



## COUNCIL SUMMONS

YOU ARE REQUESTED TO ATTEND A MEETING OF THE TAUNTON DEANE BOROUGH COUNCIL TO BE HELD IN PRINCIPAL COMMITTEE ROOM, THE DEANE HOUSE ON TUESDAY 17TH DECEMBER 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 Meetings of the Council held on 15 October 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 deal with questions to and receive recommendations and reports from the following members of the Executive:-
7. Councillor Horsley (Leader of the Executive)  
Recommendations relating to:-  
(a) Council Tax Base 2003/04  
(b) Implementing the Vision for Taunton
8. Councillor Stone (Housing Services)
9. Councillor Bulgin (Transportation and Planning)
10. Councillor Croad (Economic Development, Property and Tourism)
11. Councillor Henley (Leisure)  
Recommendation relating to Leisure Trust Status  
Report to follow
12. Councillor Lees (Communications)
13. Councillor Lisgo (Community Leadership)  
Recommendation relating to Corporate Child Protection Policy  
Report to follow
14. Councillor Mullins (Environmental Health)
15. Councillor Partington (Resources)

G P DYKE  
Member Services Manager

The Deane House  
Belvedere Road  
TAUNTON  
Somerset

TA1 1HE

10 December 2002

At the beginning of the meeting the Mayor, on behalf of the Council, will accept an award from Mrs. J. Griffiths of the British Astronomical Association's Campaign for Dark Skies. This is a section of the British Astronomical Association committed to eliminating light pollution (light which is allowed to go where it is not needed). The "Good Lighting Award" is being made to the Council for the work that it has done with Taunton Rugby Club on the provision of floodlights at its new ground.



At a meeting of the Taunton Deane Borough Council held in the Principal Committee Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton on Tuesday 15 October 2002 at 6.30pm.

Present: The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Govier)  
Councillors Mrs Allgrove, Mrs Angus, Mrs Biscoe, Bone, Mrs Bradley, Bulgin, Croad, Cudlipp, Debenham, Denington, Eckhart, Escott, Farbus, Floyd, Guerrier, Hall, Henley, Mrs Hill, Horsley, House, Hunt, Lee, Lees, Mrs Lewin-Harris, Lisgo, Meikle, Mrs Miller, Mullins, Murphy, R Parrish, Mrs Parrish, Partington, Paul, Miss Phippen, Slattery, Stone, Tolchard, Vail, Mrs Whitmarsh and Williams.

(The Council stood in silence in memory of the late Councillor Roy Squier).

1. Minutes  
The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 23 July 2002, a copy having been sent to each Member were signed by the Deputy Mayor.
2. Apologies  
The Mayor (Councillor Prior-Sankey), Councillors Bishop, Cavill, Edwards, Gill, Mrs Lippiatt, Tremethick and Warren.
3. Public Question Time  
A representative of Friends of the Earth asked for the Council's support for the GMO Free Britain Campaign.

Councillor Horsley replied:

"I thank Taunton Friends of the Earth for letting me have notice of their intention to put a question to this council although they didn't actually specify what the question was.

To remind councillors, Policy Committee of TDBC on 25 November 1999 approved a recommendation concurring with the then Environmental Services Committee that we support a 5 year freeze on genetic engineering of crops. In addition the council also approved the following:-

- All suppliers to the council of food products to label clearly as to whether they contain GM ingredients
- The possibility of GM trials being licensed within the area of TD be recognised
- The release of gm organisms into the local environment be opposed as a precautionary principle
- The County Council stand in banning the growing of gm crops on their farms be supported

We also made clear at the time we had no resources to monitor or pursue this any further

We are three years on since then. We thank Taunton Friends of the Earth for letting us have their latest booklet “Now or Never” with an update on what has happened since with GM as casework evidence builds up about the problems of contamination and other risks that we may be setting in store for ourselves.

I am asking my colleague Melvyn Mullins to consider some of the proposals that you suggest in your booklet and bring it forward in the most appropriate manner. This could take the form of a motion to council or more likely a presentation by you to have your views aired and for your doubt shared with a wider public.”

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

(a) **Leader of the Council (Councillor Horsley)**

(i) Councillor Williams asked the following question:-

I note the progress being made towards evaluating the viability of and best location for a new livestock market which could be in Taunton Deane or Sedgemoor because of the way the evaluation has been set up.

The Conservative Group would consider it a retrograde step if the livestock market were lost from Taunton Deane.

We would ask that our best endeavours are used to retain the market as it does have the potential of being a £30 million PA business which would be a major loss if re-located to Sedgemoor.

Please could an assurance be given that all possible will be done to ensure the retention of the market and, as it is acknowledged that a new market site is unlikely to be viable without assistance, that this assurance will cover financial support to provide a site or infrastructure as required.

Councillor Horsley replied:-

I thank Councillor Williams for notice of his question.

It is important that the council understands completely what the position is as far as the future of the livestock market is concerned.

In April 2000 the council entered into a 4 year lease with a possible extension for a further year with TMA. Simultaneously we jointly published a Statement of Mutual Understanding to relocate the livestock market within the lifetime of the lease. This was discussed and agreed by the council at the time. Discussions got under way, initiated by the market auctioneers themselves who began the search for a new site.

There followed the closure of the market arising from Foot and Mouth disease and all the upheaval that arose. This inevitably lead to a period of uncertainty about livestock markets which has only just begun to lift.

The TMA then approached TDBC in September 2001 with the suggestion of looking at opening a new market with lairage and other agricultural businesses to establish a rural business centre which would incorporate Taunton and Bridgwater livestock markets. The Executive discussed this idea on 25 November last year and agreed to go ahead with discussions to secure a viable and secure future for the market against the background of the impact of foot and mouth on markets.

Accordingly Taunton Deane Borough Council and Sedgemoor District Council in conjunction with TMA and support and funding from the RDA have employed consultants to look at the possibility of the provision of this centre between junctions 23 and 26. This work is still going on and it would be premature to come to any conclusions at this stage.

Of course we hope that this regional agricultural centre will be established within Taunton Deane. We have doubts about the figure that Councillor Williams has quoted as to what it is worth to the local economy. There is a tendency to exaggerate if it suits a particular political purpose. What is vital is that (a) it is financially viable in the longer term, (b) it does promote the wider aspects of business within the rural community and (c) that it is acceptable to the farming community at large. From everything we have heard so far, we believe that the Taunton and Bridgwater branches of the NFU are fully behind this joint initiative and that the RDA are supportive of it.

The farming community have made it quite clear to us that rationalisation may be the only way to survive and working with colleagues on a sub regional basis could be the oxygen that the market requires. The future of the Market cannot be dictated by TDBC alone, we must work with our partners to ensure a sustainable future.

(ii) **Report of Councillor Horsley**

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.

## **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.

## **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.

## **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 who 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 TDLSP to undertake the responsibility for overseeing the consultation and the progress. Clearly senior councillors will still be involved.

### **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.

### **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 targeting 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.

### **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.

(b) **Housing Services (Councillor Stone)**

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.

(c) **Planning And Transportation (Councillor Bulgin)**

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 Albemarle 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 the 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 its 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.

(d) **Economic Development, Property and Tourism (Councillor Croad)**

**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 advantage for the two groups in sharing ideas and activities, has brought about much closer co-operation 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 co-ordinate 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 and greater communication.

These three activities have been made a key priority for our tourism department, 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.

(e) **Leisure (Councillor Henley)**

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 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.

(f) **Communications (Councillor Lees)**

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.

(g) **Community Leadership (Councillor Lisgo)**

**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 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 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.

## (h) **Environmental Services (Councillor Mullins)**

(i) No report

(ii) Councillor Miss Phippen asked the following questions:-

- (1) Recent television coverage gave details of how Manchester City Council overcame its litter problem. What steps are being taken to improve the situation in Taunton Deane?
- (2) In view of the recent Press coverage concerning a lost dog who was re-homed before the owner could trace him, does this Authority have plans to ensure there is adequate communication with neighbouring authorities, dog wardens, Police and reception kennels to reduce the risk of this happening again?
- (3) The new Fact Sheet about the Dog Warden Service states "that Dog Wardens have a legal duty to pick up strays and to take them to the kennels. However this duty is limited to normal working hours. Outside these times, responsibility passes to the Police who have a duty to accept strays brought to them.

As dogs do not know our "normal working hours," do we have any plans to improve our very limited week-

end cover of the dog warden service? Do we work with neighbouring authorities to provide a better service?

Councillor Mullins replied:-

- (1) Further investigations would be undertaken into how Manchester City Council had overcome its litter problem;
- (2) A further look would be taken at how information was provided to dog owners;
- (3) There were no plans to improve the existing level of weekend cover. The Council would continue its close working relations with neighbouring authorities.

(i) **Resources (Councillor Partington)**

**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 intended 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.

**5. The Vision for Taunton**

Received presentation and considered report of the Taunton Vision Commission.

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

- (i) the Report of the Taunton Vision Commission be received;
- (ii) the report be referred to both the Taunton Deane Local Strategic Partnership (TDLSP) and the Somerset Strategic Partnership (SSP) and they be asked 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.
- (iii) The two Partnerships jointly appoint a “Reference Group” to take the lead on their behalf in championing the Vision – by advising on progression and monitoring the work referred to in para (ii), such Group to 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 to be a flexible body, meeting on an ad hoc basis and able to respond to local needs and priorities.
- (iv) The proposed Reference Group be asked by either or both councils from time to time to advise them on appropriate matters, as outlined in the report.

## **6. Housing Capital Finance – Motion**

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 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.”

The motion was put and was carried.

**7. Exclusion of Press and Public**

RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting because of the likelihood that exempt information would otherwise be disclosed relating to Clause 9 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

**8. Crescent Car Park Development**

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

- (a) the Heads of Terms being agreed and the outstanding payment of costs to the Councils' external consultants being made and
- (b) the Leader of the Council together with the Chief Executive being satisfied that a partnership between Heritage Shopping Centres, Sovereign Land Ltd and Fortis Bank was available and feasible;

the following be agreed:-

- (1) 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 Mrs Hill arrived at the meeting at 7.15pm)

(The following Councillors left the meeting at the times indicated:- Councillor Meikle at 8pm., Councillor Mrs Miller at 8.40pm., Councillor Hunt at 8.55pm; Councillor Tolchard at 9.25pm; Councillor R. Parrish at 9.30 pm; and Councillor Eckhart at 9.45 pm).

(The meeting ended at 9.55pm).

**COUNCIL MEETING - 17 DECEMBER 2002**

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

(a) Council Tax Base 2003/04

The Council Tax Base is the Band 'D' equivalent of the properties included in the Valuation Officer's Banding List as at 16 October 2002 as adjusted for voids, appeals, new properties, etc and the provision for non collection.

The Band 'D' equivalent is arrived at by taking the laid down proportion of each Band as compared to Band 'D' and aggregating the total. The approved base has to be notified to the County Council, the Police Authority and to each of the Parishes.

Adjustments have also been included for new dwellings and for initial void exemptions for empty properties. The Council Tax Base also has to reflect the provision for losses on collection. In the current year, a collection rate of 98.5% was agreed, however, improved recovery rates indicate that this could be increased to 99% for 2004/04. The Council Tax Base for 2002/03 was 37,317.82 and the recommended base for 2003/04 of 38,122.79 represents an increase of 804.97 or 2.15%.

The Council are, therefore, RECOMMENDED that:

- (a) the Report of the Corporate Finance Manager for the calculation of Council Tax Base for the whole and parts of the area for 2003/04 be approved;
- (b) that pursuant to the Corporate Finance Manager's Report and in accordance with the Local Authority (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 1992 the amount calculated by Taunton Deane Borough Council as its tax base for the whole area for the year 2003/04 shall be 38,122.79 and for the parts of the area listed below shall for 2003/04 be:

Ash Priors	64.49
Ashbrittle	80.93
Bathealton	80.14
Bishops Hull	1,060.29
Bishops Lydeard/Cothelstone	1,747.68
Bradford on Tone	270.96
Burrowbridge	196.94
Cheddon Fitzpaine	617.85
Chipstable	109.92
Churchstanton	296.10
Combe Florey	107.55
Comeytrowe	2,066.07
Corfe	130.85
Creech St Michael	939.06
Durston	56.75
Fitzhead	120.74
Halse	140.43
Hatch Beauchamp	241.44
Kingston St Mary	426.88
Langford Budville	211.37

Lydeard St Lawrence/Tolland	195.55
Milverton	565.70
Neroche	235.83
North Curry	694.52
Norton Fitzwarren	652.77
Nynehead	143.14
Oake	318.92
Otterford	160.35
Pitminster	435.55
Ruishton/Thornfalcon	602.68
Sampford Arundel	128.16
Staplegrove	707.17
Stawley	112.47
Stoke St Gregory	369.72
Stoke St Mary	193.02
Taunton	15,141.11
Trull	931.31
Wellington	4,501.70
Wellington (Without)	288.83
West Bagborough	155.29
West Buckland	391.84
West Hatch	135.36
West Monkton	1,058.45
Wiveliscombe	1,036.98
<b>Total</b>	<b>38,122.79</b>

(b) Implementing the Vision for Taunton

In order to progress the Vision for Taunton it is necessary to engage consultants to work on an Urban Design Framework for Taunton. The draft brief will need to be agreed with our partners and this Council will need to contribute £50k in the current financial year towards the cost of the consultants. This is an opportunity to continue our partnership with SWERDA and the County Council and to share the cost of this important, urgent work.

This is a matter that will have been considered by the Executive by the time that Council meet but a recommendation will not have been made until after the Council Summons has been published. For that reason, the recommendation is subject to it being first agreed by the Executive at its meeting on 11 December.

It is therefore RECOMMENDED that, subject to agreement of the Executive, Council agree to a Supplementary Estimate of £50,000 being made in the current financial year towards the cost of engaging consultants for the Taunton town centre Urban Design Framework and masterplanning of the major sites.

Councillor Jefferson Horsley

## COUNCIL MEETING – 17 DECEMBER 2002

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

The season of goodwill is upon us. I would first like to welcome Kim Cooper to her first meeting as the new representative for Creech and Ruishton. She will bring a new vigour and fresh approach to the council. Her victory was an endorsement of the ideas and policies of the ruling group coupled with her own personal message for the people of the ward.

#### 1. Asylum Seekers

I am pleased that the response we are getting from the NASS (National Asylum Support Service – an arm of the Home Office) and Clearsprings is one of co-operation. I hope to be able to report to you verbally on a meeting likely to take place on 16 December.

I have written to the Home Secretary David Blunkett enquiring how the figure of 302 refugees was arrived at for Taunton. I have also asked him what research has been done into establishing the availability of housing within the private rented sector before they came here with their announcement of their intentions.

I repeat that we want to play our part in assisting these people. We want the best for all homeless people of whatever origin. Our problem lies in the fact that the private rented sector seems unable to cope with the waiting list that already exists here and the sheer scale of the allocation given to Clearsprings by the NASS will only exacerbate the situation. The funding comes from the Home Office but the knock on effect could be serious and costly especially if there is a danger of replacement of those already waiting with the incoming refugees.

#### 2. The Budget

It is difficult to understand at this stage the announcement of the figures for central government support for 2003/4. The headline figure is that there has been a 4.7% increase for us compared with 12% for Mendip, 9.4% for Sedgemoor and as little as 3.3% for South Somerset.

In cash terms this however comes down to only 2.1% for TDBC and could be yet another example of government “spin” to appear much more generous than they actually are. I have to give them the benefit of the doubt at this stage as the full figures have not been yet revealed to us. There is a hope that the change in Housing Benefit Administration grant which has been transferred to the Department of Work and Pensions might in fact be more generous and help us to overcome part of our Budget Gap of £411,000. I will endeavour to update the Council verbally on  
17 December.

I do deprecate the fact the government released the early figures to the press some six hours before they came to Taunton Deane. It shows that they are much more interested in getting their own message across than helping local authorities to overcome the difficulties they face.

### 3. Wellsprings Centre

We are making significant progress on this project. It does not appear from any visit to the site but behind the scenes things are much more optimistic.

Firstly the process for selecting a partner to submit the bid into Sport England is making good progress. Sport England have understandably informed us that they will only consider the cost of work to completion and expect us to pick up any remedial and rectification work that has to be done. This is approximately half the remaining work. We are still on target for the timetable we have jointly agreed between ourselves and the other partners Ladymead School and the County Council.

Secondly the funding package is slowly taking shape between the partners. Clearly this has to have the approval of full Council in due course but I am more sanguine than of late about this. Again I will endeavour to update colleagues on 17 December.

Thirdly it is pleasing to report that the attempts by Warners to seek adjudication in their favour in respect of costs have failed now on three separate occasions. Each time TDBC has come out well and Warners has in effect had to pick up the bill. This doesn't guarantee we will win always but it does augur well when we come to seek recompense for the rectification work that has to be done before completion.

We have not had to date the District Auditors "due diligence" report.

We owe it to the community to get the centre up and running and put behind us the disappointments of the past 15 months.

### 4. Vision for Taunton

We are already seeing the fruits of our work on this. We have to go forward with the approach "This is what we are doing – isn't it great!" rather than "Do you think this is a good idea?"

It is pleasing that the Reference Group has now been established by the Local Strategic Partnership. This will monitor progress as well as providing advice on all matters. What it does establish is a commitment to making Taunton a regional centre of excellence and capitalising on what we do best – namely serving the public in all aspects.

We will have to overcome the difficulties we are experiencing with infrastructure projects. We must seek to drive forward the ambitions to obtain a Strategic Employment site. The longer term work of the Urban Extension Study is critical to this ambition of ours.

I want to clear any ambiguity about this being "Taunton only". We can only deliver the Vision of Taunton as this regional centre of excellence if we enjoy the support of our colleagues in Wellington and the wider community – the diaspora of Taunton. Similarly we must acknowledge the significance of other towns who impact on our lives such as Bridgwater. The regional approach towards planning that is coming in will mean that we have to plan with the strategic objectives in mind for the wider community.

The Blue Paper on Urban Design Framework shows that we are not letting grass grow under our feet. In fact, in terms of long term visioning I believe we are positively sprinting!

Councillor Jefferson Horsley

**COUNCIL MEETING – 17 DECEMBER 2002**

**REPORT OF COUNCILLOR STONE – HOUSING SERVICES**

1. Securing Social Housing

“Social Housing ” – means subsidised social housing for rent.

It is unlikely that in the foreseeable future there will be a significant increase in the amount of Social Housing Grant available for Councils to allocate to Housing Associations to build new homes. The delivery of social housing locally needs to increase significantly to allow us to work towards our target of 131 dwellings per year (the figure established in the Couttie Housing Needs Report). Less than 50 social housing units will be provided next year.

In order to increase provision, the Government is recommending that Councils introduce Supplementary Planning Guidance to secure an increase in the developer’s subsidy on sites allocated for housing. The objective is to secure social housing on planning sites at nil public subsidy. Council Social Housing Grants could then be used to fund other Housing Association schemes not tied in to private housing developments.

**The Current System** - Using an example property value of £100,000, the Housing Association currently raises approximately £40,000 in private borrowing paid for from rents and the remaining sums come from the Housing Corporation Social Housing Grant (SHG) £30,000 and Local Authority SHG of £30,000.

A Section 106 agreement is used when an application for private housing is submitted by a developer and the site is one hectare or over, or the scheme is for 25 units or more. If the site is a Local Plan allocation, the target % for social housing has already been set in the report agreed by the Executive in May 2002. The percentages vary from 20% - 35% depending on whether there are exceptional costs associated with a site’s development. The terms of the Section 106 agreement are spelt out at the time of the application and the final wording is agreed between the Council, the developers and the Housing Association.

On windfall sites not identified in the Local Plan, the proportion of social housing will be determined on a site-by-site basis, generally within the range above.



**The New Proposal for Providing Social Housing** - Recent Strategic Planning and Housing Review Panels have recommended that the Council adopts an additional policy to provide social housing. Under this new Supplementary Planning Guidance on Section 106 sites, the Housing Association would expect to pay the developer only 40% of the value of the social housing (the figure for this is set by the Housing Corporation and is known as the "total cost indicator" (TCI). The remaining 60% would be seen as a subsidy from the developer.

To achieve this the developer could give the land free to the Housing Association and bridge the gap between the cost of the land and the 60% by way of a financial contribution. Alternatively the developer could build the dwellings and sell them to the Housing Association at 40% of their TCI value. These dwellings would be built in accordance with Housing Corporation design standards.

This new arrangement would mean that no additional subsidy on these sites would need to be provided by the Council or the Housing Corporation.

## 2. New Social Housing in Cotford St. Luke

Redland Housing Association has completed 20 houses at Milsom Place. A planning application has been submitted for a further 20 dwellings at Manning Road. This will be an "Eco site".

Knightstone Housing Association and SHAL Housing Limited are working together to provide 10 houses and flats, and 10 shared equity houses on the Village Centre site.

## 3. Energy Efficiency Strategy

A new Strategy to promote domestic energy efficiency is currently being created. It includes plans to develop financial incentives, grants, advice and promotion and involves many partners both within and outside of the Council. Some recent initiatives include an Energy Efficiency Week prize draw to win a fridge and kettles, plus two radio interviews on local stations at the start of Warm Homes Week to promote grants and advice available from the Energy Efficiency Officer.

There has also been an excellent response to the advert placed in the Taunton Times recently and many phone calls have been received from people requesting more information.

This winter's Deane Warmth campaign is imminent and will again involve a partnership with a utility company. The grant will once again provide insulation measures to those vulnerable to cold and damp conditions.

## 4. New Housing

There were 74 completions at Cotford St. Luke between October 2001 and September 2002 with a further 250 still to come.

Sites with Planning Permission in Taunton will provide a further 430 completions, With 110 at the Rugby Club, 50 off Lisieux Way and 50 at Bishops Saab Garage.

In Wellington a further 130 dwellings, with 58 of these on the Tonedale site.

Although there are 1,300 committed dwellings in the system for the Borough it is fair to say that in Taunton the number of sites is 'drying up' pending the Local Plan sites coming through.

Councillor Phil Stone



**COUNCIL MEETING – 17 DECEMBER 2002**

**REPORT OF COUNCILLOR BULGIN - PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION**

I have been considering how best to achieve an inflation-only increase in the total income from car parking charges. Converting this into actual coinage within the tariff structure is not easy.

I have therefore decided to advertise proposals immediately after Christmas to increase the charges in the medium stay (Shopper 2) car parks by 10p per hour. This will bring in an estimated additional £47,000 in a full year and will affect the Belvedere Road, Castle Street, Duke Street, Elms Parade, Greenbrook Terrace and Wood Street Car Parks.

Charges in the central short-term car parks and the commuter car parks will not be increased.

The comments made by several Members about the apparent under-usage of the top floors of the Old Market Shoppers Multi-Storey Car Park, as well as the recommendations which came from the Review Panel following their recent deliberations, have also been taken on board.

This car park's present designation of Shopper 1 reflects its most central location. I do however agree that we cannot be seen to have such an asset not being fully used and am grateful to those who have provided graphic evidence to back up their arguments. I believe that we should encourage some longer stay usage, whilst protecting the shopper and visitor customers.

To achieve this, I am proposing that the top two floors be made a minimum stay of 4 hours and that the charging structure lies between the Shopper 1 and Shopper 2 rates. This will give an all day charge of £3 instead of the present £4.

Moving on from parking matters, we will be carrying out a preliminary consultation with Monkton Heathfield residents during the first quarter of 2003. This will be purely exploratory to find out from the local people what they want to see in the Development Guide for Monkton Heathfield.

Finally, I am pleased to report that a brief for consultants for the Taunton Urban Design Framework (UDF) is being prepared. The UDF will build on the existing Local Plan Policies to provide Supplementary Planning Guidance for the development of the centre of Taunton. Such guidance will reflect the aspirations of the Vision and will allow Taunton to fulfil its role as a Principal Urban Area.

Councillor Roy Bulgin



**COUNCIL MEETING – 17 DECEMBER 2002.**

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

You will recall that when this Council submitted our first Asset Management Plan last year, it was assessed as being ‘poor’ largely due to the fact that our properties condition had not been evaluated.

I am pleased to be able to report that this year our Plan has been placed in the ‘good’ category, which means that future demands on us are likely to be less onerous. In addition, we should receive the sum of £50,000 which I hope can be ring-fenced for future maintenance programmes.

Although we will not be required to make detailed annual submissions, we will still need to demonstrate we are managing our assets well and doubtless the CPA judgement will be influenced by its effectiveness.

The condition of our stock is relatively satisfactory but we must ensure that it does not deteriorate and that the existing categories are maintained. We have to take some hard decisions on those assets which are in the lowest category. We either improve them or dispose of them.

I have asked our officers to come up with some imaginative proposals which may attract the interest of the RDA or County Council.

An up to date Property Asset List is now available for Members on request.

I made reference in my last report to the Urban Design Framework and the master plans for the key areas. We have met with senior members of the SWRDA and they have urged us to move ahead with the minimum of delay. These are the important first steps to implementing the vision.

**Tourism**

I am most sorry to see Katie Burton, our Tourism Officer, move on to pastures new, but I know you will join me in wishing her well in Cumbria. It will be hard to match her enthusiasm and energy but I am determined that we will maintain the current momentum, particularly in the important areas of Equine and Cycling Tourism, together with the many other initiatives she has been driving forward.

I had the pleasure of addressing “The Way Forward for Tourism in Somerset” meeting held recently at Cricket St Thomas. Local Authorities in Somerset, the RDA and South West Tourism were well represented along with key operators in the County’s tourist industry. The Interim Steering Group reported on the progress made in developing a Tourist Strategy for Somerset. This Group will continue their work and by next April will come up with recommendation for a structure, a detailed strategy, culminating in a business plan. If Somerset is to receive the funding it needs, for example, to exploit the benefits of E Tourism, we must demonstrate it has clear and effective policies and the right structure to deliver a service that is anything approaching world class.

Councillor Colin Croad



**COUNCIL MEETING - 17 DECEMBER 2002**

**RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL**  
**COUNCILLOR HENLEY - LEISURE, ARTS AND CULTURE**

Leisure Trust Status

A joint meeting of Health and Leisure Panel and the Executive, held on 21 November 2003, considered proposals regarding the formation of a Leisure Trust.

As part of the Sports and Pitches Best Value Review, the Council had commissioned the company, Strategic Leisure, to undertake a study to evaluate the alternative options for the management of the Sports and Leisure Service. The initial feasibility study received in January 2002 reached the following conclusions:

- (i) the current in-house service was providing an economic, effective and efficient service;
- (ii) the establishment of a Trust could provide a Best Value solution. The option could generate a tax based solution equivalent to around £250,000 per annum; and
- (iii) there would be no significant benefit in a private sector partnership due to the cost effectiveness of the current operation.

A more detailed study was commissioned as a consequence to consider the following:

- the need for capital investment given the condition of the facilities;
- the impact on the Council of any Trust;
- a draft business plan for the Trust;
- the scope of any externalisation;
- the form of Trust; and
- the needs of stakeholders.

This further study had now been undertaken and the meeting, to which all Councillors had been invited, received a presentation from Strategic Leisure on their findings and conclusions.

To maximise the financial benefits available and cause minimum disruption to the Council, the study recommended that a Trust should be established based initially on the leisure centres, Vivary Golf Course, development services and sports pitch bookings.

There were two options for forming a Trust. These were a company limited by guarantee or an industrial and provident society (IPS).

An IPS would be easier and quicker to establish, would be less heavily regulated and allowed for the involvement of employees. It could also be deemed an "exempt charity" enabling the Council to use its discretionary powers to grant mandatory tax relief. This would be very important in meeting the future capital needs of the service.

The essential capital maintenance programme over the next ten years was estimated at £2.38 million. If the current revenue position was sustainable, it was predicted that the tax and VAT advantages arising from the establishment of an IPS would amount to approximately £290,000 per year. Much of these revenue savings could be used to fund the capital requirements of the existing facilities.



Other financial implications were:

- (i) start-up costs of approximately £70,000 would need to be taken from year one savings;
- (ii) a contingency allowance of £25,000 should be set aside as initial working capital for the first two years;
- (iii) as there was to be no TUPE transfer of Central Support Staff, a phased "exit route" would need to be negotiated to allow the Trust to procure support services from the Council for a short period of time;
- (iv) the Trust would incur additional support costs of approximately £70,000 a year from year two onwards following the recruitment of a Finance Director and additional personnel support; and
- (v) the study assumed that the Head of Commercial Services post and her Personal Assistant would TUPE transfer as well as all of the existing staff directly employed by the Leisure DSO.

The formation of a Leisure Trust or IPS would have an impact on both Commercial Services and Community Services.

With the loss of the Head of Commercial Services and the entire Leisure DSO function, alternative management arrangements would need to be made for the DLO, Procurement and Cemeteries and Crematorium. The options available to the Council would need to be carefully considered and it was suggested that £23,000 be retained from the savings each year to finance these arrangements.

Although Community Services would be responsible for monitoring the Trust/Council partnership and for negotiating the annual grant settlement, it would also be responsible for strategically planning Leisure Services in the future, even though the professional advice such planning relied upon, would be transferred with the Leisure DSO staff.

To resolve this issue it was proposed that the remit of the Leisure Development Manager's post be widened to include sports issues and that a new post of Strategic Leisure Officer be created with £30,000 being retained from the savings each year to finance the post.

The Council would continue to:

- retain the assets;
- formulate the leases (typically 20 years) which could include break clauses;
- negotiate the annual grant with the Trust enabling it to ensure that the Trust delivered its corporate objectives;
- take up to three seats on a Board of 16 members; and
- retain the responsibility for the strategic direction of Leisure.

Adequate safeguards would need to be included within any leases negotiated to take account of any changes in the current tax relief position.

It is, therefore, RECOMMENDED that:

- (a) a Leisure Trust be formed on the basis set out in the report to come into operation in October 2003;

- (b) alternative management arrangements for the residual Commercial Services functions be funded from the savings generated by the formation of the Trust;
- (c) a new post of Strategic Leisure Officer be created and be funded from the savings generated by the formation of the Trust;
- (d) the set-up costs of approximately £70,000 be taken from the year one savings;
- (e) the working capital costs of £25,000 be taken from the year one and two savings;
- (f) all the residual savings generated by the formation of the Trust be ring fenced for reinvestment in the facilities managed by the Trust; and
- (g) adequate safeguards be included in any leases negotiated to protect the Council's interests in the event of the tax relief position changing in the future.

Councillor Ross Henley



**COUNCIL MEETING 11 DECEMBER 2002**

**REPORT OF COUNCILLOR RICHARD LEES – COMMUNICATIONS**

In my second report as the member with responsibility for Communications I am able to report success in our work for early and positive publicity and progress on our Communications objectives. You will remember that my role is to co-ordinate and review:

public relations,  
media relations and  
communications.

In the last two months we have faced, as usual media pressures for information on a number of major schemes, the latest of which is the proposal by Clearsprings Management Ltd that refugees are brought to Taunton to await determination of the application for asylum. This one in particular was quickly placed in the public arena, to inform and to remove uncertainty as far as we can.

To them all we have responded quickly and accurately and members have played their part in keeping themselves well briefed and available for immediate comment – we know that good communication is essential to good local government.

Of the items I brought you last time, the Communications Strategy is continuing to be developed alongside the Council's bid for Investors in People and also with some additional support from the Community Services Directorate, an example of cross-corporate working.

Our Council newspaper the Deane Dispatch is published this month, delivered with the free newspaper 'The Star' to urban areas and direct to every rural household by post. We will be pleased to hear in the New Year of any gaps in delivery – not that we believe there are too many!

The Deane Dispatch is a major vehicle for Council news and explanation in a way that is most likely to be considered by householders, directly to their home. The front page story gives space to our Budget consultation and details the pressures on this authority to do much, with not enough.

Please encourage your residents to respond, every slip returned will be read and will weigh in our Budget deliberations.

Finally on 20 November I was able to welcome delegates to a one day Seminar organised by the South West Access Forum. It was aimed at Architects and Surveyors and with Ed Norton from our Building Control was a valued speaker, informing professionals on access for all.

In the New Year I will be looking to gather information about access for all within the Borough of Taunton Deane especially as 2003 is to be European Year for the Disabled.

Executive Councillor Richard Lees  
Communications



**COUNCIL MEETING - 17 DECEMBER 2002**

**RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL**  
**COUNCILLOR LISGO - COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP**

Corporate Child Protection Policy

The Executive have considered details of a proposed Corporate Child Protection Policy.

The protection of children and young people is integral to the Council's corporate values and underpins the delivery of the Council's corporate priorities.

The Draft Policy has been prepared following investigation and research by an Officers' Working Group. It has also been considered in detail by the Community Leadership Review Panel at its meeting on 24 October 2002. The Panel recommended that the Policy be adopted. Details of the Policy have previously been circulated to all members, together with the papers for the Community Leadership Review Panel meeting on 24 October and the meeting of the Executive on 20 November 2002.

It is, therefore, RECOMMENDED that the Corporate Child Protection Policy be adopted.

Councillor Libby Lisgo



**COUNCIL MEETING – 17 DECEMBER 2002**

**REPORT OF COUNCILLOR MULLINS – ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES**

**Environmental Protection Team.**

- The public consultation phase for the declaration of two discrete Air Quality Management Areas at East Reach and Henlade is now complete. The way is now clear formally to declare these areas which will be done in the form of an Order, as required by legislation. We are in close consultation with Somerset County Council's Economy, Transport and Environment Department to develop an Action Plan to reduce levels of Nitrogen Dioxide in these areas.
- The annual programme for the routine sampling of private water supplies, which was severely disrupted by the outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease, is now back on track as a result of a successful 'catch up' programme.
- Progress is on schedule to identify and prioritise potential land contamination sites across the Borough. The legislation requires a more detailed examination of all high risk sites by the end of 2003 and we are on target to achieve this.
- Work has commenced to provide the long awaited first time rural sewerage scheme in the Blagdon Hill and Pitminster areas and is scheduled for completion in January 2003.

**Housing Standards Team**

- The Team participated in a recent successful Landlords' Forum at which copies of the new 120 page TDBC Landlords' Guide to HMOs was distributed. The Guide will be made available free of charge to all HMO Landlords.
- A recently commissioned HMO Survey has revealed the existence of 12 previously unknown HMOs within the Borough, which have now been prioritised and added to the Inspection Programme.
- Following the announcement that some 300 Asylum Seekers are to come to TDBC, work has commenced to identify and address the many Housing Standards issues involved.

**Recycling**

- We have just received news that the SWP in partnership with Avon FoE have been successful in winning £370k of DEFRA funding to provide a collection service from "difficult to access" properties such as blocks of flats. The new service will utilise 2 special vehicles shared between SDC,



MDC, SSDC and TDBC to collect recyclables from micro recycling sites. An example of real joined up partnership working.

## **Food Safety**

- **Indian takeaway and restaurant initiative**

Food safety officers often have difficulty communicating effectively with people whose English language skills are limited, particularly when trying to explain technical requirements. There can also be cultural barriers to overcome. This year we have engaged a Bengali speaking officer from another local authority to go into each Indian premises to advise on food safety issues, and to assist our own officers by training them in aspects of the culture of the Bengali community.

While it is too early to judge the effectiveness of this initiative there have been clear benefits, with improved standards of hygiene reported after the advisory visits programme.

## **Licensing**

- From May 2000 to date the number of fee paying PEL holders has risen from 40 to 85, this has been as a direct result of effective enforcement, the premises are safer and better policed than they ever were and the licensees are happier as there is now a "Level Playing Field"
- The Licensing Unit has a new Licensing Officer, Nicky Easton who has joined us from Trading Standards at Somerset County Council she has replaced Natasha Mounce who had worked for TDBC for over 6 years.
- Following the Queen's Speech the Licensing Unit and myself are looking forward to the challenge of Liquor Licensing being transferred from the Magistrates to the Local Authority.

## **Environmental Health Challenge**

- Environmental Health decided to hold a challenge workshop for members of the Health and Leisure Panel and the Executive to fundamentally challenge the provision of the EH service as part of their best value review. It was felt that a workshop would be more likely to generate discussion than a report being presented to the panel. The Members were given information about the service, the results of the consultation exercise and a list of questions to consider before the workshop. The discussion at the workshop was then based around the questions. The workshop went well and officers were pleased with the outcomes.

## **Finally**

**My I wish all the staff of Taunton Deane together with all Councillors.**

**A MERRY CHRISTMAS.**

Councillor Melvyn Mullins



**COUNCIL MEETING 17 DECEMBER 2002.**

**REPORT OF COUNCILLOR PARTINGTON – RESOURCES**

**Members' Allowances**

The report of the Members' Allowance Review Panel was discussed by the Resources Review Panel 28 November 2002. The recommendation of the Resources Review Panel together with those of the independent members' Allowances Panel will go to the Council on 25 February 2003 where the Council will make its decision taking into account all other budgetary considerations.

**Members Room**

There are occasions when more than one member requires the use of a computer in the Members' Room and some Members who have laptops require facilities. To improve the situation, there will be improvements in the next couple of weeks to the computer facilities in the Members' Room.

The number of work stations will be increased to three

- (a) two PC tower systems with flat screens to maximise available desktop space are provided, to replace the existing desktop machine,
- (b) a USB hub with keyboard and mouse is provided to allow laptops to be connected to the network, and
- (c) a networked printer replaces the present inkjet.

Councillor Paul Partington

