

## Executive - 28 November 2018

Present: Councillor J Williams (Chairman)

Councillors P Berry, M Edwards, R Parrish, V Stock-Williams, A Sully and J Warmington

Officers: Shirlene Adam, Nick Bryant, Jo Humble and Rachel Searle

Also Present: Councillors S Coles, H Farbahi, R Habgood, J Horsley and I Morrell

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

### 33. Apologies.

#### Apologies for Absence

Councillor Beale.

### 34. Minutes of the previous meeting of the Executive held on 5 July 2018. (attached)

#### Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of the Executive held on 5 July 2018 were taken as read and were signed.

### 35. Declaration of Interests.

#### Declaration of Interests

Members present at the meeting declared the following personal interests in their capacity as a Member of a County, Parish or Town Council:-

Name	Minute No.	Description of Interest	Personal or Prejudicial or Disclosable Pecuniary	Action Taken
Cllr V Stock-Williams	All items	Wellington	Personal	Spoke and voted
Cllr J Warmington	All items	Bishops Lydeard & Cothelstone	Personal	Spoke and voted
Cllr S Coles	All items	County	Personal	Spoke

### 36. Public Question Time.

#### Public Question Time

No members of the public spoke on any of the items on the Agenda.

37. **North Taunton Woolaway Project. Report of the Housing Development and Enabling Manager (Verbal Update)**

**North Taunton Woolaway Project**

Considered the verbal update from the Project Officers present which included a PowerPoint Presentation and short video. A formal paper with more detail would be forthcoming in the New Year through the Shadow Democratic path for final sign-off.

The Project had consulted with communities affected in North Taunton since 2017 with four separate events as well as one to one follow ups and this work reached a conclusion in October 2018. The long timescale enabled officers to work in depth with a Resident's Design Group, which met monthly through this process.

There were many issues that the Community itself brought to the Council's attention which informed the options being considered. The latest urban design principles and building regulations were also able to be examined which included principles around concepts such as 'Lifetime Homes'. The plan had taken on board the needs of the Community, including those in the community with disabled needs. Architects were being worked with at the current time in preparation for an outline planning application of 280 dwellings.

**Resolved** that the Executive noted the update.

38. **Financial Monitoring 2018/19. Report of the Interim Finance Manager (attached).**

**Financial Monitoring 2018/19**

Considered report previously circulated, which provided an update on the projected outturn financial position of the Council for the financial year 2018/19 (as at 30 September 2018).

The Interim Finance Manager briefly took Members through the report and highlighted the key points included therein, and it was reported the forecast end of year financial position for revenue and capital expenditure as at 30 September 2018 for the Council's General Fund (GF), Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and trading services. The regular monitoring of financial information was a key element in the Council's Performance Management Framework. Crucially it enabled remedial action to be taken in response to significant budget variances, some of which may be unavoidable. There was also the opportunity to assess any consequent impact on reserves and the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan.

The current revenue forecast outturn for the financial year 2018/19 was as follows:

- The General Fund (GF) Revenue Outturn is forecasting a net underspend of £13k.
- The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is forecasting underspend of £356k.

The current capital forecast position for 2018/19 is as follows:

- The General Fund capital account is forecasting spend of £11.762m against a total Programme budget of £71.883m with £43.462m forecast to be spent in future years (£16.659m spent in previous years);
- The HRA capital account is forecasting spend of £8.679m against a budget of £17.686m with £9.007m forecast to be spent in future years.

The General Fund reserves forecast balance as at 31 March 2019 was projected to be £2.312m. The balance remained above the recommended minimum reserves level approved in the Council's Budget Strategy (£1.7m). The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Reserve forecast balance as at 31 March 2019 is £3.132m, which was above the recommended minimum level (£1.8m) set within the Council's Budget Strategy and HRA Business Plan.

It was clear that the organisation was undergoing major change at present with implementation of the new operating model under Transformation and the preparation for the new Somerset West and Taunton Council taking effect in April 2019. All reasonable effort was being undertaken by budget holders and finance staff to ensure that budgets remain under control during this period of disruption.

During the discussion of this item of this item, Members made comments and statements and asked questions on a number of areas which are summarised:-

- A query was raised concerning Scrutiny comments regarding the DLO Trading Account and the results of any further audit?
- *The response given at Scrutiny was concerning the integrity of the Trading Account and the whole of the financial accounts of the Council are subject to rigorous external audit and no issues were highlighted by them on this Account. A further update on the DLO Trading Account would come separately to Scrutiny.*
- A reduction in footfall and the delay in pay on foot implementation had combined to have an impact on parking income.

**Resolved** that the Executive noted the Council's forecast financial performance for 2018/19 financial year as at 30 September 2018.

39. **Review into Affordable Employment Land Task and Finish Group. Report of The Task and Finish Group (attached)**

## Review into Affordable Employment Land Task and Finish Group

Considered report previously circulated, which set out the findings of the Task and Finish Group charged to review Taunton Deane Borough Council's (TDBC) 2009 Affordable Employment Land Strategy, agreed by the then TDBC Executive. There was no doubt that TDBC needed to create an appropriate balance between the number of homes and the number of jobs provided. Taunton Deane was falling behind neighbouring conurbations in providing well-paid employment. The Council must work in meaningful partnership to facilitate inward investment and encourage economic growth. The cross-party approach to working together on this investigation was praised and the energy of the Councillors to completing the work and there was a general desire to keep the momentum on this.

During the discussion of this item, Members made comments and statements and asked questions which included:-

- The report was welcomed and the Peter Brett report that had been commissioned into Employment Land demonstrated a shared commitment to improvement in this area.
- *It was helpful for Peter Brett to report their emerging findings from their work to the Task and Finish. Work was also being undertaken in Strategy and this helped inform the Task and Finish Group's deliberations and research.*
- *The evidence from the Peter Brett report demonstrated employment was low but productivity also lagged, and this was something that would need to be tackled under the Prosperity Area and there was a Lead Prosperity role that would be vital to its success. Any jobs that are created needed to be higher quality skilled and it was recognised this work needed to be accelerated.*
- It was recognised that work needed to be done in advance of the Local Plan Review to look at Employment Land and what was realistically deliverable.
- *The Council was committed to a pilot project being run by the University of Exeter Centre for Circular Economy which was a positive development brought about by the engagement of Councillor Farbahi.*
- *The Garden Town Status of Taunton also was recognised as offering opportunities for the Council in this area, with the Department for International Trade and those areas looking to transformational development and the investment opportunities from abroad.*
- The work of the Task and Finish Group so far had cost the taxpayer little, and the value was considered in bringing these outstanding individuals and organisations through an Integrated Project Delivery concept to add value in the emerging industries such as The Centre for Circular Economy.

- *A Research and Innovation Centre would be resource intensive and would need a sound business case to be developed.*
- It was recognised that a lot of work had been undertaken into the Research and Innovation Centre opportunity that existed but concerns were raised around deliverability and the proposals already on the table being worked up on the Digital Geospatial and Innovation Centre which had been backed by the Government, which also had involvement from local Universities.
- There was some discussion around the use of Local Development Order's that were criteria based rather than location.

**Resolved** that the Executive noted the Task and Finish Group's Report and recommended the following:-

**1) Affordable Employment Land:**

- a) TDBC and the subsequent Council must build on the Affordable Employment Land Report undertaken by Peter Brett Associates by commencing an urgent reappraisal of all employment sites;
- b) TDBC and the subsequent Council to explore the delivery of Affordable Starter Employment Units via different delivery models including varying forms of Local Development Orders, and expedient Council enabling through a standalone approach or development partner involvement.

**2) Investigate the feasibility of an office for the creation of a Research and Innovation Centre:**

- a) TDBC and the subsequent Council should undertake a prompt detailed feasibility study into the viability of such a centre. Effective use of appropriate partnership working was crucial to the success of such a venture.

(The Meeting ended at 8.15 pm)