

EXECUTIVE

YOU ARE REQUESTED TO ATTEND A MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE TO BE HELD IN THE JOHN MEIKLE ROOM, THE DEANE HOUSE, BELVEDERE ROAD, TAUNTON ON WEDNESDAY 16TH SEPTEMBER 2009 AT 18:15.

AGENDA

1. Apologies.
2. Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 11 August 2009 (attached).
3. Public Question Time.
4. Declaration of Interests. To receive declarations of personal or prejudicial interests, in accordance with the Code of Conduct.
5. Mercury Abatement - Taunton Deane Crematorium. Report of the Cemeteries and Crematorium Manager (attached). Paul Rayson
6. Recommendations of the Employment Land in Taunton Task and Finish Group. Report of the Scrutiny Officer (attached). Erin Taylor
7. Non-Domestic Rates - Section 49 Hardship Relief Policy. Report of the Head of Revenues and Benefits (attached). Heather Tiso/Paul Harding
8. Proposals for Improving Performance Management. Report of the Performance and Client Lead (attached). Ruth James
9. Performance and Financial Monitoring - Quarter 1. Joint Report of the Performance and Client Lead and the Acting Financial Services Manager (attached). Ruth James and Emily Collacott
10. Full or Partial Flexible Retirement Policy. Report of the Retained Human Resources Manager (attached). Martin Griffin
11. Proposed relocation of the Tourist Information Centre to the Brewhouse Theatre. Report of the Interim Economic Development Manager (attached). Phil Sharratt
12. TDBC Funding Support to the Taunton Town Centre Company for Business Improvement District (BID) Administration Costs. Report of the Interim Economic

Development Manager (attached).

13. Redevelopment of four sites in Taunton to provide Affordable Housing in perpetuity. Report of the Housing Enabling Manager (attached). Also see Agenda Item No. 15. Lesley Webb

The following items are likely to be considered after the exclusion of the press and public because of the likelihood that exempt information would otherwise be disclosed relating to the Clause set out below of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

14. Proposed commissioning of a County-wide Home Improvement Agency. Report of the Strategy Lead (attached). Clause 1 - Council Employees. Simon Lewis
15. Redevelopment of four sites in Taunton to provide Affordable Housing in perpetuity. Report of the Housing Enabling Manager (attached). Please also see Agenda Item No.13. Clause 3 - Tenant or Lessee. Lesley Webb

Tonya Meers
Legal and Democratic Services Manager
08 September 2009

Executive Members:-

Councillor Henley (Chairman)

Councillor Coles

Councillor R Lees

Councillor Paul

Councillor Prior-Sankey

Councillor Slattery

Councillor Mrs Smith

Councillor A Wedderkopp

Councillor Mrs Wilson



Members of the public are welcome to attend the meeting and listen to the discussion. Lift access to the main committee room on the first floor of the building is available from the main ground floor entrance. Toilet facilities, with wheelchair access, are also available. There is a time set aside at the beginning of the meeting to allow the public to ask questions



An induction loop operates to enhance sound for anyone wearing a hearing aid or using a transmitter. If you require any further information, please contact Greg Dyke on:



Tel: 01823 356410
Fax: 01823 356329
E-Mail: g.dyke@tauntondeane.gov.uk

Website: www.tauntondeane.gov.uk (Council, Executive, Review Board & Review Panel Agenda, Reports and Minutes are available on the Website)

Executive – 11 August 2009

- Present:** Councillor Henley (Chairman)
Councillors Coles, R Lees, Paul, Prior-Sankey, Mrs Smith,
A Wedderkopp and Mrs Wilson
- Officers:** Penny James (Chief Executive), Tonya Meers (Legal and Democratic Services Manager), John Williams (Chief Housing Officer), Stephen Boland (Housing Estate Manager), Lydia Baker (Housing Accountant), Ian Jamieson (Acting Section 151 Officer) and Richard Bryant (Democratic Services Manager)
- Also present:** Councillors Mrs Allgrove, Beaven, Bishop, Bowrah, Brooks, Critchard, D Durdan, Farbahi, Mrs Floyd, Gaines, Guerrier, Hayward, Ms Herbert, Miss James, Mrs Lees, McMahon, Meikle, Morrell, Mullins, Murphy, O'Brien, P Smith, Mrs Stock-Williams, Stuart-Thorn, Watson, Ms Webber, D Wedderkopp and Mrs Whitmarsh.
Ken Marshall and Dustin Etherington (Tenants Forum)

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm.)

63. Apology

Councillor Slattery.

64. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 15 July 2009, copies of which had been circulated, were taken as read and were signed.

65. Public Question Time

Councillor Meikle, as a member of the public, made reference to the recommendations the Community Scrutiny Committee had made to the Executive in connection with the Brewhouse Theatre. The portfolio holder's article in the last Weekly Bulletin had not addressed the central question posed by scrutiny.

Effectively the Committee had challenged the financial judgement of the Executive over the proposed two year run of grant to the theatre. The Committee had simply requested the Finance Officer to be asked again whether such a move was ill advised. If it was considered to be unwise, then the Scrutiny Committee would be content and would not press the matter further.

As the Executive would not now have the call in on its agenda, it was hoped that by asking the same question of the Leader, this quite reasonable question would be answered in public.

In response, Councillor Henley confirmed that the decision reported through the Weekly Bulletin had been made in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

He felt that the subject had been well aired over the past few weeks and that there was no need for further discussions. He added that the Executive had worked closely with the Brewhouse Board and a satisfactory conclusion had been reached with them.

66. Declarations of Interest

Councillors Henley, Paul and Prior-Sankey declared personal interests as Members of Somerset County Council. Councillor Coles declared a personal interest as a Director of Southwest One. Councillor Mrs Smith declared a personal interest as an employee of Somerset County Council. Councillor Morrell declared a personal interest as the owner of leasehold properties. Councillors Brooks and Stuart-Thorn declared personal interests as Council tenants.

67. Rent Increase Decrease

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the proposed reduction of the rent increase which had been introduced at the beginning of the current financial year.

Shortly after the Council set its budget at Full Council on 17 February 2009, the Government made a surprise announcement which sought to enable Councils to reduce their rent to a national average of 3.1%. Following consultations, the Government released a new formal subsidy determination for each authority.

The Government had indicated that it would fund the reduction in the rent increase by increasing the Council's subsidy. In practice this meant the Council would pay less in Negative Subsidy.

The average rent for a Taunton Deane Tenant was set at £63.96 in February, but this would reduce to £62.10 if the rental increase was reduced.

There would be no significant impact on service or investment because the loss in income would be compensated through the subsidy determination. However, there would be additional IT and administrative costs, estimated at £15,000, which would not be covered by the Government and which, therefore, would slightly reduce the Housing Revenue Account Working Balance.

The proposed decrease had been provisionally scheduled to operate from 5 October 2009, which was exactly half-way through the rent year.

Reported that a publicity campaign would be mounted to prevent, as far as possible, any confusion tenants might have as a result of the proposed

changes.

The 41% of tenants who received full Housing Benefit would experience no financial gain and the further 18% who received partial Housing Benefit would only receive a reduced gain. It was also therefore important to manage expectations amongst those on benefit.

Further reported that whilst the major cost of this one off adjustment would be covered by the Government, this loss of rent operated year upon year and as yet there was no certainty that the reduction in Negative Subsidy payment would continue after this financial year.

Members were invited to consider two options - To maintain the average rent increase of 6.2% that had been agreed at Full Council on 17 February 2009 or to recommend a reduction in the rent increase to a local average of 2.95%. The Executive decided to support the latter option.

Resolved that Full Council be recommended to reduce the rent increase agreed earlier in the year (as part of the budget-setting process) to a local average of 2.95%.

68. **Tenant Empowerment in Taunton Deane**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning Tenant Empowerment in Taunton Deane.

During the past year, a small group of tenants had examined the opportunities available to have more say in the way in which their homes were managed.

The way in which social landlords were regulated was undergoing fundamental change with the creation of the new regulator, the Tenant Services Authority (TSA). The TSA, which was currently the responsible regulator for housing associations, would take formal responsibility for the regulation of Local Authority landlords from April 2010.

The TSA was committed to improving the deal for tenants via a new standards framework, with tenant empowerment key to a cultural change in the way social landlords engaged with their tenants.

It was essential for the Council to review its tenant involvement arrangements and work towards a model which would begin the movement of direct influence over investment and services to a new representative body of Councillors and tenants. The Tenants' Empowerment Group (TEG) felt that whilst the Council consulted with tenants, they had little influence.

Following a series of meetings, a report on behalf of the tenants' group had been prepared titled "Tenant empowerment in Taunton Deane : Next steps", a copy of which was submitted for the information of Members.

The report provided an opportunity for the Council to make a significant difference by taking tenant involvement to level not seen before in Taunton Deane. It suggested the creation of a Tenant Services Management Board of ten tenant representatives and two Councillors, one from each of the main parties. The Board would be non-political and charged with the responsibility for ensuring the best possible standards of service delivery to tenants.

The report described the Board's remit as including:-

- involvement in setting the budget and determining spending priorities;
- reviewing and revising policies;
- involvement in agreeing and reviewing contracts;
- staff appointments including a role for tenants in interviewing;
- monitoring service quality;
- considering complaints and appeals;
- making proposals for future development including identifying new build opportunities;
- developing the capacity to progressively manage services; and
- supporting and encouraging tenant and resident management in local neighbourhoods.

It was felt a new partnership agreement would formalise the relationship in a positive and constructive way and confirm the tenant at the heart of all decision-making.

The Board would also have a key role in self-assessment of the landlord service against the new standards and regulatory framework being developed by the Tenant Services Authority (TSA).

The Council was transforming itself by means of the Core Council Review, and the suggested new Board would be a good "fit" with the stated principles of the review and in particular its commitment to community engagement.

Recruitment to the Board would offer opportunities for the development of individuals and training opportunities would be made available. A publicity campaign leading on these and other positive benefits would be created to attract members to the TEG.

Noted that to progress the work involved in the creation of a Tenant Services Management Board, it would be necessary to employ a specialist officer on a temporary basis.

The proposals for tenant empowerment had been considered by the Community Scrutiny Committee where they had generally been supported.

Resolved that:-

- (1) The creation of a Tenant Services Management Board comprising ten tenants and two Councillors (one from each of the main parties) be approved;
- (2) The Chief Housing Officer and Housing Operations Manager be authorised to begin the work necessary to create an operational Tenant Services

Management Board by April 2010;

- (3) Full Council be recommended to approve a supplementary estimate from the Housing Revenue Reserves of £20,000 to employ a temporary consultant Tenant Empowerment Officer to progress the work involved;
- (4) The options for resourcing tenant empowerment within the consideration of Phase 4 of the Core Council Review be examined by the Chief Housing Officer and the Housing Operations Manager; and
- (5) Increased tenant empowerment be adopted as one of the guiding principles of the Core Council Review.

(The meeting ended at 7.12 p.m.)

Usual Declarations of Interest by Councillors

Executive

- **Members of Somerset County Council – Councillors Henley, Paul and Prior-Sankey**
- **Employee of Somerset County Council – Councillor Mrs Smith**
- **Director of Southwest One – Councillor Coles**
- **Member of Somerset Waste Board and employee of Sedgemoor District Council – Councillor Slattery**

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Executive – 16 September 2009

Mercury Abatement - Taunton Deane Crematorium

**Report of the Cemeteries and Crematorium Manager and Registrar
(Paul Rayson)**

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Tim Slattery)

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To advise the Council of the tenders received from manufacturers to supply filtration equipment and suggest an alternative arrangement to obtain full legislative compliance with the requirements of DEFRA and Government's PG5/2 legislation.

Executive Summary

Since 1 April 2006 Taunton Deane Crematorium has been saving £35 per cremation towards the purchase of mercury filtration equipment, to date over £230,000 has been reserved for this project.

Tenders sought for filtration equipment varied in both price and quality. In all five tenders were received with the most favourable manufacturer quoting £551,214 plus optional extras for all three cremators to be filtered for mercury and an additional £100,000 (guide price) for a building extension to house the equipment. One manufacturer recommended replacing the existing three cremators with two new cremators at the same time as installing filtration equipment.

The crematorium is a listed building and it is clearly beneficial to avoid a building extension if at all possible. The proposed extension will also be at the rear of the building occupying space currently reserved for disabled persons parking and would be highly visible.

The crematorium provides the Council with a large annual financial surplus and the crematorium cremation fee is amongst the top national quarter.

This report proposes for the tendering and installation of three new cremators and filtration equipment which will provide the Council with a greater choice of supplier, the provision of a large cremator, limit work to the exterior of the building and long term-reduced costs.

A business case to re-evaluate this project has been constructed and it is recommended that the scheme be re-tendered for three new cremators and filtration equipment, to be financed through savings and borrowing.

2. Background

- 2.1 Taunton Deane Crematorium carries out over 2200 cremations per annum.
- 2.2 The crematorium is a great asset to the council. It was built in 1963 to a very high specification and is truly an outstanding example of this type of facility, in fact; the building has been listed due to its architectural interest.
- 2.3 The crematorium has a catchment area that well extends the borough boundary and attracts business from Bridgwater, Chard and Minehead.
- 2.4 Taunton Deane Crematorium is currently equipped with three-Joule cremators installed and maintained by Furnace Construction.
- 2.5 Emissions from crematoria have been regulated under Part 1 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 since 1991. These controls have not, however addressed emissions of mercury from crematoria, DEFRA and Government's PG5/2 legislation has addressed this issue. It is estimated that in the absence of intervention, emissions of mercury from crematoria would rise by two-thirds from 2000 to 2020. In response to this DEFRA consulted with the industry on the introduction of gas cleaning equipment to remove mercury emissions.
- 2.6 Due to the prohibitive cost on smaller crematoria of this equipment a compromise approach has been agreed, whereby 50% of cremations will be abated for mercury by 2012.
- 2.7 The current cremators are over twelve years old and have carried out over 26,000 cremations. The annual independent testing for emissions to air limits demonstrates that they are currently working within the present legal requirements.
- 2.8 The cremators are regularly serviced and re-bricked, although continual problems have been experienced with the quality of maintenance and repair. The crematorium is rather restricted to the use of the manufacturer as servicing agent due to the computer programs installed to operate the equipment.
- 2.9 If the existing cremators are to remain then the current EPA equipment on each machine will need replacing, this will cost £13,000 per machine.
- 2.10 To give members an idea of other costs; the re-bricking of each cremator is £15,000 (this is normally carried out every 3-4 years) and servicing/maintenance costs from revenue expenditure over the last five years is detailed below;-

•	2004/05	£22,330.95
•	2005/06	£22,135.14
•	2006/07	£24,915.40
•	2007/08	£19,161.75
•	2008/09	£38,130.02

3. Options (DEFRA)

- 5.1 Operators may either upgrade their existing crematoria to trade emissions limits with other crematoria or a combination of both to achieve 50% reduction of mercury emissions.
- 5.2 A single crematorium can abate 50% of its cremations and not trade emissions.
- 5.3 Local authorities with 2 or more crematoria can trade internally provided they can provide evidence of achieving 50% reduction in mercury emissions.
- 5.4 Two or more operators could form their own arrangement provided they can provide evidence of achieving 50% reduction in mercury emissions.
- 5.5 DEFRA have made it clear that if a 50% reduction of mercury emissions cannot be demonstrated then the alternative option of targeting those crematoria with the highest number of cremations will come into play; Taunton Deane Crematorium is within this group.
- 5.6 The Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities have proposed a burden-sharing scheme (CAMEO) whereby cremation authorities can trade emission rights. An authority that abates for mercury will be able to receive payments from those that do not abate.

4. Taunton Deane Crematorium

- 4.1 Taunton Deane Crematorium carries out an average of 2200 cremations per annum. If DEFRA is unable to get the 50% reduction it will be targeting crematoria that carry out over 1800 cremations per annum for abatement.
- 4.2 The main income generator for the crematorium is the cremation fee and a comparison with neighbouring crematoria is detailed below.
- 4.3 The table demonstrates the increase in cremation fee compared to other authorities over a ten-year period.

Crematorium	1998 (£)	1999 (£)	2000 (£)	2001 (£)	2002 (£)	2003 (£)	2004 (£)	2005 (£)	2006 (£)	2007 (£)
Bristol (Canford)	245	265	275	290	310	325	345	385	410	455
Bristol (South)	245	260	275	290	310	325	345	385	410	455
W-S-M	250	260	270	290	310	325	345	390	435	460
Barnstaple Plus Interment Fee	197	214	215	225	255	260	290	356	393	415
Exeter (Private) Plus Interment Fee	250	275	296	311	326	345	365	Not Known	418	450
Yeovil Plus Organist Fee	200	210	219	230	240	270	300	330	400	420
Taunton	186	198	208	219	270	295	355	399	459	479

5. Proposal

- 5.7 Re-tender the project for new cremators and filtration equipment.
- 5.8 Estimated project price £1,000,000. Finance to come from savings and borrowing which will be paid back from the cremation fee income.

6. Benefits

- 6.1 Taunton Deane is a major cremation authority; the installation of new cremators and filtration equipment will be a long-term investment.
- 6.2 If the Council choose to re-tender the project requesting cremator and filtration equipment a wider and more selective response from manufacturers will be received.
- 6.3 There is an opportunity to replace the existing equipment and install new cremators and filtration equipment without extending the building, saving building costs.
- 6.4 There will be no planning issues involved with the new building extension.
- 6.5 The provision of a large cremator will enable the cremation of larger deceased persons. Currently we can accommodate a coffin up to 31 inches wide a large cremator will accept a coffin 41 inches wide.
- 6.6 The same manufacturer will supply the cremators and filtration equipment with no conflict of interest between suppliers during servicing, repair and maintenance.

7. Funding

- 7.1 The Council is currently saving £35 per cremation towards this project.
- 7.2 The cost will be £1,000,000 with £230,000 already in an earmarked reserve leaving a requirement for £770,000. The life of the asset will be 15 - 20 years.
- 7.3 The interest cost would be approx $5\% \times £770k = £38.5k$ per annum and the MRP would be $£770k/20 \text{ years} = £38.5k$, therefore £77k per year.

Note: The MTFP assumes that the RCCO (which has been making up the £230k) stop in 2011/12 and this just also happens to be £77k.

- 7.4 The MTFP will need to be adjusted from 2011/12 onwards as it currently assumed that the £35 would drop out at this point.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1 It is recommended that the Council re-tender for mercury filtration equipment and three new cremators.
- 8.2 It is recommended that the total project cost be financed through the earmarked reserve and borrowing.

Contact Officer:

Paul Rayson, Cemeteries and Crematorium Manager and Registrar

Tel: 01823 284811

Email: p.rayson@tauntondeane.gov.uk

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Executive – 16 September 2009

Task and Finish Review into Employment Land in Taunton

Report of the Scrutiny Officer

(This matter is the responsibility of Councillor Simon Coles)

Executive Summary

This Task and Finish review has now been concluded. The final report has been submitted to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee and was approved subject to some amendments (detailed below) being recommended.

This cover sheet provides directions on how the Executive should deal with the Task and Finish report into large housing schemes, particularly its five recommendations.

The final report of the Task and Finish review follows this cover report.

1. Recommended Changes to the Task and Finish Report suggested by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee

- 1.1 The final report of the Task and Finish Group was considered by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 6 August 2009. During the discussion of this item, a number of suggested changes to the recommendations were made. These are shown in **bold print** on the attachment marked “Extract from the Minutes of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee meeting”.

2. The Executive is asked to do the following:-

- 2.1 Consider the above recommended changes of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee and agree whether or not these should be included in the report.
- 2.2 Then consider the report and its recommendations and decide which, if any, of the recommendations it wishes to adopt.
- 2.3 If the Executive agrees to adopt any of the recommendations of the review, it should state who will be responsible for delivering each of the adopted recommendations. The Corporate Management Team (CMT) has had prior sight of the report and has identified a CMT member to take responsibility for each recommendation, if adopted.

2.4 If the Executive decides **not** to adopt any of the recommendations, it must specifically state why, as prescribed by the Local Government Act 2007.

3. Contact Details

Erin Taylor
Scrutiny Officer
Taunton Deane Borough Council
T: 01823 356415 (internal ext. 2305)
e: e.taylor@tauntondeane.gov.uk

Extract from the Minutes of the Corporate Strategy Committee meeting held on 6 August 2009.

“Resolved that the Executive be recommended to accept the Task and Finish Review’s recommendations subject to the changes shown in bold below:

- (1) In line with Circular 02/2009, the Council should initiate discussions with landowners and developers for the release of immediate short term employment land opportunities at Nerrols, Creech Heathfield and Walford Cross **and other suitable sustainable sites** for up to 5,000 square metres (around 2 hectares per site). **Such discussions should aim to encourage the owners of land to release sites to businesses, wherever possible, on a freehold rather than a leasehold basis;**
- (2) In line with Circular 02/2009, the threshold for out-of-centre office proposals for requiring a sequential assessment be raised to 1,000 square metres. This should enable additional windfall opportunities to come forward in the short term;
- (3) A strategic employment site of about 25 hectares **should** be brought forward in the medium/long term, through the LDF. **The Council recognise that it needed to collaborate closely with all relevant agencies if it wished to build in flexibility into the Core Strategy. The owners of any potential site identified should again be encouraged to release sites to businesses, wherever possible, on a freehold rather than a leasehold basis;**
- (4) To progress a strategic **employment** site it was also recommended that a working group be set up and led by **the Strategic Director, involving** Economic Development, Project Taunton **and representatives of all relevant agencies**, a Councillor representative **and others as appropriate** with the purpose of developing an evidence base and proposal for the LDF Core Strategy. **Consideration should be given to a representative from Sedgemoor District Council being invited to sit on the Working Group.** As part of this process there should be community engagement with the parishes that would be affected. It was recommended that the strategic employment site should provide opportunities for major inward investment **and relocation of existing sites** to Taunton. It was accepted development (non Class A1) would be necessary to fund the initial infrastructure to open up the site, but the total proportion of floor space for such uses should remain ancillary (around 10%) and focus on medium sized office suites (300 – 1,000 square metres) in order to remain consistent with Government policy and to avoid undermining Firepool as the strategic office site for the Taunton Strategically Significant City and Town (SSCT). **Such a Working Group**

should report back to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee within 4 months, with a progress report;

- (5) The Executive be requested to identify the specific partners for the Working Group which would be led by Taunton Deane with the process and reporting back arrangements (to ensure progress was measured) being led by the Strategic Director, Joy Wishlade.”



Executive

Task and Finish Review

A Review into Employment Land in Taunton



Taunton Deane Borough Council: Executive A Task and Finish Review into Employment Land in Taunton



Introduction by Councillor Norman Cavill

Chairman of the Employment Land Task and Finish Review

There can be no doubt that in recent years there have been several occasions when opportunities for inward investment within the Taunton area have been missed and companies wishing to expand have moved away.

This Task and Finish Group was tasked to assist in resolving and reversing this situation. We have had the benefit of reports clearly showing that business requires a variety of sites that we presently do not have allocated and an analysis of the existing allocations has resulted in a re-evaluation.

However this Group was also attended by representatives including consultants, professional agents and developers as well as officers from Taunton Deane, Somerset County Council and other statutory agencies.

As you will see from the report there was no doubt at all from those representing the private sector, that Taunton is chronically short of a major strategic site, required in the near future, which would complement Firepool. If the employment opportunities required over the next 20 years are to be provided then short, medium and long term sites are required.

This is in spite of the fact that businesses and consumers are experiencing the worst recession since the 1930s and that global warming is a reality driving the need to transition to a more sustainable economy that recognises and protects the heritage of Taunton and the surrounding natural environment.

This does not mitigate the urgent need for employment land, but rather, further emphasises the need to create local jobs in Taunton within sustainable employment sites.

The Economic Development Manager is developing a green job strategy that will be essential in stimulating the recovery from the current economic downturn. It

will promote the greening of existing jobs through more efficient use of resources, and stimulate new jobs by helping to develop skills, innovation and new technologies, which will contribute to the strengthening of the green knowledge economy but also the low carbon energy sector within Taunton.

In short we need to find the will and the way to break the mould of past years, and expedite the provision and allocation of these sites. This must become one of our primary objectives, if we are to have any future standing in the South West.

Councillor Norman P Cavill
July 2009

Acknowledgements

Ralph Willoughby-Foster

Planning Policy Advisor, Taunton Deane Borough Council

Roger Mitchinson

Senior Policy Officer, Taunton Deane Borough Council

Mark Green

Project Taunton

Philip Sharratt

Interim Economic Development Manager, Taunton Deane Borough Council

Background to the Review

Why do a review on this subject?

A growing body of evidence suggests that the demand for employment land and premises is outstripping the supply within Taunton. In particular, Taunton Deane Borough Council is aware of the strong private sector feeling that there is a shortage of available employment land and that there is not the choice of premises or sites available to meet the future needs of indigenous business growth nor of potential inward investors.

There appears to be a need for small sites in the short and medium term, to provide smaller industrial and office premises of less than 10,000 sq ft with a choice of tenures and a need for a medium/longer term strategic site to attract high value inward investment that will complement the office development at Firepool.

It is important to quantify the apparent need that exists and examine the current suitability of sites identified for employment uses in the Taunton Deane Local Plan. It is understood that of the 70-80 hectares allocated in the Local Plan only 2 or 3 hectares in the Taunton area are currently capable of being brought forward for development.

The ready availability of employment sites in Taunton is an important issue which needs to be addressed. Taunton has Growth Point status and is one of the Governments eight 'Priority Places', but does not have sufficient employment land in the short term to accommodate the growth and diversification of the economy that will allow Growth Point targets to be achieved.

It was acknowledged that many companies have relocated their operations to Exeter, Yeovil and other adjoining towns due to the lack of availability of appropriate sites within Taunton to accommodate their growth requirements. However, the preferred choice of location for many of these businesses had been Taunton.

It could be argued that Taunton has an excellent strategic position, equal or better than their final relocation choice and there is anecdotal evidence that a growing number of Inward Investment Companies have considered relocating to Taunton but were unable to be offered any suitable site. This inevitably leads to the conclusion that there is a lack of appropriate employment sites and that this factor is truncating the economic potential of Taunton.

It is clear that Taunton will have to deliver a wide diversity of employment if it is to achieve the sustainable growth targets of the future. Blackbrook Business Park was the last sizeable allocation made in Taunton and that was almost 25 years ago. If Taunton is in any way to realise its economic potential identified within the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) then alterations and additions to its present employment land allocation need to be made.

Definitions and Abbreviations

- The Government Office for the South West - (GOSW)
- Strategically Significant Towns and Cities - (SSCT)
- Local Development Framework - (LDF)
- The Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2009 - (Circular 02/2009)

Membership of the Review

Councillor Norman Cavill (chairman)

Councillor Habib Farbahi

Councillor Terry Murphy

Councillor Jayne O'Brien

Councillor Mrs Vivienne Stock-Williams

Councillor Mrs Mary Whitmarsh

Councillor John Williams

Terms of Reference

This review is subject to the following terms of reference:-

- Review the Strategic Employment Sites currently available and recommend whether they ought to remain in the Local Plan;
- Identify locations for alternative Strategic Employment Sites which could be more readily available for a wide range and types of businesses;
- Establish what could be achieved through the preparation of the current Local Development Framework (LDF) whilst considering how lengthy potential delays to land coming forward for development may be overcome;
- Undertake consultations with interested parties;
- To consider how we should work with statutory bodies such as the Highways Agency and others to enable any proposed sites to be brought forward; and
- Make recommendations to the Executive.

At the first meeting the group acknowledged that it did not intend to duplicate work already being undertaken by the LDF Steering Group and that any recommendations made by the Task and Finish Group would feed into the preparation of the Core Strategy and the LDF.

Evidence Taken, Key Findings and Recommendations

1. Taunton's Economy

The Task and Finish Group has identified that there is a need for Taunton to diversify the employment base and to increase private sector knowledge intensive activity that will provide choices of employment opportunities, retain talent within the area and attract higher wage earners to Taunton Deane.

The Local Economic Assessment, undertaken during January 2009, has shown that Taunton's economy is not thriving as it should and is overly dependant on public administration and low value consumer-led private sector activity to provide employment growth. See Taunton Deane Local Economic Assessment, Geoeconomics, February 2009.

The Government Office for the South West (GOSW) recommend that as Taunton is a Growth Point for the South West it is important that it should be investigating what restrictions it is facing and how these could be removed. The GOSW also recognise the need for flexibility in Taunton's economic growth in order to adapt to changes in the economic situation and to meet local need.

It was suggested to the group that the employment land opportunities in Taunton are not diverse enough and that this is evident in the low take up of allocated employment land for business use. It was stated that the Firepool development would not be appropriate to meet the needs of all growing local businesses and that it would not satisfy the diversity of requirements of potential inward investors, including high value manufacturing and design and production operations, or smaller operations requiring less than 10,000 sq ft of office space.

2. The Taunton Deane Employment Land and Premises Survey

During January 2009, questionnaires were distributed to businesses and public sector organisations within the Taunton Economic Zone. A total of 7,200 questionnaires were distributed with 884 returned completed - a significant increase on the 400 responses received when the questionnaire was last distributed in 2006.

The responses represented the views of a cross section of organisations across sectors, at ratios of around 30% industrial uses, 31% wholesale or retail, 23% office space, and 15% other including education, health, and hospitality uses:-

Agriculture, Food and Fisheries	5%
Manufacturing	12%
Construction	9%

Wholesale and Retail	31%
Hotel, Restaurant (including Tourism)	8%
Transport and Storage	4%
Real Estate and Business Services	6%
Public Admin and Community	6%
Education, Health and social work	7%
Other	11%

Of those that responded to the question about turnover 82% had a turnover of less than £2 million, 14% had a turnover between £2 million - £25 million and 4% had a turnover of £25 million or more, which is not unrepresentative of the structure of the local economy.

When asked if their present business premises were appropriate for their current needs, 11% of those responding reported that their premises situation was poor/very poor, indicating that if they had not already explored alternatives that they would need to plan to relocate within the next 3 year strategic cycle and that a further 34% of those responding only rated their current premises situation as “adequate for now”.

On this basis it is safe to assume that the lack of appropriate or suitable premises is a factor that has been given consideration within the decision making process to meet the growth aspirations of 45% of employers within the Taunton Economic Zone and may be a factor that is limiting the growth of employment opportunities for local residents and preventing the diversification of the local economy.

In terms of future requirements, these organisations require a choice of tenures, including easy-in/easy-out, rented, leasehold, freehold serviced and freehold land with premises predominantly of less than 10,000 sq ft, though there remains a significant proportion of organisations looking for premises within the range 10,000 sq of – 20,000 sq ft and larger than 20,000 sq ft.

Of these larger premises, Firepool will meet the needs of the larger office users requiring 10,000 sq ft plus, but it is recognised that there is currently no site available to accommodate the needs of those requiring larger manufacturing or production premises, or those with large warehousing and distribution operations.

50% of the respondents felt there was insufficient choice in employment space to meet their future needs and, in particular, identified that there was a shortage of small workshop/manufacturing space, premises for wholesale/warehousing or distribution operations and smaller office space.

The most important factors, beyond appropriateness, in determining what would compose suitable premises were cost and availability of parking, which is not surprising as the two most important factors to growing Small and Medium

Enterprises (SMEs) is cashflow and recruitment of a qualified and dedicated workforce.

The respondents were offered a number of options of 'preferred locations', including existing or planned employment areas and other areas to provide a complete choice around Taunton (North, East, South, and West) including existing sites within Wellington and Bridgwater. The top 4 locations identified were:-

- Firepool;
- East of Motorway (access to Junction 25);
- North Taunton; and
- Monkton Heathfield.

Whilst it might be expected that Firepool would have appeared close to the top of the list due to the publicity and anticipation of the regeneration of the town centre and its proximity to the town centre and the railway station, there is no significant employment allocation east of the motorway at Junction 25. There is a large allocation of employment land at Monkton Heathfield (14 ha) within the urban extension and a small allocation of employment land within what is currently planned as a mixed use housing scheme at Nerrols Farm where a total land allocation of 2 ha may be available for development in the short term.

The future of Taunton lies in the creation and growth of its indigenous business and despite the fact that the survey was undertaken during January 2009 when news coverage of the economic crisis was at its peak, there are a large number of businesses who are optimistic about the future.

Over half of the respondents were anticipating year on year growth of 5% or more, with 14% of respondents forecasting growth in excess of 15%, but the lack of available and appropriate premises of the size and tenure required by these organisations will have the effect of limited growth or forcing growth to occur outside of the Taunton Economic Zone.

Taunton is a Growth Point and the draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) identifies that to meet the employment requirements of the proposed housing growth an additional 16,500 jobs will need to be created. Respondents were asked what the 'big issue' was for them and 21% felt that it was issues to do with planning and premises, which came second only after the recession at 32%.

Respondents were also asked how they felt Taunton Deane Borough Council could help them and 29% felt that improvements to the planning process and availability of premises were areas where the Council could improve their support. 53% of respondents felt that the Council does nothing to help or actively hinders local businesses.

Frome is not a recognised Growth Point and yet there are 42.9 ha of employment land being brought forward in the short term.

Across Mendip there are further employment developments being brought forward including one site of 8 ha that is outside a settlement limit and the current LDF, but the needs of the local area are providing motivation for their Forward Planning, Development Management and Economic Development Teams to work together to overcome the planning problems that might at first sight appear to produce barriers to this development succeeding in being passed through the planning process.

If, as a result of the lack of allocated employment land in Taunton that is financially viable and attractive to the private sector to bring forward for development and can, and is likely to be, brought forward within the next strategic business planning cycle of 3 to 5 years providing the mix of tenures and range of premises that will meet the needs of these growing indigenous businesses, then these ambitious Growth Point targets for employment growth will not be achieved.

The findings of the survey are that the lack of employment land and appropriate premises in Taunton is an issue of such significance that solutions need to be found now as part of the LDF process.

3. The Future of Taunton

Building on the Local Economic Assessment, during March 2009 the Economic Development Team worked with Professor Mark Hepworth and the Geoeconomics Team to produce a vision for the future of the Taunton economy. Within this study further detailed analysis of the economy was undertaken which highlighted that the 16,500 job creation target within the RSS was understated.

What Professor Hepworth describes as the 'inconvenient truth' is that around 4,000 jobs will be lost in the recession and that upwards of 20,000 new local jobs must be created between 2011 and 2026. Furthermore, a higher proportion of these jobs than before have to be concentrated in high skill, high paid occupations, with private sector knowledge intensive jobs being created at a rate of 2:1 to total jobs created in order to diversify the local economy and increase average earnings within Taunton Deane to the national average.

However, it was also revealed that 36% of the 60,000 jobs in Taunton Deane are part-time, against a regional average of 28% and a national average of 24%. Taunton is the number one part-time economy in the Country and to reduce the number of part-time jobs to the regional average will require creating an additional 4,800 full time jobs and an additional 7,500 full time jobs to bring part-time working down to the national average.

Therefore, the challenge is to create 28,000 new full time jobs between 2011 and 2026 growing high value employment at a rate 200% faster than low value administration and consumer-led employment.

It was also recognised that the local economy was imbalanced toward public sector employment, which provides around 40% of the total employment across Taunton Deane and contributes significantly to the knowledge intensive activity locally, whilst the bulk of private sector employment was in low value consumer-led activity such as retail, hospitality and tourism.

In order to provide choices of employment opportunities, which is required to retain talent and attract graduates, the local economy needs to diversify toward private sector knowledge intensive employment such as cultural and creative industries, digital and green technology businesses and programmes of activity to drive demand for 'green collar' employment, health and education establishments to attract talent including innovation centres and a physical central place for higher education in Taunton, production and construction businesses and activity including building modern industrial estates, a green building programme and social innovation to drive the adoption of sustainable energy production within mixed use urban extensions.

The "Envisioning the Future of the Taunton Economy" report suggests that Taunton is heading for gradual economic decline. There is a need for strong leadership from the Council to reverse this trend and for employment land to be made available to meet the needs of indigenous business growth and attract high value Inward Investment to Taunton, in addition to the opportunities for large office users created at Firepool.

The Firepool site will create 5,000 new jobs and the challenge for the Project Taunton Team is to ensure that this employment achieves the 3,300 high value private sector jobs required from the development to contribute to the diversification of the local economy. However, the real challenge is to create 28,000 new jobs of which 18,500 need to be high value private sector employment opportunities. Firepool, as the only strategic employment site available to Taunton will not accommodate this growth in employment and it is self evident that an additional strategic site of greater size than Firepool is required beyond the secondary employment sites already identified, including the 14 ha at Monkton Heathfield.

The Group feels that the Envisioning report, and subsequent work being commissioned by the Economic Development Unit, should be incorporated into the Corporate Strategy.

4. The Stage 1 Employment Land Review

The Stage 1 Employment Land Review was agreed at the Task and Finish Group

and signed off by Councillor Coles. It assesses existing Land Supply with Taunton Deane to inform allocations and requirements in the emerging Core Strategy. It was prepared Taunton Deane following broad agreement on findings through consultations with agents and developers.

A number of organisations took part in the consultation process, notably Summerfield Developments, Greenslade Taylor Hunt, Hatfield White, Alder King and Somerset County Council. A summary of the responses from those who took part in the consultation are contained in Appendix A. Appendices B, C, and D contain detailed responses to the Employment Land Review from Summerfield and WYG.

As a result of the consultation a number of sites were either removed from available supply (for example Henlade due to viability of development and sustainability) or retained but excluded from the totals as development was unlikely to result in additional employment (for example Priorswood former land fill site).

The Strategy Team and Planning Policy Advisor produced a report for this Group attached at Appendix E. The group decided to adopt the recommendations made in this report. The main points are summarised below.

The Stage 1 Employment Land Review Assessment identifies:-

- 55.5 ha of employment land available over the RSS period (2006-2026) for **industrial and other** employment uses within Taunton Deane, of which:-
- 22.2 ha within the Taunton SSCT (Strategically Significant Cities and Towns).
- 25.95 ha within the Wellington area.

In Taunton:-

- 8 ha immediately and short term available (within 3 years) comprised of sites at Taunton Trading Estate (5.2 ha), Crown land (1.95 ha), Courtlands (0.8 ha) and Frobisher Way (0.32 ha).
- 14 ha available within the medium term (3-10 years). All within Monkton Heathfield.

Office Use

- 100,000 sq.m. of commitments within the period 2006-2026. Nearly all of

this is within the Taunton SSCT and most is identified through the Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan.

Concerns

- Lack of short, medium and longer term opportunities within the Taunton SSCT for industrial/other land.
- Now that Blackbrook is nearing completion there is a lack of current opportunities for medium sized office suites (300-1000 sq.m.).

Options for short term release outside of Local Plan / LDF

- Under Circular 02/2009 site areas of approximately 2 hectares for non office use would not need to be referred to GOSW as a departure.
- It also defines Major development in the Town Centre as under 1,000 sq.m. Thus potentially allowing additional small scale out of centre office sites.
- In line with this the following sites could be investigated to be bought forward in the short term:-
 - Crown land at Nerrols (c2 ha);
 - Creech Heathfield (part of c8 ha total);
 - Walford Cross (c2 ha); and
 - Additional windfall out of centre office sites may also arise with the higher office 'threshold'.

It is unlikely that larger sites for immediate release could you be brought forward outside of the Development Plan system.

5. Taunton's Infrastructure and Junction 25

Taunton is in the centre of the South West region and needs to further improve its road infrastructure if it going to attract additional businesses. This is a challenge which needs to be embraced and overcome.

It was emphasized by consultants and developers that potential sites to attract businesses must have the correct location as well as good infrastructure. Strategic sites such as those in Exeter and Weston-Super-Mare, which had retail, office and industrial units were near the M5 Motorway and these are the sort of sites which should be identified in Taunton.

6. Junction 25

- The Task and Finish Group was advised that it is unlikely that another Motorway junction will be built, which had previously been suggested as an idea to service the Monkton Heathfield employment site.
- Whilst the Government has been calling for Taunton to increase its economic viability, the Highways Agency has in the past been reluctant to support increased use at Junction 25. As proactive leadership has demonstrated in the past with campaigning for the proposed dualing of the A358, it was agreed that the Council should be engaging with the Highways Agency and other authorities to enable the timely and correct investment to be brought forward to achieve a new strategic site.

Somerset County Council have said that although they do not believe Junction 25 should be the key determinate, as it would be expensive, it does need to be addressed and consideration should be given by linking it to the Henlade By-Pass. They have provided reassurance that if Taunton Deane has viable ideas they would work with the Highways Agency and the Council to achieve them.

- The land east of Junction 25 is considered of high value for employment use and it was agreed that it should be a priority for the Council to work with the Highways Agency for this strategic site to come forward. Particularly as the Park and Ride, once it is available, will significantly reduce the amount of traffic movement coming from the A358 direction.
- Future funding of £1 billion is available for transport improvements under the Regional Funding Allocation 2 (RFA 2). Taunton Deane needs to enlist the assistance of the RDA and others to support its bid for the Junction 25 improvements.
- Those representatives of the business sector gave their assessments and agreed that the only site that satisfied the requirements for a new strategic site was the land adjacent to Junction 25

7. Alternative Sites to Land East of Junction 25

- It is important that potential projects are undertaken properly, for example any development at the Monkton Heathfield and A38 sites which would provide sustainable urban extensions with homes and offices. These developments could then lead the way for other similar sites, such as Galmington and Bindon Road. Although they would not be strategic sites, they would be significant in providing employment sites. However, the developers felt that it would be difficult to bring these sites forward without significant infrastructure investment to make them financially viable. The highways access would not be good enough for a strategic site.

- The Monkton Heathfield site could be bought forward in isolation without the rest of the housing development.
- There is an underlying need to find sites which are accessible. Therefore, the priority is to allocate sites near major roads in order to provide a good infrastructure.
- Apart from the Blackbrook site which is almost full, the only other site presently suitable for offices is Firepool. There is concern that there is a lack of sites for the types of business going to Blackbrook and that the Firepool site would not provide this type of development.

8. Funding

- The Regional Infrastructure Fund (RIF) produced about £2m for the flood storage scheme at Long Run Farm which will facilitate regeneration of Taunton Town Centre.
- The Local Transport Plan has included:-
 - The North West Taunton Package which provided the Silk Mills Bridge over the mainline Railway, a new Park and Ride site and bus priority measures.
 - Cambria Park and Ride is under construction.
 - Taunton Third Way and Northern Inner Distributor Road have planning permission and funding.
- To date Taunton has received about £9m of New Growth Point Funding. However there is a need to achieve Growth Targets if we are to be successful in future and avoid a potential payback situation.
- The total provision of road infrastructure can restrict the development of a small to medium site. This severely limits the number of potential sites around Taunton.
- To give this some idea of the costs of improvements. The Creech Castle Junction, which is to be funded by the RFA 2, would cost in the region of £20m. The Henlade bypass will cost £30m - £40m.

9. Recommendations

1. In line with Circular 02/2009, the Council initiates discussions with landowners and developers for the release of immediate short term employment land opportunities at Nerrols, Creech Heathfield and Walford Cross for up to 5,000 sq.m. (around 2 hectares per site);
2. In line with Circular 02/2009, the threshold for out-of-centre office proposals for requiring a sequential assessment be raised to 1,000 sq.m. This should enable additional windfall opportunities to come forward in the short term.
3. A strategic employment site of about 25 hectares be brought forward in the medium - longer term, through the LDF. (Any attempt to bring forward a strategic site outside the LDF would be blocked by the Highways Agency and possibly GOSW and SW Councils).
4. To progress a strategic site it is also recommended that a Working Group be set up and led by Economic Development or Project Taunton, involving a Taunton Deane Strategy Officer, and representatives of Somerset County Council Transport, Highways Agency, Environment Agency, Regional Development Agency/SW Councils, developers and agents and a Councillor representative with the purpose of developing an evidence base and proposal for the LDF Core Strategy. As part of this process there should be community engagement with the parishes that would be affected. It is recommended that the strategic employment site should provide opportunities for major inward investment to Taunton. It is accepted that an element of office and non Class B employment generating development (non Class A1) will be necessary to fund the initial infrastructure to open up the site, but the total proportion of floor space for such uses should remain ancillary (around 10%) and focus on medium sized office suites (300-1,000 sq.m.) in order to remain consistent with Government policy and to avoid undermining Firepool as the strategic office site for the SSCT; and
5. The Executive be requested to identify the specific partners for the Working Group which would be led by Taunton Deane with the process and reporting back arrangements (to ensure progress was measured) being led by the Strategic Director, Joy Wishlade.

10. Conclusions

Taunton is strategically placed in the centre of the South West. An attractive

location for businesses but without the required infrastructure and choice of employment sites.

The Task and Finish Group have recognised that Taunton is a Growth Point for the South West where there is a need to diversify and attract higher wage earners to the area. There are a large number of businesses that are optimistic about the future, but the lack of premises available may contribute to businesses leaving the area.

Taunton needs to improve its road infrastructure before it can attract the right business. The Firepool type developments will not be wanted by all potential businesses coming to the area and so other business types must be considered, such as high value manufacturing, design and production companies. The need for flexibility in Taunton's economic development in order to adapt to changes in the market has been identified.

Taunton has received funding to improve its infrastructure and must obtain further funding from the RFA 2 for development from 2014-2019. It should be noted that the figure of £1billion is for all the seven Counties of the South West Region.

Members from the private sector have informed the Group that it would be difficult to bring the alternative sites forward without significant infrastructure investment to make them financially viable. Taunton Deane should therefore be pro-active in engaging with the Highways Agency to enable investment to be brought forward to achieve Growth Point targets and enable development of land east of Junction 25.

The Group recommends that a new strategic site in excess of 20 hectares to the east of the M5 Motorway at Junction 25 is required as a minimum, in addition to the continued growth of smaller sites. Within the short term the only site available for immediate occupation is Chelston (Westpark 26) in Wellington, which means that there is little or no significant volume of employment land available around Taunton within the next three to five years.

It is essential for the economic wellbeing of Taunton that this Strategic site is brought forward as quickly as can be done.

TAUNTON DEANE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**STAGE 1 EMPLOYMENT LAND ASSESSMENT
CONSULTATION RESPONSE.**

Appendix A

Response of Greenslade Taylor Hunt, Hatfield White and Alder King

23. February 2009.

Consultees Response	Council comments
<p>Agree with the Stage 1 conclusion “there is a significant mismatch in supply between Taunton and Wellington ... the current employment supply in the Taunton area will worsen ... there is a particular need to identify and target additional land in the Taunton area ... to fulfil market gaps (eg a large strategic quality site ton attract high value growth sectors, the lack of freehold land and a better spatial spread in the rural areas”.</p>	<p>Noted</p>
<p>The response contains a site by site assessment of the availability and viability of the Stage 1 identified sites. It concludes that for Taunton, there is only 3.01 ha of office land (at Blackbrook) and 16,570 sq.m. potential office space at East Goods Yard immediately available and around 10 ha of non office land.</p>	<p>Following discussions with stakeholders it was agreed that a 3 year ‘short term’ was an appropriate period for assessing availability. This should also include an element of ‘immediately’ available. Within a 3 year timeframe over 71,000 sq.m. of office space can be considered available. All but Firepool (47,000 sq.m / Site TTa7) was considered unconstrained/immediately available for development.</p> <p>In addition, the Stage 1 assessment uses 1 April 2006 as the start date for the RSS 20 year period to 2026, thus this response excludes 2 years of completions (2006-2008) which amounted to an additional 8,000 sq, m of office space.</p> <p>This combined short term total of over 79,000 sq.m. is around 87% of the RSS background paper estimates for office supply over the Plan period (which may prove an underestimate).</p>

	<p>However, the Council accepts that there is little availability of office space in Wellington although any additional provision should be of a scale and function to the size and future role of the town.</p> <p>Developers/agents also, strongly consider that available sites are heavily orientated to Taunton town centre and may not meet all of the sectoral demands for future suite size and business locations over the Core Strategy period. This also needs to be addressed.</p>
<p>Only 1.93 ha of office land is realistically available now and Firepool is not suitable for the sort of occupiers that have taken buildings at Blackbrook. Sites to satisfy demand over the next 5 years are thin on the ground.</p>	<p>See above comment.</p> <p>The respondees assessment actually identifies 19,428 sq.m. office space available within 2 years. A further 7,340 sq.m. has been built in Taunton area since the start of the RSS period (2006-08). This amounts to over 26,700 sq. of available office space over the first 4 years of the Plan period (out of a total requirement of between 60-90,000 sq.m.) and is not considered unreasonable. Moreover, town centre sites such as Firepool (c47,000 sq.m.) are anticipated to be available for development in phases, commencing within the next 3 year period (c2011/12).</p> <p>The Council is aware that suite sizes in some town centre regeneration sites may be too large for many potential occupiers and that a town centre location may not be suitable for operational needs, but is particularly mindful of Government, Regional and Local Planning policy. However, subject to identified need over the Plan period, the Council accepts that an element of ‘out of centre’ office (and other employment generators excluding comparison/convenience retail) use may be necessary to provide a mix of employment and to ‘pump-prime’ the consequences of high infrastructure costs within larger, strategically located employment sites. A figure of around 10% total</p>

	<p>floorspace would be the maximum the Council would consider as not being more than incidental, and thus contrary to policy.</p>
<p>With the exception of Chelston (Wellington), there has been no significant industrial development for many years. Much land in Taunton is not viable, reflecting location, access and infrastructure constraints.</p>	<p>Accepted. The mismatch in supply between Wellington and Taunton has been a recognised concern for a number of years. The Stage 1 assessment proposes the deletion of a number of sites from the ‘supply’ calculations for a number of reasons. This still leaves nearly 22 ha in the Taunton area.</p> <p>However, it is accepted that this 22 ha may not be suitable for all types of business use, sectoral requirements or other investment opportunities. Moreover, much of the land at Taunton Trading Estate is being redeveloped to include less employment provision (albeit a better utilisation of space, much of which was unusable due to building age and quality).</p> <p>The Council proposes to work in partnership with developers, agents etc to produce an evidence base identifying market gaps which cannot be met through the current supply and increase land requirements over and above current background studies, to inform Core Strategy policy and allocations.</p>
<p>There is an alarming shortage of available land available for office and industrial development in the short and medium term, with the exception of the ‘Vision’ sites’ which only cater for a limited sector of the market. There is not enough suitable land allocated for the</p>	<p>As noted in the above comments, by the respondees own observations there is over 26,760 sq.m. of office space available over the period 2006-2011. The Council considers that other sites such as ‘Firepool’ will also commence availability within a 3 year (ie short term) period, providing around 47,000 sq.m. additional office space.</p> <p>The above Council responses also suggest that subject to need it may be appropriate to also make limited office provision in larger,</p>

	<p>strategically located out of centre employment areas but such sites are unlikely to be agreed and advanced outside of the Development Plan system. The past decade has already provided significant out of centre choice at Blackbrook (around 34,000 sq.m. or c30% of existing town centre office space, including Taunton and County Council offices).</p> <p>It is accepted that availability of industrial land in Taunton is very limited, particularly in the short term. However, the Core Strategy needs to plan for requirements over the 20 year period (2006-2026), not just the short term, especially if current RSS and TDBC reports consider an oversupply over the 20 year period. It is though agreed that the range and choice of sites in Taunton is poor and that additional land is required to be identified in the Core Strategy.</p>
<p>Whilst regional policy discourages ‘poaching’ investment from nearby areas, Taunton must strive to put itself in a position where it has the best chance of retaining existing business and can compete in equal terms with other centres.</p>	<p>Agreed. The Council agrees with the principle that the currently perceived employment land oversupply in the RSS and TDBC (Stage 2) studies is misplaced since, although deliverable and viable, some of the sites identified in the Stage 1 assessment may not fulfil all of the market requirements. Again, the Council is willing to work with stakeholders to develop a robust evidence base to challenge the quantum of supply identified in these studies.</p>
<p>Strategic sites should not be pigeon holed for specific uses. Occupier demand should be left to identify what is built.</p>	<p>Partially agree. Planning policy requires a sequential approach (subject to need) for office use. However, other Class B and associated uses are usually accepted within employment estates and within a class the Council cannot specify a specific type of user that is or isn’t acceptable.</p>
<p>The following minimum allocations should be made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. At least 10 ha for major strategic office site, with good access to the M5 and out of town office market. Other additional uses could be accommodated in addition; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Out of centre office parks would only be acceptable to ‘need’ and a sequential approach to location. It is also unlikely that ‘need’ would require an additional 10 hectares of office land.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ii. A strategic site or sites totalling at least 25 ha for office, industrial and sui generic use with good J25 access. iii. Several smaller sites totalling at least 10 ha for industrial and sui generic use, with good access to the primary transport routes and existing employment areas. A proportion of premium value uses should be acceptable to assist viability. Land to the west of Taunton should be included in this category; iv. Several sites totalling at least 5 ha for quasi employment uses such as trade parks, showrooms, open storage, builders merchants etc; v. Thus a total of a further 50 ha for the period to 2026 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ii. –v. The Stage 1 assessment already identifies around 30 ha more land than required in the Stage 2 assessments (ie around 10 ha less than the total c40 ha non office sought by the respondees). However, it is accepted that these sites may not entirely fit in with the requirements outlined by the respondees as being attractive to investors and occupiers. The Council is willing to increase the land requirements in the Core Strategy to meet market gaps if stakeholders can provide evidence to justify the principle and quantum.
<p>List of sites to be removed from the Stage 1 calculations</p>	<p>Offices T.Ta3 Blackbrook Do not accept. This is an extant planning permission. Delete in due course if necessary. T.Ta.10 Coal Orchard and T.Ta11 Morrisons. Do not accept. These sites are part of a mixed use allocation in the TCAAP, adopted late 2008. The Inspector was satisfied to retain these allocations to include office proposals of this scale. It is too early to reconsider deletion. R.Co1 Cothelstone. Do not accept. Extant planning permission. Delete in due course if necessary.</p> <p>Other uses T.Ta8, T.Cf2, T.Cf4, T.Nf6 Sites already excluded from total. T.Cf1 and T.Nf4 Sites already in use. Accept. Remove from supply total. W.We3 Tonedale Mill. Do not accept. This is an underused site. Refurb will increase employment provision. Also existing Local Plan allocation. W.We8 Chelston House Farm. Site already excluded. However, see Philip Broom – reinsert as additional site.</p>

	<p>W.W1 Pleamore. Do not accept. The site was available and under construction in 2008, thus correct to include as part of land supply for period 2006-20026.</p> <p>R.He1-3 Sites already excluded from the totals.</p> <p>R.Wi1. Do not accept. This site has valid planning permission.</p>
--	--

Response of Philip Broom 6th February 2009

Consultees Response	Councils comments
Site W.We.8 (Chelston House Farm) is partly developed and the rest retained for future employment sale.	W.We8. Accept. Reinstate site but as already largely in employment (or quasi) use do not include as part of available supply.

Response of Summerfield 18th February 2009

Consultee Response	Councils comments
Taunton town centre office market is adequately served with plenty of short to medium space at Firepool.	Noted.
High rise buildings at Firepool will not be suitable for occupiers requiring smaller, self contained buildings, or individual bespoke designs. In addition, the accommodation will all be expensive grade A space, not suited to all occupiers.	It is too early to yet say how 'expensive' or otherwise the Firepool office space will be. However, Project Taunton have confirmed that the Firepool site is unlikely to provide small – medium sized office suites. At this stage it is also too early to gauge whether other AAP sites will cater for a range of large/small, freehold/rental, and expensive/cheaper options.
The out of town office market has been ignored in the Core Strategy and no suitable land allocations have been made up until 2026. Blackbrook is nearly fully developed, resulting in a potentially serious situation for Taunton. Suitable land must be brought forward in the	Over the previous 5 years, 98% of all Taunton office floorspace was constructed at the 'out of centre' Blackbrook. Floorspace at Blackbrook office park equates in total to around 65% of all Taunton town centre office space (excluding Council offices). It was approved

<p>Core Strategy.</p>	<p>prior to government policy requiring a sequential approach to major office development if there is an established need.</p> <p>The Core Strategy has yet to allocate any additional land. However, background studies for the RSS and Core Strategy suggest that the Borough needs a maximum of between 60,000 - 91,000 sq.m. of new office space. Existing commitments (Development Plan and permissions) amount to around 100,000 sq.m.</p> <p>At present, no evidence has been presented to the Council to suggest an additional quantum of office floorspace above background studies is required, although developers/agents have argued that town centre opportunities do not entirely fulfil market demand. As stated above, the Council is prepared to work with stakeholders to reassess need and market gaps and potentially allocate additional opportunities within policy constraints.</p>
<p>Development of Chelston has retained some businesses in Taunton Deane but there is a dearth of suitable (non office) employment land in Taunton.</p>	<p>Accepted. Monitoring reports show a clear, long term mismatch of industrial/sui generis land between Taunton and Wellington. The scale of growth proposed for Taunton will exacerbate this position unless additional land is identified for the Taunton area to 2026. The Council will seek to work with developers and agents to quantify the shortage of such land in the SSCT.</p>
<p>In conclusion, the stage 1 assessment is overoptimistic, statistics only telling half the story. Occupiers cannot be steered to where they don't want to go and inward investment will go elsewhere. A large mixed use business park of +40 ha at a strategic Taunton location that complies with institutional funding requirements should therefore be allocated.</p>	<p>Suitability/availability of sites queried:</p> <p>Offices</p> <p>T.Ta2, 4 and 12 'Already developed'. These sites were available at or since RSS commencement date (April 2006) and thus form part of the total supply.</p> <p>T.Ta3 Adjoins office park. Extant permission. This site cannot</p>

	<p>therefore be deleted from supply T.Ta.5,6,7 (Firepool) 'Available within 3-5 years'. Possibly. Project Taunton confident of commencement within 3 years. Respondees office floorspace total for Firepool/TTa7 (47,000 sq.m.) is accepted and Stage 1 draft total (51,000) sq.m. deleted. T,Ta10,11 (Coal Orchard, Morrissons) 'Existing non office uses' and unlikely to be of interest to be redeveloped. Noted but adopted AAP recognises regeneration potential in mid/long term Plan period and Project Taunton confirm long term aims and suitability. T.Nf2 (Station Road) Extant office permission. Retain.</p> <p>Non office TCf1, (Toneway) Accept, not available, Take off land supply TCf2, (Priorswood) Already excluded from supply T.Nf3. Site was available/allocation at April 2006 commencement date. T.Nf6 Already removed from supply figure RHe1-3 (Henlade) Already excluded from supply figures. WWe8 (Chelston). Part of Local Plan allocation. Retain (see Philip Broom response) W.Ww1 (Pleamore). Now developed but available post 2006 commencement date. RWi1 (Hillsmoor) Valid planning permission on site available post 2006 commencement.</p> <p>Most sites recommended for deletion are commitments and thus should be retained (planning permission or allocation) and capable of development within Plan period 2006-2026. However, accept that there may be market sectors or types of investment opportunities lacking. The Council will work with developers/agents to investigate opportunities to challenge existing evidence base for demand</p>
--	--

	requirements as part of the Core Strategy.
--	--

White Young, Green 10th February 2009

Consultees Response	Councils comments
According to the 2004 Guidance notes Stage 1 is only an initial assessment. Stage 2 should be conducted to assess local market circumstances and the supply in quantitative terms before an oversupply of employment land can be concluded.	The Stage 2 report has been undertaken (by DTZ). A similar assessment was undertaken by SWERDA/DTZ as part of the RSS evidence base. It is on this basis that the Council has concluded an oversupply. However, Council reports have made it clear that there may be grounds to challenge certain assertions and gaps in the assessments, hence TDBC's willingness to review the Core Strategy evidence base with developers/agents.
A significant number of the committed sites would not appear to be currently available and others are not considered available within 5 years. The Stage 1 review commitment figure is not therefore robust	<p>The Core Strategy and RSS covers the 20 year period 2006-2026 and the projected requirements for office development cover this period to 2026.</p> <p>Even removing sites deemed unsuitable by agents in the short term, Greenslade Taylor's assessment identifies 19,428 sq.m. office space available within 2 years. A further 7,340 sq.m. has been built in Taunton area since the start of the RSS period. Over 26,700 sq. of available office space over the first 5 years of the Plan period (out of a total requirement of between 60-90,000 sq.m.) is not considered unreasonable. Moreover, town centre sites such as Firepool (c47,000 sq.m.) are anticipated to commence development within 3 years (subject to economic climate?) further increasing provision. This is not considered unreasonable. Moreover, the Council considers that other sites, such as Coal Orchard and Tangier may also be advanced for development around 2014.</p>
The 91,000 sq.m. figure does not reflect the RSS requirements. The	The RSS does not indeed specify any office demand figure, purely an

<p>draft RSS does not state a specific level of office need and is not a development plan requirement supported by the RSS.</p>	<p>employment figure for Taunton TTWA (around 16,500 jobs). However, a background study for the RSS commissioned by SWERDA suggested potential office requirement of up to 91,000 sq.m. over the period 2006-2026, which is higher than the c66,000 sq.m. identified as the maximum requirement in the Borough Councils Stage 2 Assessment undertaken by DTZ.</p> <p>Further, a Regional Assembly commissioned (Aug 2008) Employment Land: Spatial Implications study considered only around 2,268 new office jobs over the period 2006-2026 in Taunton Deane which the study equates to 40,828 sq.m. of new floorspace.</p> <p>The Planning system requires an evidence base to back policy formulation and the 91,000 sq.m. has been used as a starting point by the Council. AS stated before, the Council is willing to consider any objective evidence of a shortage in quantum submitted by agents/developers if they consider the total requirement to still be above committed supply.</p>
<p>The latest modifications to RSS raised the employment requirement for Taunton Deane to 25,000 jobs</p>	<p>This figure relates to Taunton HMA which includes Bridgwater for example, ie it is not the same area as covered by Taunton Deane.</p>
<p>A 5 year rolling supply of sites should be provided. It is unreasonable for Taunton Deane to require very little employment land in the short term, thus relying upon delivery nearer 2026.</p>	<p>The Council considers it appropriate to seek to ensure a reasonable supply across the whole Plan period. As noted above, it is considered that a reasonable supply of office space is committed and available for development both within the first 5 years of the Plan period and over the next 5 years. There is also a reasonable short term supply of industrial/other land in the short term over the Deane although it is accepted that this is unacceptably skewed towards Wellington, rather than the Taunton area. However, future sites should be identified through the Development Plan process rather than ‘ad hoc’.</p>

<p>The RSS recognises a difference between town centre and out of centre requirements, making allowance for out of town office development, recognising its need and function – eg. where they are ancillary to other forms of employment provision</p>	<p>Paragraph 8.4.12 of the RSS states that “provision of office ... uses will need to be provided in-step with the needs generated by economic and population growth ... based on the ‘town centre first’ sequential approach ... follow(ing) guidance given in PPS6”</p> <p>Policy TC1 of the RSS also states “The planning of office development at other (non town centre) employment development areas should reflect the need to avoid putting at risk any approved LDD’s for a city or town centre”</p> <p>The Council is not aware of any part of the RSS which accepts out of centre office space that would conflict with the above statements or Regional, National and Local Plan policy. However, it does accept that many Class B1,b and c uses may include an office element within the building that would be ‘ancillary’ to the main use and thus not requiring planning permission and, subject to identified ‘need’ the Council comments above has accepted that there may be justification to allow an element of other office uses at major, strategically located sites in the Borough..</p>
---	---

Somerset County Council 18th February 2009

Consultees Response	Councils comments
<p>Mismatch between Taunton and Wellingtons industrial land supply is noted and the conclusion that there is a particular need to identify and target additional land in the Taunton area is supported.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>
<p>Sites R.He1-3 (Henlade), despite the constraints, should be considered as an ‘amber’ rather than ‘red’ as, despite constraints, this area could form part of a strategic opportunity, as evidenced by the recent</p>	<p>The SHLAA does not recognise the area south of the motorway as a priority location for accommodating the towns RSS growth, reflecting the background work to the RSS.</p>

SHLAA submission. It could be suitable for a more detailed appraisal in stage 3.	
--	--

Tim Roper 27th February 2009

Consultees Response	Councils comments
Site W.We7 (Lowmoor) has excluded land between the road and river, which has extant permission and is partly used.	Accepted. The land benefits from a 1988 planning permission and amounts to 1.18 ha. However, whilst it is accepted that the land is classed as ‘employment’ it is not proposed to add the 1.18 ha to the land supply figures since part is already implemented and the remaining land falls within the floodplain and flood alleviation would be required. If developed in long term, this should be regarded as an additional windfall.

Clarke Wilmott 5th February 2009

Consultees response	Councils comments
The sites are of a size that is insufficient to be attractive to developers and/or occupiers. Further, the site sizes make it highly unlikely that their development will deliver or contribute towards any significant infrastructure enhancements.	The Council accepts that there is a very limited supply of non office sites in the Taunton area and this needs to be rectified in the Core Strategy, but there is no evidence that the retained sites will not prove attractive for developers or occupiers. Apart from Monkton Heathfield, the sites proposed to be retained do not have significant infrastructure issues restraining development. The sites all lie within or adjoining existing employment areas and the Council does not accept that the sites proposed for retention will not be developed within the Plan period.
The 2005 Somerset Economic Strategy noted “the need for regionally significant sites in Somerset’s larger towns is a priority for future	The Local Plan was adopted in 2004, prior to the mentioned strategy, thus there has been limited opportunity to ‘allocate’ additional land

<p>competitiveness, including investment”. Taunton has failed to allocate land for this purpose, and given the content of the Stage 1 Review, this trend looks set to continue.</p>	<p>outside of the planning process since then.</p> <p>The Council does not necessarily accept that ‘this trend looks set to continue’. An aim of the Stage 1 review is to flush out gaps in provision – such as the lack of relative provision in Taunton. Firepool functions as a ‘regionally significant site’ and feedback from the consultation exercise suggests the lack of larger non office sites may provide additional scope to challenge the existing ‘demand’ requirements to 2026 in the Stage 2 Assessment. The Council proposes to continue dialogue with developers/agents to objectively quantify such gaps.</p>
<p>Apart from Blackbrook, little land of any consequence has been developed for office purposes.</p>	<p>Noted. However, a number of town centre opportunities have been identified as commitments, through planning permission and/or within the recently adopted Taunton Town Centre AAP. Even excluding Firepool, this amounts to over 20,000 sq.m. available now and a further 7,000 sq.m. built over the period from the RSS baseline commencement of 2006 to the Stage 1 date of 2008.</p>
<p>Using a 2006 basedate results in a number of sites at Blackbrook being included which have since been built.</p>	<p>Noted. However the RSS 20 year period runs from 2006 -2026 thus including completions since the 2006 commencement date is appropriate.</p>
<p>Important businesses such as Taunton Cider and Thales have been lost.</p>	<p>Noted. Taunton Cider closed around 15 years ago. Thales has been more recent although the premises remain and are partly used.</p>
<p>The reports land supply (25.17 ha) (Note, now in final draft the figure is 22 ha) is less than the area lost at the former Taunton Trading Estate (31.17 ha).</p>	<p>Noted. However, Taunton Trading Estate were former military building built for the war effort. They were old, much of the space was underused, not suited to modern industrial requirements and part of the site lay within the floodplain. Moreover, the economic restructuring of the economy enables modern business to utilise less modern space to better advantage. However, it is accepted that the loss of most of this employment land should be a factor in allocating additional land in the</p>

	Core Strategy.
There is an effective acknowledgement that much of the allocated land in the last Local Plan is either unsuitable or unavailable for development.	Accepted in part. Of the three large Taunton allocations, Taunton Trading Estate is currently under redevelopment for a mix of uses and Monkton Heathfield has permission for mixed use redevelopment (granted March 09). It is however proposed to remove the Henlade allocation from the employment supply as the site is unlikely to come forward. The allocations at Wellington are underway (Chelston House Farm) or completed (Chelston).
In consequence of the above, it is important to understand which sites are available for development, making up the 25.17 Taunton supply figure.	Clarke Wilmott phoned with this question and were told the Stage 1 sites marked as to be 'retained' are the sites in question. The assessments also show whether they are considered available in short (within 5 years), medium (within 10 years) or longer term. This should not therefore hinder their understanding of what sites are referred to.
Sites may be 'available' only in planning terms rather than in a practical or commercial sense.	The Council accepts that there are very limited sites available in Taunton as a result of the Stage 1 review (and some of these are proposed to be removed from the supply list eg T.Cf2 and 4,). However, sites at Norton Fitzwarren have planning permission and development started. Sites at Monkton Heathfield have the benefit of planning permission, granted in March 2009. It is thus too early to say they are not commercially attractive although the Council accepts that in the current economic climate, few sites are likely to be so at present.
The Council also needs to pay careful regard to the range and type of employment uses to be attracted to Taunton. This begs the question of whether Taunton Deane has an economic strategy. If one is being prepared no officer from Taunton Deane should be involved.	The Councils most recent Economic Development Strategy (draft 2007) is currently being updated. It would not be appropriate to exclude officers from the Councils own Economic Development Strategy although it is being drafted by consultants. Part of this strategy will reassess the range and type of employment uses identified / targeted in earlier studies.
The report concludes that only the Monkton Heathfield allocations within the Taunton area have a 'realistic potential to attract any	The comment regarding Monkton Heathfield and 'growth sectors' arose from internal discussions with Economic Development Section

<p>identified non office, significant, high-value growth sectors such as those within the scientific knowledge-based or creative industries'. It would be helpful if the authors have taken external commercial agency advice to underpin this conclusion. Monkton Heathfield is not high profile and it is tenditious to say that this allocation is deliverable and available. It has been under consideration for over a decade without development occurring. Lack of activity and the current economic climate suggests that funding will not be likely in the foreseeable future. Thus whilst available in the future, a prospective operator/investor could not be certain that the unit they require could be got underway in a matter of months.</p>	<p>on the basis of the size of site and Greenfield location. There have been no requests to delete the site in favour of alternative uses by the applicants and no other consultees have considered that the site is not deliverable.</p> <p>Development has not occurred in the past because the site was only allocated in the adopted Local Plan in 2004 and an application lodged in late 2005. Permission was granted by Secretary of State in March 2009. The Council does however accept that the current economic climate may inevitably affect delivery of this mixed use urban extension, along with many other sites nationally. The Council accepts the suggested medium/long term timescale (-5-10 years) of Greenslade Taylor et al is now a more realistic timeframe.</p>
<p>With the Monkton Heathfield allocation set aside, it is erroneous to conclude that there is a broad range of unit sizes available in Taunton.</p>	<p>Accepted. Without the Monkton Heathfield allocation, availability of sites and thus unit sizes are extremely limited.</p>
<p>Upon what policy guidance is the use of 'short term availability' within 5 years regarded as an acceptable approach?</p>	<p>The 5 year period for 'short term availability' was used at both the Taunton Deane Local Plan Inquiry and Taunton Town Centre AAP as constituting a 'reasonable period of time' by which to judge whether land was available. Earlier case law (eg Kingston upon Hull and Huntingdonshire) also used the 5 year period to constitute available within the context of the sequential assessment.</p> <p>The Council notes that Policy ES3 of the emerging RSS advocates a three year rolling supply of employment land to ensure allocations continue to meet the needs of business.</p> <p>Based on current annual take-up rates a rolling three year supply does exist within the Deane but this is largely due to immediate availability in Wellington. It is accepted that supply in Taunton remains extremely</p>

	limited and is an important issue for addressing in the Core Strategy.
--	--

Ref: CSEmpStage1responses



TAUNTON DEANE BOROUGH COUNCIL STAGE 1 EMPLOYMENT LAND REVIEW

Response from Summerfield Developments (SW) Limited (supplemental to our January 2009 Paper)

- 1 Summerfield have over 20 years' experience specialising in employment land and have developed business parks along the M4/M5 corridor at Chippenham, Bristol, Weston-super-Mare, Highbridge, Taunton, Wellington and Exeter. Occupiers include office headquarters and large distribution warehouses as well as smaller light industrial units.
- 2 We also have extensive knowledge of the city/town centre office market having developed large buildings for the MOD in Bristol, National Rivers Authority in Bridgwater and Charity Commissioners and Treasury Solicitors in Taunton.
- 3 We consider we have a good understanding of the property development market for employment uses and particularly the requirements of office, industrial and warehouse users. We also have knowledge of the general criteria for investment in land and buildings from institutional funds and private sector developers.

Our additional comments on the Employment Land Review Report are as follows:

Land Suitable for Office Development

- 1 We strongly disagree with the conclusions of the TDBC Report and consider a serious shortfall has already developed with an almost complete lack of suitable office sites in Taunton readily available. We wonder where the figure of 111,776 m² of available office space comes from, representing "an excess of projected demand by over 20%"?
- 2 In our opinion the only suitable site for offices that is potentially available is the Firepool Regeneration Site that could eventually cater for around 60,000 m² of space. However, in view of the significant infrastructure costs and scale of the development large office requirements, possibly from the public sector will probably be necessary to kick start this development.
- 3 The mainstay of the Taunton office market is in buildings of around 600m² to 1,200 m² and our opinion there are no viable sites in Taunton for this important sector of the market immediately available (apart from two sites left at Blackbrook).
- 4 In addition, and most importantly, Firepool is not suitable for prestigious bespoke office occupiers such as the NatWest Data Processing Centre and Emergency Fire Service Centre. Both required purpose build buildings with an unusual design that can only be accommodated on suitable business park sites, such as Blackbrook.



- 5 As previously explained Firepool only caters for the town centre office market and if things are left as they are Taunton will not be able to offer any suitable sites for the bespoke institutional out of town office market up until 2026. These occupiers require prestige sites with amenities and communications and in our view none of the sites listed fulfil this criteria which is a sad state of affairs.

Land Suitable for Industrial//Warehouse Development

- 1 Apart from the St Modwen development at Norton Fitzwarren (resulting in an acknowledged net loss of industrial land) not much industrial/warehouse development has happened in Taunton for at least 10 years. The only major development has been at Chelston and planning permission for the Chelston Phase II Extension was given some years ago because of an acknowledged shortfall of suitable land in Taunton. Nothing has changed to alleviate this situation.
- 2 If potential sites have not been developed over the last 10 year boom in commercial property it follows therefore that most of the sites listed are potentially unsuitable. This is for a variety of reasons but particularly because they are in the wrong location, are too rural in nature or have high infrastructure costs with low value buildings that make the sites unviable.
- 3 We therefore disagree with TDBC's contention that available supply of "58.90 hectares would appear to offer the potential for a broad range of unit sizes from small to large scale provision both within Taunton and Wellington." Apart from Chelston we consider very few sites are suitable or immediately available.

Overall conclusion

- 1 We agree with TDBC that there is a significant mismatch in supply between Taunton and Wellington but this is hardly surprising as our conclusion is that there is virtually no suitable land for either office or industrial/warehouse development immediately available in Taunton.
- 2 This is likely to be the case for some time until the Firepool site is brought forward for development but this is only suitable for town centre offices.
- 3 Taunton will lose enquiries to Bridgwater, Tiverton and Yeovil unless further land is brought forward in Taunton as an urgent interim measure.
- 4 It is pointless allocating further land at unproven locations just to make up the numbers as this will only exacerbate the problem.
- 5 We agree with the final conclusion of the TDBC report that there is particular need to identify and target additional strategic land in the Taunton area to enable the town to fulfil its role and function.
- 6 We consider this site needs to be strategic and of regional importance to build on the success of Blackbrook as a regional offices centre.

- 7 We also consider any site allocated needs to be for mixed use development for a variety of uses in order to make development viable and ensure success.
- 8 Having suitable available land to accommodate a variety of occupiers needs is the single most important factor in economic development. To have the best chance of success a business park needs to tick the right boxes for institutional investment, and good communication and amenities for staff are the key.

Richard Lloyd
10 February 2009/A



Summerfield Developments (SW) Ltd
 Tauntonfield
 South Road
 Taunton
 Somerset TA1 3ND
 Telephone 01823 257 961
 Facsimile 01823 327 700
 www.summerfield.co.uk

RDAL/GE

18 February 2009

Email: rlloyd@summerfield.co.uk

R Mitchinson Esq
 Forward Planning Unit
 Taunton Deane Borough Council
 The Deane House
 Belvedere Road
 Taunton
 TA1 1HE

Your Ref: RM/S02/EMPCSStage1lett120209

Dear Sir

EMPLOYMENT LAND REVIEW

Thank you for your letter of 12 February and further to our various Task and Finish Group meetings I have pleasure in enclosing two tables setting out our conclusions of the availability of employment land in Taunton Deane and Wellington.

I have been through each site looking at them objectively and concluding which sites are available or could be brought forward in the future in terms of availability, suitability of use and viability.

Our conclusions are that the Taunton town centre office market is very adequately served with plenty of available office space in the short to medium term at Firepool. However the large high rise buildings proposed at Firepool will not in my opinion be suitable for those occupiers who require smaller self contained buildings or indeed individual bespoke designs that do not readily fit into the Firepool masterplan. In addition the accommodation provided will all be expensive Grade 'A' space which will not suit all occupiers.

The out of town office market (which has been very successful in Taunton) has been ignored in the Core Strategy and no suitable land allocations have been made up until 2026. As Blackbrook has been the mainstay of the Taunton office market (98% of Taunton floor space developed over the last 5 years) and is down to its last site, this is an extremely serious situation for Taunton.

I do not believe we have lost a lot of office occupiers to rival towns in the past but am very fearful for the future if suitable quality land is not brought forward in the Core Strategy. Taunton needs to attract not just inward investment but also look after its existing companies, and if they cannot expand into suitable accommodation this will be extremely bad for economic development.



Regarding employment land in Taunton, again there is a dearth of suitable supply with many old chestnuts that have been around for years and not developed. Meanwhile a considerable amount of light industrial warehouse and sui generis uses have been developed at Chelston which over the years has had a successful and steady take-up. Many of these occupiers would prefer to be located in Taunton but at least they are still in Taunton Deane! Other companies have no doubt relocated to Bridgwater and Yeovil where there is a plentiful supply.

In conclusion I consider that the floor space and land areas mentioned as being available in the employment land review are over-optimistic and that the statistics only tell half the story. Whilst the employment market is complex success boils down to providing occupiers with what they require in the location they require. Occupiers cannot be steered to where they don't want to go - they will vote with their feet and potential inward investment in Taunton Deane will go elsewhere, or companies will leave if they cannot find suitable accommodation. In addition, in a difficult and competitive market choice is necessary to attract a wide variety of users, including sui generis uses, to ensure success.

Summerfield Developments therefore advocates the allocation of a large mixed use business park of, say, 40+ hectares at a strategic location in Taunton that complies with institutional funding requirements.

If Taunton Deane comes to a similar conclusion the next stage will be to look at potential sites in detail.

Yours sincerely

SUMMERFIELD DEVELOPMENTS (SW) LIMITED

Richard D A Lloyd
CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND CHAIRMAN

EMPLOYMENT LAND REVIEW

SITE REF	ADDRESS	SITE AREA	FLOOR SPACE	SUITABLE USE	VIABILITY	AVAILABLE	AVAILABLE OFFICE	AVAILABLE LIGHT INDUSTRIAL/ WAREHOUSE	COMMENTS
		HA	M ²				M ²	HA	
TAUNTON									
TTa1	Blackbrook	1.03	3500	Offices	Yes	Yes immediate	3500		Last site on established office park. Out of town offices.
TTa2	Blackbrook	0.54	1240	Offices	Yes	No			Already developed
TTa3	Blackbrook	0.22	1395	Offices	Yes	No			No access through CW car park
TTa4	Blackbrook	0.54	2270	Offices	Yes	No			Already developed
TTa5	Taunton East Goods Yard	0.35	4580	Offices - Town centre	Yes	3-5 years	4580		Unlikely until Taunton Vision land started
TTa6	Taunton East Goods Yard	0.55	7200	Offices - Town centre	Yes	3-5 years	7200		Waiting for Taunton Vision land and infrastructure
TTa7	Firepool	4.50	60000	Offices - Town centre	Yes	3-5 years	47000		Needs large initial occupier
TTa8	Priorswood	1.80		Light Ind/warehouse	Unlikely	No			Operational land for railway
TTa9	Tangier		8000	Offices/retail	Yes	5-7 years	8000		Upper floor offices not attractive to market. Contamination and flooding a problem
TTa10	Coal Orchard		2000	Theatre	No	No			Existing theatre and car park
TTa11	Morrisons		10000	Supermarket	No	No			Existing supermarket
TTa12	Staplegrove Road		338	Offices - Town centre	Yes	Yes immediate	338		Already refurbished
TCf1	Toneway		625	Storage	No	No			Access and shape difficulties
TCf2	Priorswood landfill	1.39	15354	Light Ind/warehouse	No	Min 10 years			Existing tip
TCf3	Crown Estate	1.95	4875	Light Ind/warehouse	Yes	Yes		1.95	Been around but undeveloped a long time
TCf4	Crown Estate	4.10		Light Ind/warehouse	Yes	Yes		4.10	Same as above. Difficult landlords
Tmh1	Monkton Heathfield	14.00		Light Ind/warehouse	Yes	3-5 years		14.00	Major infrastructure needed. Persimmon yet to commit, unlikely to be suitable for offices.
TNf1	Taunton Trading Estate	6.59	16475	Light Ind/warehouse	Yes	Yes immediate		2.42	Most of site already developed
TNf2	Station Road		2013	Light Ind	No	Yes			Contamination. New build unlikely.
TNf3	Taunton Trading Estate	0.79		Cash and Carry	Yes	No			Being developed
TNf4	Courtlands Farm	0.54	1250	Light Ind/warehouse	Possibly	Yes		0.54	Converted chicken huts. Low value only.
TNf5	Courtlands Farm	0.35	875	Light Ind/warehouse	Possibly	Yes		0.35	As above
TNf6	Former Matthew Clark	0.49		Residential	No	No			Developed for residential
TSt1	Frobisher Way	0.32	990	Light Ind	Yes	Yes		0.32	Small acorn units
RHe1	Henlade	10.00		Light Ind/warehouse	No	No			Council recommends removal
RHe2	Henlade Tarmac	1.41		Light Ind/warehouse	No	No			Council recommends removal
RHe3	Henlade Tarmac	1.00		Light Ind/warehouse	No	No			Council recommends removal. Flooding issues.
							70618	23.68	
WELLINGTON AND RURAL AREAS									
WWe1	Rylands Farm	1.03	2520	Light Ind	Yes	Yes immediate		1.03	Part already built
WWe2	Rylands Farm	0.46	1600	Light Ind	Yes	Yes immediate		0.46	Low value uses
WWe3	Tonedale Mill	1.50	5539	Workshops	Unlikely	Possibly 2-5 years		1.50	Small workshops - low value refurbishment
WWe4	Chelston House Farm	14.90	64476	Offices/Light Ind/ Warehouse/sui generis hotel	Yes	Yes immediate	2230	14.90	Institutional site. Fully serviced.
WWe5	Chelston House Farm	3.44		Light Ind/Warehouse	Yes	Yes		3.44	Institutional site.
WWe6	Milverton Road	0.78		Workshops	Unlikely	Possibly		0.78	Problems with contamination
WWe7	Lowmoor	2.05	5000	Light Ind/Warehouse	Unlikely	Possibly		2.05	Low value uses. Some residential.
WWe8	Chelston House Farm	1.47		Owner occupier	Yes	No			Remove. Own use.
WWw1	Pleamore	1.52		Owner occupier	Yes	No			Own use. Local only.
RCo1	Manor Farm Cothelstone	0.25		Workshops/Storage	Unlikely	Long term		0.25	Listed farm buildings
RM11	Preston Farm	0.51		Light Ind/Warehouse	Unlikely	Yes		0.51	Low value
RW11	Hillsmoor	1.03		Owner occupier	Yes	No			Own use
RW12	Sandys Moor Wiveliscombe	4.94		Light Ind/Warehouse	Unlikely	Medium term		4.94	High infrastructure costs. Low value rural location.
							2230	29.86	

TIMESCALE	OFFICES TOWN CENTRE	BESPOKE OFFICES OUT OF TOWN	LIGHT INDUSTRIAL/ WAREHOUSING
	M²	M²	HA
AVAILABILITY IN TAUNTON			
Immediate 0-2 years	338	3500	9.68
Short/medium Term 2-5 years	58780	NIL	14.00
Medium/Long Term 5-10 years	8000	NIL	-
TOTAL	67118	3500	23.68
AVAILABILITY IN WELLINGTON AND RURAL AREAS			
Immediate 0-2 years	NIL	2230	23.17
Short/medium Term 2-5 years	NIL	NIL	6.44
Medium/Long Term 5-10 years	NIL	NIL	0.25
TOTAL	NIL	2230	29.86



Appendix D

STAGE 1 EMPLOYMENT LAND REVIEW – COMMENTS ON SITES

The Blackbrook sites - we heard from Richard Lloyd that it is highly likely that the whole of the business park will be completed in 12 months' time and therefore realistically should be taken out of the appraisal.

Site TA6, Taunton East Goods Yard – since it is in use, this site should be excluded.

Site TA8, Priorswood – since it is in use, the site should be excluded.

Site TA9, Tangier – what is the deliverability of this site?

All of the in town sites, such as Tangier and Firepool, need an assessment of deliverability and viability.

Are you really going to include the Morrison site, the Brewhouse Theatre site and the land at Coal Orchard when as with the Morrison site as you so clearly say, the owners have no interest in disposing of the site?

Staplegrove Road site, TA12 – ground floor in use.

Toneway, CF1 – site is not available as the owner is quite happy with the site being used for the present open storage use.

Priorswood CF2 and CF3 - there should be some severe question marks including any Crown Estate land for immediate availability because of reluctance for people to acquire leasehold land.

Priorswood Tip CF4 – noted that this former Monkton Heathfield mill is of course long term despite planning permission. Current tipped area is deleted.

Taunton Trading Estate NF1, 2, 3 and 6 - is a reduction in land.



The majority of the Courtlands Farm Site, NF4, is in use. The entirety of the Courtlands Farm Site, NF5, is in use.

Although perhaps not directly relevant since we are talking about Taunton, site WE2 at Rylands, Wellington is occupied, and site WE3 Tonedale Mill is a site that has been around for donkeys year but very little used, and with a housing scheme where work has stopped.

Site WE6, Milverton Road – I am pleased to see this is being removed from the employment land since a housing application is imminent.

With the Lowmoor sites we believe these are in flood land.

WW1, Pleamore – building now fully in use.

HE1 – Pleased to see the removal of the Henlade site at long last. Need for an urgent replacement.

DRAFT

Appendix E

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Employment Land Task and Finish Group - 16 June 2009

Report of Strategy Team and Planning Policy Advisor

Issues to report on:-

1. Review of available sites and whether they should remain as employment opportunities.

The Stage 1 Employment Land Review Assessment has now been completed as part of the evidence base for the Core Strategy. This included consultation with a range of agents, developers and other interested stakeholders. Where possible, amendments have been made by the Council to seek to attain common ground between all parties.

The report identifies:-

55.5 ha of employment land available over the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) period (2006-2026) for **industrial and other** employment uses within Taunton Deane, of which;

- 22.2 ha within Taunton SSCT (Strategically Significant Cities and Towns); and
- 25.95 ha within the Wellington area

(The RSS requires c28 ha)

Splitting the Taunton figure;

8 ha immediately and short term available (within 3 years) totals 8 ha. Sites at Taunton Trading Estate (5.2 ha), Crown land (1.95 ha), Courtlands (0.8 ha) and Frobisher Way (0.32 ha);

14 ha available within the medium term (3-10 years). All within Monkton Heathfield.

The Core Strategy will identify land for the medium and longer term opportunities.

With regard to **office** use, the Stage 1 Employment Land Review Assessment identified 100,000 sq.m of commitments within the period 2006-2026. Nearly all of this is within Taunton SSCT and most is identified through the Taunton Town Centre (Area Action Plan) AAP.

(The various RSS background studies indicate requirements of between c60-90,000 sq.m).

Conclusions

Despite RSS 'demand' figures exceeding identified 'supply', the Stage 1 report identifies a number of key areas of concern, including:-

- Lack of short, medium and longer term opportunities within Taunton SSCT for industrial/other land. A range of additional site sizes, tenure and quality is lacking, including a major strategic site with good access to the trunk route network.
- Now that Blackbrook is nearing completion there is a lack of current opportunities for medium sized office suites (300-1000 sq.m). Whilst town centre sites are available immediately and short term (up to three years), it is likely that most regeneration sites will be targeted towards larger office occupiers.

2. Options for short term release outside of Local Plan / Local Development Framework (LDF)

Under Circular 02/2009 sites of up to 5,000 sq.m floorspace outside of development plan areas would not need to be referred to the Government Office for the South West (GOSW) as a departure. This would equate to a site area of c 2ha for non-office use.

Circular 02/2009 also defines 'major development' in terms of town centre uses as 1,000 sq.m. Below this threshold sites would not require to be referred to GOSW as a departure.

If the Council were to adopt the above thresholds, subject to owner and developer interest, the following sites could be brought forward in the short term, outside of the Development Plan process:-

- Crown land at Nerrols (c2 ha)
- Creech Heathfield (part of c8 ha total)
- Walford Cross (c2 ha)
- Additional windfall out of centre office sites may also arise with the higher office 'threshold'.

It is unlikely that larger sites, for immediate release could be brought forward outside of the Development Plan system, especially large 'strategic' sites with infrastructure and other issues. The Highways Agency for example have major concerns for additional development in the vicinity of J25.

3. What could be achieved through the LDF?

The Stage 1 assessment identifies the need for:-

- a range of opportunities in Taunton area for a variety of site size, tenure and quality for (short) medium and longer term development;
- employment uses in sustainable urban extensions in the medium and longer term;
- the retention of lower quality employment land (ie existing sites);
- a strategic employment site with good access to the trunk route network.

All of the above will require a sound evidence base to quantify the apparent need. Whilst discussions with developers/agents have made a start on this, most evidence is fairly 'anecdotal'. Agents/developers will require to be more objective in quantifying need over the coming months.

4. Recommendations

1. In line with Circular 02/2009, the Council initiates discussions with landowners and developers for the release of immediate short term employment land opportunities at Nerrols, Creech Heathfield and Walford Cross for up to 5,000 sq.m (around 2 hectares per site);
2. In line with Circular 02/2009, raising the threshold for out-of-centre office proposals for requiring a sequential assessment to 1,000 sq.m. This should enable additional windfall opportunities to come forward in the short term;
3. A strategic employment site of about 25 hectares (can only) be brought forward in the medium - longer term, through the LDF. (Any attempt to bring forward a strategic site outside the LDF would be blocked by the Highways Agency and possibly GOSW and SW Councils);
4. To progress a strategic site it is also recommended that a working group be set up and led by Economic Development or Project Taunton, involving a Taunton Deane Strategy Officer, Somerset County Council Transport, Highways Agency, Environment Agency, Regional Development Agency/SW Councils, developers and agents, with the purpose of developing an evidence base and proposal for the LDF Core Strategy. As part of this process there should be community engagement with the parishes that would be affected. It is recommended that the strategic employment site should provide opportunities for major inward investment to Taunton. It is accepted that an element of office and non Class B employment generating development (non Class A1) will be necessary to fund the initial infrastructure to open up the site, but the total proportion of floorspace for such uses should remain ancillary (around 10%) and focus on medium sized office suites (300-1,000 sq.m) in order to remain consistent with Government policy and to avoid undermining Firepool as the strategic office site for the SSCT.

Ref:U/TaskFinish0609

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Executive - 16 September 2009

Report of the Head of Revenues and Benefits

Non-Domestic Rates - Section 49 Hardship Relief Policy

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Nicola Wilson)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report explains the provision for a Billing Authority to award Hardship Relief to a Business Rate Payer and sets out a recommended procedure for determining applications made under Section 49 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988.

Members of the Executive are asked to consider the procedure and recommend its acceptance to Full Council.

1. Background

- 1.1. There are around 3,800 non-domestic properties within Taunton Deane. These businesses are liable to pay rates of roughly £33m a year.
- 1.2. Section 49 of The Local Government Finance Act 1988 gives Taunton Deane Borough Council, as a billing authority, discretion to reduce or remit payment of rates. This is where it is satisfied that the ratepayer would suffer hardship if it did not do so. Additionally it must be reasonable for Taunton Deane Borough Council to do so, having regard to the interest of its Council Tax payers.
- 1.3. Central Government has provided guidance to help billing authorities decide whether to grant relief. The guidance states that while it is for each billing authority to decide on the facts of each case whether to exercise its powers under Section 49 - and to judge the extent of those powers – authorities may wish to bear the following guidance in mind:-
 - Although authorities may adopt rules to consider hardship cases, they should not adopt a blanket policy either to give or not to give relief, each case should be considered on its own merits;
 - Reduction or remission of rates on grounds of hardship should be the **exception** rather than the rule;
 - The test of 'hardship' need not be confined strictly to financial hardship; all relevant factors affecting the ability of a business to meet its liability for rates should be considered;
 - The 'interests' of Council Tax payers in an area may go wider than direct financial interests. For example, where the employment prospects in the area would be worsened by a company going out of business, or the amenities of an area might be reduced by, for instance, the loss of the only shop in the village: and

- Where granting relief would have an adverse effect on the financial interest of Council Tax Payers, the case for a reduction or a remission of rates payable may still on balance outweigh the cost to them.
- 1.4. 75% of the cost of any reduction or remittance of rates can be offset against the authority's payment into the national non-domestic rate pool. **25% would be borne locally by Council Tax payers** and met from the authority's General Fund;
 - 1.5. Historically we have received very few applications for hardship from ratepayers. However it is expected the number of hardship applications will rise significantly as the economic downturn starts to bite.

2. The Recommended Procedure

- 2.1. All applications for Hardship relief must be made in writing using a prepared forms designed by Revenues and Benefits service to ensure that all the information which is considered important to the decision making process is captured.
- 2.2. All applications must be accompanied by a copy of the last two years audited accounts, a projected income and cash flow for the next 12 months and any other information in support of the application.
- 2.3. The process detailed below should ensure that proper and consistent consideration is given to all applications, the financial implications are considered and members have the final say in deciding on, and financing, any awards.
- 2.4. Applications will initially be received within the Revenues and Benefits unit where they will be examined for completeness.
- 2.5. Where the application is not complete the Revenues and Benefits unit will contact the ratepayer to seek any missing information or seek clarification where it is necessary. The application will not be considered further until it is complete.
- 2.6. The Revenues and Benefits unit will consider each complete application on its merits and the Head of Revenues and Benefits Service make a written recommendation to the Section 151 Officer whether to reject the application or whether to make an award.
- 2.7. In making either recommendation, the Head of Revenues and Benefits Service will consider the following
 - The goods or services provided by the applicant and the closeness of alternative suppliers
 - Whether the goods or services are mostly provided to customers within the Borough
 - Any social benefits provided by the applicant
 - Local employment provided by the applicant
 - The causes of the hardship
 - The applicant's attempts to mitigate the hardship
 - The impact of Rates as a % of overall business expenses
 - Whether the business is viable

- Whether it is in the interests of the Council Tax payers within the Borough to provide the 25% cost of any hardship relief awarded.
- 2.8. Where a recommendation to reject the application is made adequate reasons should be put forward.
- 2.9. Where a recommendation to approve the application is made, the recommendation should detail
- The period to be covered by the award
 - The social benefit to the Council Tax payers in the award being made
 - The amount of the award
 - The sum to be met by the general fund and the Non-Domestic rating pool respectively.
- 2.10. The authority to **decline** applications for hardship relief should be delegated to the Section 151 Officer.
- 2.11. Where the Section 151 Officer decides there is sufficient merit in awarding hardship relief a recommendation will be made to the Executive. The Executive should have the delegated power to decline or award hardship relief following referral of an application by the Section 151 Officer. **Where it supports the recommendation, The Executive will also need to the make the necessary budget arrangements to meet the commitment.**
- 2.12. **Appendix A** gives examples of rates payable by different businesses within the Borough for 2009/10. An indication is provided of how much would have to be met by the authority's General Fund if 100% hardship relief were awarded.

3 **Appeals**

- 3.1 The authority to consider any appeal against the refusal of a hardship application should be delegated to the Executive Portfolio Holder Resources. All appeals must be made in writing and be received within two months of the date on which the ratepayer was advised of the Council's decision.

4. **Conclusion**

- 4.1 The legislation requires Taunton Deane, as a billing authority, to consider and determine applications for Section 49 reductions.
- 4.2 The Council is potentially faced with receiving a significant increase in the number of such applications. We need to be able to ensure consistency in approach and give due consideration to the financial implications to the ratepayer and the Council Tax payers.

5. **Recommendation**

- 5.1 The Executive is asked to recommend Full Council to adopt this policy for considering applications for Section 49 Reductions.

Heather Tiso
Head of Revenues & Benefits

Contact officer: Heather Tiso, Head of Revenues & Benefits
Telephone: (01823) 356541 (Ext. 2245)
E-mail: h.tiso@tauntondeane.gov.uk

Contact officer: Paul Harding, Principal Revenues Officer
Telephone: (01823) 356567 (Ext. 2500)
E-mail: p.harding@tauntondeane.gov.uk

Contact officer: D. English, Senior Non-Domestic Rating Officer
Telephone: (01823) 356324 (Ext. 2529)
E-mail: d.english@tauntondeane.gov.uk

Appendix A

Non-Domestic Rates, Section 49 Hardship Relief Procedure

Illustration of potential cost to the General Fund of awarding Section 49 Hardship Relief

Business Type	Rates Payable 2009/2010	Cost to General Fund if 100% Hardship Relief awarded for 2009/2010.
Take away, Station Road, Taunton	£ 2,500	£ 625
Medium sized clothes Store Cheapside, Taunton	£ 37,000	£ 8,250
Mobile phone shop, Cheapside, Taunton	£ 18,000	£ 4,500
Medium Pub, Wellington	£ 4,000	£ 1,000
Small Unit, Chelston Business Park	£ 2,600	£650
Small Office, Fore Street, Taunton	£ 1,800	£450
Woolworths, Fore Street, Taunton	£195,000	£48,750
Woolworths, Fore Street, Wellington	£ 10,000	£ 2,500
MFI Priory Fields, Taunton	£160,000	£40,000

Important - the above examples are for illustration purposes only.

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Executive - 16 September 2009

Proposals for improving Performance Management

Report of the Performance and Client Lead

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Nicola Wilson)

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to summarise proposals to improve and strengthen how we monitor and manage the performance of all Council services.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Ensuring the right things are being measured is an essential part of any effective performance management arrangement. Systems must be in place to ensure performance against measures can be calculated and collated regularly, as well as being reported to decision makers in a timely manner in a way that is easy to understand, interpret and deal with as necessary.
- 2.2 The proposals summarised in this paper will strengthen how we use the performance information to demonstrate that we are using it to drive forward improvement and deliver efficiency savings across the Council. The proposals will change the format of Performance Reports and the process for presenting these reports to Members.

3.0 Summary of proposals

3.1 Format of the Performance Report

- 3.11 In future, the Performance Reports will be produced using the exception principle, namely, only providing detail on those areas of concern (poor or deteriorating performance) but also highlighting areas of excellent performance and summarising positive outcomes which are being delivered for the community.
- 3.12 We are also proposing to introduce a Performance Dashboard of not more than two sides of A4 which will pull together performance information for an area and provide a summary of performance across the area. The aim is to make it simple to understand. The appendices will provide the detailed information behind the Dashboard and summarise issues and actions as necessary.

3.2 The Performance Report will be summarised into three main areas:-





- 3.21 **Corporate Strategy** – detailing delivery and progress of the Corporate Strategy. This will include progress toward aims, objectives and key activities as well as results against performance indicators identified in the strategy.
- 3.22 **Operations** – measuring the performance of business areas and operations critical to the effectiveness of the organisation. Included within operations will be the monitoring of National Indicators which fall within the scope of the service. It is recognised that we need to overhaul the existing local performance indicators we manage, this will be done as part of the review of service planning in the autumn.
- 3.23 **Finance** – detailing current financial position including; revenue spending against budget, capital position and levels of reserves.
- 3.24 The performance of key partnerships will not be reported separately instead, their contribution to delivery against the three main areas of the report will be detailed within these sections.
- 3.25 As part of the new reporting format, we have clarified roles and responsibilities for the new performance management arrangements, including responsibility for the national indicators and local performance indicators (see Appendix 1).

4.0 Measuring Performance

- 4.1 Where it will be possible and helpful performance information contained within the report, will be based on a **forecast** of what is likely to be achieved at the end of the year, based on current levels of performance. Actual performance can be measured within the Service Performance Reports.
- 4.2 Indicators will be measured in a number of ways: by comparing forecast with target; by assessing progress since the previous year (direction of travel); and how performance compares relative to others (this can only be done annually).

5.0 Assessment of Performance

- 5.1 A four band traffic light scheme will be used to summarise performance. Four bands, rather than the traditional three bands, allows for a better assessment of performance exceptions and will show quickly where resources could be reallocated to drive improvement in underperforming areas. The performance bands proposed are as follows:-

-  10% or more above target (green star – solid colour)
-  on target and up to 10% above (green star – outline)
-  up to 5% below target (amber triangle – outline)
-  more than 5% below target (red triangle – solid colour)

5.2 Where performance against any measure is shown to be an issue commentary in the form of key messages will be provided. These key messages will be expected to identify the reasons behind current performance levels as well as actions being undertaken to improve performance. These comments will be produced by the Theme Manager responsible for the area in question (see above). The comments will be agreed with the relevant Portfolio Holder as detailed in the Performance Cycle section in Appendix 2 which is graphically summarised in Appendix 3.

6.0 Partnerships

6.1 The proposal is to include the performance monitoring of key partnerships as part of the monitoring report during 2010/2011. The partnerships would include Southwest One, Somerset Waste Partnership, Tone Leisure and South West Audit Partnership.

7.0 The role of the Performance and Client Team

7.1 Apart from producing the Quarterly Report, it is proposed that the Performance and Client Lead and Performance and Client Officer develop a closer working relationship with each of the new Theme Managers.

7.2 It is proposed that there is a quarterly meeting with the Performance and Client Lead, the Finance Lead for the service area, the Theme Manager, the Service Accountant and relevant Portfolio Holder once the performance data has been collated and before the Quarter Report is drafted. At this meeting the performance of the service and budget monitoring will be discussed and relevant actions to tackle performance and finance issues agreed. Those actions will then form part of the appendix in the Performance Report. Following this meeting, a similar meeting will need to be held with the Shadow Portfolio Holder or there may be a joint meeting with the Portfolio Holder as appropriate and subject to discussion with the Theme Manager.

8.0 Timetable for Performance Reporting

8.1 It is proposed to introduce a system which produces exception reports, highlighting issues and service areas which are not achieving the set targets. Therefore, the Quarter One Report will be a highlight report, only summarising those areas where services are not on target for meeting set indicators and summarising the reasons why and actions to be taken to remedy the situation.

- 8.2 The Quarter Two Report will be a more in depth report, again focusing on areas where performance is not being achieved, highlighting excellent performance and outcomes which have been delivered as well as summarising any predictions for the end of the year. The Quarter Three Report will again be a highlight report, summarising progress and areas for concern. The Outturn Report will again be a more in depth study of performance over the year, again focusing on areas for concern, highlighting excellence and outcomes as well as issues to be dealt with. The Outturn Report will then feed into the development of the next Corporate Strategy.
- 8.3 To manage the organisation more effectively we may decide to produce high level performance summaries on a more regular basis, for example monthly. This discussion will need to take place at the new Theme Managers, the introduction of any new reporting must enable service improvement and not just simply provide information.

9.0 Timetable for implementation

- 9.1 These proposals have now been discussed with CMT and Core Council Managers where they have been supported.
- 9.2 The Corporate Scrutiny Committee discussed this proposal on 3 September 2009 and suggested a couple of improvements, firstly that the performance statistics are provided next to the traffic light scheme and secondly that we try to make the Performance reporting cycle tighter. The Performance reporting cycle is determined by the speed at which services provide performance information and preset the Committee timetable.
- 9.3 The suggested timetable is summarised below (more detail is provided in Appendix 3):-

Who	When
Report to Corporate Scrutiny Committee	3 September
Report to Executive	16 September
Report to Corporate Governance Committee	28 September
New process to be used in Quarter 3 monitoring report	December
News style report to be used in Quarter 3 monitoring report	February/March 2010
Launch of new performance monitoring and performance management regime	1 April 2010

10.0 Effect on corporate priorities

- 10.1 As this report covers all aspects of the council's performance, all corporate priorities are affected.

11.0 Recommendation

It is recommended that the Executive supports the proposals for improving performance management.

Ruth James
Performance and Client Lead
01823 356499
r.james@tauntondeane.gov.uk

Appendix 1

Roles and responsibilities for LAA, national indicators and local performance indicators

1.0 Information Owner: Theme Manager

1.1 Responsible for:

- 1.11 Developing service specific local performance indicators as part of Service Plan.
- 1.12 Responsible for developing and maintaining robust systems to collect LAA, national indicators and local performance indicators.
- 1.13 Owning and monitoring the performance indicators.
- 1.14 Contributing to and monitoring any relevant LAA Delivery Plans.
- 1.15 Providing updates to the Performance and Client Team within **10 working days** of the end of the quarter.
- 1.16 Meeting all deadlines for providing data to central Government Departments.
- 1.17 Completing the data quality sheet for each performance indicator by 30 June of the following financial year.

2.0 Performance and Client Team

2.1 Responsible for:

- 2.11 Developing an annual timetable for LAA and national indicator monitoring.
- 2.12 Uploading national indicator data to the HUB.
- 2.13 Collating Taunton Deane Borough Council performance indicators and producing quarter monitoring reports for CMT, Executive and Scrutiny.
- 2.14 Meeting Quarterly with each Theme Manager and Portfolio Holder.
- 2.15 Working with services to enable and deliver service improvement and efficiency savings.
- 2.16 Advice and support to Theme Managers.

Appendix 2

The Performance Reporting Cycle

1.0 Background

- 1.1 An effective reporting cycle ensures that information is presented to the right people at the right time. This will ensure that performance measurement information is used effectively to performance manage the organisation.

2.0 Performance Reporting Cycle

- 2.1 Corporate performance reports will be produced on a quarterly basis; July, November, January and June. The reports will contain details of performance information relating to those areas identified as most important to the delivery of priorities and the effective running of the organisation.
- 2.2 Each of these reports will follow the same reporting cycle with clear roles and responsibilities being assigned at each stage.

3.0 Report Drafting

- 3.1 The Corporate Performance Report will be produced and collated by the Performance and Client Team. Information will be supplied by Theme Managers using data already collected to inform service plan monitoring process in their area.
- 3.2 Information will be collated within 10 working days from the receipt of the performance data from the Theme Managers at the end of each quarter. Performance against indicators and measures will be supplied **automatically** to the performance team together with key messages in support of those areas registering as performance exceptions.

Roles and responsibilities

4.0 Corporate Management Team (CMT)

- 4.1 CMT to review report, dashboard and appendices focusing on those areas identified as performance exceptions.
- 4.2 CMT to discuss performance exceptions in detail, reviewing and enhancing key messages where appropriate.
- 4.3 Theme managers to agree key messages with relevant Portfolio Holder following CMT.

5.0 Executive

- 5.1 Performance and Client Team to present report to Executive Board. Report to be 'sponsored' by the Leader of the Council.
- 5.2 Executive should focus on those areas identified as performance exceptions. Portfolio holders should present to, the Executive and comment on, the performance exceptions falling within their area of responsibility. In addition Theme Managers will be available to add additional detail where appropriate.
- 5.3 Executive should agree actions deemed necessary to address areas of poor and deteriorating performance.
- 5.4 Executive actions to be added to the report by the Performance and Client Team.

6.0 Scrutiny

- 6.1 The role of Scrutiny is not to review the full performance report, but rather to hold the Executive to account by reviewing those actions agreed at Executive in relation to performance exceptions.
- 6.2 Corporate performance team to present the performance report to the Scrutiny Committee.
- 6.3 Scrutiny Committee to review Executive actions and discuss effectiveness over time. Where the Scrutiny Committee continues to have ongoing concerns regarding the performance of a service area it may be necessary for a Scrutiny review of the service to be scoped.
- 6.4 Comments and actions arising from the Scrutiny Committee should be fed back to CMT and Executive.

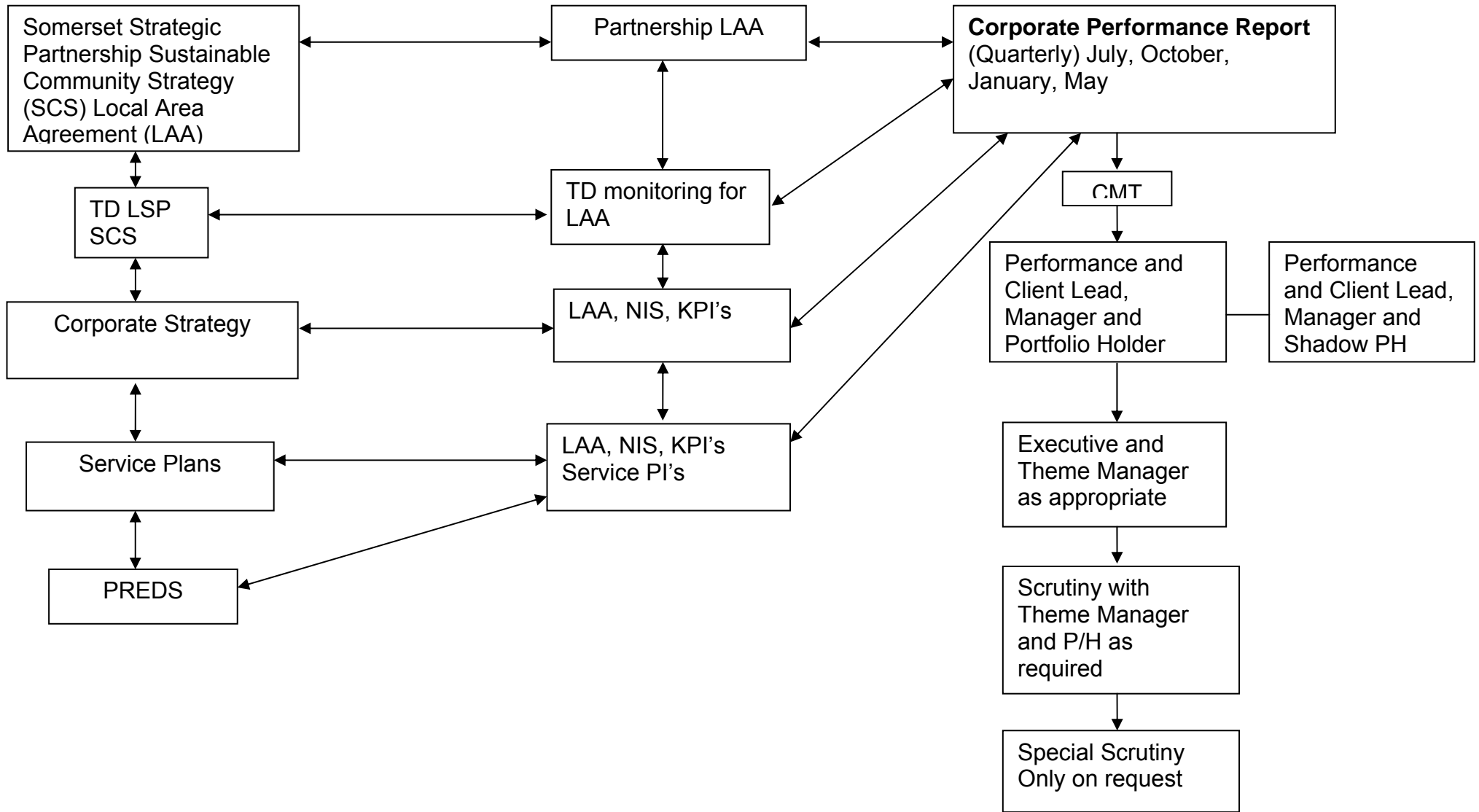
Appendix 3

Proposed Performance Reporting Cycle for TDBC

"Golden Thread" for TDBC

Performance indicators

Performance reporting cycle for TDBC



Taunton Deane Borough Council

Executive - 16 September 2009

Performance and Financial Monitoring - Quarter 1 Report

Joint Report of Performance and Client Lead and Acting Financial Services Manager

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Nicola Wilson)

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 This report is to provide an overview of service and financial performance for Taunton Deane Borough Council between 1 April and 30 June 2009. As the Outturn Report has only just been approved by the Executive, it is proposed to focus only on the progress with performance on an exception basis. A more in-depth report will be provided for Quarter 2 in November.

2.0 Progress against the Corporate Strategy 2008/2011

- 2.1 The Objectives of the Council, together with the key actions to attain them, were listed in the Corporate Strategy 2008 - 2011, and approved by the Executive. So far, we are on track to deliver all the Objectives in the Corporate Strategy.

3.0 Progress against local and national indicators

- 3.1 At Quarter 1, the only local indicators which are not on target are BV 9 and BV 10. These relate to the in-year collection rates for Council Tax and Non Domestic Rates. Details are provided in Appendix 1. The remaining performance indicators (listed in Appendix 2) are either on track or are not collected every quarter. A more in depth update will be provided as part of Quarter 2 monitoring in November.
- 3.2 As part of the core council restructure we want to rationalise the existing arrangements for managing and monitoring performance. We need to challenge what we have to enable the introduction of a smarter and more efficient process which effectively drives and monitors council performance. This work has already started and a separate paper regarding 'Proposals for improving Performance Management' is being presented at this meeting.
- 3.3 If any Member would like any further information about any of the performance indicators, please contact Ruth James.

4.0 April - June Budget Monitoring

4.1 General Fund

4.1.1 Budget monitoring for the period April to June is showing a potential overspend of £299k. The variations from the planned budget are shown in the table below:

Description of Variance		Qtr 1 £'000	Total £'000	
Land Charges	The £40k represents the projected loss of income for the year. This takes into account the current situation in the Housing market.	+40	+40	☹
Car Parking (off street)	This is the current prediction for the full year effect of reduced occupancy of TDBC car parks – this is linked to the overall slowdown in the economy.	+30	+30	☹
Planning	The predicted loss of income is due to slowdown in the Housing market.	+250	+250	☹
Concessionary Fares	The present position indicates that if usage remains at current levels an underspend in the region of £100k may occur. However, historically the financial position has changed significantly around Q3 so we need to be cautious.	-100	-100	☺
Investment Income	There is an expected minor reduction in interest receipts. This is largely due to a reduction in interest rates.	+13	+13	☹
Recycling/ Refuse	Information supplied by SWP shows an increase in the predicted outturn for the recycling/refuse contract.	+66	+66	☹
Net variation		+299	+299	☹

4.1.2 Members should note that no national agreement has been reached yet over the inflationary increase for staff pay, the 2009/10 budgets include a cost of living increase of 2.5% on salaries.

4.1.3 The General Fund reserve is forecast to stand at around £1.58m at the end of 2009/10. This takes into account the supplementary estimate of £148k for the Core Council Review approved by Full Council in April.

4.2 Housing Revenue Account Qtr 1 Budget Monitoring

4.2.1 Budget monitoring for April to June shows a potential underspend of £60k. The variations are shown in the table below:

Description of Variance	Qtr 1 £'000	Total £'000	
Additional admin and printing costs due to the rent restructuring agreed by Full Council 11 th August.	+15	+15	☹

Further slippage in asbestos works due to compatibility with Academy.	-75	-75	☺
Net variation	-60	-60	☺

4.2.2 The Housing Revenue Account working balance is forecast to stand at around £1.8m at the end of 2009/10. This takes into account the supplementary estimate of £13.4k for the Core Council Review approved by Full Council in April and the £20k approved in August for Tenant Empowerment.

4.3 Capital

4.3.1 No budget monitoring variance for either the General Fund or Housing Revenue Account Capital have been reported.

4.4 Comment from the Strategic Finance Officer (S151 Officer)

4.4.1 With the introduction of the new finance system (SAP) it is recognised that there are some transactions for the period April to June 2009 that have yet to be processed through the new system. These transactions relate to both income and expenditure. However, through the controls that have been put in place since April, managers' detailed knowledge of their service and the input of the accountants, I have confidence that the figures shown above are as robust as they can be at the current time.

4.4.2 We cannot confirm the position for the DLO at the present time due to interfaces between legacy systems and SAP still being completed. However the DLO are both paying bills and billing customers as they did pre-SAP so no material variance is currently expected at the year end.

5.0 Effect on corporate priorities

5.1 As this report covers all aspects of the Council's performance, all corporate priorities are affected.

6.0 Recommendation

6.1 It is recommended that the Executive challenges the Council's performance and financial management at the end of Quarter 1 and make recommendations as appropriate to deal with any specific issues.

Ruth James
Performance and Client Lead
01823 356499
r.james@tauntondeane.gov.uk

Emily Collacott
Acting Financial Services Manager
01823 356421

e.collacott@tauntondeane.gov.uk

Maggie Hammond
Strategic Finance Officer and Acting S151 Officer
01823 358698
m.hammond@tauntondeane.gov.uk

Appendix 1

TDBC local indicator update to June 2009: Quarter 1

Local indicator	Description	information owner	Target	Performance in Quarter 1 2009/10	Frequency of data collection and when	On target Yes/No	If off target reasons why and actions taken
BV 9	Percentage of the net collectable council tax debit collected in-year	Simon Doyle	98.5%	35.02%	Annual	No	At the end of Q1 we were 0.34% short of the target for Q1 (the annual collection target for 2009/10 is 98.50%). We believe this is mainly due to the severe economic downturn, although some early delay in progressing recovery action due to uncertainty concerning the receipt of payments through SAP implementation has inevitably impacted on performance in this area. A robust programme of recovery action is in place to chase late payers and the effects of this action should start to be felt as the year progresses.
BV 10	Percentage of the net collectable NNDR are debit collected in-year	Simon Doyle	98.82%	32.07%	Annual	No	At the end of Q1 we were 4.83% short of the target (the annual collection target for 2009/10 is 98.82%). The Q1 target was largely based on collection performance in 2008/09. However, many large organisations have this year restructured their payment

Local indicator	Description	information owner	Target	Performance in Quarter 1 2009/10	Frequency of data collection and when	On target Yes/No	If off target reasons why and actions taken
							<p>patterns to monthly rather than annual in advance. These changing payment patterns will have an affect on the early quarters collection rates, which should start to even out as the year progresses.</p> <p>There are however continuing signs the economic downturn is affecting our business community. There has been a rise in applications for hardship relief and also the number of empty properties, on which we have to collect full rates, continues to climb. Collecting rates on empty properties is particularly challenging.</p> <p>Additionally, reminder & final notices have been delayed during the quarter due to early uncertainty of receipt of payments through SAP.</p>

Appendix 2

Local Area Agreement National Indicators

National indicator	Definition	Baseline Performance 2008/09	LAA Somerset target Variable depending on Delivery Plan
1	Percentage of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area	77.3%	81%
4	Percentage of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality	28.4%	Baseline +4%
6	Participation in regular volunteering	27.9%	Baseline +4%
7	Environment for a thriving third sector	16.3%	Baseline +3.5%
11	Engagement in the arts	Active people survey revealed 47.7% in Somerset engaged.	Baseline +3.9%
16	Serious acquisitive crime rate	9.66 crimes per thousand population	9.04 crimes per thousand population
21	Dealing with local concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime by the local council and police	29.7%	Not set
30	Reoffending rates of prolific and priority offenders	Avon and Somerset Police to provide data	Target to be set
32	Repeat incidents of domestic violence	Avon and Somerset Police to provide data	Target to be set
39	Rate of hospital admissions per hundred thousand for alcohol-	NHS to provide data	Target to be set

National indicator	Definition	Baseline Performance 2008/09	LAA Somerset target Variable depending on Delivery Plan
	related harm		
47	People killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents	SCC to provide information	Target to be set
56	Obesity in primary school aged children in year 6	NHS to provide data	14.9% (2008-9) 14.7% (2009-10) 14.6% (2010-11)
111	First Time entrance To the Youth Justice System aged 10-17	Probation Service to provide data	Target to be set
112	Under 18 conception rate	NHS to provide data	22.8 per 1015-17-year-olds (data available in 2012)
115	Substance misuse by young people	Data not yet available	Target to be set
121	Mortality rate from all circulatory diseases ages under 75	NHS to provide data	Target to be set
136	People supported to live independently through social services (all adults)	Data not yet available	Target to be set
139	The extent to which older people receive the support they need to live independently at home	34.9%	36.8% by 2011
142	Percentage of vulnerable people who are supported to maintain independent living	Data not yet available	95.49%
147	Care leavers in suitable accommodation	Data not yet available	2008/0 990%; 2009/10 90.5%; 2010/11 91%
152	Working aged people on out of work benefit	Data not yet available	Target to be set

National indicator	Definition	Baseline Performance 2008/09	LAA Somerset target Variable depending on Delivery Plan
154	Net additional homes provided	Data not yet available	Target to be set
155	Number of affordable homes delivered (gross)	Data not yet available	611 per annum
163	Proportion of population aged 19-64 for males and 19-59 for females qualified to at least level 2 or higher	72.4%	Target to be set
165	Portion of population aged 19-64 for males and 19-59 for females qualified to at least level 4 or higher	28.8%	Target to be set
166	Median earnings of employees in the area	ONS data to be provided	Baseline +1.6%
171	New business registration rate	Data not yet available	Target to be set
172	Percentage of small businesses in an area at showing employment growth	Data not yet available	Target to be set
175	Access to services and facilities by public in court, walking and cycling	70% (Baseline in 2007)	90%
179	Value for money-total net value of on-going cash-releasing value for money gains	Actual efficiency, total in-year gains £573,613	Target to be set
185	CO2 reduction from local authority operations	Data not yet available	Target to be set
186	Per capita CO2 emissions in the local authority area	Data not yet available	Target to be set

National indicator	Definition	Baseline Performance 2008/09	LAA Somerset target Variable depending on Delivery Plan
187	Tackling fuel poverty -- people receiving income-based benefits living in homes with a low energy visions in rating	16.91%	Target to be set
188	Adapting to climate change	0	Target to be set
191	Residual household waste per household	371.56 kg per household	Target to be set

TDBC National Indicators

National indicator	Description	Baseline performance 2008/09	TDBC target 2009/10
2	Percentage of people who feel that they belong to their neighbourhood	60.3%	Target to be set
3	Civic participation in the local area	14.8%	Target to be set
5	Overall general satisfaction with local area	87.7%	Target to be set
8	Adult participation in sport	20.4	Target to be set
14	Avoidable contact: the proportion of customer contact that is of low or no value to the customer	27%	Target to be set
15	Serious violent crime rate	0.22	Target to be set
17	Perception of anti-social behaviour	10.3%	Target to be set
20	Assault with injury crime rate	6.26	Steady downward trend
22	Perception of parents taking responsibility for the behaviour of their children in the area	34.7%	Target to be set

National indicator	Description	Baseline performance 2008/09	TDBC target 2009/10
23	Perception that people in the area treat one another with respect and dignity	23.8%	Target to be set
27	Understanding of local concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime by the local council and police	28%	Target to be set
29	Gun crime rate	Avon and Somerset Police to provide data	Target to be set
34	Domestic violence – murder	Avon and Somerset Police to provide data	Target to be set
35	Building resilience to violent extremism	Avon and Somerset Police to provide data	Target to be set
36	Protection against terrorist attack	Avon and Somerset Police to provide data	Target to be set
37	Awareness of civil protection arrangements in the local area	16.1%	Target to be set
41	Section of drunk or rowdy behaviour as a problem	23%	Target to be set
42	Perception of drug use or drug dealing as a problem	19.3%	Target to be set
48	Children killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents	Road Safety Partnership provide information	Target to be set
110	Young people's participation in positive activities	Data not yet available	Target to be set
118	Take-up of formal childcare by low-income working families	HMRC to provide data	Target to be set
119	Self-reported measure of people's overall health and well-being	77%	Target to be set

National indicator	Description	Baseline performance 2008/09	TDBC target 2009/10
120	All age all cause mortality rate	NHS to provide data	Target to be set
122	Mortality from all cancers and ages under 75	NHS to provide data	Target to be set
137	Healthy life expectancy at age 65	NHS to provide	Target to be set
140	Fair treatment by local services	73.8%	Target to be set
151	Overall employment rate	SCC to provide data	Target to be set
156	Number of homes in temporary accommodation	43	56
157 a	Processing of planning applications as measured against targets for "major applications"	75%	65%
157b	Processing of planning applications as measured against targets for "minor applications"	75%	75%
157c	Processing of planning applications as measured against targets for "other applications"	83%	85%
158	Percentage of decent council homes	15.41%	15%
159	Supply of ready to develop housing sites	Data not yet available	Target to be set
160	Local authority tenant satisfaction with landlord	82.2%	Target to be set
170	Previously developed land that has been vacant or derelict for more than 5 years	Data not yet available	Target to be set
180	Changes in the Housing Benefit/council Tax Benefit new claims and change events	694.7	Target to be set

National indicator	Description	Baseline performance 2008/09	TDBC target 2009/10
181	Time taken to process housing benefit/council tax benefit new claims and change events	10.3 days	Target to be set
182	Satisfaction of businesses with local authority regulation services	82.1%	Somerset target: 75%
184	Food establishments in the area which are broadly compliant with food hygiene	86.5%	Target to be set
189	Flood and coastal erosion risk management	Environment Agency	Target to be set
192	Household waste recycled composted	48.22%	Not applicable
193	Percentage of municipal waste to landfill	Data not yet available	Target to be set
194	Air quality -- percent reduction in NOx and PM10 emission through local authority estates in operations	Data not yet available	Target to be set
195	Improved street and environmental cleanliness (levels of graffiti, litter, detritus and flyposting)	Data not yet available	Target to be set
196	Improved street and environmental cleanliness-fly tipping	4	4
197	Improved biodiversity -- active management of local sites	100%	100%
199	Children and young people satisfaction with park and play areas	Data not yet available	Target to be set

Current TDBC local indicators

Local indicator	Description	Performance 2008/09	Target
BV 2a	The level of the Equality Standard	Level 1 of the new Equality Framework for Local Government	Level 3
BV 2b	The duty to promote racial equality	79%	89%
BV 12	The proportion of working days lost due to sickness absence	10.9 days	11 days
BV 63	Average SAP rating for local authority owned premises	66.02%	66%
BV 66 a	Percentage of rent owed that was collected	100.15%	98.3%
BV 80 (vii)	Overall satisfaction with the service (Benefits)	82.85%	Greater than 81.43%
BV 86	Cost of waste collection per household	Data not yet available	
BV 156	Percentage of buildings where all public areas are suitable for an accessible to disabled people	Data not yet available	68%
BV 202	Number of people sleeping rough	10	10
BV 204	Percentage of appeals allowed against the authority's decision (planning)	18.2%	10%
BV 213	Housing casework intervention	6.4	4
BV 218 a	Percentage of new reports of abandoned vehicles investigated within 24 hours of notification	100%	98%
BV 219b	Percentage of conservation areas with up-to-date appraisals	45.2%	No target set
LPI 10	Percentage of telephone calls answered within 20	86.2%	83.5%

Local indicator	Description	Performance 2008/09	Target
	seconds (Contact Centre only)		
LPI 30	Percentage of council tenants who have reported anti-social behaviour in the last 12 months, rating the help and advice given as excellent or good	66.6%	66%
LPI 35	Overall tenant satisfaction with repair service	97.81%	98.1%
LPI 41	Area of local nature reserves per 1000 population	1.07	1.07
LPI 47	Percentage of available commercial premises let	89.29%	90%
LPI 48	Percentage of available industrial premises let	63.64%	90%
LPI 60	The proportion of planned repairs and maintenance expenditure on HRA dwellings compared to responsive maintenance expenditure on HRA dwellings	57.55%	67%
LPI 61	Proportion of expenditure on emergency and urgent repairs to HRA dwellings compared to non-urgent repairs expenditure to HRA dwellings	17.71%	14%
LPI 62	Percentage of calls resolved at the first point of contact (Contact Centre only)	96.4%	72%

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Executive – 16 September 2009

Full or Partial Flexible Retirement Policy

Report of the Retained HR Manager

(This report is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Mrs Wilson)

1 Executive Summary

<p>The purpose of this report is to propose a new Policy for Full or Partial Retirement to meet the requirements under the Local Government Pension Scheme (Benefit, Membership and Contributions) Regulations 2007 to have a written policy for Regulations B18(1) and B18(3).</p>

2 Background

- 2.1 The Local Government Pension Scheme for England and Wales is a statutory pension scheme where its rules are laid down under Act of Parliament. Even allowing for this the regulatory framework has never been rigid and has allowed scope for regional and local variances and accountability.
- 2.2 From 6 April 2006 Her Majesty Revenue and Custom (HMRC) changes allowed pension schemes to facilitate flexible retirement. Flexible retirement provisions were subsequently written into the Local Government Pension Scheme by modifying the principal regulations in 2006 and then when the new look scheme was introduced in 2008, the flexible retirement provisions were modified further.
- 2.3 This flexibility was introduced to assist local government in managing the impacts of the ageing population which will see a greatly increased retired population being dependant on a reduced active workforce; by creating conditions where gradual or phased retirement would be possible and would allow for paid work during retirement without financial penalty.

3 Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations – Relevant Employer Discretions

- 3.1 There are a number of discretions within the LGPS (75 in total) some of which are the responsibility of the employing authority and some the administering authority and which some are also subject to the requirement to have a written policy.
- 3.2 In relation to full or partial flexible retirement these are contained in Local Government Pension Scheme (Benefit, Membership and Contributions) Regulations 2007 and are:-

B18(1)

Whether all or some benefits can be paid if an employee reduces their hours or grade (flexible retirement).

B18(3)

Whether to waive, in whole or part, actuarial reduction on benefits paid on flexible retirement.

- 3.3 These discretions allow for a scheme member who has attained the age of 55* to draw all or part of their retirement benefits (both pension and lump sum) even though they have not retired providing that:
- the employer consents, and
 - there has been a reduction in hours, or
 - a reduction in grade.

*In the case of scheme members who were members on 31 March 2008 the age of 55 is replaced by age 50 provided that they flexibly retire before 31 March 2010. From 1 April 2010 this will revert back to age 55.

- 3.4 With regard to a reduction in hours it is normal for a request to be approved, that the reduction is at least a minimum 20% reduction and more often to meet the financial business case in the region of 50%.
- 3.5 A scheme member who has a request approved for flexible retirement can continue to contribute to the Local Government Pension Scheme in their new employment.

4 Benefits of the Proposed Policy

- 4.1 Local Government generally and Taunton Deane are undergoing significant change to meet both the financial and service delivery pressures that are being faced. In undertaking restructuring it is important that the Council has at its disposal a range of options that can be used to satisfy these pressures.
- 4.2 The ability to provide full or partial flexible retirement will allow the Council to work with staff to provide staff an alternative to 'cliff edge' retirement which could see the retention of key skills at the same time as securing cost reductions. This will facilitate succession planning and business continuity.
- 4.3 The introduction of this policy will also ensure compliance with the need to have a written policy statement for this Employer Discretion as set out in the Local Government Pension Scheme (Benefit, Membership and Contributions) Regulations 2007.

5 Financial Implications

- 5.1 The early release of benefits on flexible retirement can cause pension strain

which is calculated with regard to the type of service the scheme member has and the shortfall in contributions that the pension scheme have actuarially assessed would be due to age 65.

5.2 As strain costs would be met by the Council the proposed procedure requires the proving of a business case which is based on the need for the proposals to demonstrate a saving over a three year period although the requirements of the service and other non financial benefits must be taken into account.

5.3 If the payment of benefits occurs before age 65 the benefits are reduced in accordance with guidance issued by the Government Actuary. The Council, however, has the power, on compassion grounds, to waive any actuarial reduction that the employee may incur and this provision has been included within the proposed policy although it is not envisaged that this option will be used on a regular basis.

6 Links to Corporate Priorities

6.1 Links to Objective 20 to achieve level 4 of the Equality Standard for Local Government by the end of 2010 and to attain level 5 by 2012.

7 Finance Comments

7.1 This policy is sound and the requirement to produce an individual business case for each post under consideration is a necessary safeguard.

8 Risk Management

Risk	Consequence	Probability	Impact	Treatment
Loss of Capacity	Strain on service delivery.	High	High	Business case required prior to approval.

9 Equalities Issues

9.1 This policy applies to all staff who are members of the Local Government Pension Scheme irrespective of gender, race, disability, occupation or grade.

10 Partnership Implications

10.1 There are no current partnership implications arising from this report although the potential development of Pioneer Somerset and other shared service arrangements will mean that this Policy will need to be kept under review.

10.2 The policy will apply to all Taunton Deane employees who are members of the Local Government Pension Scheme and consultation has taken place with SW1 over the proposed changes as it will cover employees seconded to SW1. Confirmation has been received from SW1 that the proposals, as contained in

this report, are acceptable to them as there is a requirement for each request to be subject to a business case.

- 10.3 Consultation has also taken place with the Taunton Dean UNISON Branch who are supportive of the proposals and a statement from UNISON is set out below:

'UNISON are satisfied that this proposed policy gives another option for staff who may be affected by the Core Council Review, in particular. It will also be of benefit to other staff who wish to adjust their hours, prior to retirement, but wish to continue links with their current post.'

11 Recommendations

- 11.1 The Executive is recommended to:-

- (1) agree the Policy on Full or Partial Flexible Retirement set out in the Appendix; and
- (2) recommend Full Council to formally adopt the Policy.

12 Appendices

- 12.1 Appendix 1.

Contact: Martin Griffin
01823 356533
m.griffin@tauntondeane.gov.uk

Appendix 1

FULL OR PARTIAL FLEXIBLE RETIREMENT POLICY

1. Employees aged 55 (aged 50 up to 31 March 2010) who are members of the Local Government Pension Scheme are able to request payment of early retirement benefits whilst remaining in the Council's employment on reduced hours or a lower grade.
2. This right does not apply to employees who are in receipt of a redundancy payment and early pension benefits or who have taken early retirement in the interests of the efficiency of the service.
3. As a guide, a business case for flexible retirement where any reduction is minimal (e.g. less than 20% either in terms of reduced hours or lower grade) may be difficult to objectively justify.
4. Requests for flexible working may be instigated by employees who meet the criteria set out in 1 above at anytime but will only be able to make one request in any 12 month period.
5. An employee should, in the first instance, approach their line manager with a request for reduced hours, more flexible working patterns by putting their request in writing.
6. The line manager will notify the HR Advisory Team and a meeting will be arranged within 21 days to discuss the request from the employee.
7. At this point the HR Advisory Team will request an estimate of early retirement benefits from the Pension Section of Somerset County Council which will be provided to the employee and be used to complete the Flexible Retirement Approval Request Form.
8. The meeting between the employee, line manager and a member of the HR Advisory Team will discuss the request and business case and will only be referred for approval if it is operationally viable.
9. If the request is referred for approval this will be considered by the relevant Theme Manager/Service Unit Manager and the HR Manager.
10. It should be noted that employees who are retiring in this way before their normal retirement age will suffer an actuarial reduction in their benefits to reflect early payment. In exceptional compassionate circumstances the Council has the right to waive this actuarial reduction.
11. If the request is not referred for approval this will be confirmed to the employee in writing to the employee within 14 days of the meeting. The employee would have the right of appeal against this decision which should be made in writing to the Retained HR Manager within 10 days of receipt of the reason for refusal of the request or refusal to waive the

actuarial reduction on compassionate grounds where the request is approved.

12. Appeals will be heard by a Strategic Director advised by the Retained HR Manager.

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Executive – 16 September 2009

Possible relocation of Taunton TIC to the Brewhouse

Report of the Interim Economic Development Manager

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Mrs Fran Smith)

Executive Summary

This is a headline report looking at the potential feasibility of the relocation of Taunton Tourist Information Centre to the Brewhouse Theatre in Taunton.

This report is without detailed analysis and negotiation of costs, which if approval to progress is given will be undertaken by the Asset Management function.

Recommendation

It is recommended that approval given to progress further work to explore the full cost implications of relocating Taunton Tourist Information (TIC) to the Brewhouse Theatre in a phased approach:

- Phase one - relocation to the Green Room in isolation to the Brewhouse Box Office Activity.
- Phase two - identify synergies and ways of increasing collaborative working
- Phase three - possible full integration of box office activity at a future date.

1. Background to this report

This paper has been produced to give a high-level feasibility study and identification of the options if the Taunton Tourist Information Centre (TIC) were to be relocated from its current site in the Library, Paul Street to within the Brewhouse Theatre building at Coal Orchard.

The paper has been produced in consultation with the Brewhouse Theatre as one of the conditions agreed by Executive on the 17th June 2009. The condition stated that the Brewhouse Theatre would work “with Taunton Deane in connection with the joint

location of the Tourist Information Centre (TIC) be progressed, together with works to enable Taunton Deane to formulate a robust business plan for the potential move. Clear, measurable and acceptable progress to the Council shall be made by September 2009”.

The study considers options ranging from renting space within the Brewhouse building to relocation with full integration of the Box Office activity.

Two locations within the Brewhouse are to be considered. The first option is the space in the current Box Officer / Foyer area. The second option is the ‘Green Room’ within the building.

The paper provides some broad indicative possible costs and impact. If approval is given for this work to progress, a job task will be raised with Asset Management to produce a full report with detailed costings.

2. TDBC Tourism and Taunton Tourist Information Centre background

Tourism plays a vital role in the economy of Taunton Deane and the vibrancy of Taunton town centre. The 2007 Value of Tourism Report produced by South West Tourism shows that the tourism industry is worth £167m per annum, supporting 3,123 jobs with 284,000 staying visitors and 1.7million day visitors. The tourism function and Taunton Tourist Information Centre contribute directly to this.

Taunton Tourist Information Centre transferred to the full control and funding by Taunton Deane Borough Council on 1st April 2005. Since transferring across the centre has developed three main areas of operation. 1) Tourist Information, 2) Ticket Centre for many local, regional and national events and 3) Travel Centre, acting as booking agent for companies including National Express, Berry’s Coaches, Brittany Ferries, Bakers Dolphin, Butlins and Haven.

The level of professionalism of the TIC has been recognised through good results in the annual Mystery Shopper study by Visit Britain and winning the National Express Agency of the Year regional and national awards.

The ‘Winning: A tourism strategy for 2012 and beyond’ published by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), in partnership with Visit Britain and Visit London aims to deliver a first-class welcome for all visitors through the provision of fully accessible facilities and information. Through this Taunton TIC has been designated an ‘Official Partner’ by Visit Britain.

National Research by Visit Britain shows that TIC’s in England generated an additional £170.2m for the visitor economy. Approximately 25 million people visited a TIC in England in 2008, of these it is estimated that 14.4 million were tourists.

In the 2008 – 2011 Taunton Deane Borough Council Corporate Strategy the identification of a suitable site for the relocation of Taunton Tourist Information Centre was listed as a priority due to the forthcoming redevelopment of the existing site as part of Project Taunton developments. This is no longer listed in the Corporate Strategy as Project Taunton have confirmed the demolition of the multi storey car park is unlikely to happen in the next three years.

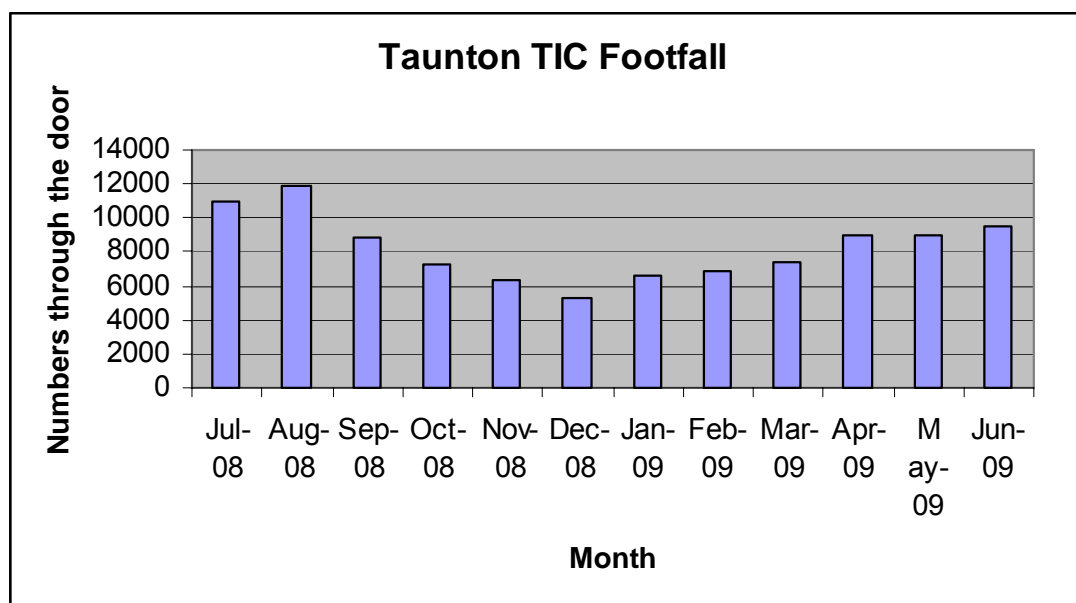
Table One: Taunton TIC Statistics July 2008 – June 2009

Throughput (Footfall)	98,832
Counter enquiries from UK visitors	32,202
Counter enquiries from overseas visitors	4,704
Travel centre enquiries	21,048
Emails received (tauntontic@tauntondeane.gov.uk)	1,001
Telephone calls received	21,613
Brochures dispatched	2,720
Number of accommodation bookings made by the centre	260

Taunton Tourist Information Centre Profit and Loss

Please see the Financial summary in Appendix One of the attached Buckley Young Associates Ltd review of Taunton Tourist Information, Ticket and Travel Centre report.

Table Two: Taunton TIC Footfall



3. Location options within the Brewhouse

3.1 Location Option One: Existing Box Office / Foyer area in the Brewhouse

Strengths and opportunities lie in using this area, as it is well known and frequented by users of the Theatre. It would allow for a one-stop shop for all ticket sales in the town. However the floor space available is limited and therefore it may prove difficult to accommodate the TIC service. At the moment public access to this part of the building is less prominent and less inviting, this would need to be addressed as part of a re-fit.

Questions have been raised concerning the need for separate counters, to be allocated for the Brewhouse box office and the TIC. If this were to be the case could this be achieved in this part of the building especially on occasions when the theatre is filled to capacity?

The TIC would require some 'back-office' space to allow the TIC storage for leaflets, at least one workstation and room for filing cabinets. If this is unavailable the TIC would have to seek alternatives elsewhere. All parties have agreed a full refit of this area would be required to accommodate everyone and this is a cost that would be need to be borne either jointly or by TDBC.

Security of TIC operation – the space proposed will be open and available to others out of hours, TDBC would need to ensure it adopts a design and style that protects its equipment and material. Suitable storage facilities for cash (e.g. a safe) would need to be provided. This risk would be mitigated by using the Green Room which can be locked and secured.

3.2 Location Option Two: The 'Green Room' at the Brewhouse

This space provides greater opportunities to both parties, whether as a separate TIC or combined operation. It could provide a 'front-of-house welcome' to the whole Theatre and the many services lying within its building. The bigger, lighter unit would allow for a larger Tourist Information Centre to be established (than if the service was located within the current box-office) and it could allow for storage and back office facilities to be created through the use of screening, this could reduce refit costs. Being in a (distinct) separate part of the building the TIC would be able to secure and lock its facility when the service is closed.

The historical nature of the 'Green Room' would make it more attractive to customers and with more space we could work with other partners such as Project Taunton to promote their work. This area would also require a refit but this could be done with less impact and in isolation to the Brewhouse, its operation and the footfall through the building.

4. Service Options

4.1 Relocate the TIC operation in isolation from the Brewhouse box office operation

This option would be the easiest to achieve as it would simply require the TIC to take over and rent existing space. It would allow TDBC to review the TIC services, review its operation and identify any hardware upgrades required in isolation to the Brewhouse operation.

4.2 Relocate the TIC operation with a full merger of box office services – all run by TDBC.

For the customer a one-stop shop approach is the most attractive and user-friendly. It would provide a central contact for ensuring and building a high quality customer focussed service, which would benefit both parties. A joint box-office would work to

meet some of the aims of the Taunton Cultural Consortium who are currently investigating joined up working with regards events taking place and the promotion of these within the town.

Drawbacks exist in that both teams contain team members with specialist knowledge of their service built up over many years. Merging two teams together creates training implications and anomalies in pay and remuneration. A new merged service may require new ICT and box office systems to operate and this has a cost. Conflict may arise over accessing customer databases currently held by both organisations. These new costs would need determining and negotiation would be required over who would provide the funding for this.

The opening hours for the two operations differ with the TIC open Monday to Saturday 9.30am to 5.00pm and the Brewhouse Box-Office open Monday to Saturday 10am to 8pm (6pm on non-performance days or later for special shows when the box office may remain open until 9pm). Some form of harmonised opening hours would be required and there would be staffing and budget implications.

Both services are well established and have a loyal customer base. The smooth transition and communication of any relocation and possible merger is fundamental to future success for all involved.

5. Budget Implications

Item	Cost
Rent	To be negotiated and confirmed
Refit of Brewhouse to accommodate TIC	Approx. £30,000 (Burnham-on-Sea TIC refit cost in 2006)
Impact to TIC budget if income targets are not met after relocation	Unknown
All TDBC produced tourism literature promotes Taunton TIC and its current contact details. All literature would need re-printing with the new contact details.	£1000 per leaflet
Town Centre finger post signage amends / replacement	To be confirmed
New Box Office System	Unknown
Publicity and Marketing	To be confirmed
Setting up of direct IT links to TDBC IT System	To be confirmed
EPOS System	£1750 approx.
Telephone system	£1250 approx.

6. Next Steps

If agreement to progress exploring the options is given, the following requires further investigation:

- **TIC Location within The Brewhouse Building**
Further exploration and a decision on whether to locate in the current box office area or Green Room must be made. The Brewhouse are open to the

idea of the TIC using either the Box Officer or Green Room area. Both parties need to be mindful of costs of relocating the box office system (to Green Room) and this would be considered should the need arise by Asset Management.

- **TIC Market Research**

Ensuring that the relevant people have access to the TIC is fundamental. The TIC remit is to improve the visitor experience to Taunton (Deane) and to provide products and service to improve the economy of Taunton.

Visitor and statistical research relevant to the potential TIC market is required i.e. footfall figures for 'Coal Orchard' area would need researching as there are no current figures in existence.

The Brewhouse total attendance / participations in 2008 was 114,964. This figure does not include café customers or conference delegates and is mainly achieved during evening hours when the current TIC operation is closed. Daytime footfall figures of the Brewhouse and external areas are required. The annual library footfall figure is in excess of 500,000. This does not take account of Paul St footfall including people movements to and from Paul St Multi Storey car park.

The current location of the TIC limits its operations, as it is located in a tertiary shopping area. This is a sufficient distance from the primary shopping streets meaning only pedestrians using Paul Street, the library and the Multi Storey Car Park pass the current TIC. This results in only those who know its location or seek it out can access it. The TIC needs a location with higher footfall / passing trade. The Brewhouse location does not appear to provide this at this time.

In 2008 TDBC commissioned Buckley Young Associates to produce a 'Review of Taunton TIC Report'. Buckley Young Associates identified that there can be little doubt that if Taunton TIC were to move to a more prominent town centre premises; the visitor traffic would increase substantially.

During the review process Buckley Young Associates were unable to find any Tourist Information Centres that operate without a subsidy.

- **Replacement Box Office System**

If a merger of box office operations occurs a new box office system is required. The Brewhouse have stated a new system would be required and that sharing this cost would be cost effective for both organisations. In addition the Brewhouse state that it is likely their box office system will be updated shortly at little cost to them.

- **Box Office Commission**

As part of any negotiations should a box office merger be considered, there will be a need to negotiate the level of income TDBC would gain from running this service.

- **Income Projections**

Without understanding whether the TIC will relocate or not, or whether it will take over the running of the box office it is difficult to forecast income projections other than stating what is currently achieved in terms of income and expenditure and reviewing that against footfall levels and marketing and promotional activity to raise awareness of the new service and location. The Taunton TIC review report confirms that income from revenue generating activities of the TIC does not cover all operating costs however intangible benefits to the Taunton Deane economy from the TIC have been stated in section 3.

- **Rent and servicing costs**

Until detailed negotiations are undertaken between Asset Management and The Brewhouse Theatre it is not clear what level of rent the TIC would be required to pay. As a result this could impact upon the overall cost of the TIC compared to current rental expenditure.

The Brewhouse have stated that depending on the type of rental agreement, it would be easier to pay a marginally higher fixed rental cost to include servicing of the TIC in terms of cleaning etc.

- **Personnel Issues (box office merger)**

At this stage the Personnel issues cannot be quantified. Dependent upon the outcome of this process and options chosen the advice of HR through Southwest One would be sought to carry out this work should some form of merger take place.

- **Hardware**

The TIC till and telephone systems needs replacing. The current till does not provide stock control capability and relocation may provide the opportunity to undertake a full review of hardware requirements.

- **Security**

Both locations within The Brewhouse have no CCTV coverage. As part of negotiations with caterers and the Youth Service the Brewhouse is reviewing security procedures to enable shared use of the building. A new CCTV system will be a part of this, and the Brewhouse would be keen to share these costs. The complete system is estimated at around £10,000. The Green Room location provides a more secure location.

- **Service Level Agreement (SLA)**

Both TDBC and the Brewhouse would require the setting up of an SLA if it was agreed that TIC would run the box office service. The SLA would define the level of service provided and set out responsibilities and priorities. It would cover issues including staffing, income and commission.

The Brewhouse have stated that the physical box office is the fount of all knowledge for their patrons, from show times to catering bookings and the main reception area for the organisation. The box office database informs and leads their programming and marketing activities, and is the engine of their business.

- **Publicity and Marketing**

Taunton TIC has been in its current location for 13 years. For users of the service, both residents and tourists, there will be a need to promote the fact that the TIC has relocated in conjunction with promoting the products and services that it would then offer. This can be achieved through PR in local media such as the Somerset County Gazette, Wellington Weekly News, BBC Radio Somerset, Heart Radio and through Parish Magazines, community newsletters, leaflets and signage at a cost.

The Publicity and marketing would cover reprints for existing tourism publications to include new address / contact details and updated / new signage both in the town centre and on routes into the town centre.

The key theme is making the users of the service aware that the high levels of professional customer service and satisfaction will be upheld. Awareness will be needed of any negative publicity created locally of the move.

7. Recommendation

It is recommended that approval given to progress further work to explore the full cost implications of relocating Taunton Tourist Information (TIC) to the Brewhouse Theatre in a phased approach:

- Phase one - relocation to the Green Room in isolation to the Brewhouse Box Office Activity.
- Phase two - identify synergies and ways of increasing collaborative working
- Phase three - possible full integration of box office activity at a future date.

Contact Officer : Phil Sharratt 01823 356534 or p.sharratt@tauntondeane.gov.uk

Appendix One - SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- One-stop ticket shop
- Potential longer opening hours for Tourist Information Centre
- PR opportunities
- If done well, could be a market leader and example to others
- Central to the new Firepool development, Somerset County Cricket Ground and Somerset Square, Bridge over River Tone to Morrisons
- Paid and fully trained, experienced staff
- TIC team can offer a multi-skilled service covering all customer needs.

Weaknesses

- Cost of relocation to TDBC
- Location not in main town centre where highest footfall occurs
- Not next to library and their 500,000 footfall
- Not under main town centre car park
- Building requires refurbishment in box office / foyer and Green room
- No storage space (box office / foyer)
- No back office space (box Office / foyer)
- Security issues – (box office / foyer)

Opportunities

- Creating Taunton's one-stop location for tickets and cultural events taking place in the area
- Would give the public a greater reason to visit the Brewhouse building and to use the Brewhouse facilities
- Green Room location would provide greater flexibility than box office area with space and a warm welcome.
- The TIC could provide a branded information stand for tourist information in the library linking in with existing work the new Taunton Park and Ride and train station.

Threats

- Current customers not using service in new location
- Loss of current business to other operators
- Library become a second TIC to fulfil enquiries made by residents and visitors who still visit the library location looking for Tourist Information.
- Conflict due to Brewhouse programming, i.e. booking of No Fit State Circus.

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Executive - 16 September 2009

TDBC funding support to the Taunton Town Centre Company for Business Improvement District (BID) Administration Costs

Report of the Interim Economic Development Manager

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Mrs F Smith)

1. Executive Summary

The Business Improvement District (BID) programme has proved successful in harnessing the collective contribution of businesses operating within the designated BID area. Over £1 million of funding will be collected from businesses over the five-year term.

The difficult economic climate and reduction in the number of businesses trading in the town has reduced the total annual sum collected under the BID levy.

The Council has supported the BID programme through funding and officer time during the first two BID operational years. The Council is being asked by Taunton Town Centre Company to reaffirm this funding commitment for a further three years to be reviewed annually against the BID business plan.

2. Background

Taunton Town Centre's BID is a five year programme of investment by local business rate payers to bring enhanced service improvements in support of retail, commerce and public areas across the town centre.

The BID was developed by Taunton Town Centre Company (the BID body) in close partnership with Taunton Deane Borough Council (the billing authority) and SWERDA (the Regional Development Agency).

The five year programme of investment commenced on the 1 October 2007 and will conclude on the 30 September 2012.

During its lifespan the BID will invest over £1 million in service enhancements funded by the levy paying business community. In the first two years of the programme, this investment has been enhanced through additional funding contributions from the private sector, Avon and Somerset Constabulary and Taunton Deane Borough Council.

3. Current Situation

As the billing authority, acting under the BID regulations (2004) the Council issues demand notices to all rateable value properties within the designated BID area in October each year. The Council may charge the BID body reasonable costs for the collection of the levy.

In years 1 and 2 of the BID, aggregate receipts totalled £455,706.00. Collection rates remain high at over 95%. However, there has been a dramatic shift in the UK and world economy during this initial two-year period.

Due to a reduction in the total number of businesses trading within the BID area there has been a small but significant reduction in levy income when compared to the BID Business Plan agreed in 2007. It should be noted that contrary to the mechanism for collection of non-domestic rates, the Council is not able to recover BID levy where premises are vacant on the day the demand notice is served.

The aggregate reduction in levy collection for years 1 and 2 is estimated at over £30,000 most of which is thought to be non-recoverable. In planning for year 3 of the BID it is estimated by the Council's collection team that the value of total recoverable receipts will drop by a further £20,000 and, dependant on the business attrition rate, could be significantly more.

In the first two years the council has contributed £30,000 for each of the two years from the LABGI fund in support of the BID; £20,000 toward 'Shop Front Improvements' of which only around £5,000 has been drawn down allowing for the existing contribution made to be extended across the balance of the BID contract and £40,000 toward BID administration costs.

This annual administration contribution made by Taunton Deane has been ring-fenced to support the Town Centre Company in meeting the administrative costs of the BID, ensuring the levy collected is directed towards physical service delivery.

4. Taunton Town Centre Company Proposal to TDBC

The reduction in business numbers and subsequent reduction in levy will result in adjustments to service delivery going forward. The Town Centre Company has embarked on an internal restructure and further cost savings measures to limit the impact on services (Appendix 1).

In order to protect service delivery under the BID, and negate deeper service cuts, the Council is asked to reaffirm its funding support to the BID over the next three years. The annual commitment of £20,000 from LABGI funds should be

reviewed against the BID business plan for decision each year prior to commencement of the BID operating year on 1st October.

5. Conclusions

The BID programme has proved successful in harnessing the collective contribution of businesses operating within the designated BID area. Over £1 million of funding will be collected from businesses over the five-year term.

The difficult economic climate and reduction in the number of businesses trading in the town has reduced the total annual sum collected under the BID levy.

The Council has supported the BID programme through funding and officer time during the first two BID operational years. The Council is being asked by Taunton Town Centre Company to reaffirm this funding commitment for a further three years to be reviewed annually against the BID business plan.

Establishing a vibrant town centre within Taunton is critical to supporting the work of the Economic Development Unit Delivery Programme and will feature as a major project within the Economic Strategy, to support the work of Project Taunton in regenerating Taunton and encouraging inward investment, and to achieve the Growth Point aspirations.

6. Recommendations

It is recommended that Members consider and discuss the payment of an additional grant of £20,000 from LABGI Reserves to support the Taunton Town Centre Company in providing administration for the BID contract during Financial Year 2009/10 subject to the following condition:

1. That the Chairman of Taunton Town Centre Company (TTCCo) submits a Quarterly report in January, April, July, and October of each year remaining of the BID contract on actual and forecast BID finances and activities to a new Taunton Town Centre Economic Advisory Board, possibly comprised of the following members:

Economic Development Portfolio Holder
Shadow Economic Development Portfolio Holder
Economic Development Manager
Project Taunton Project Manager
Chairman TTCCo
CEO TTCCo

Members should note that this payment would reduce the available LABGI Reserves currently earmarked to seed-fund future economic development

initiatives identified within the Economic Development Delivery Programme to £68,810

Members should also note the possible requirement for future funding of £20,000 per annum for each of the years 2010/11 and 2011/12 to be considered for decision each year prior to commencement of the BID operating year on 1 October, and also note that projected future income values of the LABGI grant will not be able to support these payments.

APPENDICES:

1. BID Budget 1 Oct 2009 to 30 Sep 2010
2. BID Trading Summary 1 Oct 2007 to 30 Sep 2009
3. Extract from the minutes of the Review Board of 22 March 2007 concerning the BID proposal

Appendix 1

BID Budget 1 Oct 2009 to 30 Sep 2010		
	Business Plan Projection	Operating Budget
Income		
BID Levy	245,000	225,000
Police	0	0
DLO	0	0
EcDev't	10,000	2,500
Owner/Occupier	0	0
TDBC	20,000	20,000
Advertising & Sponsorship	20,000	20,000
Total Income	295,000	267,500
Expenditure		
Safe and Sound		
Police Team	80,000	70,000
Looks Good Feels Good		
Street Cleaning		
Bins		
Trade Waste Recycling		
Graffiti Removal		
Shop-front grants		
	50,000	35,000
Shout About It		
Christmas lights		
Lamp-post banners		
Events		
Website		
PR and advertising		
Signing	110,000	90,500
Admin		
Establishment	40,000	56,780
Levy Collection	10,000	10,000
Contingency	5,000	5,000
Total Income/Expenditure	295,000	267,280
Surplus/deficit	0	220

Appendix 2

Business Improvement District Trading Summary October 2007 to September 2009

	Business Plan	Estimated Outturn
Income		
Levy at 1% of RV	490000	455706
SWERDA	30000	30000
TDBC Project Support	20000	20000
TDBC Administration Support	40000	40000
Sponsorship & Events	40000	75000
Total income	620000	620706
Expenditure		
Admin	80000	86000
Levy Collection	30000	20000
Safe & Sound	160000	140000
Shout about it	200000	239000
Looks Good - feels good	120000	86000
Getting About	20000	18000
Contingency	10000	10000
Total Expenditure	620000	599000
Surplus/deficit	0	21706

Notes

SWERDA funding contribution in year 1 only

In kind contribution from Avon & Somerset Constabulary up to £80K p.a. joint funds BID police team

Levy income reduced due to business attrition rate

BID requires to achieve small operating surplus to meet development and/or wind up costs at end of BID term

Appendix 3

Extract from the minutes of the Review Board of 22 March 2007 concerning the BID proposal

22. Proposed Taunton Business Improvement District (BID)

Considered report previously circulated, giving details of the progress made towards Taunton Town Centre becoming a Business Improvement District (BID).

A BID provided a partnership between the private sector and the local authority that would develop and deliver added value services that would benefit the trading environment and the public realm.

A BID, which could only be set up following approval by ballot of relevant businesses, was funded through the application of a small levy on Non Domestic Rateable Value.

The aim of the BID was to provide an area with a strengthened economic outlook, ultimately increasing profits for those businesses paying for the improvements.

Since 2005/2006 Taunton Town Centre Company (TTCCo) had been working towards the BID and had become a Company Limited by Guarantee. PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PWC) had been appointed by the Government to mentor the Taunton BID as one of 20 pilot towns. Over a two year period PWC would assist Taunton with the process of developing effective partnerships and a successful submission via a ballot.

Support and funding had been secured through SWERDA to provide capacity for the company to develop a BID submission by July 2007. Taunton Deane had also provided support through the Local Authority Business Growth Initiative (LABGI) Allocations.

Consultations had been carried out with business groups and the five main areas identified for investment included:-

- Street cleaning and recycling;
- Town centre security;
- Signage and information;
- Marketing and promotion; and
- Training.

This information would result in a Business Plan and Action Programme for the Taunton BID area being worked up. In order to achieve this plan a levy of at least 1% on Rateable Value of NNDR properties in the BID area would be required. This would yield approximately £220,000 per year. TTCCo would be looking to match this fund from other organisations and through voluntary contributions from landlords.

The services to be delivered through the Taunton BID Programme would be added value services to those already provided and would finance additional activities provided under contract. These services would include additional street cleaning and litter bins and better sign posting.

The Council was required to finance the cost of the ballot. However, if there was less than a 20% turnout the BID proposer, TTCCo, would finance the cost. Administration costs would be deducted from the income gained from the BID.

The TTCCo, together with the Economic Development Team, would ensure that services were maximised and service level agreements would be drawn up with all providers.

All Council owned property within the BID area would be liable for payment of the BID levy.

The BID in Taunton Town Centre had received £20,000 from LABGI allocations in 2006/2007 and it was proposed that this would continue in 2007/2008. In addition the Council's levy as a property owning member of the BID would also be met from the LABGI allocation for 2007/2008.

Submitted for the information of Members the Taunton BID Governance arrangements which would be put in place if the ballot enabled the formal submission to be made.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The report be noted; and
2. Executive Councillor Cavill be recommended to approve the funding of the Business Improvement District in Taunton Town Centre.

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Executive – 16 September 2009

Redevelopment of four sites in Taunton to provide Affordable Housing in perpetuity

Report of the Housing Enabling Manager

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Hazel Prior-Sankey)

The purpose of this report is to bring to the attention of the Executive the endless possibilities of council owned potential sites in Taunton that are ‘land hungry’ and in need of updating or replacement. These could, with careful planning, provide up to 270 new affordable homes. I seek your support to progress these sites through the recognised process.

All of these sites are in the ownership of the Council. There is a separate piece of ‘no mans’ land adjacent to Victoria Gate flats. I seek your permission to instigate Compulsory Purchase action on this land and to then sell on to Knightstone Housing Association at NIL cost to this Council.

Detailed below are my proposals for each site and I would urge you to carefully consider these proposals, to recognise the potential and to support the progression of these schemes, which in turn supports the Council’s agreed priority of providing affordable housing.

I believe these proposals reflect the Core Council’s Review, the Council’s commitment to providing Affordable Housing, compliment Project Taunton and are the first steps in providing a better Taunton Deane for our residents.

Scheme One – Garage site behind Priorswood Shops.

This scheme will entail the demolition of 20 garages and the redevelopment of an area of Council owned land with six family homes including plenty of parking on site for these new homes. It will also replace at least six garages.

Background

There are currently two blocks of garages. Block one has 12 garages and 6 of these are contained within the leases of some of the shops. The remaining six are let through our normal garage lettings policy. Block 2 has 8 garages and one is leased to a shop holder. Six are let through the normal garage lettings policy. The remaining garage has no known identity as yet.

In order to achieve the new development it will be necessary to

- Replace, at least, the leased garages.
- To take account of and not impede any rights of way into or across the rear of the shops.
- To consider the movements of delivery vehicles.

It is envisaged that the leased garages will be replaced as well as the existing 5 parking spaces. It may be possible to include some additional garages for rent.

The space is very tight and Highways have confirmed that they would not object to an access onto Lyngford Lane. This will provide greater flexibility of the area.

There is no community space on this site but Lyngford Park is only meters away.

A Public Consultation was held on the afternoon of 26th June, 2009, Invitation letters were sent to all the shop owners, garage holders, tenants above the shops, and Residents in all adjoining properties, including the Public House, residents in part of Dorchester Road, some of Eastwick Road and Selworthy Road. The radius covered everyone who it was considered might be affected by the proposed development.

An analysis of the consultation responses:

68 letter sent out, posters in shops, library etc

Attendance:

8 households who had received a letter including 3 shop owners.

7 who had seen the posters but not received a letter.

2 Councillors.

General comments:

Do not want to lose garage

Disabled need garage

Vandalism of cars if not in garage

Tenant of garage for 40 years

Concerns about future access and turning area for lorries, deliver daily.
Not happy about replacing leaseholders garages only
Too much extra parking for new houses
Request 4/5 more garages for tenants above shops.

Three tenants from the maisonettes stayed most of the time and expressed concerns over the loss of garages and the delivery vehicles. One shop keeper had organised a petition, through the shops, which he handed to Housing Enabling Manager.

Current Position

The scheme proposals have now be discussed with Development Control. Taking on board any comments the scheme is now ready to progress through the preliminary stages.

Scheme Two - Redevelopment of Ruskin Close including the relocation and provision of a new Play area. To include a small piece of land currently leased to Thales. To include, in the scheme, a development of 16 flats, on an adjacent piece of land, which is under negotiation between Knightstone Housing Association and Gadds.

At least 90 homes will be achieved by the redevelopment of this area. These will include 1 and 2 bed flats, 2, 3 and 4 bedroom family homes as well as homes for the Disabled and Move on accommodation. This redevelopment will result in a sustainable mixed community

Background

This former sheltered housing scheme is a development of 36 one bed, two storey flats of traditional construction built in 1957. There is also 1 two bed house which was originally the warden's house. The flats were all decommissioned in January 1995 and are now let on a general needs basis. One flat is sold under the right to buy.

Some 12/15 years ago TDBC entered into a weekly agreement with Stonham Housing Association to let the eight flats, numbered 5a – 8b these are sublet to their tenants who are in need of supported housing.

Similarly a verbal agreement with Carr Gomm enabled the eight flats, numbered 1a – 4b and three other properties in the close to be sublet to their tenants in need of supported housing.

Ruskin Close itself is in a very quite area in a fantastic location close to all amenities and there is a huge demand for housing in this area, vacancies rarely occur. There has

been one vacancy in several years. There is a wide age range of tenants occupying these flats providing an effective mixed use community.

Consideration must be given to the actual buildings and the effect on the residents who live there. Although fifty one years is not long in building terms these flats are no longer fit for purpose.

- The buildings have been described as very dated, tired and dull. Not at all suitable for some people who are in need of supported living. The environment inside the blocks of flats is described as depressing. Noise emits from adjoining flats in the form of door banging, walking around overhead, and footsteps on the concrete stairs. All this indicates limited sound deadening insulation in the walls.
- Each flat has outdated storage heaters which are expensive to run. One of the major sources of complaint was the long, open walkways across the front of the flats. These walkways are served by a concrete stairwell which is very dark and cold where vagrants are sometimes found sleeping.
- Some improvement work has been carried out on these flats

In addition to redeveloping Ruskin Close there is a children's play area close by that needs urgent attention. Reports show this area to be totally unsuitable and dangerous for children to use. It is approached by a 'closed in' footpath off Wordsworth Drive with two meter fencing on each side with high gates at each end. The play area, itself, is surrounded by two meter fencing and can only be viewed by a few of the first floor adjacent flats with only one access/exit.

Two half day surveys were carried out at the play area. The first morning no children came to play on the equipment. During the afternoon of the second half day two children came to play at different times. A written survey was handed out to the parents of the children who attend the YMCA play school. Assessing all the comments regarding the play area it was clear that the current play area was not required and a new one not welcome. It has recently been reported that mature young men have been found using the area at night.

Information regarding unsuitability has been provided by the Ward Councillor, the Community Police and local residents and the Housing Estates Officer.

Proposals and moving forward.

Working together with Knightstone Housing Association an indicative scheme has been designed which will greatly enhance the area, make better use of the land available, and provide new modern cost effective homes for the residents in addition to increasing

the number of homes which in turn will make more homes available for letting in this area.

Adjacent to Ruskin Close, in Wordsworth Drive, is land owned by Gadds Developers with planning permission for 11 apartments. The site has been offered to Knightstone Housing Association for Affordable Housing. In fact the flats are too big for normal lettings and Knightstone would have difficulty in attracting subsidy from the Homes and Community Agency. In view of this, Knightstone have redesigned the block with 16 one and two bedroom flats for Affordable Housing, they will be built to at least Code 4 standard. By the date of the Executive meeting a new planning application will have been submitted.

With your support and an approved planning permission for the site in Wordsworth Drive these 16 flats could launch the redevelopment of the area. These new apartments will represent the first phase of an exciting new Ruskin Close.

On completion of the 16 new apartments residents of Ruskin Close will have the opportunity to choose which of these new flats they would like to move into, should they wish to stay in the Close.

The Statutory Home Loss payment with associated displacement compensation will be available to those residents of Ruskin Close who qualify.

Ruskin Close could be redeveloped in three phases which will mean existing tenants can stay where they are until they move directly into their new home, unless they wish to move elsewhere in the Deane. This option would be offered.

A public consultation was held on the 23rd July, 2009 at the Peacock Club, Lisieux Way. Over 100 letters were sent out to those who might be affected by the redevelopment inviting them to attend. Fifty one people came along to see the proposals on offer.

Visitors were asked to complete a comment sheet. Some were taken away and sent in. I have detailed below a list of those comments.

The tenants of Ruskin Close were asked where they would like to be rehoused in the event of the redevelopment taking place. They were encouraged to complete a relocation preference chart giving priority to their choices e.g staying in the new Ruskin, moving elsewhere in Taunton Deane, moving out of the area.

One 86 year old lady 'jumped' at this opportunity to move near her disabled sister in Curry Rivel. With the financial payment and Homefinder Somerset we should be able to help her to achieve this.

There was much discussion about the existing play area. It was, overwhelmingly expressed that no one wanted the new play area. It was also agreed that no one wanted the play area in the centre of the development. The architect is looking at alternative uses for this area.

Analysis of Consultation

109 letters sent out, posters displayed in Surgery and shops.

49 people attended

17 from Ruskin Close

6 from Wordsworth Drive

5 from Parmin Close

1 Burns Road

Others

Ward Councillor

PCSO

LAT

Carr Gomm support workers

More than one person attended from some households.

General comments:

Concerns the new development may increase the chance of anti-social behaviour.

Do not want the play area

Prefer more parking and landscaped area

Agree Ruskin Close needs updating.

Would like new development to be dog friendly

In agreement with Wordsworth Drive play area being closed

Good idea to redevelop Ruskin as it is very old and in need of upgrading.

Children are damaging the trees in the play area.

Problems with people going into the park late at night. We shall be very pleased to see it go.

I agree with the alterations as long as they are dog friendly.

There is a need for a sitting area and space for my dog.

Little children are no problem.

Verbal comments.

Access road through Burns Road.

Remove or close the existing play area.

Who is going to live here?

Don't want to live overlooking the play area.

It's been on the cards for many years that this will happen.

Would like to move out of Somerset.

Would like to move to Devon.

Can I have a ground floor flat for my two guinea Pigs?

Will I be able to take my two Budgies?

Breakdown of areas of choice for re housing by sixteen residents.

Holway. Duke Street. Priorswood. New Ruskin Close.
Somewhere green. Downstairs flat with area for buggy. Disabled bungalow.
West Dorset. Devon/Dorset. North Curry. Curry Rivel.

Moving forward

Knightstone are working with Gadds to progress the planning application for the land in Wordsworth Drive.

Discussions are underway with the Open Space and Leisure Manager over the existing play area.

A further consultation just for the residents of Ruskin Close is planned soon after the Executive meeting.

Scheme Three – The redevelopment of Victoria Gate and associated area. There are 30 elderly person’s flats in two separate locations; both locations are remote from one another.

The current scheme is in a very pleasant location being only a half a mile from the town centre. It is proposed to include in this development the ‘no mans land’ nearby. This development will enable up to 60 homes to be achieved on these sites.

The Redevelopment of Victoria Gate sheltered housing scheme should be considered as three locations, described below.

Location one consists of 20 flats in three, two storey blocks.

The ex warden’s house at no. six.

Location two consists of 10 flats in two, two storey blocks.

Location three is a piece of ‘No Mans’ land adjacent to location one above and behind the car park to the White Hart Inn. Currently known as allotment land.

Comment from the Supported Housing Manager

“Victoria Gate is an ideal location to provide a mix of general need and accommodation for older people with easy access to local services. The existing accommodation would benefit from refurbishment/replacement”.

History.

A health check was carried out on this Elderly Persons scheme in 1999 when it was reported that there were a number of younger, active tenants living in the flats as well as elderly tenants. There were various recommendations put forward to bring the scheme up to date to encourage older residents to accept these properties.

These flats are quite 'land hungry' and the area lends itself to a much larger up to date mixed development. Both sites lend themselves to redevelopment.

Adjacent to location one is an area of '**no mans land**'. This land is behind the car park to the White Hart Inn. It is 'landlocked', this council owns an access road leading to it. Future access could be achieved as part of this scheme over TDBC land. The land is unregistered with no known owner. Extensive work has been carried out, by another party, to identify the owner but to no avail. It is proposed to Compulsory Purchase this land and sell on to Knightstone Housing Association at NIL cost to this Council. If this land can be secured it would be used for the development of affordable housing in conjunction with the redevelopment of Victoria Gate flats.

Again the development of this site would launch the redevelopment of the area without causing too much disruption to the present nearby Taunton Deane tenants.

You will note on the site location plan this land is denoted as allotment gardens. These allotments have not been cultivated for many years, probably decades. There is no water on the site. There are currently Environmental issues with fly tipping and the presence of rodents, needles etc.

Proposals:

The Council to secure the 'no mans' land (location three) through the Compulsory Purchase process, with no cost to this Council. Then to sell on to Knightstone Housing Association. The proceeds of the sale would be invested with Trustees appointed. This area of land would be developed first to allow a smooth decant operation. Tenants would be carefully consulted and given the option of moving to the new flats in the area or to other appropriate accommodation in the Borough.

To transfer the land of 'location one' to Knightstone who would then demolish and redevelop the site.

To transfer the land of 'location two' to Knightstone who would then demolish and redevelop the site.

Currently there are thirty elderly persons sheltered homes on two of these three locations. With careful planning and consultation this site could be transformed into an innovative site with a mixed community providing up to 60 homes.

The present tenants in the flats at Victoria Gate would receive the Statutory Home Loss payment and compensation for displacement issues.

A public consultation was held on the 5th August, 2009. 113 letters were sent out as well as posters. A total of 45 visitors attended the consultation.

20 from Victoria Gate

18 from Mitre Court

7 from Alfred Street

Plus four others including two Community Police Officers.

General comments:

The market value of our homes will decrease.

Please keep White Hart going.

As long as the plans don't take over any more of the green belt.

I have no problems with building on existing land.

Pleased that you are not planning to encroach on the green park area.

Parking is already a problem.

I gather there is extra parking for people in the houses.

I don't want to move I am 84 I have a nice view.

For the sake of a few more people you could destroy the lives of others,

I was very impressed with the presentation and the advice given. I would have liked to see a model and we could have understood it a bit better.

I would like to apply, here and now, for a two bed roomed disabled ground floor flat.

As you can imagine there are some disgruntled tenants

I would like wall lights with a dimmer.

I would need help with the move, I can't move myself

I need someone to install my electrical equipment

Would we have the same postcode?

Will tenants be involved with the colours etc?

Most important a new Victoria Gate Surgery with a Pharmacy attached.

It is very difficult to get prescriptions dispensed at present.

I do not want to move but if I do I would like a ground floor flat.

Please confirm what type of people are entitled to be housed here as no one wants to 'run down' the near by neighbourhood.

How long is it planned to take from start to finish.

Can the Council guarantee that the residents of Victoria Gate will be able to move into the new accommodation if they wish to.

The re development of Victoria Gate – Welcome. Especially if it come with a new energy like gas for heating.

Can you help me to get a ground floor flat?

I am going to be honest I love living here and want to stay with all my neighbours as they rely on me and my children. I am looking in favour of the development that might go ahead as long as my needs are taken into account. I have 6 kids and need a four/fiver bed house.

Will the boiler be noisy?

Will wait to see your next presentation.

Moving forward

Discussions are taking place with the Dr. Surgery over possible solutions for a new larger surgery and pharmacy.

Discussions are taking place with the Brewery regarding the White hart land to see if this is available , if so it could enhance the site greatly.

Progress the Compulsory Purchase process of the 'no mans' land at NIL cost to the Council.

Discussions are taking place with the architect for modifications to the plans as a result of the consultation.

A further consultation for just the residents/tenants of Victoria Gate is planned soon after the Executive meeting.

Scheme Four – Please see details of this scheme on the confidential, pink papers attached.

In Conclusion

In Taunton Deane there is a need for all types of Affordable Housing. Over recent years we have fallen behind in our delivery by at least 3,000 affordable homes and just acknowledging this demand is going some way towards addressing the need.

Working with Housing Associations to redevelop land hungry sites is a way of increasing the supply. The four sites put forward for redevelopment will increase the number of homes available by approximately 270. Will provide a good standard of living for our tenants new and old and by building to at least Code 4 it will reduce energy bills and provide a better environment.

Recommendations

Members of the Executive are asked to consider the recommendations and approve:-

- 1 The principle of progressing the Redevelopment and Regeneration of these four sites; and
- 2 To dispose of the land to the appropriate Registered Social Landlord (Housing Association).
- 3 The disposal of this land, should in return, give letting priority to Taunton Deane residents through the Homefinder Somerset scheme.

- 4 On disposal of the land it should be legally agreed that the land can never be used for anything other than for the provision of Affordable Housing.
- 5 To progress the Compulsory Purchase process of the 'no mans' land at Victoria Gate at NIL cost to Taunton Deane Borough Council.
- 6 Meet the tenants' aspirations, where possible, for relocation.
- 7 The Council will work closely with all the residents in each of the above locations and keep them informed.

By agreeing to these recommendations your support will enable the progression of these sites through the recognized process.

Mrs. Lesley A Webb
Housing Enabling Manager.
l.webb@tauntondeane.gov.uk
01823 356351 ex 2604

