



## COUNCIL SUMMONS

YOU ARE REQUESTED TO ATTEND A MEETING OF THE TAUNTON DEANE BOROUGH COUNCIL TO BE HELD IN THE PRINCIPAL COMMITTEE ROOM, THE DEANE HOUSE, BELVEDERE ROAD, TAUNTON ON TUESDAY 15TH OCTOBER 2002 AT 18:30.

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### **AGENDA**

The meeting will be preceded by a Prayer to be offered by the Mayor's Chaplain.

1. To receive the Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 23 July 2002
2. To report any apologies for absence.
3. To receive any communications.
4. To receive petitions from Local Government electors under Standing Order 17.
5. To receive questions from Local Government electors under Standing Order 18
6. To receive a presentation on The Vision for Taunton. Report attached. (This item will be taken at 7.30p.m.)
7. To deal with questions to and receive recommendations and reports from the following members of the Executive:
8. Councillor Horsley (Leader of the Executive)  
Recommendation relating to Crescent Car Park
9. Councillor Stone (Housing Services)
10. Councillor Bulgin (Transportation and Planning)
11. Councillor Croad ( Economic Development, Property and Tourism)
12. Councillor Henley (Leisure )
13. Councillor Lees (Communication)
14. Councillor Lisgo (Community Leadership)
15. Councillor Mullins (Environmental Health) - No report.
16. Councillor Partington (Resources)
17. To consider the following Motion to be moved by Councillor Murphy seconded by Councillor Paul:

Taunton Deane Borough Council has always been committed to ensuring that there is a good stock of affordable and social housing available. It is proud of its record as a local authority in the way it has both managed its own housing and enabled Registered Social Landlords to procure further housing for rent.

It sees no reduction in the waiting lists for meeting housing needs over the years and there is evidence of continuing pressure on these lists.

This council notes that under the "pooling" arrangements proposed in the Consultation Paper "The Way Forward for Housing Capital Finance" the proceeds would be directed towards those authorities with greatest need and demand and where the Councils have difficulties in meeting the Decent Homes Standard.

This council has reservations about the pooling of such resources from the sale of Council Houses to address the housing shortages in other parts of the country whilst there is a problem in the funding of social house building for the homeless in Taunton Deane. The Council needs assurance that the process will not be used to deplete resources in the county and districts at the expense of the metropolitan and large urban areas. It would prefer the comprehensive spending review to provide new funds for housing in general rather than confuse the programme with the redistribution programme suggested.

The council welcomes the proposals to replace the convoluted Local Authority Social Housing Grant system with a simple system to make direct grants to the Registered Social Landlords.

This council asks the government to note its comments on the Consultation Paper.

18. To consider the following Motion moved by Councillor Partington seconded by Councillor Henley:

This Council recognises the importance of improving people's livelihoods and employment opportunities, particularly to the rural economy and smaller towns. The Council's existing initiatives of supporting tourism and locally produced products are noted. A further strategy should be developed as part of its commitment to develop tourism, locally produced products and sustainability.

It therefore resolves:

1. to ask the Planning, Transportation & Economic Review Panel to consider ways to:
  - further encourage and promote awareness of the economic benefits and employment opportunities associated with tourism
  - further promote equine activities and cycling as a niche market
  - make the Council's employees, the public and local businesses aware of the benefits to the local economy, of buying locally produced food and goods together with the link between sustainability and green tourism.
  - include in the Council's contracts the supply, where practical, of locally produced food and other locally sourced products for use at any meeting or functions under its auspice
  - further promote the Farmers Market



At a meeting of the Taunton Deane Borough Council held in the Principal Committee Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton on Tuesday 23 July 2002 at 6.30pm.

Present: The Mayor (Councillor Prior-Sankey)  
The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Govier)  
Councillors Mrs Allgrove, Mrs Biscoe, Bishop, Mrs Bradley, Bulgin, Cavill, Cudlipp, Dawson, Debenham, Denington, Eckhart, Edwards, Escott, Farbus, Floyd, Gill, Guerrier, Hall, Henley, Mrs Hill, Horsley, House, Lee, Lees, Mrs Lewin-Harris, Mrs Lippiatt, Lisgo, Meikle, Mrs Miller, Mullins, Murphy, R Parrish, Mrs Parrish, Partington, Paul, Phelps, Miss Phippen, Slattery, Stone, Vail, Warren and Williams

1. Minutes

The Minutes of the meetings of the Council held on 8 May, 10 June and 27 June 2002, a copy having been sent to each Member, were signed by the Mayor subject to (a) Minute 14 (8 May 2002) being amended to include reference to Councillor Meikle's term as Leader of the Council from 1974-1991 and (b) Minute 2 (10 June 2002) being amended by the deletion of Miss Phippen's recorded vote against and it being included under Minute 3.

2. Apologies

Councillors Mrs Angus, Bone, Croad, Squier, Tolchard, Watson and Mrs Whitmarsh.

3. Public Question Time

Mrs J Hookings, a resident of Swingbridge, Bathpool drew attention to flooding problems at her property. This issue had previously been raised by her at a meeting of the Executive in July 2002. At that time Mrs Hookings had been informed that the Environment Agency were investigating this problem. She informed the Council that she had not yet heard the outcome of the investigations and that no action had been taken to resolve the situation. She appealed to councillors to help find a satisfactory solution.

Councillor Mullins replied that the report from the Environment Agency had been received that day and a copy would be forwarded to Mrs Hookings. He would address the issues contained in Mrs Hookings' question in a detailed written response.

4. Councillor Croad

The Mayor (Councillor Prior-Sankey) reported that Councillor Croad was currently unwell. It was agreed that the best wishes of the Council be sent to Councillor Croad for a speedy recovery.

5. Recommendations to Council

The following recommendations were considered:-

(a) Best Value Performance Plan

On the motion of Councillor Horsley it was RESOLVED that the Best Value Performance Plan (a copy of which had been circulated to members) be approved.

(b) Brewhouse Theatre Professional Indemnity Claim

Reported that the Brewhouse Theatre had been pursuing a claim for Professional Indemnity against a firm of architects employed to carry out a lottery funded refurbishment and extension in 1997. An offer of £65,000 compensation had been received which the Brewhouse Board now wished to accept. There were however three claims on the use of the settlement including one by this Council.

To overcome the conflict concerning the use of money, the Brewhouse Panel had suggested that the Brewhouse Theatre should pay the Council the £65,000 and that the Council should then immediately re-grant £65,000 to the Brewhouse Theatre in order that it could (a) cover its legal fees and expenses and (b) purchase the most vital items of outstanding equipment from the Lottery Project to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act and Health and Safety issues.

On the motion of Councillor Horsley it was RESOLVED that a grant of £65,000 be made to the Brewhouse Theatre in accordance with the method suggested.

(c) Capital Strategy 2002

On the motion of Councillor Horsley it was RESOLVED that the Capital Strategy 2002 be adopted.

(d) Asset Management Plan 2002

On the motion of Councillor Horsley it was RESOLVED that the Asset Management Plan 2002 be approved.

(e) Statement of Accounts 2001/02

On the motion of Councillor Horsley it was RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the main Statement of Accounts 2001/02 be approved.
- (ii) the following determinations be made in respect of the year ended 31 March 2002:-

1. Section 42(2)(g)

that £1,157,711 of expenditure for capital purposes, which was financed by grant, be capitalised.

2. Section 56(i)

that basic and supplementary credit approvals of £1,034,240 (after adjustment for capital and grants received) be treated as authority to charge to capital accounts expenditure of that amount.

3. Section 60(2)

that £2,166.845 of usable receipts be applied to meet capital expenditure.

4. Section 63(i)

that £654,336 be put aside from the revenue accounts in 2001/02 as a provision for credit liabilities.

(f) Taunton Tennis Centre Expansion

On the motion of Councillor Henley it was RESOLVED that:-

- (a) a Supplementary Estimate from General Fund Reserves for £318,275 (+ irrecoverable VAT) be made, and
- (b) an application be submitted to the Sport England Lottery Fund for the balance of the project cost.

(g) Hillfarrance Flood Alleviation Scheme

On the motion of Councillor Mullins it was RESOLVED that additional funding towards the Hillfarrance Flood Alleviation Scheme be agreed and a supplementary estimate from reserves of £64,500 be made.

(h) Housing Strategy and Business Plan

On the motion of Councillor Stone it was RESOLVED that he be granted delegated authority to submit the Council's Housing Strategy and Business Plan to the Government after being guided by the recommendations of the joint meeting of the Executive and Housing Review Panel on 24 July 2002.

6. Reports of the Leader of the Council and Executive Councillors

(a) Leader of the Council (Councillor Horsley)

(i) Councillor Debenham asked the following question:-

In view of the new openness of the local Freemason's Lodge and its wish to be much more normally engaged in local, social and civic affairs, could it now be voluntarily ascertained which of our present councillors are Freemasons and this list be made public and also circulated to councillors?

Councillor Horsley replied:-

As members will be aware, the high ethical standards which we as councillors work under have recently been updated in our Code of Conduct. Part of the code requires all councillors to register those financial and non-financial interests which are defined in the Code. The Register does not require membership of private clubs to be declared. If individual councillors wish to declare such memberships - they are, of course, free to do so in the Register.

Naturally when individual items of business are being transacted, each councillor needs to assess whether any relationship - or membership of a club - would amount to a 'personal' or 'prejudicial' interest.

(ii) Report of Councillor Horsley

It has been a momentous three months since full Council last met - excluding the special meetings we have had for Wellsprings and Cotford St Luke. The following three months seem equally likely to bring major items to our attention. We also have the problem of the pay award and the likely impact of the strike called for Wednesday 17 July. I will report on this at the meeting.

Wellsprings Centre

Wellsprings is a first priority for us to get up and running and I strongly deprecate those who have been critical in the press about the situation. I promised at the special council meeting at the suggestion of Councillor Tony Floyd that there would be an enquiry into the problems. I set out the main questions that would have to be answered in the Weekly Bulletin on 29 June and I think it is premature of the opposition to jump to conclusions ahead of the enquiry. Their speculation is unhelpful. They would be doing the Council a better service if they devoted their time and expertise to assisting us all rather than trying to prejudge the outcome of the enquiry.

### Best Value Performance Plan

The main attention has focused on services and the publication of the Best Value Performance Plan which is being ratified on 23 July pays tribute to the hard work and devotion of our staff to their tasks. I am pleased that the Government has recognised the extraordinary effort that goes into preparation of Best Value and now sees it in a more strategic light than before. However it doesn't alter the fact that the report runs to 164 pages, huge by any standards. Over 50 pages are devoted to Performance Indicators (Part 3 and part of Part 7) and other measures a lot of which have been discarded but because of the prescriptive nature of the legislation have still to be calculated. How difficult it is to convince members of the public that we take rises in Council Tax seriously when we have to spend so much on producing this kind of report!

### South West Regional Chamber

At the South West Regional Chamber on Friday 12 July we debated the SWARMMS report, the decision was taken by 45 votes to 11 to upgrade the A303/30 to dual carriageway status. This puts it on a par with the A358 option, the preferred choice of the consultants and the panel that advised them. This could have very serious consequences for Taunton Deane.

We will not be 'on par' in reality as there is a chance that the Department will choose not to 'trunk' the A358 and the £3 billion set aside for the South West will go elsewhere. There is likelihood that this could hamper our economic growth if we cannot get the M5 junction improvements. We have to strive to ensure that the Highway Agency and Department of Transport take seriously our Principal Urban Area status. I will develop this argument further at full council.

The South West Regional Chamber also welcomed the White Paper 'Your Region, Your Choice'. Our discussions at the Members Briefing session on 8 July were helpful. There was a debate about the decoupling of local government reform to bring about unitary authorities from the referendum on setting a directly elected regional chamber.

I am strongly of the view that if we want devolved powers from central government via a Regional Assembly then to win a referendum we will have to convince the public that we are not adding another tier of government overall.

The Chamber accepted an amendment of mine that representation should be a minimum of one constituency-based member per approximately 100,000 of the electorate and asked the officers to research this alongside other 'fair' methods of representation.



### Vision for Taunton

The Vision for Taunton is reaching its climax. It is meeting for its penultimate session on 22 July and I will be able to report to the Council how it is progressing. I have circulated my views on this to all of you and I welcome any comments on this from you.

What is important is that the outcome is seen as *ours*. We joined with the County on this and have used their facilities but this was our initiative and must remain with us to share with all who will help to make the Vision come about.

### Residents' Parking

Residents' parking is working; we need to review the times, the knock-on effects in other areas arising from displacement and the whole question of commuter parking. We will engage with the County about some of their measures for delivering the Local Transport Plan. There is concern that the Inner Relief Road is again slipping behind in the likely delivery date. We are all aware of the bus problem and the ineffectiveness of the buses offering a viable alternative to the private car in our semi-rural area.

### Future of Housing

The long term future of municipal housing is again before us. Phil Stone will no doubt be reporting in more detail on this in his portfolio but my initial view on the HACAS Chapman Hendy report is not exactly ecstatic.

### Forward Plans

We are already putting together our Forward Plans for the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the portfolio holders have all been in discussion with their lead officers to update their Corporate Priorities for next year's budget. We would like to test some of the ideas with the community ahead of council tax fixing and will involve the Local Strategic Partnerships in the process where appropriate.

There is much evidence of partnership working across the different interests in the community whether health, education, police or social services. What we want is firm action. We don't want distractions and disagreements from amongst us to slow achievement. We are proud of our Council and will extol its virtues as loud and long as we can.

(b) Planning Policy and Transportation (Councillor Bulgin)

(i) Councillor Slattery asked the following question:-

Would the Portfolio Holder agree to seek the necessary amendment to the Traffic Regulation Order forbidding vehicles over 2m in height or carrying advertising material other than company or business logos from visiting or parking in any of the Taunton Deane Borough Council car parks?

Councillor Bulgin replied that he would support this type of amendment which would give greater powers to control the abuse of our car parks. He would immediately look at how this could best be achieved and start the formal amendment process, which would involve advertisement of the proposed changes.

(ii) Report of Councillor Bulgin

Restructuring of the Planning Section to make sure lines of reporting responsibility is taking place on the lines of the recommendations from the Planning Working Group and Review Panel. It is anticipated that this will speed up the processing of planning applications and reduce the workload on the Planning Committee, it will also provide more adequate checks on applications which will hopefully avoid any recurrence of the problem experienced at Stoke St Gregory recently.

The final elements of the residents parking scheme is being completed - Cleveland Street and Portland Street areas. TRO panel recommend agreement and the scheme therefore will be implemented.

The Vision for Taunton had completed its investigations and their report is eagerly awaited.

The SWARMMS report has been received and as anticipated is generating considerable discussion. This is a golden opportunity for Taunton and if the Regional Assembly back the proposals made by this Council in its responses, then we will have the chance to resolve a major part of our transport problems as well as provide for the future development of Taunton.

The Couttie report was delivered recently and it poses some very serious questions for our housing requirements in the future, this is something that will have to be given consideration through the planning process and forward planning through the Strategic Plan Review Panel process.

I have met with Taunton Town traders, Town Centre Partnership, Chamber of Commerce and the Town Centre Manager recently. We have discussed traffic issues and the need for the park and rides and temporary parking sites during the proposed development of the Crescent Car Park and when it happens - Tangier.

(c) Economic Development, Property and Tourism (Report presented by Councillor Horsley in Councillor Croad's absence)

1. Tourism

I am pleased to report that positive steps have been made towards the creation of a more co-ordinated and coherent tourism strategy for Somerset.

The Borough and the Districts have formed a Portfolio Holders Group under the chairmanship of Alan Gloak of Somerset County Council. We are looking at unnecessary duplication, the sharing of best practice, particularly relating to the best value reviews and their outcomes.

Simultaneously the Way Forward Steering Group has been formed comprising representatives from the various operators within the industry. The Tourist Operators are represented on the Portfolio Holders Group by Graham Mottram and both Alan Gloak and myself are the Local Authority representatives on the Way Forward Steering Group, so there is plenty of cross fertilisation.

The Operators are presently involved in a data collection process examining how money is spent, duplication and how resources might be redirected. It will also aim to identify marketing and partnership opportunities. This Group are looking at suggestions for a logo with a strapline for Somerset Tourism for general use by both local authorities and the private sector.

2. Economic Development

The vision process is coming towards its concluding stages. The Commission have reviewed well over 100 submissions but it is possible to detect themes emerging from this mass of very strongly held views.

All Executive Councillors have been asked to review their corporate priorities and high on my list will be to work in co-operation with the RDA and developers to bring forward the development of Chelston House Farm which has been designated for employment use in the Local Plan. It is important that we have a serviced, strategic employment site to take advantage of the opportunities provided by Junction 26 being relatively under-utilised.

I was very surprised to learn at a recent meeting that some Wellington Town councillors were of the opinion that the location of any Agricultural Business Centre had already been determined. Can I use this report to make clear that the current study is only at an early stage and I remain highly optimistic that a site adjacent to Junction 26 could be the preferred site. Although I recognise that the first role of the feasibility study must be to consider whether such a centre is

economically viable wherever it is located and there is much evidence to be taken before the final outcome is known.

(d) Leisure (Councillor Henley)

Since the last full Council meeting the Leisure, Arts and Culture portfolio has been very busy. Looking forward we have had several projects centred round our parks. By the time of the Council meeting we will have had The Proms in the Park and The Pop in the Park concerts. So much work has gone into making these events a success so let's hope that things went well as these events do really show Taunton Deane in a positive light. I would like to thank Karen Dyson and Debbie Arscott of the Leisure Department for all the work they have done with planning and promoting these concerts. Also, by the time you read this we will have had the judging from Britain in Bloom in both Wellington and Taunton. I think both towns look very good and I wish both Britain in Bloom teams great success. The amount of community involvement and sponsorship vindicates the decision to appoint a Britain in Bloom co-ordinator and Shaun Cregan has been very pro-active in this role. Since the last Council meeting we had the Jubilee celebrations and the Parks Department and DLO did an amazing job getting the towns of Taunton and Wellington ready for the events. The Programme of Events in Wellington and Taunton parks has been good over the last few weeks and has been enjoyed by many, many people.

On the sports side, I was very pleased to hand over a cheque to the Carnival Committee for sponsorship of the Taunton 10K, which has become a major event over the years. Also on the sports side we are awaiting the result of a bid for extra funds for an extension of the Blackbrook Tennis Centre.

(e) Community Development (Councillor Lisgo)

1. Best Value Reviews

(i) Equality Issues

The Council is shortly to adopt a 'Race Equality Scheme' in line with its statutory duty to promote race equality. The Scheme is being developed as one aspect of a wide-ranging best value review of equality issues currently underway. The Race Equality Scheme will be in place in August 2002, while the wider review of equalities will be completed by December 2002.

(ii) Economic and Community Regeneration

A joint workshop was held on 15 July to consider these related issues and get feedback from key stakeholders. The review is scheduled to finish in April 2003.

2. Community Planning

The Local Strategic Partnership is meeting for a 'development session' on 17 July at Lyngford House to determine future common priorities. One aspect under discussion will be the creation of a district wide community strategy shared by all partners to guide future resource allocation throughout the borough.

3. Youth Issues

The 'Voice 24-7' Magazine has recently celebrated its second birthday and is continuing to provide a dynamic means of engaging young people. I will be discussing with officers the range of future possibilities that exist around the development of a Local Youth Council for the area.

4. Crime and Disorder Issues

(i) Parish Wardens

The first year of this initiative is now available and there are encouraging signs as outlined in recent press report. There is a clear reduction in reported crime.

(ii) Street Wardens

The new Street Wardens for Priorswood and Halcon started work at the end of May, and are settling in well into their new roles. My intention is that we build upon these schemes for the future.

5. Womens' Forum

The next meeting of the Forum will take place in the autumn at a time and date yet to be determined. This will be announced in a future issue of the Weekly Bulletin.

6. AGENDA 21 Issues

The Council has recently become an active partner in the 'Somerset Foodlinks' project. This initiative seeks to promote the economic, social, environmental and health benefits of producing and consuming local food. There are many projects aimed at consumers (for example box schemes, local food delivery) and producers alike.

7. Sure-Start

The Council is a key partner in this initiative, securing government funding to support children (0-4 years) and young families in the North

and East Taunton areas. A bid has been submitted to the Government and the local partnership for Sure-Start is now looking at sites in the area for new facilities needed to support children and young families.

(f) Environmental Services (Councillor Mullins)

Hillfarrance

Following a public meeting at the Anchor Inn, Hillfarrance in May, the Environment Agency gave a presentation on the status of the flood scheme at that time. It was clear to me that early action was required if the funding was to be secured in the form of grant-aid from DEFRA. With goodwill and haste from all the partners involved hopefully this can be secured.

The recommendation was presented to the June Executive for Taunton Deane's contribution towards this.

A few days later I received a letter from the 'Hillfarrance Action Group' thanking myself, the Executive (and the Council) for their long term support and commitment.

*This has to be one of the highlights of my term in office 'so far'.*

Doorstep Waste Recycling

I shall be signing the contract for this (together with the other Executive Councillors of the SWP) at Yeovil, in August.

The scheme will commence in October. It will start in Ruishton and Creech St Michael. This will allow us to analyse performance and resolve any operational issues prior to a managed roll-out across the Deane.

Briefings are planned for both parish councils prior to 'R' day.

Licensing Issues

I have been surprised that during the recent high profile licensing events, that is, 'The Full Monty', 'Spider Man' and the current 'new' stripper's application I have received very little communication from Councillors on these events.

I am always willing to hear your views (preferably before you share them with the press). With some issues this may save valuable councillor and officer time in discussing issues without the need for reference to the 'Licensing Board'.

(g) Housing Services (Councillor Stone)

1. Housing Strategy and Business Plan

The Housing Strategy and Business Plan is a matter which would normally be submitted to full Council for consideration and decision. However, because of timing problems and in order to allow discussion by the Tenants' Forum, it has not been possible to submit it to either the Executive or Council before tonight's meeting. Arrangements have therefore been made for a joint meeting of the Executive and the Housing Review Panel to consider the Strategy and Plan at a meeting to be held on 24 July 2002. The meeting is, of course, open for all Councillors to attend.

In order to comply with the timetable for submission of the Council's proposals it will be necessary for a decision to be made at that meeting. I am therefore requesting that Council grant me delegated authority to make a decision on this matter after being guided by the recommendations of the joint meeting of the Executive and the Review Panel.

A copy of the finalised Strategy and Plan will be submitted to all members of the Council.

This document is of vital importance to the Council's housing service over the coming three years and I look forward to the Council backing the plan through the required process.

2. The Chapman Hendy report on the future option for Taunton Deane's housing stock

There was a disappointing turnout from councillors to hear the presentation of the analysis carried out by Chapman Hendy of our so-called options for our housing stock. There was in fact far more of the Tenants' Forum members present than councillors.

I have attended many meetings during my long involvement with Housing on this Council and despite the problems inherent with trying to provide homes for those on a very long waiting list with inadequate resources I have mainly enjoyed those meetings. I found the Chapman Hendy presentation profoundly depressing. The Government in its usual top down, dictatorial style has laid down precise targets for all the key decisions in housing, including crucially the exact rent levels for the coming years, the standards to which our council houses have to be improved and the levels of investment required over future years to name but a few. The end result is that if we are to meet these targets, surprise, surprise, it will be difficult for us to retain our housing stock.

Here in Taunton we have managed by sustained investment over many years to maintain our council houses in a reasonable condition. Most

now have central heating, many have double-glazing and all are maintained on a rolling repair cycle.

If the new government targets mean that we have to explore different ownership and management arrangements in order to get access to the required investment finance then it would suggest that most councils throughout the country will be also forced down this route. Will council housing soon be a thing of the past?

I do not propose at this stage to comment much on the 'options' presented to us but it worth pointing out that other than transfer of the stock to a Housing Association the only other serious choice is the arm's length company. To even qualify for this option at present means passing yet another test set by the Government's obsessive target setters, the equivalent of a 'well-above average performing authority'. Our first task therefore is to concentrate our efforts on achieving that status so that we at least have another option.

The choice process promises to be a challenging one which I hope will be of great interest and concern to all councillors. As housing at last appears to be becoming a bigger issue on the political stage perhaps we can hope that the Government will in the coming months start to recognise the desperately needed social housing rather than putting so much effort into forcing ownership changes through financial manipulation.

(Councillor Stone arrived at the meeting at 6.52 pm.

The following councillors left the meeting at the times indicated:- Councillor Dawson at 7.40 pm, Councillor Warren at 7.50 pm, Councillor Cudlipp at 7.55 pm, Councillor R Parrish at 8 pm, Councillor Cavill at 8.40 pm, Councillor Mrs Hill at 9.25 pm, Councillor Govier at 9.40 pm, Councillors Mrs Parrish, Mrs Biscoe and Escott at 10 pm, Councillors Paul, Lee and Gill at 10.15 pm, Councillor Debenham at 10.30 pm, Councillor Slattery at 10.35 pm and Councillor Bishop at 10.45 pm).

(The meeting ended at 10.50 pm).





**Taunton Deane Borough Council - 15 October 2002**  
**Somerset County Council -16 October 2002**

## **TAUNTON VISION COMMISSION**

### **1. Summary**

#### **1.1 This report:-**

- reminds the two Councils of their objectives in establishing the joint Taunton Vision Commission.
- asks them to receive the Commission's Report.
- asks them to agree processes and procedures to enable further consideration of the Report, the need for consultation on its findings and action to enable those findings to be taken forward.

### **2. Recommendation**

#### **2.1 The two Councils are ASKED:-**

#### **2.2 To receive the Report of the Taunton Vision Commission.**

#### **2.3 To refer the report to both the Taunton Deane Local Strategic Partnership (TDLSP and the Somerset Strategic Partnership (SSP) and ask them to take joint responsibility for:-**

- instituting any further consultation on the Report;
- assessing action needed to implement the Commission's findings and conclusions, and the bodies and agencies which would need to be involved;
- preparing a programme for the implementation of action;
- seeking further input from the two Councils, as necessary.

#### **2.4 In support of 2.3, to ask the two Partnerships jointly to appoint a "Reference Group" to take the lead on their behalf in championing the Vision – by advising on, progressing and monitoring the work referred to in para 2.3. We suggest to the Partnerships that the Group should comprise:-**

- 3 members of Taunton Deane Borough Council, to be appointed by the Council and to include their representative on the LSP;
- 3 members of Somerset County Council, to be appointed by the Council and to include their representative on the LSP;
- 3 other members of the Taunton Deane Local Strategic Partnership, to be appointed by the Partnership.

This Group would need to be a flexible body, meeting on an ad hoc basis and able to respond to local needs and priorities.

- 2.5 To agree that the proposed Reference Group could be asked by either or both councils from time to time to advise them on appropriate matters, as outlined in paragraph 3.6 below.

### 3. **Background**

- 3.1 The Commission was established jointly by the two Councils in February this year, with the following brief:-
1. To demonstrate joint Authority commitment to enhancing the strategic role of Taunton as a distinct commercial, cultural and service centre for the central part of the South West Region.
  2. To raise the profile of regeneration activities and collaborate with strategic and local partners to identify the aspirations for Taunton with a clearer focus for partnership planning and investment.
  3. To question and gather evidence from any representatives of organisations and groups or persons involved with the future commercial, cultural and service centre role of Taunton to identify any distinctive criteria that should drive forward any shared vision of Taunton's enhanced role.
  4. To make joint recommendations to the Borough Council and County Council upon the key issues likely to affect Taunton's distinctive future role by 2025 and to suggest key priorities that need to be addressed.
- 3.2 The Commission comprised five members from each Council, with Mr Brian Tanner acting as independent chairman.
- 3.3 The Commission met frequently between February and September. It received evidence from a wide range of people and interests and invited a cross-section of witnesses to debate issues at the Commission's meetings. Its findings and conclusions are set out in a formal Report, a copy of which is enclosed. A presentation will be made at each Council meeting by the Commission chairman and a senior member of each Council. A press launch will take place on Monday 14 October.
- 3.4 At this stage, the two Councils are asked to receive the Commission's Report, note that publicity and further consultation on its findings and conclusions may be appropriate, and establish a process which will lead to an Action Plan for taking forward the findings and conclusions.
- 3.5 The establishment and operation of the Commission has generated considerable interest both within and outside Taunton. The press launch of the Report's submission to the two Councils will enhance that interest. The findings and

conclusions of the Commission are comprehensive and challenging, and their fulfilment will require acceptance and action by the public and a wide range of interests in the public, private and voluntary sectors. It is therefore assumed that the two Councils would wish the public and affected interests to give their reactions. If so, this process should be tightly managed in order that the Commission's work can be seen to bear results without unnecessary delay.

3.6 The Commission's findings and conclusions have implications for a wide range of interests and bodies, as well as for the community at large. Although the two Councils have taken the initiative and will have a continuing interest, responsibility for assessing and progressing those findings and conclusions will need to be vested in a strategic body or bodies which have the authority, influence, range of representation, and community involvement to achieve results. The recently formed Taunton Deane Local Strategic Partnership (TDLSP) and the county-wide Somerset Strategic Partnership (SSP) seem the obvious bodies and could be asked to take joint responsibility. This will help ease, widen and deepen participation by the public at large and help avoid any issues of 'ownership' of what is a far reaching Vision in terms of its impact on potential delivery bodies and agencies.

3.7 However, a specific mechanism is needed to advance the Vision, oversee consultation and ensure that a pro-active group is in place to take forward ideas and monitor progress on the Commission's work. A dedicated group is needed to do this effectively and make sure that things happen. Therefore, to support the Partnerships in their proposed new responsibility, to facilitate the sharing of responsibility, and to continue the two Councils' interest in the project, we suggest that the two Partnerships be asked to form a single, small "Reference Group" of representatives of the two Authorities and the LSP to "champion" progress. The Group could also advise the two Authorities direct both on implementation of the Vision and on associated issues such as the North West Taunton Transport Package, Taunton Urban Extension and the Taunton Urban Design Study

#### 4. **Personnel and financial implications**

4.1 At this stage there are no direct implications.

#### 5. **Legal implications**

5.1 At this stage, there are no direct implications.

#### 6. **Equal opportunities implications**

6.1 Any further consultation should take account of this aspect.

#### 7. **Background papers**

7.1 The report of the Taunton Vision Commission.



**COUNCIL MEETING – 15 OCTOBER 2002**

**RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL**  
**COUNCILLOR HORSLEY – LEADER OF THE EXECUTIVE**

Crescent Car Park Development

The Executive have considered recent issues that have arisen in connection with the proposed development of the Crescent car park.

There is also an exempt report on this matter to be considered at agenda item 9.

The Executive have therefore RESOLVED that subject to a meeting taking place at which the Heads of Terms are agreed and the outstanding payment of costs to the Councils' external consultants being made Council be RECOMMENDED that:

1. subject to the Members Panel being satisfied that a partnership between Heritage Shopping Centres, Sovereign Land Ltd and Fortis Bank was available and feasible that that partnership be appointed as the developer of Crescent Car Park site on the terms and conditions originally approved by the Council in December 2001;
2. the Council take a positive proactive role in the promotion of the scheme and in the use of a Compulsory Purchase Order to assist with the land assembly necessary for the development to take place; and
3. work now commence to determine the cost of urgent repairs to the High Street.

Councillor Jefferson Horsley

## **COUNCIL MEETING – 15 OCTOBER 2002**

### **REPORT OF COUNCILLOR HORSLEY – LEADER OF THE EXECUTIVE**

The pace has not lessened over the summer months which are traditionally quiet. The Council has been involved in many discussions which are ongoing and this note is an attempt to brief you on these projects and other things.

It would be wrong of me not to express sorrow at the death of Roy Squier. He was a man of principle and integrity, if not always the most comfortable of colleagues to be with because of his tenacity and persistence to get the answers he wanted. His devotion to his tasks will be sadly missed in this Council. My thoughts and prayers go out to his wife and family.

#### **1. WELLSPRINGS CENTRE**

This sorry story continues. The report commissioned by us from Symonds revealed defects in the building and the Wellsprings Panel felt obliged to cancel the full council meeting scheduled for 22 August. Our hopes of completing the building this year were dashed because of the remedial work and associated costs.

We have now extended the Panel to include members from Somerset County Council and Ladymead School. to help draw up plans which will a) fund the cost of the completion and b) ensure a proper process is carried out with full accountability and best value in mind. Members of the panel are now receiving a weekly update from the officers of progress in the negotiations. Sport England are working closely with us to help us bring the project to a successful conclusion.

The work by the District Auditor on the problems that this contract has caused us is to be welcomed and I hope it will enable us to identify any learning lessons.. It certainly should assist the Health and Leisure Panel in conducting its own review into the project.

#### **2. FUTURE OF THE LIVESTOCK MARKET**

A report will be available in the next 6 weeks or so on the negotiations that have been taking place on the creation of a Regional Agricultural Business Centre which will incorporate a livestock market. The consultants have been asked to look at the suitability of Junctions 23,24,25 and 26 in turn.

It is unlikely that any of the options will be able to be funded by the private sector alone bearing in mind the strict requirements now needed since the outbreak of foot and mouth disease. The RDA have funded the research into the feasibility of this exercise.

We very much hope that tourism and other economic goals will feature in the final outcome and recommendations which come before the council.

### **3. VISION FOR TAUNTON**

This has been one of the most rewarding cross party and cross councils exercise I have ever taken part in. We have overcome the prejudice of those who thought that this might be just another form of land use planning. It was broad, expansive with plenty of thinking “outside the box”. We met 8 times, read over 150 submissions and listened to a number of excellent presentations given by a range of people from Chief Executives and Chairmen to a School boy.

The collaboration and unity of purpose shown in identifying what is best for Taunton has been extraordinary. My thanks to all that have made that possible.

It is important that this is now owned by the local people. This can be best achieved by asking the Taunton Deane Local Strategic Partnership to oversee a public consultation on the vision document and to be responsible for furthering progress on the projects that arise and monitoring its development. I would suggest that this can be best done by establishing a Reference Group within the TDLSPP to undertake the responsibility for overseeing the consultation and the progress. Clearly senior councillors will still be involved.

### **4. CRESCENT CAR PARK**

We have lost a year as a result of our negotiations with our preferred developers and the likely completion date has been put back to 2006. There is a pink paper for further discussion on this topic tonight.

### **5. CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

The next meeting of the Executive on 23 October will contain an up date on the Corporate Priorities for the future. The emphasis is on improving services and maintaining this council’s record of targetting resources at those who are most disadvantaged and excluded from the benefits which we often take for granted.

This will be the basis on which the Medium Term Financial Strategy will be taken forward and also lead onto the beginning of the budget process for 2003/4

We have an obligation to consult on the budget this year arising from the Local Government Act 2000 and I would be interested in any ideas on what sort of topics/spends that we should consult on from members.

### **6. LEISURE SERVICES**

Negotiations are well under way about the future delivery of all our Leisure Services. Ross Henley will be bringing a paper to full Council in December on this topic. It suffices to say at this stage that the council is feeling the pressure of competition on all fronts. Now there is no longer CCT and we are driven by Best Value, it is



important that we look at all options for our achieving our corporate priorities in this area.

**JEFFERSON HORSLEY**

7 OCTOBER 2002

**COUNCIL MEETING - 15 OCTOBER 2002**

REPORT OF COUNCILLOR STONE (HOUSING SERVICES)

Housing Review.

As the Housing service has to undergo both a Best Value Review over the next 12-18 months and a review of the options for the future of the Council's housing stock it is now proposed to carry out these two exercises as a single review. It is hoped that this will save time and resources and reduce the duplication of effort which would be involved in separate reviews.

The Housing service can be broken down into 16 different aspects which would be the subject of a Best Value review. Several of these have already been completed but all will now become part of the forthcoming comprehensive review. This will of course be a daunting task for the officers involved as all the usual demands of running the service will of course need to be met at the same time. I hope Members will bear this in mind in the coming months.

Government propose further changes to Housing finance.

A further round of radical changes to the way that Housing finance is dealt with between Local Authorities and Government is now being considered. While changes aimed at simplifying the over-complex system which we presently have would be welcome, the initial proposals for some areas appear to risk further centralisation of decision making into Government hands.

One of the fundamental issues we shall be hoping to see from Government is a recognition that there is a serious housing crisis in the South West of England as well as in the London area. Significant changes are proposed in deciding how to allocate housing investment programmes and how to use the resources generated from Council house sales. Key issues will be the need to provide additional resources for areas like Taunton Deane where housing need is greatest and to ensure that Councils are given the ability to allocate resources in their area in a way which reflects their own local knowledge and priorities.

Housing/ Planning review of gypsy site provision.

Following two decisions in the past year by Planning Inspectors to over-rule the refusal of planning consent by the Council at two sites to the East of Taunton officers are now being asked to take a more corporate view of the gypsy site issue. Inspectors reports indicate that it is no longer sufficient to view these appeals as purely planning issues. While the two appeal decisions both suggest that they should not be viewed as setting a precedent, it is obvious that the issues such as availability of alternative accommodation and the personal circumstances of the individual gypsy families involved must be recognised as valid issues about which the Council must be better prepared to submit evidence at a public enquiry.

Councillor Phil Stone



**COUNCIL MEETING - 15 OCTOBER 2002****REPORT OF COUNCILLOR BULGIN (PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION)**

I am pleased to report that since the last full Council meeting revised and updated regulations for TDBC car parks have been adopted. The result of these amendments will make the car parks safer for people to use, remove any nuisance for adjacent properties and give the Council the necessary powers to pursue any contraventions. It was considered not appropriate to apply height restrictions in the car parks because several businesses in the Deane have to have access to goods loading bays via public car parks. The officers considered this along with other activities being experienced in various car parks and came up with a package to cover all issues. All Councillors have been notified of the changes and after due process the order has been adopted.

The latest phase of the Residents' Parking Scheme in French Weir was adopted on 9 September 2002. The streets concerned were Cleveland Street, Portland Street, Clarence Street, Upper Wood Street and Northfield Gardens. This completes the scheme for this zone. Following reviews there are proposals to modify the St Augustine's Area to include Duke Street and Priory Court and to extend the hours for the Albermarle Area to 8.00pm. Alongside this the double yellow line restrictions in Station Road are also being reviewed to evaluate the need for them, and if possible to revert to single yellow lines in places which will help local businesses that trade in the evening.

The grant of planning permission for the flood alleviation scheme at Halse Water is imminent - another piece in the jig-saw for the development of Norton Fitzwarren, and for protection of the existing properties there and further down stream In Taunton and beyond.

Proposals from developers for the design and use of land at Taunton Trading Estate have been made public and are stimulating debate - I hope that we are seeing the beginnings of some positive action in this area and that we will in the not too distant future see the site used to it's full potential.

On a connected issue, it is pleasing to report that the County Council has very recently approved the plans for the construction of Silk Mills Bridge with work likely to start in 2004

The County Council's adoption of a Speed Management Policy is now under way, and over the next few years over 100 new speed limits will be applied in Taunton Deane, with five times that number throughout the whole of Somerset. The County Council have indicated that they wish to handle the processing of all these new Traffic Regulation Orders, instead of the District Councils, in order to ensure a common approach to all issues. I believe this is good news because it will not only save TDBC officers time but will also save on costs.

Councillor Roy Bulgin



**COUNCIL MEETING – 15 OCTOBER 2002**

**REPORT OF COUNCILLOR CROAD – TOURISM, ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT AND COUNCIL BUILDINGS**

**Economic Development**

Now that the work of the Vision Commission is almost completed Taunton Deane Borough Council is about to embark on the most exciting year in its history. In particular this is true for the departments of Economic Development and Forward Planning.

In the next twelve months we should see both the Urban Extension Study and the Urban Design Framework. Both these exercises sound pretty dull and dry but in reality they will form the cornerstones of the Vision. They will determine the way Taunton will look in the first half of this century.

We have to ensure that we end, once and for all, the piecemeal development of our town, in order to implement the Vision. The recent recommendation of the Review Panel in relation to Firepool and Tangier was very important.

Sitting underneath the Urban Design Framework, which among other things will set the architectural standards, will be the master plans for Firepool, Tangier and the Crescent/High Street developments. I hope and trust you share my excitement at these challenges.

**Tourism**

Since the advent of foot and mouth disease we have been able to change the emphasis, albeit with relatively modest resources, to providing greater support for rural tourism.

There are three initiatives on the go at the moment

1. HATS - Horse Accommodation Tourism

Equine tourism is a fast growing sector and in Somerset we can provide an ideal venue. I have been immensely impressed by the group who are heading this initiative. TDBC and the Levels and Moors Partnership are key players but there are very significant inputs from private business. This partnership has the enthusiasm and motivation to make things happen and I advise you to watch this space. What has become clear to me is how this niche opportunity can bring new business to rural areas, here I am thinking of vets and farriers as well as restaurants and Bed and Breakfast establishments. To support this contention, our tourism officer, encouraged one of the group to invest in six trekking horses instead of converting his barn for further B & B accommodation. After a year this business is making more from the equine side than it is from its traditional B & B.

## 2. Cycling Tourism

In many ways cyclists use and enjoy similar terrain to horse riders and there is a very active group promoting cycling tourism in the county. Katie Burton realising that there are advantages for the two groups in sharing ideas and activities has brought about much closer cooperation between the two. TDBC is now working with the group on a cycling leaflet for Taunton Deane. We hope it will be possible to use some of the Leader Plus money to encourage tourists to “**Ride Somerset**”

## 3. LARA – Linking Rural Accommodation with Rural Attractions

This group are looking to coordinate accommodation with rural activities like horse riding, clay shooting and fishing. The aim is to develop rural tourism in the heart of Somerset, with particular emphasis on improving occupancy rates, exploiting rural attractions and assets, better communication and greater communication.

These three activities have been made a key priority for our tourism department (Katie Burton) and I confidently expect there will be real progress over the next twelve months.

While on the subject of the behind the scenes working of our officers, it was great to hear Mark Besley of Procters Farm, publicly thank John Rowe for his advice, encouragement and support when Mark opened his new farm shop at West Monkton.

Councillor Colin Croad

**COUNCIL MEETING – 15 OCTOBER 2002**

**REPORT OF COUNCILLOR HENLEY – LEISURE**

I would like to start my report by talking about the wonderful success both Taunton and Wellington have had in Britain in Bloom. Wellington not only retained the Portman Cup but also picked up the Abiss Trophy. Taunton also once again won its' category and at the National Britain in Bloom Awards won a Silver Medal. We had an excellent Awards night at W.P.A. to celebrate this award and to thank all the people who won and entered all the various local competitions. Many thanks to the teams led by Chris Mulchay, Shaun Creegan, Adrian Prior-Sankey, June Norman and Isobel Ward.

We have now, following last weeks' Review Panel, held a review of the Proms and the Pop weekend in Vivary Park. They were great events and it was decided to progress the pop event with the help of an outside contractor with us taking on board the issues of food and drink at the event. We must not forget though that 8,000 people attended and enjoyed these events.

Taunton Deane, in partnership with Take Art has just started a series of cinema film shows to rural village halls. This new initiative will allow people who live in rural areas to enjoy cinema films where they have previously not had the opportunity.

I had the pleasure of opening the new Bumbles Play Area in Wellington Sports Centre. This new facility is the first of its kind in Wellington and is a welcome addition to our new, re-equipped Sports Centre.

Last week took place the annual Taunton 10k event which was a great success as usual.

The Council is also positively looking at ways of replacing the burnt down golf pavilion at Vivary Park.

Councillor Ross Henley.





REPORT OF COUNCILLOR LEES – COMMUNICATIONS

For my first report as the member with responsibility for Communications I am looking forward, and bringing you notice of the items that I have under consideration at the moment. It may be worth reminding members here of the Communications portfolio remit. We know that good communication is essential to good government and I aim to co-ordinate and review:

public relations,  
media relations and  
communications.

I am keen that the Council is accessible in its buildings literature and website and I have added three communications actions supporting the corporate priorities:

to improve accessibility,  
information exchange and  
media training.

The Public Relations Officer is working on a Communications Strategy to support these aims among others and I have seen the first draft of this document which will be completed before the end of the year.

I have looked at some of our publications too. The council newspaper the Deane Dispatch will be published at the end of November and I am reviewing the suggested articles and its distribution. I also receive a digest of Weekly Bulletin articles before they are published. The Council do many good things for the people of Taunton Deane and I wish to promote the good work of the Council when and wherever possible.

Future publicity is being planned to increase the quantity of news coming out of the Council. I want to ensure that we communicate early and well so that our publicity properly reflects both the good work that is done, and also that it reports at the earliest stage any future plans or concerns we may have.

Finally I hope councillors will welcome the clear map of their Ward, that is on their desks tonight, I know I find it useful to have the exact detail of my Ward available to me and I am sure that goes for all Councillors. I am always interested in ways to promote good clear communications and I will welcome Members views at any time.

Executive Cllr. Richard Lees  
(Communications)



**COUNCIL MEETING – 15 OCTOBER 2002**

**REPORT OF COUNCILLOR LIBBY LISGO - COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP**

**Building Communities**

The Taunton Deane Local Strategic Partnership decided (on 17 September) to submit an Expression of Interest to the Regional Development Agency, under its new “Building Communities” regeneration initiative. The Expression of Interest (EoI) will focus on Lyngford ward (one of two Taunton wards eligible under this funding stream), and will include innovative proposals for tackling the particular needs of this North Taunton neighbourhood. The Council will play a key role in developing the EoI by the end of November with local partners and agencies.

**Community Strategy**

A community strategy for Taunton Deane will be completed before Christmas. This strategy, to be published on behalf of the Taunton Deane Local Strategic Partnership, provides a broad framework for measuring and improving quality of life across Taunton Deane. The Community Leadership Panel will consider the strategy on 24<sup>th</sup> October.

**Grant Giving**

Practical proposals for reforming the Council’s grant giving practices and procedures will be considered by the Community Leadership panel on 24<sup>th</sup> October.

**Equalities Review**

Several key meetings take place in October as part of the Council’s review of its performance in promoting equality across all service areas and in the wider community. A ‘challenge’ event with local groups and agencies takes place at the Albemarle Centre on 21 October, and the Community Leadership Panel is holding a special meeting to consider the issue on 29 October.

Councillor Libby Lisgo



**COUNCIL MEETING – 15 OCTOBER 2002.**

**REPORT OF COUNCILLOR PAUL PARTINGTON - RESOURCES**

**Investors in People**

This authority is working towards obtaining the award of Investors in People (IIP) for the whole council. The Corporate Management Team made the commitment in May 2001 but it requires a two-year lead-time. It is intend that the assessment to obtain the award will be June 2003 and the council is on course to make this time scale.

During the next cycle of meetings, IIP will be coming to members for support via the Executive and the Resources Review Panel. There are important benefits to this council and its employees, and this can be demonstrated by the results elsewhere of IIP being obtained in leading business and organisations producing tangible improvements in the performance of their employees and the way business is conducted.

Councillor Paul Partington

