

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 8 December 2009 at 6.30 pm.

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

Also present : Mrs Anne Elder, Chairman of the Standards Committee

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of Taunton Deane Borough Council held on 6 October 2009, copies having been sent to each Member, were signed by the Mayor.

2. Apologies

Councillors Critchard, Mrs Floyd, McMahon and Mrs Whitmarsh.

3. Public Question Time

(i) Mr C Swinburn of the Elms Estate Residents Association made reference to the numbers of Seagulls in Central Taunton despite the egg substitution efforts made by the Council during the past year. If anything, the nuisance caused by Gulls appeared to be increasing. He therefore asked:-

- What did the Council intend to do in 2010 to reduce significantly numbers of Seagulls downwards to the level of 2005?
- Would consideration be given to making dummy eggs available to the Elms Estate Residents Association to plant?
- What about a marksman being granted a license to remove as many Gulls as possible over a 2-3 day period annually given their numbers have almost doubled since 2005? and
- If the Council's Pest Control service was contracted out, why could the contract not specify Gull control measures? To not do so would seem inappropriate?

In response, Councillor Slattery stated that shooting Gulls was not an option. Control measures had been taking place over a period of years and this, together with the way food waste was now presented for collection in sealed

boxes, had resulted in a decrease in the number of Gulls in the town centre. He added that due to climate change Gulls were coming on shore and remaining where food was available.

It was accepted that numbers could be increasing in areas where control measures were not taken. As far as the Council providing dummy eggs to local residents was concerned, Councillor Slattery said this would not be possible but added that egg making kits were on the market and could be purchased from the company who produced them.

Lastly, Councillor Slattery confirmed that Seagull control was not a statutory obligation and that it was costly to undertake.

(ii) Mr P Partington asked the following questions:-

Taunton Deane Borough Council's new website

Would the Council look into making improvements to their new website to help make the Council more democratically accountable?

Future of swimming provision in Taunton Deane

- St James Street Pools were constructed in 1929 and the Flook House Pool in the late 1970's when the population of Taunton was 25,000 and 37,000 respectively. Taunton's population over the next twenty years was expected to rise to 100,000. It was recognised that swimming could benefit the physical and mental well being of residents. Did the Council accept that there needed to be an increase in public swimming facilities within Taunton Deane?
- Had the Council thought about replacing the present facilities with a 50m pool with deep water provision and a separate learner pool on the St Augustine's site or elsewhere?
- What were the relative land values of St James Street and Flook House Pools compared to the acquisition of a new site for swimming? and
- Had the Council considered making an approach to Somerset County Council for joint swimming facilities for school and out of school hours at the St Augustine's site?

In response to Mr Partington's first question, Councillor Paul stated that any feedback as to the Council's new website would be welcomed. Any problems would be dealt with as quickly as possible.

As to the questions relating to future swimming provision, Councillor R Lees reported that the Council was looking to improve the swimming facilities in Taunton. A Task and Finish Group had recently been appointed to take a detailed look at the issue and to recommend the way forward.

Councillor Lees also promised Mr Partington a written response to his other questions.

(iii) Mrs D Bradley referred to Chapter 3 on Creativity and Culture in the Economic Strategy and Action Plan for Taunton and asked that the Council's policy of making Taunton the Tree Town of the South West was put in this context.

In her view, to move this policy forward a small sum of money (£5,000) was needed to appoint a consultant to advise on tree species in specific areas such as the street scene, the Market House, the Parks and the Cemeteries. Such a project was very much in line with the thinking in the Economic Strategy and could enhance the town and create a Unique Selling Point for Taunton.

Mrs Bradley asked the Council to find the money and "get to work".

In reply, Councillor Mrs Smith stated that Mrs Bradley's input as to moving the Tree Town proposal along was welcomed and would be considered.

4. Declarations of Interest

Councillors Brooks, Govier, Henley, 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 Hill, 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. Councillor Bishop declared a personal interest as a Member of the Management Committee of Oake Village Hall.

5. Motion – "Stand Against Violence"

Moved by Councillor Murphy, seconded by Councillor Meikle.

This Council commends Adam Fouracre in his endeavours to launch a campaign titled "Stand Against Violence".

His brother Lloyd was murdered four years ago by drunken youths in an unprovoked attack bringing tragedy to Adam and his family.

We support his every attempt to make young people more aware of the consequences of violence, particularly that fuelled by alcohol. This young man's dedication has resulted in the creation of a professionally made, thought provoking DVD charting his brother's life and, with much support from local people and companies, a re-enactment of the murder of Lloyd Fouracre. The intention is to hopefully dissuade youngsters from being drawn into mindless violence.

He launched the DVD at the Tacchi Morris Arts Centre, in the hope that it will be viewed by schools, Youth Clubs and even a national audience.

Taunton Deane Borough Council in collaboration with the Police and other agencies are also engaged in a similar mission to end youth violence, but wish to salute Adam Fouracre in adding his forceful contribution.

Therefore this Council resolves that the “Stand Against Violence” campaign be fully supported.

The motion was put and was unanimously carried.

6. **Economic Strategy and Action Plan for Taunton**

In the absence of Professor Mark Hepworth of the company Geo Economics, the Mayor introduced the Council’s Economic Development Manager, Phil Sharratt, who made a presentation to Members on the Economic Strategy and Action Plan for Taunton.

Back in July 2009, Professor Hepworth had addressed the Council and had recommended that the following should be the vision for Taunton:-

“By 2026 Taunton would be one of Europe’s most successful and sustainable towns with a dynamic knowledge economy and a high quality of life.”

Mr Sharratt reported this vision was still very much at the forefront of the draft Economic Strategy. The “Values” of the Strategy had been developed and these were to:-

- Focus on enterprise and innovation to create high value employment, a diversified and inclusive economy, and drive improvement in the local skills base;
- Improve the economic well-being of Taunton Deane residents in addition to creating wealth: sustainable growth “**Green and Grow**”;
- Create choices of opportunities for all, including young people and those in poverty; and
- Improve the quality of engagement with businesses, social enterprises, and other employers.

The “Aims” of the Strategy were:-

- (a) To successfully apply the ‘Green Knowledge Economy’ model with regional, United Kingdom, European Union and international policy focus for investment and economic growth;
- (b) The rapid growth of 16,500 new jobs and the increase in earnings to the regional average – but with the emphasis on quality rather than quantity;
- (c) A focus on “industries of the future” and new technologies knowledge transfer; and
- (d) To create a culture of innovation across private and public sectors and the local community.

Mr Sharratt went on to explain the approach to the Strategy where project ideas submitted by the business community and delivery partners would be validated on deliverability, their alignment to strategy and the likely economic outcomes. It was hoped to establish 30 projects organised into the following three thematic programmes:-

Green and Grow Communities - To develop community-based, driven and owned approaches to the green knowledge economy, linking green initiatives such as renewable energy, resource conservation and management and sustainable development, with business and employment growth and skills development initiatives;

Business Development - To accelerate business growth and innovation and new enterprise development, particularly in knowledge-intensive sectors of Taunton's economy; and

Promoting Taunton - To establish Taunton as an important destination for inward investment and tourism at regional, national and international levels.

The proposed Action Plan for 2010-2012 was likely to contain six 'first wave' projects including the establishment of a Clean Energy Centre for Sustainable Communities, a Taunton Enterprise and Innovation Hub and providing renewable energy infrastructure.

The Economic Strategy for Taunton was currently in draft form and would be submitted for scrutiny during January 2010 and to the Executive for approval in February. Work would then begin on the Plan for Transition with the transformation to the proposed new service delivery occurring between March and June 2010.

After a brief question and answer session, The Mayor thanked Mr Sharratt for his very interesting presentation.

7. **Non attendance at meetings – Councillor Miss Julie Wood, Taunton Lyngford Ward**

Reported that Councillor Miss Julie Wood had not attended any "qualifying" meetings of the Council nor any other meeting as a representative of the Council since the 13 May 2009.

The Local Government Act 1972 provided that if a Member failed to attend any such qualifying meeting for a period of six months the Council must declare the seat to be vacant. The six months expired on the 14 November 2009.

Although the Chief Executive had written to Councillor Miss Wood inviting her to provide any contrary information, none had been received.

Resolved that the seat in the Taunton Lyngford Ward be formally declared vacant.

8. **Members' Allowances 2010/2011**

Submitted report previously circulated of the Members' Allowances Panel following its annual review of Members' Allowances. A copy of the report and recommendations had been circulated to all Councillors. It had also been considered by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 26 November 2009.

Details of the Members' Allowances Scheme that had been recommended by the independent Panel were submitted. The Panel had only recommended increases to the Special Responsibility Allowance paid to the two Scrutiny Committee Chairmen and the allowance paid to the independent Members of the Council's Standards Committee to recognise the increased responsibility they now had following the introduction of the Local Assessment Framework in May 2008.

Although the report and recommendations of the independent Members' Allowances Panel had been noted by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee, Members had expressed the view that no increases at all should be made to any of the allowances for the 2010/2011 financial year.

Moved by Councillor Henley, seconded by Councillor Coles that:-

There should be no increases to any of the allowances payable under the Members' Allowances Scheme for the 2010/2011 financial year.

The amendment to the recommendations was put and was carried.

The substantive Motion was put and was carried.

9. **Recommendations to Council from the Executive**

Growth Point Funding – Re-profiling the Spending Plan

Taunton Deane was currently in receipt of Growth Points (GP) funding for the future development of Taunton in both the long and medium term.

The allocation for 2009/2010 was £3,338,104 capital and £301,249 revenue and for 2010/2011 the provisional amounts allocated were £3,972,516 capital and £300,698 revenue.

The priorities for using this funding had previously been agreed by the Executive and the addition to the Capital Programme of the capital elements of this Spending Plan had been approved by Full Council earlier in the year.

Due to the recession, the Minister for Housing and Planning had notified the Council that the capital allocation for 2009/2010 was to be reduced by 43% to £2,248,263. The revenue funding had not been reduced.

With further reductions in public spending being likely next year the Executive had reconsidered the Spending Plan for 2010/2011.

The re-prioritised Spending Plan, copies of which were circulated to Members, showed that if the Council continued to undertake the works to provide the Northern Inner Distributor Road and, if no Growth Point funding was received next year, there would be a significant overspend of £2,691,000.

In this scenario, the scheme to enhance Castle Green would be at risk as it was the least aligned to the delivery of housing and economic growth in Taunton.

On the motion of Councillor Coles, it was

Resolved that the changes to the Capital Programme of the capital elements of the Growth Point Funding Plan be agreed.

10. **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 Henley)**

Councillor Henley's report covered the following topics:-

- Core Council Review;
- The Budget;
- Southwest One;
- Pioneer Somerset;
- Carbon Neutral;
- EDF/Hinkley Point;
- Local Development Framework;
- Meetings;
- Corporate Strategy.

(ii) **Communications (Councillor Paul)**

Councillor Paul's report covered the following topics:-

- External Communications;
- Internal Communications;
- Scrutiny Committee Communications;
- Website Changes.

(iii) **Planning Policy and Transportation (Councillor Coles)**

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

- Southwest One;
- Core Strategy;
- New Planning regime for major infrastructure projects;
- Recent Government Consultations;
- Officer reports to the Planning Committee.

(iv) **Economic Development and the Arts (Councillor Mrs Smith)**

The report from Councillor Mrs Smith covered:-

- Economic Development Strategy;
- Business Matters Month;
- Tourism;
- Taunton Tourist Information Centre;
- Project Taunton.

(d) **Sports, Parks and Leisure (Councillor R Lees)**

Before making his report to Members, Councillor Lees reported that Vivary Park, Taunton had recently won its category in the Accessible Somerset Awards 2009, in recognition of the Council's accomplishments regarding disability access. Councillor Lees presented the award to the Mayor.

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

- Community Leisure;
- Play;
- Parks;
- Tone Leisure (Taunton Deane) Limited Activities;
- Facility News.

(vi) **Environmental Services (Councillor Slattery)**

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

- Food Safety/Health and Safety Team;
- Environmental Protection Team;
- SORT IT Plus Roll Out;
- Bring Banks;
- Fly Tipping;
- Licensing Unit – Public Safety.

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

Councillor Prior-Sankey submitted her report which drew attention to the following:-

- New Raglan Homes;
- Mortgage approvals double, but.....;
- Tenant Services Management Board;
- Tenant Services Authority – New Regulator, New Standards;
- Recession hits private tenants;
- Decent Homes for all.

(viii) **Resources (Councillor Mrs Wilson)**

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

- Southwest One Customer Contact Highlights;
- Update on progress with Investors in People Action Plan;
- Performance and Client Team;
- Revenues and Benefits.

(ix) **Community Leadership (Councillor A Wedderkopp)**

Councillor A Wedderkopp presented the Community Leadership report which focused on the following areas within that portfolio:-

- Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership;
- Recession Relief Fund;
- Local Strategic Partnership.

(Councillors Ms Durdan, Mrs Copley, Hall, C Hill, Meikle, Thorne, Mullins, Ms Herbert, Govier, Gaines and Mrs Hill left the meeting at 7.35 pm, 8.12 pm, 8.14 pm, 8.20 pm, 8.22 pm, 8.38 pm, 8.55 pm, 8.56 pm, 9.08 pm, 9.11 pm and 9.13 pm respectively.)

(The meeting ended at 9.24 pm.)