

## Taunton Deane Borough Council

At the meeting of Taunton Deane Borough Council held in the The Shire Hall, Shuttern, Taunton on Tuesday, 11 December 2018 at 6.30 pm.

Present: The Mayor (Councillor C Herbert)  
The Deputy Mayor (Councillor F Smith)

Councillors T Aldridge, T Beale, P Berry, J Blatchford, C Booth, R Bowrah, W Brown, N Cavill, S Coles, W Coombes, D Cossey, D Durdan, K Durdan, M Edwards, H Farbahi, M Floyd, J Gage, E Gaines, A Govier, A Gunner, R Habgood, T Hall, R Henley, C Hill, M Hill, J Horsley, J Hunt, G James, R Lees, S Lees, L Lisgo, D Mansell, S Martin-Scott, I Morrell, S Nicholls, R Parrish, J Reed, R Ryan, F Smith-Roberts, V Stock-Williams, A Sully, N Townsend, C Tucker, J Warmington, P Watson, D Wedderkopp, J Williams and G Wren

38. **Minutes of the previous meetings of Full Council held on 2 October 2018 and Special Full Council held on 14 November**

The Minutes of the meetings of Full Council held on 2 October 2018 and Special Full Council held on 14 November 2018, copies having been sent to each Member, were signed by the Mayor.

39. **To report any apologies for absence.**

Apologies were received from Councillors Mrs J Adkins, M Adkins, Davies, Prior-Sankey, Stone and Ms Webber.

40. **To receive any communications.**

The Mayor reported on two matters:-

- 1) The Communications Manager had informed her that there was currently a technical issue which was affecting the receipt of Members' e-mails. It was hoped this issue would be resolved in the next couple of days; and
- 2) She had attended the annual Court Leet Law Day on 9 November 2018 which had been very interesting. The Court Leet had offered its thanks to the Council for the work it had carried out during the past year.

Councillor Habgood expressed his thanks to the Council for its role in co-ordinating with local churches and statutory bodies the establishment of the 'Streetwise Night Café'. The café which had been set up at the Pentecostal Canon Street Church, Taunton on a short term basis was intended for the benefit of the hard-to-reach rough sleepers in the town.

It was a fantastic piece of work which had resulted in the café being set up very swiftly and the officers concerned should be congratulated.

41. **Declaration of Interests.**

Councillor Mrs Smith-Roberts declared a personal interest in relation to agenda item No 8 due to her involvement in the 'Refugee Aid from Taunton' charity which operated from a building sited on the Firepool Site.

Councillors Coles, Govier and Hunt declared personal interests as Members of Somerset County Council. Councillors Bowrah, Brown, Cavill, Coombes, Gaines, Govier, Henley, Hunt, James, Mansell, Nicholls, Mrs Reed, Mrs Stock-Williams, Townsend, Mrs Warmington and Watson all declared personal interests as Members of Town or Parish Councils.

42. **To receive questions from Taunton Deane Electors under Standing Order 15.**

- a) Henry Haslam of Taunton Transition Town addressed the Council on behalf of his colleague David Blake who had run the Taunton Half Marathon several times and more recently the Deane DLO 10K race in late September. He had always been disturbed by the amount of plastic waste that these events generated, especially in the form of single-use plastic bottles, often handed out to runners who take a few swigs of water and then discard the bottle on the course.

Although the bottles were collected and disposed of, it seemed an unnecessary amount of waste and something that could easily be avoided. Following very extensive media coverage, there were very few people who were unaware that a serious crisis of plastic pollution was unfolding, both in the oceans and across the ecosphere.

With the backing of Taunton Transition Town, a petition was started on 38 Degrees on 26 October 2018 under the heading "Support Taunton runners who say no! to plastic bottles". Within a few weeks, it had attracted 976 signatures.

Although the races referred to above were organised by the Taunton and District Carnival Committee, they were Taunton events and it was within its powers for the Council to ask the Committee to consider supporting Taunton Deane's desire to become a "single-use plastic free Council".

Taunton Transition Town therefore asked the Council to take note of the petition and take practical steps where possible to work with the Carnival Committee and the organisers of races to halt the distribution of single-use plastic drinks bottles at future road races, making use of more environment-friendly alternatives.

In response, Councillor Patrick Berry stated that this was a good point that would be taken up with the organisers of the Marathon and the 10K Run. The Mayor added that she had attended recent meetings of the Committee and it was taking the matter very seriously and were already looking at ways of providing alternatives to plastic bottles of water.

- b) Liz Goldsworthy asked what the outcome was following the discussion at the last Council meeting concerning the prevention of Kingston Stream Open Space being used by travellers.

There was a need to set a way forward to address this problem, not having the matter 'hijacked' to enable the provision of static sites to be discussed.

She also asked whether any progress had been made by the Legal Department regarding the enforcement of the injunction to prevent further illegal encampments.

In reply, Councillor John Williams regretted the lack of tangible progress but the Council was studying the alternatives available such as progressing the transit site on the Blackdown Hills where unauthorised travellers could be moved to relatively quickly.

He added that Taunton had a huge problem with the number of green spaces which meant the Council needed to look at the whole issue. It was likely that if the Council sought to address the problem of illegal occupations at Kingston Stream, the travellers would simply find another vulnerable green space.

- c) Martin Pakes made reference to the proposed re-development of Coal Orchard area of Taunton which was featured in the Councillor Edwards's report. He asked:-

When would the construction of the replacement building for the former Swimming Baths site be started and completed?  
How long would there only be 25 car parking spaces and where would they be sited. Where and how many spaces would be provided "nearby"?  
Would it not be better to delay the proposed closure of St James Street until after the Coal Orchard development had been completed to allow construction traffic to use this route?

In reply, Councillor Mark Edwards stated that:-

The tender exercise was currently underway. Tenders were due to be received during January 2019 and, subject to the responses received, it was hoped that a contract would be awarded at an early date.

The Council would be looking to maintain as many spaces as possible in the Coal Orchard Car Park in conjunction with the contractor appointed. However, the number of spaces was likely to vary as the re-development moved forward. Councillor Edwards added that other opportunities for parking were also being investigated.

The proposed permanent closure of St James Street was still the subject of public consultation which would close on 31 December 2018. There was therefore still time to submit representations. He was not convinced

that construction traffic should access the site via St James Street but this would be discussed with the successful contractor.

The Mayor stated that she would call the next three questioners as they wished to raise matters on the same issue and would then ask Councillor Richard Parrish to respond.

- d) On behalf of the Residents of Staplegrove Action Group (RoSAG), Jackie Calcroft reported that Staplegrove residents were very aggrieved that this Council was going back on its word.

Councillors too who sat on the Staplegrove Planning Committee in October 2017 must also feel let down as the advice given to them unambiguously stated that if the Council was successful in its bid for £7,200,000 of Government Housing Infrastructure Funding (HIF) to build the Staplegrove Spine Road then there would be no need for a drop down road onto the rural Corkscrew Lane.

In a recent letter from land promoters, Ptarmigan, RoSAG had been informed that "We have always been consistent with our position that the District Distributor Road will be required whether the HIF money was secured or not.....we have been in discussion with Redrow who are looking to purchase the whole site. They have not discussed with us the logistics of how the site would be physically built out." This was followed a few days later by a further letter which stated that "I do know they [Redrow] have had a number of meetings with the Council regarding Reserved Matters for the site....."

The Chairman of Staplegrove Parish Council and RoSAG had recently put forward a workable solution to Taunton Deane and Somerset County Highways which conformed with Policy TAU2 to build the spine road from the west and negated access at Corkscrew Lane.

Why did RoSAG say that the Spine Road must be delivered up front and in its entirety? It was to avoid a possible scenario of only a limited number of houses 499 out of the total 713 being constructed in the west, the developer then leaving the site due to choice or market forces thus creating a cul-de-sac without proper, suitable access and an already over capacity Corkscrew Lane becoming even more congested!

Given the u-tums relating to outline approval you must surely appreciate why residents have lost confidence in the Council and its Planning Department and our concerns over the detailed application.

My questions therefore were:-

Given that the HIF bid was submitted on the basis of up front delivery of the Spine Road and the deletion of any need for the drop down road, were there any legal agreements to ensure that all developers of any part of the west site could not use any part of Corkscrew Lane as access to, or

egress from, the site for any purpose assuming HIF money was forthcoming?

Why did the Council not robustly adhere to its pledge that the drop down road would not be required in the event of the HIF bid being successful? and

Would the Council ensure that a condition was imposed on Redrow or a.n.other that the Spine Road must be completed in its entirety before any houses were built?

- e) David Lausen stated that there were rumours that Taunton Deane and Somerset County Council were now in discussions with Redrow about a “Drop Down Road” as “temporary” access off Corkscrew Lane despite Taunton Deane securing £7,200,000 HIF for a Spine Road. If these rumours were correct:–

Was Council Leader, Councillor Williams misled when he was interviewed with me on Radio Somerset in February 2018, when he assured everyone that the drop down road would now no longer be required?

Were our Member of Parliament, Rebecca Pow and then Minister for Housing and Planning, Alok Sharma misled when they visited Corkscrew Lane in November 2017 to see – and confirm – how unsuitable and dangerous Corkscrew Lane was?

Was Mr Tim Burton misled – or may be misleading – when he assured Councillors on the Planning Committee in October 2017 that approving Outline Planning and securing Spine Road funding would result in no drop down road?

- f) Simon Briggs also made reference to the HIF money for the Spine Road. As there was a lot of concern about the need for temporary access to Corkscrew Lane it was understood that this money would remove the need for that access. Bearing in mind that this allocation was agreed at the beginning of the year, when was it likely to be received, why had it taken so long and what was being done to speed up the process?

In response, Councillor Parrish stated that the Housing Infrastructure Funding (HIF) was part of the Government’s programme to accelerate the delivery of new housing. In the case of Staplegrove it also had the added benefit of delivering additional affordable housing.

Whilst it was initially hoped that the delivery of the Spine Road at the start of the development would prevent the need for a temporary access, the need to deliver new housing as early as possible would require new dwellings to be constructed alongside the construction of the Spine Road. It had therefore been confirmed that there remained a need for a temporary access, but this would be in use for a considerably shorter period of time than would be the case without HIF.

The timing of the release of the funding sat with Homes England who were undertaking the necessary due diligence. The Council had provided all the information requested, but they were handling a large number of cases which had meant that the process in relation to all of the awards had not been as swift as it might otherwise have been. There was no reason to suggest that the delay was anything more than this.

We currently did not have a date for when the money would be transferred.

g) Alan Debenham asked the following three questions:-

In view of the Government's recent budget announcement that the cap was to be lifted on Councils' borrowing to build many more new Council houses, where on the agenda was there mention of this extra borrowing and all the extra rented Council houses to be delivered?

The important arts and cultural side of Taunton's adjustment to truly becoming a Garden Town rested greatly on its ample cheap public transport, its green shrubbery and floral displays, its library facilities, its park and ride usage, a vibrant indoor produce and stall market, thorough pedestrianisation of the centre to banish all non-public services through traffic, aesthetic and emphatic connectivity between the town centre and its wonderful parks and River Tone. How was it that all these essentials were undergoing either continuing austerity cuts or little development at all?

Everyone now had stark awareness of the recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's published grave dangers facing us all of catastrophic climate change and rising sea levels unless the world reduced its carbon emissions by 45% in the next 12 years, and to net zero by 2050. How had the Council responded, or would respond, to this fearful news and why was there no mention of any urgent response on the agenda for this meeting?

In response:-

Councillor Beale replied that he was very pleased that the Government had lifted the cap which should allow the Council to increase its stock of housing.

Currently, the officers were looking at how the Government's decision would 'pan out' and what needed to be done to access the additional funding that would be available.

He added that the Council was heavily involved at the moment with the re-development of the Woolway dwellings in North Taunton. This would result in a lot more affordable housing being available compared to the present.

Councillor Edwards disagreed with Mr Debenham's question as many of the examples he had highlighted had not been subject to continuing austerity cuts. For example, pedestrianisation was underway, the Park and Ride had been saved by the Council, a Country Park had been established at Longrun Farm and further land had been acquired to provide another park to the north-east of the town and Taunton Deane still invested in floral displays.

This was due to the Council seeking to protect front line services and investing in the town. The Council would seek to continue to do this in the future as a result of Transformation.

Councillor Berry announced that he was not in a position to answer the question, which was one for the World....not just the Council.

He was aware that many people were 'doing their bit' locally to reduce their impacts on the environment. As far as the Council was concerned, more plastic than ever was being collected for recycling and carbon production at The Deane House would be significantly reduced once all the refurbishment works had been completed.

However, reducing petrol and diesel consumption of the vehicles on our roads would not happen unless there was more financial support from the Government.

- h) Roger House welcomed the proposed traffic restriction to St James Street but felt it was also time to close North Street to cars to make Taunton a real pedestrian friendly town centre.

By doing so, we would gain space to create a Touring Coach Rendezvous Point with free parking to attract many more private coaches.

North Street was the natural point to bring tourists with the Brewhouse Theatre, the main churches, the River Tone, Castle Green, the Museum and toilets, within walking range of older people.

With lower levels of future economic growth predicted, the Council could still capture more coach trade from the M5 if it acted quickly before planned attractions nearby came into being.

Could the Council make the closure of North Street a priority and by attracting coaches make our traders a bit less grumpy!

In response Councillor Parrish stated that the closure of North Street had been muted on numerous occasions over the past 25 years but was still some way off despite there being some support for it.

The current proposals, welcomed by Mr House, involved the permanent closure of St James Street between North Street and Lower Middle Street.

This meant that access to the area would still be able to be gained via Canon Street and Middle Street.

Temporary closures were currently being proposed for Hammet Street and East Street and, if these were introduced, would initially be for a trial basis so their effects could be assessed.

- i) Gideon Amos spoke about the impacts of the potential removal of 40 Commando Royal Marines from Taunton. It was not just a military issue but one that would have a significant impact on Taunton's economy.

He asked what the Council's policy on the matter was and whether this took into account the views of the Norton Fitzwarren Ward Councillors and the growing local petition to the Secretary of State for Defence that he had started against the proposed closure of Norton Manor Camp and the relocation of the Marines. The petition had so far gathered over 1,500 signatures and the campaign to halt the closure was supported by the Somerset County Gazette.

Mr Amos stated that following initial pressure to think again about the closure of the camp, an announcement had been made that it was unlikely to close until 2028 which was encouraging news. He felt that if all parties worked together there was a chance of keeping Norton Manor Camp open.

In response, the Mayor reported that if it had not been for Norton Manor Camp where her husband had been posted in 1995, she would not have moved to Taunton. She felt that Rebecca Pow MP was best placed to apply pressure on the Secretary of State to reverse the current proposal. She added that most people in the local area would support the retention of 40 Commando in Taunton Deane.

Councillor Bob Bowrah reminded Members that he was the Council's Armed Forces Champion. He stated that he had recently attended a meeting of the Armed Forces Covenant Board at Tidworth Garrison in Wiltshire where the proposed closure of the camp was discussed. The matter was therefore a County-wide issue not just a Taunton one.

Councillor Williams referred to the Motion on the agenda which would follow shortly which he hoped all Councillors would support.

43. **Opposing the closure of Norton Manor Camp and relocation of 40 Commando Royal Marines out of Taunton Deane. To consider a Motion proposed by Councillor Marcia Hill, seconded by Councillor Simon Coles (attached). An assessment of the implications for the Council should the motion be carried is also attached.**

Proposed by Councillor Marcia Hill, seconded by Councillor Simon Coles.

"The Council were aware that the closure of Norton Manor Camp, with expected disposal in 2028, was announced by the Secretary of State for Defence in



November 2016 in 'A Better Defence Estate', with a key objective to raise £1 billion from land sales, including the statement "opportunities to release value from surplus land and property must be maximised".

The Somerset County Gazette reported "False Hope" after the Defence Secretary said in Parliament on 22 October 2018 that 40 Commando Royal Marines would remain in Taunton "for a long time into the future" but his Ministry of Defence (MOD) spokesperson then described these words as "vague" confirming the Camp remained scheduled for closure.

The National Audit Office (NAO) had said implementing the plan would be "extremely challenging" and there was a "significant risk" to defence capability.

No operational military reasons or objectives had been given by the MOD for the closure, and the Government's National Security Capability Review begun in summer 2017 had led to proposals to cut up to 2,000 Royal Marines over the next decade; cuts which the Defence Select Committee of the House of Commons described as "militarily illiterate".

At a time of significant reductions in footfall in Taunton Town Centre the value of 700-800 personnel at the Camp to the local economy had been estimated at £10-14 million per annum (on the basis of the proportion of locally spent average family incomes).

#### **Recommendations:-**

- 1) The Council opposes the decision of the Government to close Norton Manor Camp and relocate the Royal Marines out of Taunton Deane; supports the efforts of our local Member of Parliament, Rebecca Pow, to secure the retention of the 40 Commando Unit; and stands behind the local 40 Commando community of serving and veteran Royal Marines who wanted the Camp to remain in the Borough;
- 2) The Leader of the Council writes to the Secretary of State for Defence strongly opposing the closure of the Camp, urging him to remove Norton Manor Camp from the list of sites to be disposed of on the Ministry of Defence website; and
- 3) The Leader of the Council also writes to all of Somerset's Members of Parliament pointing out that the County was in danger of losing 40 Commando Royal Marines, urging them to take up the importance of Norton Manor Camp to the County of Somerset and to Taunton Deane in particular in Parliament and oppose its closure and the relocation of 40 Commando to another area and that the Chief Executive should report back to the whole Council placing copies of any replies received on the public record."

The Motion was put and was carried unanimously.

44. **Firepool Hotel Development - Consultation with Local Businesses. Report of the Head of Commercial, Investment and Change (attached), to be**

**presented by Councillor Mark Edwards.**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the feedback from consultation with local businesses, on the previous Council resolution to invest and develop a new mid-market hotel on Firepool south-side site.

The original hotel report was approved by Full Council 10 April 2018 (Minute No. 12/April 2018 refers). Subsequently, at the Full Council meeting on 10 July 2018 a motion was agreed - "To defer the decision to build a hotel at Firepool and consult with businesses in Taunton Deane in order to safeguard public funds and to ensure the maximum return on our capital". (Minute No. 8/July 2018 refers).

The consultation process involved the creation of a 'Question and Answer' leaflet and an on-line survey. The consultation period was during the whole of October 2018 and the Taunton Business Community was informed as follows:-

- Press release issued and published on the Council and [www.investtaunton](http://www.investtaunton) websites (on 1 October and follow-up on 24 October 2018);
- E-mails sent directly to 312 Taunton / town centre businesses on the Council's Business Development and Visitor Centre databases (together with sending a message directly to the Taunton Chamber of Commerce);
- Social media – The consultation was promoted regularly throughout October via Twitter (Taunton Deane and Taunton Business Twitter accounts);
- Taunton Business twitter feed = c.2700 followers; and
- TDBC corporate twitter = c.4000 followers.

The feedback from the consultation with local businesses, on the previous Council resolution to invest and develop a new mid-market hotel on Firepool south-side site, had been noted. The full results were submitted for the information of all Members.

Reported that the response rate had been very low despite extensive promotion by the team and direct contact with the business community. As such there was no clear pattern of response from which to draw definitive conclusions. Whilst the hotel specific question brought a higher "no" response, if the no response from the hotel/ bed and breakfast sector was taken into account, the responses were broadly even. There was support for the principle of Council investment to support the town and to generate income to support essential services. However on such a low response rate firm conclusions were clearly hard to draw and must be viewed accordingly.

Noted that the original decision was made based on delivery of the Council's prime objectives - the investment would secure longer term benefits for the town centre and the Taunton area economy creating jobs and footfall; it would spur regeneration of the currently under-developed riverside site; and, critically it would create a new source of income for the Council to support service delivery.

The Council was working closely with professional construction and design advisors (AECOM) in planning the layout of the new hotel and services on site

and were engaging with representatives of our preferred Hotel Brand and Management Operations organisations. This was necessary to identify the highest quality and affordable design for a hotel that best fitted with the Council's aspirations for the site and within an agreed budget, supported by a robust Business Case.

Early pre-application consultations were continuing with local authority and highways planners to reach general consensus around a suitable site access, layout and services, before developing a concept design into more detailed plans.

Members would be kept informed as proposals for the new hotel developed into architect plans that could be shared.

Further reported that there were no planned changes to the original Business Case that supported the planned investment in the hotel, which was based on robust information and uses informed estimates and assumptions. The details of the Business Case had been reported previously to Councillors and remained confidential.

The proposed investment had been assessed as attaining best value for the Council, supported by the findings of independent feasibility studies, commercial valuations and construction cost estimates. A detailed review of the existing supply of hotels within Taunton had provided positive income projections thereby supporting proposals to develop a new type of hotel in this preferred location.

The hotel as a commercial venture added value to the capital Land and Building investments of the Council and would provide a positive contribution to the Council's General Fund. The Council as landowner had the opportunity to develop and retain income from the new asset. Noted that the preferred model was for the Council to create a new Special Purpose Vehicle to trade enabling surpluses generated to be returned to the Council.

During the discussion of this item, an amendment urging the Council to delay a decision on the new hotel until the new Council was formed was proposed by Councillor Habib Farbahi and seconded by Councillor Simon Coles.

The amendment was put and was lost.

**Resolved** that in light of the response to the business consultation exercise and confirmation of the robustness of the original Business Case, the Firepool Hotel Project be continued in accordance with the approval of the 10 April 2018.

45. **Heart of the South West - Joint Committee - Council Update. Report of the Head of Localities (attached), to be presented by Councillor John Williams.**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the work of the Heart of the South West (HotSW) Joint Committee.

In January 2018, the HotSW Joint Committee was formally established by the

Councils and organisations involved since 2015 in the devolution partnership. The Committee was tasked with improving productivity across the HotSW area in collaboration with the HotSW Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and other organisations as necessary.

The Committee which was Chaired by Councillor David Fothergill, Leader of Somerset County Council (with Councillor John Tucker, Leader of South Hams District Council as Vice-Chairman) had met formally three times in 2018, in March, June and October.

In addition to this, the management structure that sat behind the Committee and involved Chief Executives and senior officers from across the partnership had met regularly to drive the business of the Committee.

The report summarised the progress made by the Committee over recent months in key areas of activity which included:-

- Influencing the Government;
- Approval of the HotSW Productivity Strategy;
- Endorsement of the Delivery Plan;
- The preparation of an Opportunities Prospectus;
- Housing - an agreement to work closely with Homes England and the Government to successfully deliver the ambitious housing programmes that exist across the area;
- Working with the National Infrastructure Commission to secure Government funding for a Growth Corridor Study;
- The formation of a Brexit Resilience Opportunities Group to research and advise on the opportunities and risks to the HotSW; and
- Setting up a Sub-National Transport Body to work with the Government to deliver investment in the Region's major transport infrastructure.

The report also set out actions proposed in the coming months, particularly:-

- 1) The development of an Investment Framework for the Delivery Plan so that priorities for delivery and project opportunities could be delivered via investment from a range of sources; and
- 2) Reviewing the roles and functions of both bodies through a governance review to acknowledge the revised and enhanced focus given to LEPs by the Government.

Further reported that the inclusion of the HotSW LEP area in the second wave of areas to benefit from working with the Government to develop their Local Industrial Strategies (LIS) was a considerable achievement for the Joint Committee and the LEP.

By working closely with the Government to develop our LIS it was hoped to be able to jointly agree the long term transformational opportunities that would help deliver the 'asks' specific to our area and influence wider Government policy and delivery.

LIS's would focus on the foundations of productivity and identify transformational opportunities with partners across Ideas, People, Infrastructure, Business Environment and Place.

Noted that the LEP's proposed timetable was to have the final LIS agreed between the LEP and the Government by June 2019. To enable the development of the LIS to be taken forward at pace, and to demonstrate alignment with partners across the area, it was proposed that local authority input was developed, coordinated and signed off by the Joint Committee. Approval was therefore sought from the constituent authorities to formally delegate the Council's responsibilities for contributing to and signing off the HotSW Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) to the Joint Committee.

The report also provided details of the Joint Committee's budgetary position to provide assurance that it was operating within its budget. These details included:-

- a) A summary of the Committee's current budget position for 2018/2019;
- b) A Budget and Cost Sharing Agreement which was a development of the Inter-Authority Agreement agreed by the constituent authorities at the time the Committee was established; and
- c) An indicative budget request for 2019/2020 to the constituent authorities, as set out below:-
  - County Councils - £10,500
  - Unitary Councils - £4,000
  - District Councils and National Parks £1,400.

**Resolved** that:-

- a) The progress report setting out the work of the Heart of the South West Joint Committee since its establishment in March 2018 be noted;
- b) The development and endorsement of the Heart of the South West Local Industrial Strategy be delegated to the Joint Committee (noting that final approval of the Strategy rested with the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership and the Government);
- c) The Budget statement for 2018/2019 set out in Appendix B to the report be noted and that in accordance with the decisions taken at the time the Committee was established, the Shadow Council would be asked to make an annual budgetary provision to meet the support costs of the Joint Committee in line with the Taunton Deane and West Somerset 2018/2019 contributions. Final clarification on any additional 2019/2020 budget requirement would be provided following the completion of the review of the Joint Committee's role, function and management support arrangements and development of its work programme for 2019/2020; and

d) The Budget and Cost-sharing Agreement set out in Appendix B to the report be agreed.

46. **Approval of Funding Request for the Transformation Programme. Report of the Chief Executive (attached) to be presented by Councillors John Williams and Andrew Sully.**

Considered report previously circulated, which sought additional funding for the Transformation Programme.

The approved High Level Business Case for the creation of a new Council with Transformation in 2016, promised £3,100,000 savings with one-off costs of £7,100,000.

The original Business Case required a saving of 23% of staff costs. From recruitment to date (phase 1) and staff expressions of interest (phase 2), the Councils were broadly on track to deliver this through the voluntary redundancy (VR) route. It was estimated that approximately 23% of staff would have taken VR by the end of the process.

The revised Business Case had increased the savings from £3,100,000 to £3,500,000 with a revised investment of circa £9,500,000 delivering an attractive return of investment whilst protecting front line services and improving the customer experience.

This meant that overall costs for Transformation were now estimated to exceed the original High Level Business Case estimates by £2,387,000, for which Taunton Deane's share was £1,880,000. It was proposed that the annual savings target be increased by £348,000.

The additional costs mostly came from the average cost of redundancy not from higher numbers of redundancy. In 2016 it was predicted the former to be £25,000 when in reality it has proven to be £34,000. This was most likely due to the age profile and length of service of the people involved.

Reported that approximately £800,000 of the additional cost had arisen from the inclusion of the Deane DLO workforce into the Transformation Programme. This had enabled the Councils to grow and develop the Localities function. It was also more inclusive as all staff now had the opportunity to apply for any role and to benefit from the development on offer.

The updated Business Case provided a payback period, at 2.7 years, which was below the three year good practice benchmark the Council had used for this programme.

To maintain capacity, resilience and service standards there were some one-off transitional costs for both this year and the start of next year totalling £685,000, for which the Council's share was £564,000.

**Resolved** that:-

- 1) An increase to the Transformation Programme Budget of £2,387,000 be noted and that funding of £1,277,000 for Taunton Deane's General Fund and £603,000 for Taunton Deane's Housing Revenue Account be approved. (Note £507,000 to be funded by West Somerset Council's General Fund);
- 2) An increase to service budgets for transitional costs totalling £685,000 be noted and that funding of £386,000 for Taunton Deane's General Fund and £178,000 for Taunton Deane's Housing Revenue Account be approved. (Note £121,000 to be funded by West Somerset Council's General Fund);
- 3) The proposed increase of the annual savings target by £348,000 to £3,500,000 be supported; and
- 4) It be noted that the Shadow Executive would consider the basis for allocating the increased savings target within the new Council's Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan.

47. **Suspension of Standing Order**

**Resolved** that Standing Order 28, Time limits for all meetings be suspended to enable the meeting to continue for a further half an hour.

48. **Confirmation of Appointment of Joint Chief Executive. Report of the Assistant Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer (attached), to be presented by Councillor John Williams.**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the appointment of James Hassett as Chief Executive for Taunton Deane Borough and West Somerset Councils with effect from 1 January 2019.

At the meeting of the Shadow Council held on 19 November 2018, it was agreed to appoint James Hassett as the Chief Executive Designate for the Somerset West and Taunton Council with effect from 1 January 2019 and as the permanent Chief Executive of the new Council with effect from 1 April 2018.

This decision, by virtue of the provisions of the Local Government (Boundary Changes) Regulations 2018, determined that the current Chief Executive should be treated as being dismissed by reason of redundancy. The current post-holder had therefore been given notice that their employment would cease with effect from 28 February, 2019.

Given that the Shadow Council did not have the powers to appoint staff to the extant authorities, for clarity and to ensure a smooth handover, as well as to be legally compliant, both Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset Council needed to formally appoint James Hassett as their Joint Chief Executive with effect from 1 January 2019 as recommended.

During the discussion of this item, the Leader of the Council, Councillor John Williams paid tribute to Penny James who had decided not to apply for the post of Chief Executive with the new Council. He stated that Penny had undertaken the

role of Chief Executive very well in often challenging conditions both at national and local levels. She had helped steer Taunton Deane and West Somerset Councils towards the creation of Somerset West and Taunton Council which would continue to provide local residents in both areas with a level of services into the future comparable to that which existed.

**Resolved** that the appointment of James Hassett as Chief Executive (including being Head of Paid Service, Returning Officer, Electoral Registration Officer and a Core Member of the Central Implementation Team) for Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset Council with effect from 1 January 2019 be confirmed.

49. **Approval of Redundancy (Transformation) where severance is over £100,000. Report of the Transformation HR Lead (attached), to be presented by Councillor Andrew Sully - see also Confidential Appendix at Item No. 16.**

Considered report previously circulated, which sought Council approval for the redundancies of the ICT and Information Manager.

Although the necessary financial approvals were already in place via the Business Case for Transformation, there was a requirement within the Councils' HR Policies for redundancies to be approved where severance costs exceeded £100,000 per case.

Although the new structure created through Transformation would come into effect at the end of February 2019 there was a requirement to retain the services of this particular employee until the 30 April 2019 to ensure that the significant risks associated with the IT Service could be managed appropriately.

**Resolved** that the redundancy of the ICT and Information Manager be approved with effect from 30 April 2019 in accordance with the financial details set out in the Confidential Appendix A to the report.

Due to the lateness of the hour, the Mayor suggested that rather than further extend the duration of the meeting, questions for the Executive Councillors in respect of their reports (details follow) could be dealt with via e-mail. This was agreed.

50. **Part II - To receive reports from the following Members of the Executive (attached):-**

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

Councillor Williams's report covered the following topics:-

- Chief Executive Designate;
- New Council;
- New Chair - Taunton Strategic Advisory Board;
- Proposed Dualling of the A358 – Progress;
- Refurbishment of The Deane House;



- Retail Relief – Guidance from the Government; and
- Proposed Development of the Tangier Site, Taunton with 182 new homes.

### **Sport, Parks and Leisure (Councillor Mrs Vivienne Stock-Williams)**

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

- Community Leisure – Play and Recreation; Play Equipment Repairs; Section 106 Funding for Play, Sport, Allotments and Community Halls; Capital Grant Scheme for Voluntary Village Halls, Sports Clubs and Allotments and the Parish Play Area Grant Scheme; Friends of Netherclay (Bishops Hull); Carols around the Bandstand, Vivary Park, Taunton; and Staffing;
- GLL (Taunton Deane) – Community Sport and Health; and Facilities;
- Leisure Procurement Project;
- Parks and Open Spaces – Staffing; Grass Cutting; Winter Planting; Arboriculture; Langford Lakes Christmas Trees; Vivary Park, Taunton; Wellington Park; Comeytrove Park; Somerset Wood; Swains Lane Nature Reserve, Wellington; and Abandoned Vehicles;
- Property – Station Road Swimming Pool; Vivary Park Golf Course, Taunton; and Wellington Sports Centre.

### **Corporate Resources (Councillor Andrew Sully)**

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

- Corporate Performance;
- Customer Services;
- Facilities Management;
- ICT/Technology;
- Members Case Management;
- Human Resources;
- Finance;
- Revenues and Benefits; and
- The Mayoralty and Democratic Services

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

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

- Taunton Town Centre;
- Street Wardens;
- Rough Sleeping Reduction Plan Overview;
- Streetwise Rough Sleepers Night Café;
- Wood to commemorate the Fallen of World War One; and
- Green Forum

### **Housing Services (Councillor Terry Beale)**

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

- Deane Housing Development - Weavers Arms, Rockwell Green, Wellington; North Taunton; Oake; 12 Moorland Close, Taunton; Outer Circle, Taunton; Laxton Road, Taunton; Future Council Development Pipeline; Affordable Housing Completions; General Enabling; Large Scale Sites of Interest; and Other Sites of interest;
- Deane Housing Repairs and Maintenance;
- Welfare Reform - Universal Credit; and
- Anti-Social Behaviour.

### **Environmental Services and Climate Change (Councillor Patrick Berry)**

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

- Street Sweeping and Toilet Cleaning;
- Somerset Waste Partnership;
- Cemeteries and Crematorium (Update on projects; Crematorium Waiting Room Extension; and Resignation of the Crematorium Manager); and
- Environmental Health – Health and Safety; Private Water Supplies; and Safety Advisory Group; and
- Licensing.

### **Economic Development, Asset Management, Arts and Culture, Tourism and Communications (Councillor Mark Edwards)**

The report from Councillor Edwards covered:-

- Communications;
- Events, Place, Retail Marketing and Visitor Centre – Events; Future Events; and Place Marketing;
- Growth Strategy and Specific Projects – Coal Orchard Redevelopment, Taunton; The Brewhouse Development, Taunton; Firepool Development, Taunton; Firepool Land Assembly; and Firepool Section 106 Agreement; and
- Asset Management Service Update – New Asset Management System; Leisure Procurement Facilities – Assets and Leases; Proposed Country Park (Near Nerrols Farm, Taunton); Annual Asset and Insurance Valuations; Landlord and Tenant Advice for Projects Managed by Development and Regeneration Teams; Income Recovery Efficiency Improvements; and Unauthorised Traveller Encampments.

### **Planning Policy and Transportation (Councillor Richard Parrish)**

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

- Tonedale Mill, Wellington;
- Car Parks - Variable Message Signage and Car Park Pay on Foot;
- Neighbourhood Plans;
- Public Space Improvements – St James Street, Hammet Street and East Street;
- Community Infrastructure Levy Update; and
- Garden Town Plan – Borough-wide Design Guide; Arts and Culture Strategy; Housing Infrastructure Fund – Forward Fund; Employment, Retail and Leisure Study; and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.

(Councillors Horsley and Govier left the meeting at 7.30 p.m. and 8.09 p.m. respectively. Councillors Ms Durdan, Farbahi, Mrs Floyd, Hall, Henley, Hunt and Wedderkopp all left the meeting at 9 p.m. Councillors Martin-Scott and Mrs Gunner left the meeting at 9.10 p.m. and 9.14 p.m. respectively.)

(The Meeting ended at 9.54 pm)