

# Taunton Deane Borough Council

## Council Meeting - 23 February 2016

### Part I

To deal with written questions to, and receive recommendations to the Council from, the Executive.

#### (i) Councillor Williams

##### (a) Earmarked Reserves Review

A review of a number of earmarked reserves held by the Council for various purposes has recently been undertaken with a view to balances being returned to the General Fund. .

The level of earmarked General Fund reserves as at 31 March 2015 was £11,686,000 which was equivalent to 88.6% of the Council's Net Revenue Budget.

As a result of the review, there are various earmarked reserves, totalling £92,000, that are no longer required. These related to the Stable Pensions Payroll Reserve, the Community Right to Challenge and the Bursary Account.

It is **recommended** that a Budget Return of £92,000 to General Reserves of surplus balances currently held in Earmarked Reserves be approved.

##### (b) Draft Treasury Management Strategy Statement, Annual Investment Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy 2016/2017

At its most recent meeting, the Executive considered the recommended strategy for managing the Council's cash resources including the approach to borrowing and investments. Approval was also sought for the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Investment Strategy (TMSS), the Annual Investment Strategy (AIS) and the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy.

The TMSS and related policies have been prepared taking into account the 2011 revised Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Treasury Management in Public Services Code of Practice and Cross Sectoral Guidance Notes ("the Code") and the Department of Communities and Local Government's Guidance on Local Government Investments ("the Guidance").

The key principles of the Code are as follows:-

- Ensuring that public bodies put in place the necessary framework to ensure the effective management and control of treasury management activities;
- That the framework clearly states that responsibility for treasury management lies clearly within the organisation and that the Strategy clearly states the appetite for risk;
- That value for money and suitable performance measures are reflected in the framework.

The Council's Finance Officers have worked closely with Arlingclose, the Council's Treasury Advisor, to consider the requirements of the Code and Guidance and determine the proposed TMSS, AIS and MRP Policy that ensure compliance and provide a set of 'rules' for the Council to follow in dealing with investments, borrowing and cash flow management.

The TMSS for 2016/2017 continues to recognise the increasing risks due to the new regulations in respect of 'bail in' for banks. In response to this risk and the wider continuing risks in the financial sector, the TMSS continues to build in greater "diversification" – so that surplus funds are held in a wider range of investments/accounts.

With regard to the MRP Policy, the Executive felt that the current approach which charged MRP at 4% per year, should be moved to a new approach which proposes calculating MRP based on a weighted average asset life of 45.57 years. This equates to an MRP rate of 2.19% and has enabled the Council to release budget savings of £382,000 in 2015/2016 with continuing annual savings of £234,000 from 2016/2017.

In the circumstances, it is **recommended** that Full Council approve:-

- (1) The Treasury Management Strategy Statement, Annual Investment Strategy and revised Minimum Reserve Provision Policy as set out in the Appendix to the report considered by the Executive;
- (2) The Prudential Indicators included within the Treasury Management Strategy Statement which includes limits for borrowing and investments; and
- (3) The change to the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy to be applied with effect from 1 April 2015.

### **(c) Corporate Strategy 2016-2020**

The Executive has recently discussed the contents of the Council's draft Corporate Strategy 2016-2020.

This Strategy - which has been developed with input from Members - provides a clear direction for the organisation to follow; with four key priority areas where the

Council should concentrate its efforts and resources between April 2016 and March 2020.

The key elements of the Strategy are:-

- refreshed high-level Corporate Priorities for the Council;
- design principles for the organisation;
- a refreshed vision; and
- clarity on the role and purpose of the Council.

It is felt the Strategy will lead to a more resourceful and responsive organisation that delivers outcomes to our communities in the most efficient and effective way and continues to play a key role in shaping Taunton Deane.

The Corporate Strategy is the key part of the 'Golden Thread' which sets corporate objectives from which key actions flow. This is illustrated in the following diagram:-



The Strategy is the product of a series of Member workshops which took place during the course of last year. From these workshops an initial draft of the Corporate Strategy was prepared and consulted upon both internally and externally.

The draft Strategy was considered by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 21 January 2016 where a number of specific comments were made for consideration by the Executive. A number of these comments have now been included in the latest version of the Corporate Strategy – a copy of which is attached to these recommendations for the attention of Members.

It is **recommended** that the revised Corporate Strategy be adopted.

#### **(d) General Fund Revenue Estimates 2016/2017**

**(These recommendations need to be read in conjunction with the report**

**submitted to the Executive on 4 February 2016 as amended which includes all the details of the proposed General Fund Budget to reflect the proposed Council Tax increase.)**

The Executive has considered its final 2016/2017 budget proposals which recognises the continuing financial challenges, with annual reductions in Government funding for Local Council services as the Government seeks to reduce the national deficit.

The 2016/2017 Budget has been prepared within the context of priorities identified by Members which are embedded in the Council's Corporate Business Plan.

The budget contains details on:-

- (i) the General Fund Revenue Budget proposals for 2016/2017, including a proposed Council Tax increase; and
- (ii) draft figures on the predicted financial position of the Council for subsequent years.

The Corporate Scrutiny Committee considered the draft budget proposals at its meeting on 21 January 2016. Specific recommendations made by Members related to a request for the proposal to spend £40,000 on a Railway Feasibility Study to be removed from the draft budget and the savings option to reduce the Voluntary and Community Organisation Grants by £40,000 to also be removed.

Details of the Provisional "Settlement Funding Assessment" for 2016/2017 was announced by the Department of Communities and Local Government on 17 December 2015 with the Final "Settlement Funding Assessment" announced on 8 February 2016.

The key messages to come out of the Minister's announcement on 8 February 2016 are as follows:

- As well as permitting Councils to increase Council Tax beyond previous levels where a referendum is required, the Government has also indicated that it is prepared to offer any Council a four-year funding settlement to 2019/2020 if they publish an efficiency plan. Councils have until Friday 14 October 2016 to respond to the offer of a four year settlement. Although further details from the Government are awaited on this issue, the Executive is minded to consider this offer if it is in the Council's interest to do so.
- Transitional grant has been given to Councils with the sharpest drop in Revenue Support Grant (RSG). The grant will be worth £150,000,000 a year paid for the first two years (i.e. 2016/2017 and 2017/2018).
- The Department of Communities and Local Government will conduct a review of what the Needs Assessment formula should be and use it to determine the transition to 100% Business Rates retention.
- The Rural Services Delivery Grant will be increased from £15,500,000 in 2015/2016 to £80,500,000 in 2016/2017. This is to recognise the difficulty of providing services in sparse rural areas.
- The Minister will also consult on allowing well-performing Planning

Departments to increase their fees in line with inflation at the most, providing that the revenue reduces the cross subsidy that the Planning function already receives from Council Tax payers.

- The Minister also confirmed that there will be no “tariff adjustment”/negative Rate Support Grant in 2017/2018 and 2018/2019. This has no effect for Taunton Deane as our “tariff” will not take effect until 2019/2020.

The proposed budget for Taunton Deane contains a proposed Council Tax increase of 3.62% (£5 on a Band D) for 2016/2017 which will mean that the Band D Council Tax will rise to £142.88 per year. The Band D taxpayer will, therefore, receive all the services provided by the Council in 2016/2017 at a cost of £2.74 per week.

Through the Provisional and Final Settlement the Government had announced that the Somerset County Council and the five District Councils in Somerset can raise additional funding for the new Somerset Rivers Authority by setting a precept based on up to 1.25% of each Council’s 2015/2016 basic tax rate – which for Taunton Deane is £1.74 a year for a Band D. This will fund the Somerset Rivers Authority in 2016/2017 pending its establishment as a precepting body.

An increase in the Council’s own basic Band D tax of £5 plus the £1.74 increase to precept for the Somerset Rivers Authority would mean a combined increase of £6.74 (4.89%) a year for a Band D. This will result in a total Band D charge for Taunton Deane of £144.62 on the Council Tax bills in 2016/2017.

The estimated Special Expenses chargeable to the non-parished area of Taunton in 2016/2017 amounts to £43,362, which reflects a zero increase in the special expenses per Band D equivalent of £2.98 per property per year in the Unparished Area. In addition, the Unparished Area Budget had received a notional Council Tax Support Grant of £4,020 in 2016/2017 giving a total budget for the year of £47,382.

It is a requirement for the Council to prepare not only budgets for the following financial year but to also provide indicative figures into future years. The Medium Term Financial Plan provides an indication of the expected budget gap going forward into 2016/2017 and beyond and a summary of this position is reflected in the following table:-

	2016/17 £	2017/18 £	2018/19 £	2019/20 £	2020/21 £
Forecast Net Expenditure	10,280,063	10,633,062	11,439,334	11,962,163	12,381,794
SRA Contribution	67,987	0	0	0	0
Earmarked Reserves	3,334,152	3,007,050	2,260,100	1,900,480	1,717,700
General Reserves	0	0	0	0	0
Unparished CTRS Grant	4,020	2,010	0	0	0
Unparished Precept (SER)	43,360	44,230	45,110	45,980	46,850
Parish CTRS Grant	25,980	12,990	0	0	0
<b>TDBC NET EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>13,755,562</b>	<b>13,699,342</b>	<b>13,744,544</b>	<b>13,908,623</b>	<b>14,146,344</b>
Parish precepts	640,320	640,320	640,320	640,320	640,320
<b>TOTAL NET BUDGET</b>	<b>14,395,882</b>	<b>14,339,662</b>	<b>14,384,864</b>	<b>14,548,943</b>	<b>14,786,664</b>
Retained Business Rates	-2,959,304	-2,977,089	-3,119,534	-3,060,691	-3,130,802
Collection Fund Surplus – BR	191,668	0	0	0	0
Revenue Support Grant	-1,235,137	-644,801	-279,788	0	0
Rural Services Delivery Grant	-27,582	-22,271	-17,132	-22,271	-22,271
Transition Grant	-16,930	-16,864	0	0	0
New Homes Bonus	-3,883,310	-3,416,310	-2,669,360	-2,309,740	-2,126,960
Council Tax – TDBC	-5,582,730	-5,750,630	-5,923,320	-6,101,310	-6,284,720
Council Tax – To Fund SRA	-67,987	0	0	0	0
Council Tax – Special Expenses	-43,360	-44,230	-45,110	-45,980	-46,850
Collection Fund Bal – CTax	-130,890	0	0	0	0
<b>TDBC NET FUNDING</b>	<b>-13,755,562</b>	<b>-12,872,195</b>	<b>-12,054,244</b>	<b>-11,539,992</b>	<b>-11,611,603</b>
Council Tax – Parishes	-640,320	-640,320	-640,320	-640,320	-640,320
<b>TOTAL FUNDING</b>	<b>-14,395,882</b>	<b>-13,512,515</b>	<b>12,694,564</b>	<b>12,180,312</b>	<b>-12,251,923</b>
Budget Gap – In Year	0	827,147	863,152	678,331	166,110
Budget Gap – Cumulative	0	827,147	1,690,300	2,368,631	2,534,742

The above estimates include the following main assumptions related to funding:-

- Revenue Support Grant for 2016/17 is as set out in the Final Finance Settlement, and will diminish to nil by 2019/20.
- The updated estimates for Business Rates funding for 2016/17 take into account the RPI increase at 0.80%, and the anticipated tariff adjustment in 2019/20.
- The updated estimates for New Homes Bonus funding assume that the number of years allocation will drop, therefore in 2017/2018 Taunton Deane will only receive five years allocation and in 2018/2019 and subsequent years we will only receive a four year allocation.
- Council Tax is assumed to increase by £5.00 (3.62%) in 2016/2017 then 1.99% each subsequent year.

It is proposed that the minimum acceptable reserves position should be increased to £1,600,000. Although the current Budget for 2016/2017 will seek to maintain reserves above this minimum, currently the General Fund Reserves will only be £314,000 above the new recommended minimum balance.

Based on the MTFP position set out above the General Reserves forecast is summarised as follows:-

### General Reserves Forecast

	2016/17 £k	2017/18 £k	2018/19 £k	2019/20 £k	2020/21 £k
Estimated Balance B/F	1,914	1,914	1,087	-603	-2,972
Predicted Budget Gap	0	-827	-1,690	-2,369	-2,534
<b>Estimated Balance C/F</b>	<b>1,914</b>	<b>1,087</b>	<b>-603</b>	<b>-2,972</b>	<b>-5,506</b>

Clearly the Council will need to ensure action is taken to ensure the projected financial deficit over the medium term is avoided and minimum balances are maintained. This is essential for the continuing financial resilience and sustainability of the Council. The Budget Proposals and Options presented for consideration provide opportunities to make significant progress towards addressing the financial challenge.

The Council's Section 151 Officer has a duty to comment, as part of the budget setting process on the robustness of the budget and the adequacy of reserves. In her response, Shirlene Adam has stated that she believes the Council's reserves to be adequate and the budget estimates used in preparing the 2016/2017 budget to be robust.

A number of Equalities Impact Assessments have been prepared in relation to the budget proposals and these were taken into account by the Executive when the budget proposals were considered.

It is therefore **recommended** that the General Fund Revenue Budget for 2016/2017 be agreed and that Full Council:-

- (a) Note the forecast Medium Term Financial Plan and Reserves position, and note the S151 Officer's Robustness Statement as set out in Appendix A of this report.
- (b) Approve the General Fund Net Revenue Budget 2016/17 of £14,395,882, and including a Basic Council Tax Requirement budget of £5,582,700 and Special Expenses of £43,630, and net reserve transfers totalling £3,334,152.
- (c) Approve a Council Tax increase of 3.62%, increasing the Band D basic tax rate by £5 to £142.88 per year.
- (d) Approve a further 2016/17 one-off Council Tax increase of 1.25% in respect of funding for the Somerset Rivers Authority, adding £1.74 to a Band D tax charge per year.
- (e) Approve the transfer of any unallocated year end under-/overspend in the 2015/16 General Fund Revenue Account Outturn to/from the General Fund reserves.
- (f) Approve the minimum reserves level at £1,600,000.
- (g) Delegate a decision to the Leader, Portfolio Holder for Resources and the

Section 151 Officer regarding acceptance of a four year settlement provided it is in the Council's interests to do so.

## **(e) Capital Programme Budget Estimates 2016/2017**

**(These recommendations need to be read in conjunction with the report submitted to the Executive on 4 February 2016 as amended which includes all the details of the proposed Capital Programme.)**

The Executive has also considered the proposed General Fund (GF) and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programmes for 2016/2017.

### **2016/2017 Draft General Fund Capital Programme**

The current capital strategy includes the following basis for prioritising schemes:-

- 1) Business Continuity (corporate/organisational/health and safety);
- 2) Statutory Service Investment (to get statutory minimum/contractual/continuity);
- 3) Growth / Transformation;
- 4) Invest to Save; and
- 5) Other.

The recommended General Fund Capital Programme for 2016/2017 includes bids totalling £1,323,000 split between Deane DLO Schemes and General Fund Schemes.

Funding for capital investment by the Council can come from a variety of sources including:-

- Capital Receipts;
- Grant Funding;
- Capital Contributions (for example from another Local Authority or Section 106 Agreement funding);
- Revenue budgets/reserves (often referred as RCCO – Revenue Contributions to Capital Outlay); and
- Borrowing.

All of the schemes in the Capital Programme can be fully funded through a combination of revenue contributions (DLO and General), capital reserves plus grant funding provided via Somerset County Council. As a result, the Capital Programme which incorporates all of the reported bids is supported by the Executive.

### **Capital Programme for Growth and Regeneration 2016/2017**

In addition to the above schemes, Growth and Regeneration remains a top priority for the Council. This commitment has been reflected over recent years, by the allocation of New Homes Bonus (NHB) funding for these purposes.

Members have recently supported investment in principle of £16,600,000 from



projected NHB receipts towards a number of growth spend categories reflecting the priorities established in the Taunton Growth Prospectus and aligned with the relevant plans and priorities of key partners.

£16,000,000 of the proposed spend is expected to be recognised as capital expenditure (with revenue costs of £500,000 for marketing, promotion and inward investment and £100,000 for the preparation of Local Development Orders) and as such is included in the proposed Growth Capital Programme – shown below:-

#### **Proposed NHB Allocation and Indicative Spend Profile**

<b>Growth project / category</b>	<b>2016/17 £</b>	<b>2017/18 £</b>	<b>2018/19 £</b>	<b>2019/20 £</b>	<b>2020/21 £</b>	<b>Total NHB allocation £</b>
Taunton Strategic Flood Alleviation			1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	<b>3,000,000</b>
Major transport schemes	400,000	800,000	1,000,000	300,000		<b>2,500,000</b>
Town Centre regeneration	500,000	750,000	750,000	500,000		<b>2,500,000</b>
Employment site enabling and innovation to promote Growth		2,000,000	2,000,000			<b>4,000,000</b>
Urban Extensions		1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	<b>4,000,000</b>
<b>TOTAL CAPITAL COSTS</b>	<b>900,000</b>	<b>4,550,000</b>	<b>5,750,000</b>	<b>2,800,000</b>	<b>2,000,000</b>	<b>16,000,000</b>

The Autumn Statement and subsequent Provisional Settlement announcements have suggested that Government consultation on a revision of the NHB grant funding will effectively reduce the grant by a 1/3<sup>rd</sup> in the future.

Any reduced NHB will therefore result in insufficient funds to cover all of the proposed £16,600,000 spend within the anticipated timeframe. The Council acknowledged this funding risk when it approved the investment and has accepted that plans will need to be reviewed when updated funding information is confirmed.

It is nevertheless proposed to include £900,000 within the approved Capital Programme for 2016/2017. Investment in future years will remain indicative and subject to annual review.

#### **2016/2017 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme**

The HRA Capital Programme 2016/2017 totals £8,794,000. This is provided to deliver the prioritised capital investment requirements included in the current Business Plan for the next budget year. The current five-year HRA Capital Programme includes forecast capital expenditure requirements for the period 2016/2017 to 2020/2021, as identified in the Business Plan. The programme will be subject to change pending the outcome of the recently approved stock survey.

The programme will be funded from the Major Repairs Reserve (from depreciation), revenue contribution (RCCO) from the base budget and capital receipts.

The Capital Programme Budget Estimates 2016/2017 were presented to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 21 January 2016 for review and comment. No

specific amendments to the Budget were formally recommended by the Committee.

The Executive then recommended the proposed budget at its meeting on 4 February 2016, however since this meeting an additional budget of £134,000 has been requested in respect of the Weavers Arms redevelopment and is included within this report along with a budget of £71,000 also being included in 2016/2017 for Meeting Halls. If the proposed rental increase of 0.9% in Supported Housing is not approved, this budget will be reviewed.

**Recommended that:-**

- (a) The General Fund Capital Programme Budget of £1,323,000 for 2016/2017, plus £900,000 in respect of the Growth and Infrastructure Capital Budget in 2016/2017 be approved; and
- (b) The Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme of £8.794,000 for 2016/2017 be also approved.

## **(ii) Councillor Terry Beale**

### **Housing Revenue Account Estimates 2016/2017**

**(These recommendations need to be read in conjunction with the report submitted to the Executive on 4 February 2016 as amended which includes all the details of the proposed Housing Revenue Account Budget.)**

The Executive has given consideration to the proposed Housing Revenue Account (HRA) estimates for the 2016/2017 Financial Year.

2016/2017 will be the fifth year of operating the HRA under self-financing arrangements. The Council had taken on debt of £85,00,000 in March 2012 to enable the Council to operate self-financing arrangements.

However, changes in national policy announced in 2015 – particularly the Welfare Reform and Work Bill and the Housing and Planning Bill – has greatly affected the long term financial position of the HRA Business Plan.

Dwelling rents for more than 5,800 properties provide annual income of over £24,000,000 for the HRA.

The Welfare Reform and Work Bill in its original form set out a 1% annual reduction in all social rents from 1 April 2016 for four years. This will negate the 10 year national rent policy for social housing that was implemented in April 2015, and will therefore greatly reduce the income expectations for the HRA as shown in the table below:-

### ***Reduction in Dwelling Rent Income Compared to the Business Plan***

	Reduction in Rent Income Compared to Business Plan				
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Impact of lower inflation (-0.1%)	439,900	459,000	472,400	487,000	501,800
Additional impact of change in social housing rent policy:-					
If rent policy is returned to CPI + 1% from 2020/2021 to end of 10 year Rent Policy	461,100	1,465,500	2,480,000	3,510,100	3,609,200
If rent policy is returned to CPI only from 2020/2021	461,100	1,465,500	2,480,000	3,510,100	3,845,600

*Note: This table does not reflect the adjustment for supported housing rent included in the final proposed 2016/2017 budget and rent setting.*

When forecast over the full 30 year length of the Business Plan, this reduction in rent represents a significant reduction in income to the HRA.

In January 2016, when the Welfare Reform and Work Bill was being considered in the House of Lords, Lord Freud (on behalf of the Government) announced that the Bill will be amended to exempt Supported Housing from the 1% cut in rent for one year.

Taunton Deane's rent policy, as approved in the HRA Business Plan, is for annual increases of CPI plus 1%. This would equate to an increase of 0.9% for 2016/2017 (with CPI of -0.1%).

Members are therefore able to increase rents in line with the existing rent policy for Supported Housing Schemes, including sheltered housing, by up to CPI +1% for one year only from April 2016.

Local Authorities have previously had the power and duty to set their own rents, however the Welfare Reform and Work Bill no longer allows for non-Supported Housing rents to be above a 1% reduction. This will be enforced through Chapter 6 and 7 of Part 2 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008.

In line with the amended national rent guidance it is proposed that the average weekly rent for dwellings for 2016/2017 should be set at the guideline rent of £83.31, a decrease of 0.7% or £0.59 per week. This is based on a 0.9% increase in Supported Housing rents, which is in line with the approved rent policy in the Business Plan, and a decrease of 1% in General Needs rents, in line with the Welfare Reform and Work Bill.

Around 8.1% of HRA income – or £2,150,000 – came from non-dwelling rents, charges for services and facilities and contributions to HRA costs from leaseholders and others. It was proposed to increase these budget lines generally by 0.8%.

A separate review of Sheltered Housing had been undertaken and service charges have been set at a flat rate of £10.93 for 2016/2017.

Although in December 2015 the estimated budget gap for 2016/2017 was £386,000, a number of changes have been incorporated which now includes the proposals to

deliver a balanced budget in the forthcoming financial year.

The Draft Housing Revenue Account Budget was presented to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 21 January 2016 for review and comment. No specific amendments to the Draft Budget were formally recommended by the Committee.

The Tenant Services Management Board has also considered the proposed HRA Budget.

**Recommended that:-**

- (a) The average rent decrease of 0.7% for 2016/17, with increases of 0.9% in Supported Housing and decreases of 1% in General Needs housing be approved; and
- (b) The Housing Revenue Account Budget for 2016/2017 be also approved.

### **(iii) Councillor Jane Warmington**

#### **Taunton Youth and Community Centre Funds**

Before Christmas the Executive considered a report concerning the options for allocating the remaining funding from the sale of the former Taunton Youth and Community Centre (TYCC) site in Castle Street, Taunton which had been received from the Trustees of the TYCC.

In 2013, it had been agreed to accept the Trustees' proceeds from the sale of the site at Castle Street, Tangier on the understanding that the money would be ring fenced by the Council for capital funding of youth projects to be agreed at the appropriate time. This funding amounted to £531,472.84.

Full Council had agreed in August 2014 to allocate £200,000 to the COACH Project in French Weir Park, Taunton and a further £50,000 in March 2015, leaving £281,472.84 to be committed to youth capital projects.

Following detailed consideration, the Executive has agreed that the Somerset Community Foundation should be requested to administer the distribution of the remaining funding by way of a Capital Grant Fund, overseen by a cross party Grants Panel who would agree the application process and grant awards.

In the circumstances, it is **recommended** that a supplementary estimate of £281,472.84 be approved for the 2015/2016 Capital Programme for Youth Project Capital Grants to be funded by the Taunton Youth and Community Centre allocation arising from the sale of land at Castle Street, Taunton.

## **Taunton Deane Borough Council**

### **Corporate Strategy 2016 - 20**

#### **People**



#### **Business & Enterprise**



#### **Our Place**

#### **An Efficient & Modern Council**

**“Working with our communities to keep Taunton Deane a great place in which to live, work, learn and enjoy”**

# Introduction



Cllr. John Williams  
Leader of the  
Council



Penny James  
Chief Executive

## Welcome to Taunton Deane Borough Council's Corporate Strategy for 2016-20.

The Strategy outlines our strategic direction for the next four years, setting out our vision, priorities, values and principles. It will guide our planning and allocation of resources as we establish detailed corporate and operational plans each year.

We are committed to putting this Strategy into action and making a difference for local people and business.

We know that the next four years will continue to be challenging, but our level of ambition has remained undiminished. We recognise we will have to fundamentally transform the way we think and the way services are delivered to respond successfully to these challenges.

However, we are in a good position to make sure the Council is fit for the future and can continue to play a major role in delivering economic growth and prosperity for our communities, ensure outcomes important to our communities are delivered and to fight for the best interests of Taunton Deane at a regional and national level.

We will build upon our good relationships with partners to make sure public money continues to be spent well and to deliver projects that improve the quality of life of our residents.

Our ambition is to make Taunton Deane an even better place in which to live, work, learn and enjoy.

**“Working with our communities to keep Taunton Deane a great place in which to live, work, learn and enjoy”**

## The Purpose of this Strategy

This Strategy provides a clear direction for the organisation to follow; with four key priority areas where the Council will concentrate its efforts and resources between April 2016 and March 2020.

Our activities will be based on a clear set of values and principles and are dependent upon working together – residents, partners, business, voluntary sector, our colleagues across the public sector and all levels of politicians and public servants in Taunton, the County of Somerset and London.

This Strategy will lead to a more resourceful and responsive organisation that delivers outcomes to our communities in the most efficient and effective way and continues to play a key role in shaping Taunton Deane.

This Strategy will provide direction for our Corporate Plan. The Corporate Plan will describe the actions we will take each year in order to achieve our aspirations and sets out how we will monitor and measure our progress.

The Plan will be refreshed annually to take account of any local or national changes.

The Corporate Plan in turn will influence team plans as well as individual plans to ensure every service and every person within the organisation is pulling in the same direction and understand the role they play in achieving the priority outcomes for our communities.





## Our Role and Purpose

**The Council exists to serve and represent the interests of its citizens and communities and to ensure the provision of the best possible services for its residents.**

The Council has various roles to play in order to achieve positive outcomes for our communities:

**a Enabling -**

*for example, working with others such as developers and housing associations to increase the supply of affordable homes within the district;*

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**b Championing / Lobbying –**

*speaking up for Taunton Deane at County, regional and national level;*

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**c Public Safety –**

*protecting the public through our statutory roles in relation to health & Safety, dangerous structures, noise nuisance, food safety, air and water quality;*

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**d Supporting –**

*our communities and in particular keeping rural communities alive, as well as the vital work carried out by the voluntary sector;*

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**e Promoting –**

*Taunton Deane as great place in which to live and work as well as to visit;*

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**f Challenging –**

*the performance and plans of other public service providers (e.g. Police, County Council, NHS);*

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**g Taking Strategic View –**

*taking a district wide view of the needs of all of the communities within Taunton Deane and designing service provision around this.*

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**“Working with our communities to keep Taunton Deane a great place in which to live, work, learn and enjoy”**



## Our Core Values and Principles

**At the heart of this strategy is a set of core values and principles that express the beliefs of the Council and will underpin the actions of the Council over the next four years.**

### Our values inform our behaviours



## Our Design Principles

### Our principles inform our decision making

The following key principles will guide our approach to service delivery and the structure of the Council over the next four years:

- a Taunton Deane will remain as a separate democratic Council;*
- b The Council's role will be to help deliver outcomes and will use a wide range of service delivery options and providers to achieve this;*
- c The Council will embrace the principles of a Social Enterprise - acting commercially to deliver surplus to reinvest in the delivery of our priority outcomes and services;*
- d We will solely focus on agreed priority outcomes and be customer centric/focused;*

## Our Design Principles - continued

- e We will minimise governance (internal bureaucracy /'red tape') whilst protecting the principles of transparency, probity, good leadership and management;
- f Our customer access arrangements will maximise self-service;
- g We will provide a transparent, open and accessible performance management system that enables effective and timely information to members, staff and customers
- h All services should offer value for money and be business-like in their approach;
- i Wherever possible, we should work with partners in our locality to collectively commission locally important services using our combined resources and avoiding duplication;
- j Councillors should be supported to be active advocates, champions and lobbyists to challenge partners on issues that affect their wards or wider areas;
- k We will develop an organisation where work is an activity and not a place. The Council will go to the community rather than require the customer to physically come to it;
- l We will recruit, retrain, redeploy, and reward our people to ensure we have the right skills, attitudes and behaviours needed to deliver our ambitions;
- m We will deliver a 'case management' approach to dealing with customers that see's one point of contact take responsibility for customer's issues to the point of resolution. This negates the need for the customer to know how the system operates, which tier of government is responsible and who does what within the Council;
- n We will provide a growth and development function that delivers growth, inward investment and economic, social and cultural prosperity. The function must return a net increase in resources to the Council;
- o We will provide a mechanism, in the absence of a 3rd tier of local government in the Taunton urban area, to have conversations and take decisions on locality issues;
- p We will provide a Housing function that delivers value for money, customer focussed services to our tenants and others living on our estates;
- q We will provide an ability to trade and specifically to deliver housing outside of the Housing Revenue Account and maximise the return on our own assets and investments the Councils seek to make.

**“Working with our communities to keep Taunton Deane  
a great place in which to live, work, learn and enjoy”**

## Key Theme 1

## People

### Why is this important?

**Taunton Deane is growing and will have an increasing older population. These changes will require greater housing and employment provision as well as services which support the needs of an older population and our most vulnerable residents.**



### The key issues we aim to influence and improve:

- a Facilitate an increase in the availability of affordable homes and Council homes for local people – to both buy and to rent;
- b Work with partners in both the private and public sector to develop a range of additional housing types suitable in particular for single person households, young people in rural communities and elderly people;
- c Work with others to support the wellbeing of an older population and our most vulnerable residents;
- d Facilitate the creation a broad range of high quality employment opportunities that recognises the different needs of rural and town communities in order to provide local people with more rewarding futures.

## Key Theme 2

## Business & Enterprise

### Why is this important?

**An increasing local working-age population and the desire to keep our town centres vibrant means that sustaining our local economy must be central to the Council's priorities and planning.**



### The key issues we aim to influence and improve:

- a Encourage inward investment and the promotion of the district as a place in which to visit and do business;
- b Further develop the offering of the Deane in terms of social, leisure and culture in order to make the area an even more attractive proposition for investment;
- c Ensure the Council is perceived as being 'business friendly', ensuring rules are applied appropriately and are not excessive;
- d Promote the Taunton town centre and the existing 'gems' such as the Museum of Somerset and Castle Green;
- e Identify suitable affordable employment sites, particularly in rural areas;
- f Push for the rollout of fibre broadband and better mobile phone signal coverage across the Deane;
- g Continue to work with partners to remove barriers to jobs and housing growth by addressing infrastructure constraints and securing funding for that infrastructure.
- h Support business start-ups and expansion within the Deane.

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## Key Theme 3

## Our Place

### Why is this important?

**We want to keep Taunton Deane a place to be proud of and one which is well-maintained, welcoming to residents, visitors and businesses and is easy to get around.**



### The key issues we aim to influence and improve:

- a Work with, lobby and influence others to further improve the Deane's transport links including additional cycle paths, measures that tackle congestion as well as a new railway station for Wellington.
- b Work with others to improve wayfinding within the Deane through improved signage and support improved signage at the entry points from the motorway into the Deane which promotes the area as a place to visit;
- c Make finding a car parking space in Taunton quicker and easier through the provision of electronic parking signs;
- d Ensure our high streets are clean and attractive places to visit;
- e Ensuring our environment remains attractive including through street cleaning and grass cutting;
- f Work with partners and the community to tackle speeding in the Deane;
- g Work with others to introduce measures that reduce the risk of flooding within our communities.



## Key Theme 4

### An Efficient & Modern Council

#### Why is this important?

Like all Councils, we continue to be challenged by significant budget cuts and pressure on services. We need to continue to collaborate with a range of organisations to deliver and enable outcomes that are important to our communities and find new ways of working that ensure we continue to get the best possible value out of the funds available to us.



#### The key issues we aim to influence and improve:

- a Review how services are delivered, by whom and to what standard in order to best allocate our resources;
- b Make better use of our land and property assets; investing in, transferring or selling assets where it makes sense to do so;
- c Support members to undertake their roles within their communities through improved access to information;
- d Improve access to service information and the ability to for customers and members to self-serve through delivering an improved Council website.

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## For more information contact

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### English

If you would like this document translated into other languages or in Braille, large print, audio tape, or CD please telephone us on 01823 356356 or e-mail us at [enquiries@tauntondeane.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@tauntondeane.gov.uk)

### Bengali

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### Chinese

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### Hindi

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### Portuguese

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