

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE
HELD AT FOLLATON HOUSE, TOTNES ON THURSDAY 6 DECEMBER 2007**

MEMBERS

* Cllr R J Tucker - Chairman

* Cllr P W Hitchins - Vice-Chairman

* Cllr N A Barnes

∅ Cllr H D Bastone

* Cllr B E Carson

* Cllr T J Hewitt

* Cllr D W May

* Cllr M F Saltern

* Denotes attendance

∅ Denotes apology for absence

Also in attendance at the invitation of the Chairman:

Cllrs K J Baldry, J I G Blackler, P H Cook, M J Hicks, M J Howarth, R M Lawrence,
D M O'Callaghan, C M Pannell, J T Pennington and J W Squire

Also in attendance but not participating:

Cllrs P Coulson, R D Gilbert and R C Steer

Officers in attendance:

All Agenda Items: Strategic Management Team and Head of Financial Services

E.71/07 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 8 November 2007 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

E.72/07 MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

It was noted that the following Members were in attendance and participated during the discussion on the under-mentioned item:-

Item 7 (minutes E.75/07 below refers) – Cllrs Baldry, Cook, Lawrence, O'Callaghan, Pannell and Pennington.

E.73/07 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be considered during the course of the meeting but none was made.

E.74/07 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

It was noted that no public questions had been received.

E.75/07 DRAFT BUDGET PROPOSALS 2008/09

A report was considered which updated Members on the Council's budget position and provided a framework for consultation with the Scrutiny and Policy Development Groups. It was anticipated that the report and consultation process would assist the Executive in identifying priorities, preparing the budget and maximising the use of resources.

The report concluded in stating that each year the preparation of annual budgets became more challenging than before, and this would not change over the foreseeable future. Uncertainty existed over the future funding and structure of local government. Members' views were now sought as to how they wished to reconcile the competing demands of additional expenditure, service provision and sound financial management.

The Leader of Council informed those present that it was not the intention of the Executive to fully debate the budget proposals at this meeting. Members were reminded that they would all get the opportunity to debate issues at their respective Scrutiny and Policy Development Groups and could attend any of these meetings and take part in the debate. All recommendations would then feed back into the Executive at its meeting of 24 January 2008 for full debate.

The Head of Financial Services informed the Executive that this was a very challenging year for budget planning due to a number of key pieces of information not being available, such as notification of the Formula Grant (Revenue Support Grant) and the Concessionary Bus Fare Grant from Government. It was noted that as these figures became available, they would be fed into the budget consultation with the Scrutiny and the Policy Development Groups.

During discussion, particular reference was made to:-

- a) the consultation process. Highlighted to Members was the consultation which had been carried out on the budget through the Business Forum, Town and Parish Councils, a web based survey and student questionnaires. A non-Executive Member sought confirmation that feedback received following this consultation was to be taken into account and that this was not just a democratic exercise. It was noted that one of the concerns fed back was the amount of communication carried out by the Council. In response it was noted that, during the budget debate in the respective Groups, Members should take these comments into account in line with what the Council had done in previous years budget setting;

- b) a non-Executive Members opinion that the rural areas of the district required further funding for affordable housing and therefore a bid for increased officer support in the Council's Forward Planning section should be considered. In response, Members were reminded that the bids as presented were not finite and if Members were minded to, they could put forward proposals for consideration;
- c) a non-Executive Members disappointment that there was no intention to have a full discussion on the draft budget papers at this meeting;
- d) a non-Executive Members disappointment that there were no comparative figures with the present 2007/2008 budget to compare the projected expenditure. In response it was noted that, it was difficult for Officers to determine the outcome of the 2008/2009 budget to produce comparable figures, when Members were to yet to determine the budget. Furthermore, all Members could obtain copies of the 2007/2008 budget papers to assist them in considering the 2008/2009 budget proposals. The Member then proceeded to express the opinion that all desirable budget bids should be removed from the budget proposals to concentrate on those bids which were essential;
- e) concern of the impact on reserves if there were changes in interest rates. In response, officers felt confident that the figures in the presented report relating to interest rates were stable, especially in light of Officers securing a fixed rate. However, Members would be informed of any changes.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be accepted and initial views concerning the bids for additional resources for 2008/09 and proposed reductions be noted;
2. That the view of Scrutiny and the Policy Development Groups on the issues contained within the report be obtained.

E.76/07

MOBILE PHONE CONTRACT RENEWAL

Consideration was given to a report which noted the need to renew the Council's mobile contract. Mobile phones had become a necessity for efficiency, effectiveness and safety. Moving to a three year contract would provide a significant reduction of around £6000 per annum compared to the contract which would enable the Council to manage this budget pressure. The recommendation was to select the Orange 'CAT4' three year contract.

RESOLVED

That a further contract with Orange Business Services through the pre-tendered Government OGC.BuyingSolutions Catalyst framework, for the 'CAT4' three year contract be entered into, making an exception to Standing Orders.

E.77/07 ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH FOOD SAFETY SERVICE PLAN 2007-2008

A report was considered which sought approval of the Council's Food Safety Service Plan 2007/2008. It was a requirement of the Food Standards Agency that such plans receive approval and it would demonstrate local transparency, accountability and enable the Council to promote this significant aspect of the Environmental Health Service.

RESOLVED

That the Food Safety Service Plan 2007-2008, as appended to the presented report, be adopted.

E.78/07 RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY - AMENDMENTS

Members considered a report which recommended changes to the Risk Management Strategy. The Council adopted the Risk Management Strategy as an essential part of its management systems and incorporated arrangements to ensure that risks were being managed and that risk management was being fully embedded into every aspect of the Council.

RESOLVED

That the revised complaints procedure and leaflet as presented in the circulated report be approved.

E.79/07 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

That in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business as the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Act is involved.

E.80/07 **BANKING ARRANGEMENTS: AWARD OF CONTRACT**

Members considered an exempt report which proposed the awarding of a new five year contract for banking services.

RESOLVED

That in order to ensure a continuity of banking services, and to build upon the very good relationship already established, an exemption be made to the Council's Standing Orders Relating to Contracts and the Co-Operative Bank Plc be appointed as the Council's bankers for the period from 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2013.

(NOTE: THESE DECISIONS WILL BECOME EFFECTIVE FROM 5.00 PM ON MONDAY 17 DECEMBER 2007 UNLESS CALLED IN, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULE 18).

(Meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 10.45 am).

Chairman