

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 31 March 2015 at 6.30 p.m.

Present The Mayor (Councillor D Durdan)
The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Mrs Hill)
Councillors Mrs Adkins, Mrs Allgrove, Beaven, Bowrah, Cavill, Coles, Denington, Miss Durdan, Edwards, Farbahi, Mrs Floyd, A Govier, Mrs Govier, Hall, Hayward, Henley, Mrs Herbert, C Hill, Horsley, Hunt, Miss James, Ms Lisgo, Meikle, Morrell, Prior-Sankey, D Reed, Mrs Reed, Ross, Gill Slattery, T Slattery, Mrs Smith, P Smith, Mrs Stock-Williams, Tooze, Mrs Warmington, Watson, Mrs Waymouth, Ms Webber, A Wedderkopp, D Wedderkopp, Williams and Wren

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of Taunton Deane Borough Council held on 24 February 2015, copies having been sent to each Member, were signed by the Mayor.

2. Apologies

Councillors Mrs Baker, Bishop, Gaines, R Lees, Mrs Lees, Nottrodt and Miss Smith.

3. Declaration of Interests

Councillors Coles, A Govier, Prior-Sankey, A Wedderkopp and D Wedderkopp declared personal interests as Members of Somerset County Council. Councillor Henley declared personal interests both as a Member of Somerset County Council and as an employee of Job Centre Plus. Councillor Hunt declared personal interests both as a Member of Somerset County Council and as one of the Council's representatives on the Somerset Waste Board. Councillor Ross declared personal interests as one of the Council's representatives on the Somerset Waste Board and as the Alternate Director of Southwest One. Councillor Mrs Hill declared a personal interest as an employee of Somerset County Council. Councillor Tooze declared personal interests as an employee of the UK Hydrographic Office and as the Vice-Chairman of the North Taunton Partnership. Councillor Mrs Herbert declared a personal interest as an employee of the Department of Work and Pensions. Councillor Wren declared a personal interest as Clerk to Milverton Parish Council. Councillor D Durdan declared a prejudicial interest as a Tone Leisure Board representative. Councillor Gill Slattery declared personal interests as a member of the Board of Governors at Somerset College, as a representative on the Parrett Internal Drainage Board and as a member of the National Steering Group for the Public Health England/Kings College, London longitudinal study into the impact of flooding on health and wellbeing .

Councillor Farbahi declared a personal interest as a local owner of land in Taunton Deane. Councillor Ms Lisgo declared a personal interest as a Director of Tone FM.

4. **Public Question Time**

- (1) Mr David Orr repeated his primary concerns about the Southwest One (SW1) contract.

It had cost the Council around £500,000 to enter into this controversial contract with IBM back in 2007 and it was likely to cost at least that to get out of the contract and implement the succession option.

The current project budget request for £47,000 was clearly a "starter for 10" and Taunton Deane could expect further costs, including a significant write down on the remaining book value of SAP.

Back in 2005, the Councils had decided that a large outsource of "back office" services in a joint venture was "the right answer" with the next two and a half years spent working backwards from that answer to try and make a viable Business Case.

Mr Orr requested the Council not to make a similar mistake by rushing into a preferred option without making sure that a clear view existed of what sort of services the Council would be delivering in future - the "New Operating Model".

If you do not know what sort of Council you wanted to be, then how would you know what sort of IT would be needed to support the Council? Or what option would be best for delivering the IT needed?

As soon as the elections were over, it was hoped that the new Council would rapidly align the Council shaping work with the Phase 1 options appraisal.

Clearly, the original SW1 Business Case was flawed, as no-one modelled for static or falling budgets. The ridiculous claims of £192,000,000 of procurement savings were never ever there. Predicting the complex and fast changing real world in a fixed written contract for 10 years was next to impossible.

Mr Orr went on to hope that a new administration would endorse the sensible and non-parochial sharing of offices with the Somerset County Council (SCC) who had recently committed capital budgets for a multi-user revamp of the site, together with the IT needed to support that. It would therefore be absurd for Taunton Deane and West Somerset to have a separate set of IT infrastructure and suppliers.

In the circumstances, he supported the Government policy that multi-sourcing with shorter and more manageable contracts was the best way forward.

- (2) Mr Nigel Behan of the Unite Union referred to the SW1 Succession Planning

report which was due to be considered later in the meeting. He asked:-

- (i) Would there be joint working with SCC and West Somerset Council (WSC) for the SW1 exit strategy?
- (ii) Would there be joint ICT with SCC in County Hall when Taunton Deane relocate?
- (iii) (a) Would the review take account of the recently reported discussions about joint working between Avon and Somerset Police and Wiltshire Police?
(b) What was the outcome of the "partners" conference call (about the issues mentioned in a)) in January 2015?
- (iv) Would the Taunton Deane review also include considering creating jobs in the local economy?
- (v) Could the research reports prepared by Professor Dexter Whitfield (from the European Services Strategy Unit) - about Project ISiS becoming SW1 - be revisited for some 'lessons learnt' and planning for the future?
- (vi) What were the concerns in the ICT services in relation to capacity to deliver projects?
- (vii) Which projects had been affected?
- (vii) What impact had the delays in the pricing of additional work had on service delivery and the budget?

In response to Messrs. Orr and Behan, Councillor Mrs Stock-Williams stated that many of the points raised had already been addressed by the Council. However, if there were particular issues where a further response was required, they were encouraged to contact the Democratic Services Manager who would be able to arrange this.

(3) Mr Alan Debenham referred to the following matters:-

- (i) The SW1 situation was, in his view, an absolute debacle with the expected savings unlikely to be met. Why had Councillors not tracked this in detail? Why was this disaster allowed to happen?
- (ii) In preparation for Hinkley C, EDF had decimated parts of the countryside. Would this land be re-instated to its former condition if the new power station did not go ahead?
- (iii) With the elections due in just over a month's time, it had become very clear that a significant number of electors were not currently on the Register. What was the Council doing to tackle this problem?

In response, Councillor Williams stated that SW1 had not been an unmitigated disaster and he expressed his thanks to the officers for dealing with such a complex contract. Councillor Williams also confirmed that EDF would be responsible for re-instating land should the project not proceed.

Councillor Mrs Stock-Williams confirmed that a number of reminders had been sent out to those eligible to be included on the Electoral Register. However, the Council could not compel members of the public to add their names. This

was a voluntary choice.

5. **Treasury Management Strategy Statement, Annual Investment Strategy and Minimum Revenue Position**

Considered report previously circulated, the purpose of which was to explain and obtain approval of the recommended strategy for managing the Council's cash resources including the approach to borrowing and investments.

The report also sought the formal approval of the Treasury Management Strategy Statement, Annual Investment Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy which had to be approved by Full Council by 31 March each year in line with the regulations.

The strategy had been prepared taking into account professional advice and information from the Council's treasury management advisor Arlingclose.

The strategy continued to prioritise security and liquidity of cash over investment returns. This year the strategy had been updated to reflect increasing treasury risks due to impact of the global economy on the financial sector and changes in regulations in respect of 'bail in' by United Kingdom banks, as failing banks would no longer be 'bailed out' by the Government.

In short, the Council's approach in response to this increased risk was to spread surplus funds through a wider range of investments and deposits and reduce the limits for amounts held with each institution.

It was noted that the Council currently had external borrowing of £92,200,000 which was all attributable to the Housing Revenue Account.

The Council's investment balances had fluctuated and currently ranged between £29,000,000 and £40,000,000.

Short-term interest rates were still at 0.5% and this rate was expected to be at this level until mid-2015.

Resolved that the 2015/2016 Treasury Management Strategy Statement, incorporating the Annual Investment Strategy, Minimum Revenue Position Policy and Prudential Indicators be approved.

6. **Centre for Outdoor Activities and Community Hub (COACH)**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the latest position with regard to the construction of the Centre for Outdoor Activities and Community Hub (COACH).

The proposed COACH facility would be both a building, including a floodable boat store and a community facility. The intention was to provide a sustainable and functional permanent home for a wide variety of clubs and

Community Groups as detailed in the Business Plan previously produced by COACH.

Following a previous Full Council approval to earmark £200,000 from the Trustees proceeds from the former Taunton Youth and Community Centre land sale, Sport England had confirmed their award of grant funding of £454,000. Along with funding from some additional sources, a total of £730,000 funding had been secured.

A tendering exercise had subsequently been undertaken where five tenders had been received. However, the lowest price received had been in the sum of £1,300,000.

The Cost Plan immediately prior to the receipt of the tenders had predicted a total project cost of £860,000 which equated to a per square metre cost of £1,790/sq metre. Examination of the tenders had shown that the higher than expected prices could be attributed in part to the following factors:-

- Higher than normal overheads due to site location;
- Requirement for temporary haul road across the park and fencing to the route;
- Provision of temporary public WCs for the duration of the works;
- Increased cost of piling (extra depth) following receipt of the soils investigation report;
- Steelwork price increases;
- Abnormal materials and general labour prices increases;
- Exceptionally high cost of the zinc cladding system specified in the tender;
- The cost of the green roof (omitted from cost plan) Which had been reintroduced at the tender stage;
- Mechanical and electrical services were not designed at the tender stage. A provisional sum of £80,000 had been included however once proposals were received costs rose to £51,000 for mechanical and £57,000 for electrical;
- The structural glass balustrade to the terraces was priced at £56,000;
- The cost of the specialist electrically operated boat house door came out at £18,000; and
- The cost of the spiral staircase specified came out at £19,000.

Further reported that the project had discovered three major power cables below the proposed build location which for affordability reasons required a redesign of the scheme. The current cost forecast by the contractor was £840,000 and this represented a specification that the Trustees were happy with and included all the abnormal costs associated with the location of the site. The latest design had been arrived at in close co-operation with Sport England and their technical advisers. A revised planning application had been submitted for decision on the 16 March 2015

The revised plans had been costed by COACH's preferred contractor including a specification for the changing rooms to meet Sport England

criteria. Sport England had confirmed additional funds of £30,000 taking their total grant funding to £484,000

To enable the project to maintain Sport England standards, the Business Case objectives could not be value engineered any further. Therefore the project would require an additional £80,000 of funding to enable the project to proceed, £50,000 of which had been requested from the Council. The Trustees were confident that they would be able to attract match funding to achieve the remaining £30,000.

Resolved that:-

- (1) The contents of the report be noted; and
- (2) An additional £50,000 from the Taunton Youth and Community Centre land sale funding be assigned as funding for the COACH project.

(Councillor Mrs Waymouth declared a personal interest in the above item as a Trustee of the Bishop Fox Education Trust.)

7. Southwest One Succession Planning

Considered report previously circulated concerning Southwest One (SWO) Succession Planning.

The SWO contract, for the delivery of transformation and support services to Taunton Deane, Somerset County Council (SCC) and Avon and Somerset Police (ASP) was due to expire on 1 November 2017.

This milestone meant that decisions would be needed in the near future with regard to the future service delivery and ICT system arrangements for the SWO services post November 2017.

The significantly changed financial position of the Council, the Medium Term Financial Plan and service transformation challenges, together with the decreased scope of the SWO contract indicated that the Council needed to undertake a fundamental strategic review of the options open to it to inform decisions about future service delivery.

Since 1 February 2014 the following Taunton Deane services remained delivered by SWO:-

- Customer Services;
- ICT (excluding ICT Strategy);
- Finance Transactional Services
 - Accounts Payable
 - Accounts Receivable
 - Master Data for SAP
 - Cashiers and Control Team;

- HR Administration and Payroll; and
- Procurement.

These remaining services were genuinely shared services with at least one of the other authorities (for example Customer Services between Taunton Deane/SCC; and Procurement between Taunton Deane/ASP).

The annual contract price (the Unitary Charge), that was paid to SWO for providing the remaining services was approximately £1,600,000 per annum. This had reduced by approximately two thirds from 2007 levels, mainly as a result of the services taken back in-house.

The services were delivered by a mix of staff comprising: SWO employees (also known as Direct Hires); temporary agency staff; IBM staff and local authority staff who had been seconded into SWO in 2007 for the full ten years. Their Secondment Agreement provided for “assured employment” for the contract term.

The three authorities were contractually required to notify SWO of their intentions at least 18 months in advance of the contract coming to an end - by May 2016.

SWO was obligated to produce an Exit Management Plan to ensure the smooth transfer of the staff and transition of service delivery at contract end. Due to the scale of the task and complexity of issues to resolve, planning with the partners had started, including SWO, by identifying the exit actions which were summarised as follows:-

- Contracted Exit Requirements;
- Staffing Implications;
- Premises and Accommodation;
- Asset and third Party Contract Transfers;
- Communications;
- Logistics, Technical Infrastructure and System Security and Access;
- Intellectual Property and Authority Data;
- Work in Progress Transfer;
- Service Transition and Knowledge Transfer; and
- Company Dissolution.

The report further detailed that contract end would require robust project governance and the appointment of an authority exit management team including work-streams around exit management, HR, legal/contract representation, commercial, project management, communications, finance, technology and procurement. The resource requirement would be similar whichever future delivery option was selected.

The implementation of contract end would need to take place in three broad phases which were outlined in details to Members but were summarised as follows:-

Phase 1 – Detailed Options Appraisal

The purpose of this phase would be to undertake a detailed appraisal of the various options for future service delivery and understand in detail the costs and implications of these options. A detailed and costed options appraisal would be conducted which made recommendations to Members.

Phase 2 – Implementation of Chosen Option

This phase would involve the completion of commercial negotiations with SWO and agreement with the public partners to implement the option(s) agreed by Members. This phase would complete the transfer of staff and services to any agreed new service delivery option

Phase 3 – Service Stabilisation

Phase 3 recognised that, following any transfer of service delivery, there would need to be a service stabilisation period to allow services to 'bed in' to any new arrangements. Any SAP replacement would be reviewed and issues resolved and staff induction and training undertaken.

There were a number of service delivery options available on expiry of the SWO contract, for example:-

- Continuing SWO – various options;
- Outsource;
- Shared Services;
- In House; or
- Alternative Delivery Models.

Each of these options needed to be evaluated in detail so that their respective advantages, disadvantages, costs, deliverability and how they would fit with Taunton Deane's transformation objectives could be understood. The intention was to undertake the assessment over the next few months and bring back a detailed options report with recommendations to Members in the autumn for a decision.

Further reported that the SAP ICT system had been implemented by SWO in 2009 and was the Council's main platform for the delivery of its back office functions. The provision of SAP across the partnership was also key to SWO's ability to deliver shared services to all of the partners and to large organisations such as ASP and SCC.

The SAP system comprised two main elements – SAP Back Office and SAP CRM (Customer Relationship Management). In addition our website was linked to the SAP CRM module.

The system had recently been reviewed to evaluate whether it continued to be the right ICT platform to support the Council's emerging strategic agenda. This review has been independently verified.

The review had identified a number of key themes that suggested SAP was no longer the right platform for delivery of TDBC services. In view of these

findings the Council needed to assess its technology options in respect of SAP, cost potential replacement systems and the impact on the SWO contract and its partners. This work would inform the contract end options and consequently needed to be undertaken in conjunction with the review of those options.

With regard to the financial Implications, the report provided details as to the Contract Value, Exit Costs and the work required to plan for and implement succession planning which was likely to be significant and needed to be managed as a separate project from Phase 1 onwards. Noted that this project could not be delivered from existing resources.

An element of the additional resource resource required could be funded from an existing reserve. However, an additional £47,000 would be required from the General Fund Reserve.

Resolved that:-

- (i) The position with regard to the expiry of the South West One contract, system replacement challenges, and work needed to prepare Taunton Deane for contract end be noted; and
- (ii) A supplementary budget of £47,000, funded from General Fund Reserves, be approved to enable officers to undertake the necessary work in Phase 1 to produce a detailed options appraisal and recommendations for decision.

8. New Nuclear Programme Manager – Upgrade of Post to Assistant Director

The post of New Nuclear Programme Manager (NNPM) had been created at the request of West Somerset Council, when the new shared service structure for Taunton Deane and West Somerset was established in January 2014.

This reflected the continuing importance attached by West Somerset Council to its Corporate Priority of securing maximum benefit and a lasting legacy from the new nuclear development at Hinkley Point.

With the current arrangement having now run for over a year, it was reported that a number of key developments had occurred which, collectively, had raised the need to review the NNPM post and its remuneration within the joint management structure of West Somerset and Taunton Deane Borough Councils.

West Somerset Council had already approved this proposal at its Full Council meeting on 18 March 2015. This approval was set in the context of the latest position on the Hinkley Point C project and related staff resources.

Although the new Assistant Director post would serve on the Joint Management Team of the two authorities, it would have no financial impact on

Taunton Deane Borough Council, being wholly funded by West Somerset Council through financial contributions from EDF Energy.

Resolved that the proposal to upgrade the post of New Nuclear Programme Manager to that of Assistant Director – Energy Infrastructure, with effect from 1 April 2015, be approved.

9. **Report of the Joint Independent Members Remuneration Panel**

Reference Minute No 10 from the meeting held on 9 December 2014, reported that following further discussions, the Joint Independent Members Remuneration Panel had set out its conclusions and recommendations from the early stages of a fundamental review of the Taunton Deane Scheme of Members' Allowances being carried out by the Panel.

The comprehensive report submitted included details as to:-

- **The background to the fundamental review of the Taunton Deane Scheme** – Noted that the basic principles on which Remuneration Panels worked were not legislative but there were national operational standards. In summary they included:-
 - The 50% rule (no more than 50% of Members of any individual Council should receive an Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA));
 - Any Member should only receive one SRA at any one time;
 - Basic Allowance payments should be based on a voluntary time contribution of 30% or 33% to underpin the difference between a salary and an allowance; and
 - When considering the payment of SRA's clarity was needed when considering each specific position and whether it qualified – was it a supporting one, requiring time and effort or was it a leadership role requiring evaluation, judgement and responsibility.
- **Results of the Members' Survey** – The conclusions from the Taunton Deane responses to the survey suggested:-
 - A split of views in support of maintaining the Basic Allowance (BA) at its current level and increasing the BA; and
 - Those in favour of increasing the BA made reference to the fact that in recent years the BA had not kept pace with inflation; that it might act as a disincentive to those wishing to stand for election; and the need for it to adequately reflect the commitment and time that elected Members give to their local community.
- **Basic Allowance considerations** - The Panel had recommended the following principles in respect of the BA to apply post-election in 2015:-
 - That the BA should be based on a calculation using an average number of hours worked by a councillor

- That 20 hours per week should be the basis for this calculation and reduced by a third to reflect the voluntary element
 - That a mechanism was found to base the level of BA on an appropriate spinal point in the officers grading structure
 - That future changes in the level of BA paid should be indexed to officer pay awards. This arrangement to last for the duration of the quadrennium and reviewed as part of the next fundamental review of the scheme in advance of the 2019 district elections;
- **Special Responsibility Allowance considerations** - The Panel had recommended the following:-
 - To link SRA scheme payments to multiples of BA to provide a sound base for calculation of the SRA bands and individual payments. This would also have the advantage of creating a consistent indexing provision since increases in the BA would be reflected in increases to SRAs;
 - To minimise the number of SRA bands yet providing consistent bands across the three councils where it made sense to do so, whilst allowing provision for individual Council requirements, reflecting their culture and democratic arrangements;
 - For the Panel to bring forward recommendations for a banding structure and calculations, to the September 2015 meeting of the Council based on comprehensive benchmarking, and other evidence, having developed and considered broad assumptions about the main responsibilities of key posts. This would require the Panel to agree and recommend headline responsibilities for key posts; and
 - A revised list of Approved Duties applicable for all three of the district Councils.

Reported that if the recommendations contained in the report were approved, they would form the basis for a new Members' Allowances Scheme for the Council to be brought forward for consideration in September 2015 following agreement of new democratic arrangements for the Council in May 2015.

Resolved that:-

- (1) The approach being taken by the Panel to undertake a fundamental review of the Taunton Deane Scheme and the plan for continuing reviews of the scheme be endorsed;
- (2) The principles recommended to underpin the setting of the Basic Allowance for the new Council be agreed;
- (3) The principles recommended to underpin the payment of Special Responsibility Allowances in the new Council be approved; and
- (4) The list of approved duties attached as an Appendix to the report be also approved and be applied as part of a new Members' Allowances

Scheme.

10. Recommendations to Council from the Executive

(i) Creation of the Somerset Building Control Partnership

The Executive had recently considered a report seeking approval to create a Somerset Building Control Partnership comprising Mendip and Sedgemoor District Councils, Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset Council.

The Building Control Service provided by Districts Councils was one of the Council functions that was in direct competition with the private sector (Approved Inspectors).

In recent years, services had found it more and more difficult to compete with the private sector providers of Building Control for the 'fee income' from Building Regulations applications.

The reduction in income was leaving most individual local authority Building Control Services with a choice between having a very small team with little resilience, or operating the service at a financial loss. The most effective way forward to alleviate this was for single local authority Building Control Teams to consider forming partnerships.

A comprehensive Business Case had been developed by the four partner Organisations. The key business reasons for forming the partnership were:-

- (1) To secure a sustainable Building Control Service.
- (2) To reduce costs to each partner Council.
- (3) To improve competitiveness with the private (and public) sector providers of Building Control Services – to win more business and maximise income.
- (4) To increase resilience and customer service levels – a bigger core service team rather than four small teams.
- (5) To improve professional development opportunities, to make it easier to attract and retain good quality staff.

The Business Case had projected a salary saving of £238,000 between the four partners in the first full year of the partnership, but redundancy costs would be incurred as part of the set-up. This scale of saving presented a sound financial business reason for pursuing the project, but significant further savings could be expected from:-

- Creation of a single IT system;
- Rationalising support service charges;
- Reducing the need for office space;

- The reduced head count would create additional savings in terms of computer licences, equipment, travel and other overheads;
- Improved systems;
- Improved efficiency and deployment of staff; and
- Expansion of the partnership to include other Councils and other ancillary services in the future to increase income.

The proposed governance would be through a 'Joint Committee' model as used for the Somerset Waste Partnership and the South West Audit Partnership. This involved pooling budgets and resources into a single service managed by a Joint Management Team with a Joint Steering Committee established under Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972. A detailed Inter Authority Agreement would be agreed between the Councils.

Sedgemoor District Council had been proposed to act as the host/administering authority for the Partnership. This meant that the staff from the other Councils would transfer to Sedgemoor District Council under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (TUPE).

The total Building Control fee income across the four Councils was £850,000 in 2013/2014, with approximately £200,000 in charges for statutory work.

On the motion of Councillor Edwards, it was

Resolved that:-

- (a) The creation of a Somerset Building Control Partnership as outlined in the Business Case, and subject to the approval of the other proposed partner Councils, be approved;
- (b) The creation of a 'Joint Committee' to oversee the strategic direction, performance and budget of the partnership be approved;
- (c) The Portfolio Holder and Assistant Director - Operational Delivery be nominated to represent the Council on the Joint Committee; and
- (d) Authority be delegated to the Section 151 Officer, the Monitoring Officer and the Assistant Director - Operational Delivery, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, to finalise legal agreements, partnership budgets and cost/income sharing arrangements, shared redundancy payments and detailed governance arrangements.

(ii) Support and Funding for the Arts and Creative Industries

The Executive had also considered a further request for financial assistance from:-

- **The Creative Innovation Centre Community Interest Company (CICCIC)** - The CICCIC was a non-profit organisation that encouraged the participation and development of businesses and the creative industries. Through knowledge exchange, music, art, heritage and performance its events and workshops focussed on the diversity and growth of enterprise, community and culture.

The funding request was for a total of £60,000 to support the CICCIC over a three year period. This was broken down into £20,000 per annum and would support a range of activities and projects in each of the financial years.

The Executive, whilst very supportive of CICCIC, was of the view that at this stage financial support should be limited to one year rather than the three years requested. It was noted that this investment, if approved, would enable CICCIC to 'lever in' further funds of over £250,000 into the local economy.

An amendment proposed by Councillor Farbahi, seconded by Councillor Coles seeking tighter control and monitoring of CICCIC and the payment of the proposed funding in quarterly stages was put and was lost.

On the motion of Councillor Cavill, it was

Resolved that:-

- (a) A grant of £20,000 be made to the Creative Innovation centre (CICCIC), Taunton, from General Reserves with the purpose of supporting the development of local businesses in the Creative Industries sector; and
- (b) The award of a grant to the company be subject to the following conditions:-
 1. The Company enters a Service Level Agreement with the Council to deliver the outlined services for the year 2015/2016;
 2. The Company furnished the Council with a report into the size and extent of the Creative Industries sector in Taunton Deane, and the support needs of that sector; and
 3. The Company's accounts were submitted on completion of the Service Level Agreement to a suitably qualified, independent advisor to validate the use of the funding.

(iii) Discretionary Reduction in Council Tax Liability Policy and Discretionary Housing Payment Policy

The Executive had considered a report concerning the Council's approach to awarding Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) and Discretionary Reductions in Council Tax Liability.

With regard to Discretionary Reduction in Council Tax Liability, the Local Government Act 2012 had created two new discounts:-

- o Local Council Tax Support Schemes under Sections 13A(1) (a) and (b); and
- o 13A (1) (c) which was effectively the original 13A discounts that Taunton Deane could use to increase reductions already given under the Local Council Tax Support Schemes.

The implications under 13A(1) (a) and (b) had already been considered and agreed by Full Council.

In March 2013, as a consequence of the Collection Fund (Council Tax Reductions) (England) Directions 2013, the Portfolio Holder had agreed to amendments to the Councils procedures for discretionary discounts for Council Tax liability.

As a consequence of a decision made by the Valuation Tribunal for England (VTE) last year, it had been necessary to further amend Taunton Deane's policy to ensure it complied with the VTE judgment.

The regulations covering Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) were the Discretionary Financial Assistance Regulations 2001. This legislation had given the Council a very broad discretion.

Since April 2013, changes had been applied to Housing Benefit meaning that social sector accommodation had a size criteria applied, with any working age household deemed to be under occupying their home, receiving a reduced level of Housing Benefit. As a result of this and other changes the Government had increased its DHP funding to Local Authorities in anticipation of greater demand on their budgets. Guidance had been issued as to what the additional funding was intended to provide.

The Department for Work and Pensions had also published a Discretionary Housing Payments Guidance Manual, including a Local Authority Good Practice Guide and the Council had followed this in formulating a revised DHP Policy.

On the motion of Councillor Mrs Stock-Williams, it was

Resolved that the revised policies for Discretionary Reduction in Council Tax Liability and Discretionary Housing Payments be applied from 1 April 2015.

11. **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

Resolved that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item because of the likelihood that exempt information would otherwise be disclosed relating to Clause 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972 and the public interest in withholding the information

outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information to the public.

12. **Possible Repairs Notice Action – Heritage Buildings at Tone Mill, Milverton Road, Wellington.**

Considered report previously circulated, on the possible issue of a Listed Buildings Repairs Notice in relation to heritage buildings at Tone Mill, Milverton Road, Wellington.

Full details of the circumstances that had led to possibility of such a Notice being served on the owner of the buildings was contained in the confidential report.

Resolved that the service of a Repairs Notice in accordance with Section 48 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 in relation to the buildings at Tone Mill, Milverton Road, Wellington be agreed.

9. **Reports of the Leader of the Council and Executive Councillors**

(i) **Leader of the Council (Councillor Williams)**

Councillor Williams's report covered the following topics:-

- The Last Full Council meeting of the Quadrennium;
- New Council Housing;
- Firepool, Taunton;
- Investment in Taunton Deane;
- A358 and Proposed New Strategic Employment Site at Junction 25; and
- Blackbrook Swimming Pool Extension.

(ii) **Environmental Services and Climate Change (Councillor Hunt)**

The report from Councillor Hunt drew attention to developments in the following areas:-

- Climate Change;
- Deane DLO; and
- Environmental Health / Licensing.

(iii) **Sports, Parks and Leisure (Councillor Mrs Herbert)**

The report from Councillor Mrs Herbert dealt with activities taking place in the following areas:-

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

(iv) **Housing Services (Councillor Mrs Adkins)**

Councillor Mrs Adkins submitted her report which drew attention to the following:-

- Deane Housing Development : Bacon Drive, Taunton and Vale View, West Bagborough;
- Deane Housing Development : Normandy Drive, Taunton;
- Deane Housing Development : Weavers Arms, Rockwell Green, Wellington; and
- Right to Buy Social Mobility Fund.

(v) **Corporate Resources (Councillor Mrs Stock-Williams)**

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

- Corporate and Client Services;
- Corporate Health and Safety;
- Customer Contact Centre;
- Health and Wellbeing;
- Legal and Democratic Services;
- Resources; and
- Revenues and Benefits.

(vi) **Planning, Transportation and Communications (Councillor Edwards)**

The report from Councillor Edwards provided information on the following areas within his portfolio:-

- Taunton Deane Events Group;
- Site Allocations and Development Management Plan;
- Neighbourhood Planning;
- Affordable Housing Thresholds;
- Monkton Heathfield Governance Board;
- Car Parking; and
- Communications.

(vii) **Community Leadership (Councillor Mrs Jane Warmington)**

Councillor Mrs Warmington presented the Community Leadership report which focused on all of the areas within her portfolio.

(viii) **Economic Development, Asset Management, Arts and Tourism (Councillor Cavill)**

The general report from Councillor Cavill covered a number of specific areas within his portfolio.

(Councillor Henley left the meeting at 7.24 pm. Councillors C Hill and D Wedderkopp left at 7.30 pm. Councillors Denington, Mrs Smith, P Smith and Tooze left at 8.18 pm. Councillors Mrs Reed, Horsley, T Slattery and A Govier and Mrs Govier left the meeting at 8.23 pm, 8.30 pm, 8.32 pm and 8.35 pm respectively. Councillor Mrs Floyd and Gill Slattery left at 8.40 pm. Councillor Mrs Herbert and A Wedderkopp left at 8.44 pm.)

(The meeting ended at 9.06 pm.)