-off costs of the proposals. Any surplus would be returned to the Reserves in late March 2010.

Further reported that Members had previously requested a review of political management arrangements alongside the Core Council Review. It was likely proposals would come before Members after Christmas with the aim of achieving implementation in the next Municipal Year.

On the motion of Councillor Henley, it was

**Resolved** that:-

- (a) The detailed proposals for the Themes 2 and 4 of the Core Council Review, as described in the report to the Executive, be approved;
- (b) A sum of £592,000 be ring-fenced from the General Fund (GF) Reserves to fund the one off costs of Theme 2 and 4 proposals. Any earmarked fund remaining at the end of this phase to be returned to the GF Reserve at the end of March 2010;
- (c) A sum of £127,000 be ring-fenced from Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Reserves to fund the one off costs of Theme 2 and 4 proposals. Any earmarked fund remaining at the end of this phase to be returned to the HRA Reserve at the end of March 2010;
- (d) Political management arrangements be reviewed separately with Members with the aim of achieving implementation in the new Municipal Year (2010); and
- (e) The phasing arrangements for the remaining Themes of the Core Council Review, as set out in the report to the Executive, be approved.

(The meeting ended at 7.10 pm.)