

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Motions to Council – Assessment Form

On receipt of a Motion from a Councillor, the Democratic Services Manager will carry out an assessment as to its contents to establish whether there are likely to be significant consequences to the Council should the Motion be carried at the subsequent Full Council meeting.

The first question to be addressed will be:-

“Can the Motion, if approved, be implemented without the need for any resource (financial and otherwise) to be identified outside existing budgets or staffing capacity?”

If the answer is ‘yes’, then the Motion can proceed towards discussion and resolution.

An example of a Motion which would fall into the above category would be where the Council is being asked to lobby the Government, Somerset County Council or other body on a particular issue. If the motion is carried, the action required will usually involve no more than a letter being prepared and sent to the intended recipient.

However, as in the case of the recent Motion on ‘Legal Hights’, the answer to the above question would clearly be ‘no’.

In such circumstances, detailed analysis of the wording of the Motion will be required to identify what will be needed if the Motion – when it comes before Full Council – is carried.

Such analysis will include:-

- What additional resource would be required to ensure the Motion (if approved) could be implemented?
- What needs to be done to identify the level of resource necessary both in financial and staff terms?
- Are any approvals needed to provide these resources?
- Will this require reports to be submitted through Scrutiny and the Executive? If a Supplementary Estimate is required, Full Council approval will be required too.

If such analysis is required, the Democratic Services Manager will arrange for the attached pro-forma to be completed and this will accompany the relevant Motion onto the agenda of the Full Council meeting so all Members are aware that further investigation will be required before the Motion – even if it is carried – can be implemented.

Motions to Council – Assessment Proforma

(To be used in circumstances where it appears the wording of a proposed Motion will commit the Council to providing further financial or staffing resources which cannot be met from existing budgets)

Brief Details of the Motion -

Motion

(1) Engage with all the businesses in the town centre to fully understand their challenges and see if contributions via the radio link systems can help and support their businesses. Taunton Deane and the new authority have to come together with the business community to ensure a safe environment for them to operate so that they can survive these difficult times.

(2) We propose that the £250,000 per year that is currently being spent with Sedgemoor District Council would be better used here in the County Town by developing a Taunton Deane Business Crime Unit rather than the current outsourced centres that are not obviously working. Therefore cancel the current contract and seek an alternative provider.

This Unit to:-

- monitor and maintain the CCTV system;
- operate a radio link system for the area; provide high visibility security presence in the town; and
- co-ordinate a professional and compliant data sharing service.

(3) We propose that businesses also need to contribute via the radio link systems knowing that a better quality service than that currently being received will be provided.

The community would benefit from stronger security presence and a reduced fear of crime, which would attract customers back to Taunton Town Centre.

Questions to be addressed

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>What additional resource would be required to ensure the Motion (if approved) could be implemented?</i> |
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Answer – Taunton Deane has a system of 65 cameras which are strategically placed covering Taunton and Wellington areas. In particular they cover town centre and car park areas. They are monitored and maintained by Sedgemoor District Council (SDC) via a Service Level Agreement and have been for over 10 years. The value of the contract is in excess of £250,000 per annum and is annually reviewed.
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These cameras are monitored 24 hours a day, 365 days a year by a small team based in Bridgwater House, Bridgwater. All footage is recorded and stored for evidential purposes in compliance with the current CCTV Codes of Practice as occasionally updated by the Office of the Surveillance Commissioner. SDC are also responsible for monitoring cameras covering the South Somerset District Council (SSDC) area.

As the existing staff are required for their current work – monitoring SDC and SSDC cameras 24 hours a day alongside those owned by Taunton Deane – it is hard to see how any TUPE arrangement could be appropriate. There is not ‘spare’ capacity or operators, the system is run at the minimum safe levels to ensure the service runs well. Therefore, a set of operators would be required. They would be required to cover 24/7 shifts in order to maintain the existing levels of service. In order to cover 168 hours in a week, based on 37 hours a week, you would require 4.5 FTE members of staff. However, once you factor in time away from the control room (rest), this should be increased to a minimum of 6 FTE. If each of these were paid at a rate of £20,000 per annum, plus on costs at 25% - both of which are low estimates – then the staff costs of monitoring alone would be £150,000 per annum.

Any new system will require a compliance officer or a manager/supervisor. For the purposes of this, it is possible to look at a current SDC job advert for a Monitoring Services Technical Manager. This is currently live on their website <https://www.sedgemoor.gov.uk/vacancies> and commands a salary of a minimum of £32,000. When we apply the same on costs, this rises to £40,000. A brief look at the specification for this post reveals that this would be essential for any new team:

The successful candidate will be responsible for the maintenance and improvement of the Council's CCTV network, close liaison with the Police to ensure effective service delivery and crime detection, and working effectively with other local authorities and business customers to ensure effective management of all networks and infrastructure, and client satisfaction. Proven experience and knowledge of CCTV systems, and the associated legislative background will be essential. The post holder will need to be proficient in the use of the relevant systems to be able to cover shifts and manage the legislative and data protection requirements.

A new maintenance contract would be required. The current rate is approximately equal to £2,000 per camera per year which includes provision for depreciation and replacement. To maintain this, assuming that the Council could secure a deal for this value, would cost an additional £130,000 per annum.

The new system will require a control room and associated equipment. The system was previously housed in a room in the then Parking Office in Paul Street car park (commonly known as the multi-storey). These offices are no longer occupied by anyone and were last occupied for CCTV purposes over 10 years ago. As such, any infrastructure which remains – even if it were possible to re-occupy, which is doubtful – is obsolete. If we accept that there is some equipment eg monitors and laptops that could be relocated at no cost (which is a stretch) there are still additional costs in moving hard drives and equipment, physical set up of a control room, heating,

lighting, utilities and cost of the space per se. I am unable to estimate costs associated with this.

- ***What needs to be done to identify the level of resource necessary both in financial and staff terms?***

Answer – The motion is premature as the transformation of the council is creating a new approach to localities. This review and determination of an approach to security in the town centre as a locality issue would be better delivered as an element of the overall approach. There is an existing ‘One Team’ multi-agency approach which meets on a weekly basis to discuss and oversee town centre issues.

An independent review of the current system would establish whether it provides value for money and could detect trends in overall arrest rates and incidents captured on camera for evidential purposes.

Further work would need to be done to establish the effects of terminating the existing contract, establishing a new control centre and associated costs, costs of staffing and benefits from any proposed approach. Therefore this would require an assessment of capital and revenue costs; their availability and any benefits to be derived from a new approach in addition to those derived from the current system.

Alongside this, further work would be required to establish the level of commitment that retailers would realistically have in financial terms to complement any new arrangements.

Most larger towns operate some form of crime reduction scheme and until recently this was provided across Bridgwater and Taunton by Somerset Businesses Against Crime (SBAC) supported by Hatchers and run by Andrew Sharman as Coordinator. This scheme was largely funded by its business members (and the occasional community grant it secured).

TDBC did not have a financial interest in this but were always an interested party and have supported the scheme in the past through three bids for grant aid (from Community Safety pot and Taunton Unparished Area Grant) and the occasional briefing from the Coordinator. As such, it would be inappropriate to try to establish a new scheme in addition to the costs already outlined above.

- ***Are any approvals needed to provide these resources?***

Answer – The existing contract would need to be terminated and reasons given with a notice period of not less than 3 months. Yes – capital expenditure unknown, revenue expenditure unknown but at a minimum of £320,000 per annum (the sum of the costs of staffing and maintenance outlined above) and full Council approval

- ***Will this require reports to be submitted through Scrutiny and the Executive? If a Supplementary Estimate is required, Full Council approval will be required too.***

Answer – Yes. The sheer scale of work required is prohibitive and not in accord with our understanding of the current operator. The existing arrangements provide value for money and the minimum first step would be to establish a review of existing arrangements. This is not a realistic aim in the short term as the Council is in the Transformation period. However, a period review of services provided under any and all Service Level Agreements is prudent.

Likely timescale involved – Unknown. Not less than 2 years