



## 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 25TH FEBRUARY 2003 AT 17:30.

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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 17 December 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. Regional Assemblies (Preparations) Bill - Soundings exercise on the level of interest in each English region in holding a referendum about establishing an elected regional assembly.  
To consider the Consultation Paper which was circulated separately to Members on 8 January 2003.
7. The meeting will adjourn at approximately 6.30p.m. Refreshments will be available in the Member's Room before the main business of the Council commences at 7.00p.m.
8. Member's Allowances 2003/04  
To receive recommendations from Mr. D. Baker, OBE, Chair of the independent Member's Allowances Panel and Councillor Farbus, Chair of the Resources Review Panel (enclosed)
9. To deal with questions to and receive recommendations and reports from the following members of the Executive:-
10. Councillor Horsley (Leader of the Executive)  
Recommendations relating to:-
  - (a) General Fund Revenue Estimates 2003/04
  - (b) General Fund Capital Programme
  - (c) Council Tax Setting
  - (d) Borrowing Limit
11. Councillor Stone (Housing Services)  
Recommendations relating to :-
  - (a) Housing Revenue Account - Revenue Estimates and Rent Levels
  - (b) Housing Capital Programme

12. Councillor Bulgin (Transportation and Planning )
13. Councillor Croad (Economic Development, Property and Tourism )
14. Councillor Henley (Leisure)
15. Councillor Lees (Communications)
16. Councillor Lisgo (Community Leadership)
17. Councillor Mullins (Environmental Health)
18. Councillor Partington (Resources)
19. Standing Orders  
To receive a recommendation from Councillor Denington, Chair, Community Leadership Review Panel (enclosed)
20. To consider the enclosed Motion to be moved by Councillor Horsley seconded by Councillor Henley
21. To consider the attached Motion to be moved by Councillor Mrs.Lewin-Harris seconded by Councillor Mrs. Bradley
22. To consider the attached Motion to be moved by Councillor Williams seconded by Councillor Hall.

G P DYKE  
Member Services Manager

The Deane House  
Belvedere Road  
TAUNTON  
Somerset

TA1 1HE

18 February 2003

PLEASE NOTE THE CHANGE OF TIME OF THE MEETING



At a meeting of the Taunton Deane Borough Council held in the Principal Committee Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton on Tuesday 17 December 2002 at 6.30 pm.

Present: The Mayor (Councillor Prior-Sankey)  
The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Govier)  
Councillors Mrs Angus, Bishop, Mrs Bradley, Bulgin, Cavill, Mrs Cooper, Croad, Cudlipp, Debenham, Denington, Eckhart, Escott, Floyd, Guerrier, Hall, Henley, Mrs Hill, Horsley, House, Lee, Lees, Mrs Lewin-Harris, Mrs Lippiatt, Lisgo, Meikle, Mullins, Murphy, R Parrish, Mrs Parrish, Partington, Paul, Phelps, Miss Phippen, Slattery, Stone, Vail, Watson, Mrs Whitmarsh and Williams.

(The Mayor (Councillor Prior-Sankey, welcomed Councillor Mrs Cooper to her first Council meeting.)

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 15 October 2002, a copy having been sent to each Member were signed by the Mayor.

2. Apologies

Councillors Mrs Allgrove, Mrs Biscoe, Bone, Dawson, Edwards, Farbus, Gill, Hunt, Mrs Miller, Tolchard, Tremethick and Warren.

3. Tree Warden Scheme

The Mayor (Councillor Prior-Sankey) reported that the Council had received an award from The Tree Council to honour ten years commitment to the National Grid Tree Warden Scheme. A plaque received from The Tree Council was presented to Pam Motum, Tree Management Officer.

4. Campaign for Dark Skies

The Mayor (Councillor Prior-Sankey) accepted an award on behalf of the Council from Mrs J Griffiths of the British Astronomical Association's Campaign for Dark Skies. The "Good Lighting Award" was made to the Council for the work that it had done with Taunton Rugby Club on the provision of floodlights at its new ground.

5. Taunton Chamber of Commerce

Councillor Horsley presented a plaque which signified the Council's membership of the Taunton Chamber of Commerce. Membership was an indication of the Council's commitment to working with the private sector and other partners.

(Councillor Cavill arrived at the meeting at 6.43 pm.)

6. Recommendations to Council

(a) Council Tax Base 2003/04

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

Adjustments had also been included for new dwellings and for initial void exemptions for empty properties. The Council Tax Base also had to reflect the provision for losses on collection. In the current year, a collection rate of 98.5% was agreed, however, improved recovery rates indicated 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 represented an increase of 804,97 or 2.15%.

On the motion of Councillor Horsley it was RESOLVED that:

- (i) 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;
- (ii) 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 was necessary to engage consultants to work on an Urban Design Framework for Taunton. The draft brief would need to be agreed with the Council's partners and this Council would need to contribute £50k in the current financial year towards the cost of the consultants. This was an opportunity to continue our partnership with SWERDA and the County Council and to share the cost of this important, urgent work.

On the motion of Councillor Horsley it was RESOLVED that, a Supplementary Estimate of £50,000 be 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.

(c) Leisure Trust Status

A joint meeting of Health and Leisure Panel and the Executive, held on 21 November 2003, had 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.

On the motion of Councillor Henley it was RESOLVED that:

- (i) a Leisure Trust be formed on the basis set out in the report to come into operation in October 2003;
  - (ii) alternative management arrangements for the residual Commercial Services functions be funded from the savings generated by the formation of the Trust;
  - (iii) a new post of Strategic Leisure Officer be created and be funded from the savings generated by the formation of the Trust;
  - (iv) the set-up costs of approximately £70,000 be taken from the year one savings;
  - (v) the working capital costs of £25,000 be taken from the year one and two savings;
  - (vi) all the residual savings generated by the formation of the Trust be ring fenced for reinvestment in the facilities managed by the Trust; and
  - (vii) 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.
- (d) Corporate Child Protection Policy

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

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

The Draft Policy had been prepared following investigation and research by an Officers' Working Group. It had also been considered in detail by the Community Leadership Review Panel at its meeting on 24 October 2002. The

Panel had recommended that the Policy be adopted. Details of the Policy had previously been circulated to all members.

On the motion of Councillor Lisgo it was RESOLVED that the Corporate Child Protection Policy be adopted.

7. Questions to and Reports of the Leader of the Council and Executive Councillors

(a) Leader of the Council (Councillor Horsley)

(i) Councillor Mrs Lewin-Harris asked the following question:

Following a report in the Taunton Times that the District Auditor's Due Diligence report into Wellsprings may not be made public, can I ask if this is correct? This report has been carried out in the public interest, paid for by Deane Council Tax payers, and I think that it is vital that this report does come into the public domain. If it does not, it will be seen as a whitewash, people will assume that there is something to hide and the Council will be accused of burying bad news. Can you reassure me that this report will be made public?

Please also could some indication be given as to when Members can expect to be given a formal briefing as to the likely completion costs of the centre and implications on our budget. The Contract was terminated in June and we are now in December, without any firm news as to costs or likely re-commencement of works.

Councillor Horsley replied:

I agree with Councillor Lewin-Harris that the report deserves to be in the public domain. I have always held that this is the most appropriate way for all local authorities to operate if at all possible and the Liberal Democrats have been in the vanguard of open government.

I promise her that if at all possible that we will publish it. My caveat is that whilst litigation is pending with the contractors Warners - and I will remind her that we are winning all that has come to the courts so far - we have to proceed cautiously and not in any way prejudice our prospects of success.

However, she will be one of the first people to see the report when it comes - probably in early January, but this has not been confirmed by the DA yet so no promises. She will then be able to conduct the enquiry in respect of the Health and Leisure Panel which she so ably chairs.

In response to the second part of her question I can confirm that we are giving detailed consideration to this as part of the budget process. The all party Wellsprings Panel is well aware of the situation and has got a mandate to undertake the necessary research on all matters. We will update the Council and bring proposals to the budget meeting in

February and if necessary call a special Council Meeting to discuss all relevant matters.

We have the funds available already to do any weathering of the building until such time as we get the go-ahead for the completion of the building. It is pleasing to report that the reparation of the work is likely to be a lot cheaper than earlier indications.

(ii) Councillor Williams asked the following question:

Please could we have clarification as to the actual position with the Central Government Revenue and Capital Finance Settlements as we are receiving confusing messages from the Leader and the Chief Executive. In the report to Council you refer to a 4.7% increase which you then say only results in a 2.1% increase for this Council. The Chief Executive, in what must have been a contemporaneously written report, refers to a 6.04% increase.

As this obviously results in a considerable difference to the funds available to us we would be grateful for confirmation as to the actual award made.

Also reference is made to finding out why other Somerset District Councils have appeared to receive far more generous settlements than ourselves. Is there anything further to report regarding these investigations?

Councillor Horsley replied:

The answer lies in the fact that the reports were not contemporaneous. You will have read my comments in the report. The Government have got the benefit of doubt as the Housing Benefit Grant for Administration has produced an extra £278K at this stage. This means that our cash settlement is 6.04% better than last time.

I should stress that these figures are not confirmed yet. There is a period of consultation and we are still unsure of the basis of how these figures have been arrived at. Similarly we are unable to explain the reasons for the much more generous settlements that both Sedgemoor and Mendip have received. We think it is very much to do with deprivation indices and perhaps sparsity.

We are still working through the meaning of this and all councillors will get in the Christmas stockings the first considerations of the impact on our likely budget for next year. This will be worthwhile reading for you all on Boxing Day and you will not doubt let the Executive and myself know your thoughts early in the New Year.

We have already taken some of our corporate priorities to focus groups in Taunton, Wellington and Wiveliscombe and had some interesting

responses. The outcome of these reports will be made available in late January.

- (iii) Councillor Williams asked the following questions:

At the Full Council meeting of 15 October it was reported that the report on the Creation of a Regional Agricultural Business Centre incorporating the Livestock Market would be available in six weeks or so. Nine weeks have now elapsed and I am not aware of when this report may be available. Please could we be advised when this report will be available to Members.

Also could we be reassured that as the report stage appears to be suffering delay that if necessary the lease for TMA will be extended beyond the original four years plus one year extension if required.

Councillor Horsley replied:

There is a meeting of the joint Sedgemoor/Taunton Deane panel on Thursday 19 December after which we should be in a position to say a lot more. In the meantime the answer I gave to John William on 15 October still appertains.

What I can say is that it appears that the cost of relocating the livestock market is escalating whichever site is chosen and that the funding gap is getting wider. This must make the financial viability of relocation to all parties less attractive. All options will have to be considered carefully and I promise the Full Council will have every opportunity to discuss this at length shortly.

It would be premature of me to respond to his second question about extension of the lease until matters have been clarified further about the likely venue and financial viability.

- (iv) Report of Councillor Horsley

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.

#### 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.

### 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.

### 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.

#### 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!

### LGA Improvement Commitment

On behalf of the Council I have signed a document in support of the LGA's proposed commitment to working with its members to help Councils to secure continuous improvement in their services to local people. A copy of this document is circulated for the information of members.

(b) Housing Services (Report of Councillor Stone)

#### 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.

#### 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.

#### 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.

#### 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.

(c) Planning and Transportation (Councillor Bulgin)

(i) Councillor Williams asked the following question:

Please could we be advised what action is intended to overcome the self inflicted problems we are experiencing with the Station Road/Priory Bridge Road junction. I say self inflicted problems because the decision to sanction these alterations to the junction were taken in the full knowledge that they would cause even greater traffic congestion on an already congested junction.

As a result we have imposed unacceptable delays to traffic by the congestion caused which economically is a disaster and totally unacceptable in terms of the extra pollution caused. This is said with the background that only last week we had to make orders for air quality management in two areas of Taunton Deane with other areas nearing prescribed limits.

We need positive action to reinstate two lane traffic as existed to improve the situation, not just tweaking the traffic light sequence and timing.

Councillor Bulgin replied:

The traffic signals at Priory Bridge Road came into operation on 23 August but because of technical problems were not linked up to the computer that controls Taunton's traffic signals, the SCOOT system, until 11 November. On that date the set of four traffic signal junctions, Priory Bridge Road at Station Road, Priory Bridge Road at Safeway, Station Road at Staplegrove Road and Bridge Street at Wood Street all became linked together as a single SCOOT 'region', allowing traffic throughout to be measured and managed, minimising delays on all arms of these junctions.

Whilst there are considerable delays on both Priory Bridge Road and Station Road between August and November, which undoubtedly caused frustration and anger to motorists and local traders alike, the technical problems were largely outside the control of the Highway Authority who made every effort to rectify the situation as quickly as possible. The inconvenience caused during this period is regretted.

However, the situation has been monitored regularly over the last few weeks and with the improvements that came on line in November the road network in this area is now working well with delays very little changed from before the junction of Priory Bridge Road was altered. This is being achieved with almost exactly the same throughput of vehicles on Station Road as before the junction was altered but with the addition of a safe crossing facility to allow pedestrians to gain access to this important shopping area.

At this time of year, on the run up to Christmas, when car parks are often full early in the day, not only on Saturdays but most days of the week, the whole of the Taunton road network is under considerable strain. Often long delays are occurring, sometime away from the traditional peak periods. Queues form around north Taunton at peak times at various points on the road network, but are often totally unconnected with the Priory Bridge Road junction with Station Road, although this junction is frequently cited as being the problem in every case.

Somerset County Council has no plans to make any further alterations to this junction and has no budget provision for additional works this year. In line with normal practice the County Council will continue to monitor the situation and, in partnership with the Borough Council, will shortly be starting a review of Taunton Transport Strategy and the issues at Station Road and other congested parts of the network will be addressed through this process.

Councillor Williams responded with a supplementary point. He did not agree that it was just the festive season causing problems. Two lanes should be reinstated.

(ii) Report of Councillor Bulgin

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.

(d) Economic Development, Property and Tourism (Report of Councillor Croad)

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.

(e) Leisure (Councillor Henley)

(i) Councillor Mrs Lewin-Harris asked the following question:

Can Councillor Henley please tell the Council whether the proposed extension to the Tennis Centre at Blackbrook is on or off?

May I remind Council of the sequence of events.

In July this year, Councillor Henley brought to full Council with absolutely no prior consultation, a proposal to commit £75,000 this year and £150,000 next year to partially fund an extension to Blackbrook Tennis Centre. At least those were the figures given to members in the papers sent out with the Council summons. On the evening of the Council meeting, another piece of paper was produced saying that the sum needed was £318,275, all in this financial year and a supplementary estimate for that sum from General Fund Reserves was pushed through.

Conservatives did not support this Supplementary Estimate because:

- (a) There had been no consultation
- (b) There was not justification for the figures and we had no faith in the back-of-the-envelope accounting that seemed to be going on
- (c) We had grave doubts as to whether the Council could afford this sum, given the problems with Wellsprings.

On 24 October the following decision was announced in the Weekly Bulletin:

*Following discussion by Executive Members at the Executive Agenda Setting meeting on 14 October, Councillor Henley has agreed that due to the uncertainty of the funding position with the Wellsprings Centre, the £318,000 allocated in the Capital Budget to the Indoor Tennis Centre be withdrawn.*

Conservatives questioned whether Councillor Henley had the power to make alterations to the Capital Budget in this way, and consequently the following appeared in the Weekly Bulletin on 21 November:

*It has been pointed out that in the 25 October Weekly Bulletin the decision relating to the proposed expansion of the Tennis Centre needs to be corrected. The item wrongly implied that in addition to our withdrawal of our application for LTA funding, a variation to the approved capital programme has also been made by withdrawing the allocation of £318k. This is not so. Any significant changes to the capital programme such as this can only be made by full Council. Until Council approval is given, therefore, this allocation remains in the programme as approved at the full Council meeting of 23 July.*

So, could I ask that the situation be clarified? We expected this item to be on the Council Agenda but it is not. Therefore it seems that £318,000 for the extension of the Blackbrook Tennis Centre is still in the Council's capital programme? Is it therefore proposed that the scheme to expand the tennis centre should go ahead?

Councillor Henley replied:

The £318k allocated to the tennis centre is still technically shown as such in the existing Capital Programme. The decision Council took in October was that we should not proceed with an application to the Lottery/LTA. This was taken on the emerging information on the likely costs of the Wellsprings Centre. Having received this information it seemed wise and prudent that we did not at that stage proceed with the application for a tennis centre extension. Things might change and the tennis project will be kept under review.

The Capital Programme has not been amended yet as we do not know what the amendments are likely to be. We know we have not proceeded with the tennis project, but it is not 100% clear what we

want to do with the money yet. It is likely that it will be used on the Wellsprings project, but until we know the final costs of this it is difficult to make any formal changes to the Council's programme. The entire programme will be represented to Members during the budget setting process for comment and of course will be subject to full Council approval in February.

- (ii) Councillor Mrs Bradley asked the following question:

May I refer Councillor Henley the Portfolio holder for Leisure, Arts and Culture to The Vision for Taunton and the Landsdown Partnership feasibility study on Hunt's Court as Centre for Visual Arts, and receive his assurance that he will be representing Taunton Deane at the Somerset County Council Executive Meeting tomorrow to argue for a deferral of the decision to sell.

Councillor Henley replied that representation had already been made to the Leader of Somerset County Council jointly by the Chair of the Health and Leisure Review Panel (Councillor Mrs Lewin-Harris) and the Leader of the Council (Councillor Horsley). The County Council was therefore already aware of this Council's views.

- (iii) Report of Councillor Henley

Since the last full Council meeting the decision to proceed our Leisure Service towards a Leisure Trust was supported by a joint meeting of the Health and Leisure Review Panel and the Executive. The opportunity to ensure funding for essential improvements to our leisure facilities will of course be further debated at this Council meeting.

At the moment our Parks Strategy is on going and we will be applying for Green Flag status for Wellington Park. The issue of the future of the Wellington Skateboard Park and the ski slope were discussed at last week's Review Panel.

Taunton Deane has been supporting a season of rural cinema events where we have sponsored the showing of recent cinema releases in local rural village halls.

The current re-wiring work continues apace at Wellington Sports Centre. This will however, mean, for safety reasons, a two week closure from 14 December until 28 December to complete the necessary works.

The GP referral programme, now recognised as the most successful scheme in Somerset, has already hit its target this year in less than 9 months and the golf referral programme has regular participants. A recent agreement has been made with Exeter City Football Club who will create links and association with all our junior football

programmes. This will greatly increase the prestige of our junior football sessions.

(f) Communications (Report of Councillor Lees)

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.

(g) Community Leadership (Report of Councillor Lisgo)

Community Safety

Taunton Deane Crime and Disorder Partnership is on course to spend funds allocated for reducing crime and disorder across the area. Projects include "Night Hoops" - late night basketball activity for young people in the Priorswood, Halcon and Wellington areas. Another innovation is a "drug detection" dog which is specially trained to assist the police in tracking down drug related crime in pubs, clubs and public places throughout Taunton Deane.

In addition to the successful parish warden scheme, we have now established Neighbourhood Wardens which have been operating in Taunton North and East since June 2002. Taunton Deane has been chosen by the Home Office to participate in a national pilot of such schemes and we have recently taken part in an evaluation exercise for this purpose.

Youth Matters

A Child Protection Policy is being considered by Full Council tonight. This is a national first for a District Council and covers all aspects of the Council's dealings with young people - for example, as a housing and leisure provider.

The youth magazine Voice 24-7 is now in its eighth issue and continues to involve a growing number of young people in its production and development.

Training for Councillors on youth matters has been delivered - a stimulating and challenging experience for your people and members alike! The training attracted national profile and is planned to take place again next year.

Community Strategy

A community strategy for Wiveliscombe and West Deane area is nearing the end of development. There has been huge local involvement in the exercise, with thousands of people from across the West Deane area giving their views at numerous events that have taken place over the past year. The community strategy will act as a blueprint to guide the future of the area in the longer term.

The Taunton community strategy will link closely with the recent exercise to develop a vision for Taunton and will focus largely on the implementation of the vision.

A great deal of effort has been put in to creating a bid to the RDA via the Somerset Strategic Partnership to support regeneration in Lyngford. I would like to record my thanks to officers for all their efforts on this front in recent weeks.

### Race Equality Scheme

This scheme is another piece of work which has been recently developed and also highlighted as an example of national best practice by the Housing Quality network.

#### (h) Environmental Services (Report of Councillor Mullins)

##### 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.
- Licensing of Churches for Public Entertainment  
Considerable concern was expressed at how any new regulations might affect the ability of churches and secular buildings to stage public entertainment events.

RESOLVED that representations be made to the Government and the Member of Parliament regarding the possible adverse affect this legislation might have on churches and secular buildings.

### 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 question 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.

(i) Resources (Report of Councillor Partington)

Members' Allowances

A report of the Members' Allowance Review Panel was discussed by the Resources Review Panel on 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 Mrs Whitmarsh left the meeting at 8.30 pm.)

(The meeting ended at 8.55 pm.)

**RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL FROM DAVID BAKER, OBE, CHAIR,  
MEMBER'S ALLOWANCES REVIEW PANEL AND COUNCILLOR FARBUS,  
CHAIR, RESOURCES REVIEW PANEL**

**MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES**

**(a) Recommendations of Members' Allowances Review Panel**

The independent Members' Allowances Review Panel completed its review of members' allowances in November last year.

A copy of our report and recommendations was circulated to all Councillors on 18 November 2002. The report and recommendations were also circulated with the papers for the Resources Review Panel which considered the matter at its meeting on 28 November 2002. Our recommendations were arrived at following consideration of much background information, comparisons with other local authorities in Taunton Deane's "family" group and after consultation with individual Councillors and political groups.

The full details of the Panels' terms of reference, the methodology used and research undertaken to carry out the review are contained in our report.

We feel that it is important to emphasise that the basic allowance is not a full and proper recompense for the duties performed and that it does not reflect a similar level of responsibility in the private sector. It also reflects the fact that a proportion of any Councillor's work continues to be voluntary.

Our comparisons with other authorities indicates that the level of basic allowance at Taunton Deane is below the average. This, together with the knowledge of the amount of ward work now expected of a Councillor, has persuaded us to recommend an increase that more closely reflects the time Councillors spend on their public duties.

We saw no reason to make any alteration to the posts previously identified as having special responsibilities. However, we felt that we now had a far greater understanding of the responsibilities of those offices that attract special responsibility allowances. For this reason, we have recommended increases which we feel more accurately compensates Councillors for these important and time consuming duties which now form such an integral part of administering a modern local authority.

It apparent that there now seems to be little concern regarding the payment of expenses for approved duties.

The one concern drawn to our attention was the non-payment of expenses for attending political group meetings.

A great deal of discussion took place on the payment of expenses for attendance at political group meetings. The Panel continue to feel strongly that the payment of expenses for these meetings would not comply with the spirit of openness and transparency that formed such an important theme

within the local government legislation. Although we acknowledge that Group meetings might help the administration of Council meetings, we remain of the view that they are primarily used for party political purposes and should not therefore qualify as an approved duty.

Our suggested list of Approved Duties is set out in the attached Appendix.

The Panel therefore submitted the following recommendations for consideration by the Council:-

1. The existing Members' Allowance Scheme be discontinued and replaced with the following scheme with effect from 1 April 2002.

	£	£
Basic Allowance (payable to all members)	3,200	172,800
Leader	9,000	9,000
Executive Councillors (8)	3,500	28,000
Chair, Planning Committee	3,000	3,000
Chair, Review Board	3,000	3,000
Chair, Review Panels (5)	1,000	5,000
<b>Total Annual Cost</b>		<b>220,800</b>

2. Travelling and subsistence allowances shall be payable to Councillors incurred by them in the necessary carrying out of those official activities as a Councillor as appear on the list of "Approved Duties" set out in the Appendix to this report.

3. Payment for the care of Councillors' dependants to be in accordance with the following conditions:-

- (a) Councillors shall be re-imbursed, up to a specified maximum limit, for costs actually incurred in providing care for any of the following who are at the time part of the claimant's household living with him/her and who would normally be looked after by him/her, whilst the claimant is undertaking an "approved duty".

- children under the age of 14
- elderly persons (aged 60 and over)
- people with disabilities
- people with learning difficulties

- (b) In addition to living as part of the claimant's household the dependant must be unable to be left unsupervised by the carer.

- (c) The carer must not be someone who also ordinarily lives with the claimant as part of the household.

- (d) For the purposes of (a) above:-

- (i) "approved duty" would be a duty under the Council's scheme
  - (ii) The maximum hourly rate repayable would be £4.50 per hour
- (e) The claimant must produce a receipt for payments he/she has made to the carer and must sign a certificate which, amongst other things, will state that the costs were properly and necessarily incurred in the course of, or to permit, him/her undertaking his/her duties as a Councillor.

DAVID BAKER, OBE  
Chair  
On behalf of the Members' Allowances Review Panel

(b) Recommendations of Resources Review Panel

The Resources Review Panel, at its meeting on 28 November 2003 considered the report on the annual review of members' allowances undertaken by the Members' Allowances Review Panel.

Having considered the report, members felt that, bearing in mind the current economic climate, it might not be the time to award themselves a substantial rise in the basic allowance.

The Resources Review Panel therefore RECOMMEND that if it was accepted that the Basic Allowance for Councillors should be increased, such increase be limited to the rate of inflation or the 3.5% Local Government Staff Pay Award, whichever was the higher.

Councillor Mark Farbus

RECOMMENDED LIST OF APPROVED DUTIES

Approved duties for the payment of travelling and subsistence allowances:

- (a) meetings of the Council, the Executive, its Executive Boards, Panels, Committees, Working Parties and sub groups;
- (b) meetings of County Councils committees where the Councillor has been appointed by Taunton Deane as a member or representative;
- (c) any national conferences authorised by the Council and involving an overnight stay;
- (d) meetings of other bodies to which the Council makes appointments (representatives of the Council on outside bodies);
- (e) the following types of meetings:-
  - briefing meetings convened in The Deane House for members by an officer
  - Council organised induction/training seminars
  - agenda setting meetings
  - meetings on Council business with officers, MPs, VIPs and others holding official positions
  - Informal Council
  - civic functions (twinning ceremonies, Britain in Bloom awards, Design Awards, etc)
  - meetings of Parish Councils or Community Associations where the Councillor attends as a representative of the Council (not as a member of the Parish Council or Community Association)
  - meetings within a ward, generated by business with a constituent (any such claims to be supported by completion of a form indicating the area of the journey and the nature of the business)
  - site visits by members of the Planning Committee
- (f) such other duties approved by the Council.



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

(a) General Fund Revenue Estimates 2003/2004

The Executive have considered the draft forward estimates for General Fund Revenue Expenditure for 2003/04. They have also been considered in detail by the Review Board.

The report has been updated to reflect the final local government finance settlement together with a statement from the Financial Services Manager, (Section 12 of Appendix A), on the adequacy of reserves. This is included in full in Appendix A to this recommendation.

The Council are therefore RECOMMENDED that the budget for General Fund services for 2003/04 be agreed and that:-

- (a) the transfer for any underspend in 2002/03 back to General Fund Reserves be agreed;
- (b) the use of £692,499 from General Fund Reserves to support the 2003/04 budget be agreed;
- (c) the development bids set out in the report be agreed;
- (d) the increases to fees and charges set out in the report be agreed;
- (e) the proposed 2003/04 budget being Authority expenditure of £11,262,515 and special expenses of £25,000 be agreed in accordance with the Local Government Act 1992;
- (f) the predicted General Fund Reserve balance at 31 March 2004 of £1,310,308 be noted.

(b) General Fund Capital Programme

The proposed Capital Programme of the Council projects a total programme of £5,861,831 over the next three financial years.

The financing of the General Fund Capital Programme uses a number of funding sources which includes Basic Credit Approvals, Supplementary Credit Approvals, Capital Receipts, Revenue Contributions to Capital (RCCO) and Developers contributions and Section 106 Agreements.

The Executive have considered the proposed Capital Programme which includes (a) schemes to be deleted/reduced from the programme; (b) new schemes to be included in the programme and (c) new schemes that have not been included in the programme. The amount of resources available totalled £5,861,830. The proposed programme as submitted projects a total programme of £5,621,830. This means that there is currently a surplus of £240,000 available. Any new schemes that emerged during the lifespan of the programme will be funded through the surplus resources or through new resources such as additional Capital Receipts.

The Review Board have considered the General Fund Capital Programme and have not suggested any amendments.

The Council are therefore RECOMMENDED that the General Fund Capital Programme as set out in the report circulated to all Councillors with the Executive agenda be agreed.

(c) Council Tax Setting 2003/04

The Council is required to make an annual determination which sets its gross expenditure (including the Housing Revenue Account and balances brought forward) and gross income (also including the Housing Revenue Account and balances brought forward) with the difference as its budget requirement. (This determination is set out in the resolution).

The level of Council Tax for the Police Authority and the County Council has not yet been confirmed.

The estimated expenses chargeable to the non-parished area of Taunton in 2003/04 is £25,000 and this forms part of the total net expenditure of the Council. Details of the Parish Precepts levied and the appropriate Council Tax at Band 'D' are submitted with the Executive agenda.

The estimated balance on the Council Tax Collection Fund is a surplus of £186,321. Taunton Deane's share of this is £22,140. This is reflected in the Revenue Estimates.

The overall debt outstanding on Community Charge is now approximately £2,100. The overall debt has been reduced during the year by "write-offs" of over £27,000 and it is estimated that the Community Charge collection fund as at 15 January 2003 has a surplus of £27,974. This element is not shared with the County Council or the Police Authority and is therefore available as income to the General Fund. This is reflected in the Revenue Estimates.

The Council's requirement, including Parish Precepts and non parish special expenses is £11,568,625. This is then reduced by the amount notified in respect of the Borough's Revenue Support Grant of £3,458,359 and the non-domestic rates distribution from the Pool amounting to £3,579,322.

The net amount, having taken the collection fund position into account of £4,480,830 is used to calculate the Council Tax at Band 'D' by dividing it by the total of the Council Tax base as approved by the Council in December 2002. The Council Tax for the Borough (excluding Parish Precepts and special expenses for the non-parish area) is £109.51, an increase of £2.15 (2%) compared to the 2002/03 Council Tax. The total Council Tax, including the County Council and Policy Authority Precepts, is still subject to confirmation.

The Police Authority have now confirmed their tax increase, and will be levying a Band D tax of £111.64, an increase of 33.86%.

Somerset County Council will agree their tax at a meeting on 19 February 2003, after these papers have been issued. The draft figures used for tax setting purposes show a Band D tax of £858.36, an increase of 11.9%. Should this figure change, the tax setting recommendations will be updated verbally at the meeting.

The Council are therefore RECOMMENDED that subject to final determination, including the Council Tax for Somerset County Council, which is still to be advised:-

- (1) that it be noted that at its meeting on 17 December 2002 the Council calculated the following amounts for the year 2003/04 in accordance with the regulations made under Section 33(5) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992:-
  - (a) 38,122.79 being the amount calculated by the Council in accordance with regulation 3 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992, as its Council Tax base for the year.

(b)

Ash Priors	64.49	Neroche	235.83
Ashbrittle	80.93	North Curry	694.52
Bathealton	80.14	Norton Fitzwarren	652.77
Bishops Hull	1,060.29	Nynehead	143.14
Bishops Lydeard/ Cothelstone	1,747.63	Oake	318.92
Bradford on Tone	270.96	Otterford	160.35
Burrowbridge	196.94	Pitminster	435.55
Cheddon Fitzpaine	617.85	Ruishton/ Thornfalcon	602.68
Chipstable	109.92	Sampford Arundel	128.16

Churchstanton	296.10	Staplegrove	707.17
Combe Florey	107.55	Stawley	112.47
Comeytrowe	2,066.07	Stoke St Gregory	369.72
Corfe	130.85	Stoke St Mary	193.02
Creech St Michael	939.06	Taunton	15,141.11
Durston	56.75	Trull	931.31
Fitzhead	120.74	Wellington	4,501.70
Halse	140.43	Wellington (Without)	288.83
Hatch Beauchamp	241.44	West Bagborough	155.29
Kingston St Mary	426.88	West Buckland	391.84
Langford Budville	211.37	West Hatch	135.36
Lydeard St Lawrence/Tolland	195.55	West Monkton	1,058.45
Milverton	565.70	Wiveliscombe	1,036.98

being the amounts calculated by the Council, in accordance with Regulation 6 of the Regulations, as the amounts of its Council Tax Base for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate.

(2) That the following amounts be now calculated by the Council for the year 2003/04 in accordance with Sections 32 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992:-

(a) £53,818,644 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 32(2)(a) to (c) of the Act.  
*(Gross Expenditure including amount required for working balance).*

(b) £42,250,019 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 32(3)(a) to (c) of the Act.  
*(Gross Income including reserves to be used to meet Gross Expenditure).*

(c) £11,568,625 being the amount by which the aggregate at (a) above exceeds the aggregate at (b) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 32(4) of the Act, as its budget requirement for the year.

(d) £7,087,795 being the aggregate of the sums which the Council estimates will be transferred in the year from its Collection Fund to its General Fund in accordance with Section 97(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 (*Council Tax Surplus*) and increased by the amount of any sum which the Council estimates will be transferred from its Collection Fund to its General Fund pursuant to the Collection Fund (Community Charge) directions under Sec 98(4) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 made on 7 February 1994 (*Community Charge Surplus*).

(e) £117.54 
$$\frac{(c) - (d)}{1(a)} = \frac{11,568,448 - 7,087,618}{38,122.79}$$

being the amount calculated at (c) above less the amount at (d) above, all divided by the amount at 1(a) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 33(1) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year. (*Average Council Tax at Band D for Borough Including Parish Precepts and Special Expenses*).

(f) £306,110 being the aggregate amount of all special items referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act. (*Parish Precepts and Special Expenses*).

(g) £109.51 
$$\frac{(e) - (f)}{1(a)} = \frac{117.54 - 306.110}{38,122.79}$$

being the amount at (e) above less the result given by dividing the amount at (f) above by the amount at 1(a) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no special items relate. (*Council Tax at Band D for Borough Excluding Parish Precepts and Special Expenses*).

(h)

Ash Priors	109.51	Neroche	117.99
Ashbrittle	125.57	North Curry	126.07
Bathealton	117.00	Norton Fitzwarren	126.98
Bishops Hull	122.30	Nynehead	123.48
Bishops Lydeard/ Cothelstone	121.98	Oake	119.39
Bradford on Tone	122.43	Otterford	109.51
Burrowbridge	132.00	Pitminster	116.86
Cheddon Fitzpaine	117.60	Ruishton/ Thornfalcon	127.04
Chipstable	123.16	Sampford Arundel	132.53
Churchstanton	126.99	Staplegrove	118.70
Combe Florey	120.20	Stawley	118.40
Comeytrove	115.56	Stoke St Gregory	125.06
Corfe	116.58	Stoke St Mary	114.69
Creech St Michael	120.69	Taunton	111.16
Durston	110.21	Trull	117.03
Fitzhead	123.59	Wellington	126.01
Halse	121.97	Wellington (Without)	121.63
Hatch Beauchamp	120.28	West Bagborough	115.95
Kingston St Mary	123.57	West Buckland	127.37
Langford Budville	117.32	West Hatch	123.41
Lydeard St Lawrence/Tolland	117.18	West Monkton	116.36
Milverton	120.12	Wiveliscombe	123.98

being the amounts given by adding to the amount at (g) above, the amounts of the special item or items relating to dwellings in those parts of the Council's area mentioned above divided in each case by the amount at 1(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(3) of the Act, as the basic amounts of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate.

*(Council Taxes at Band D for Borough Parish and Special Expenses).*

- (i) See overleaf

9.2.2(i)

Valuation Band	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Ash Priors	73.01	85.17	97.34	109.51	133.85	158.18	182.52	219.02
Ashbottle	83.72	97.66	111.62	125.57	153.48	181.38	209.29	251.14
Bathealton	78.00	91.00	104.00	117.00	143.00	169.00	195.00	234.00
Bishops Hull	81.54	95.12	108.71	122.30	149.48	176.65	203.84	244.60
Bishops Lydeard/Cothelstone	81.32	94.87	108.42	121.98	149.09	176.19	203.30	244.86
Bradford On Tone	81.62	95.22	108.82	122.43	149.64	176.84	203.30	244.86
Burrowbridge	88.00	102.66	117.33	132.00	161.34	190.67	220.00	264.00
Cheddou Fitzpaine	78.40	91.46	104.53	117.60	143.74	169.87	196.00	235.20
Chipstable	82.11	95.79	109.47	123.16	150.53	177.90	205.27	246.32
Churchstanton	84.66	98.77	112.88	126.99	155.21	183.43	211.65	253.98
Combe Florey	80.14	93.48	106.84	120.20	146.92	173.62	200.34	240.40
Comeytrove	77.04	89.88	102.72	115.56	141.24	166.92	192.60	231.12
Creecch St Michael	77.72	90.67	103.62	116.58	142.49	168.39	194.30	233.16
Corfe	80.46	93.87	107.28	120.69	147.51	174.33	201.15	241.38
Durston	73.48	85.71	97.96	110.21	134.71	159.19	183.69	220.42
Fitzhead	82.40	96.12	109.86	123.59	151.06	178.52	205.99	247.18
Halse	81.32	94.87	108.42	121.97	149.08	176.18	203.29	243.94
Hatch Beauchamp	80.19	93.55	106.91	120.28	147.01	173.74	200.47	240.56
Kingston St Mary	82.58	96.11	109.84	123.57	151.03	178.49	205.95	247.14
Langford Budville	78.22	91.24	104.28	117.32	143.40	169.46	195.54	234.64
Lydeard St Lawrence/Tolland	78.12	91.14	104.16	117.18	143.22	169.26	195.30	234.36
Milverton	80.08	93.42	106.77	120.12	146.82	173.51	200.20	240.24
Neroche	78.66	91.77	104.88	117.99	144.21	170.43	196.65	235.98
North Curry	84.05	98.05	112.06	126.07	154.09	182.10	210.12	252.14
Norton Fitzwarren	84.66	98.76	112.87	126.98	155.20	183.41	211.64	253.96
Nynehead	82.32	96.04	109.76	123.48	150.92	178.36	205.80	246.96
Oake	79.60	92.85	106.12	119.39	145.93	172.45	198.99	238.78
Otterford	73.01	85.17	97.34	109.51	133.85	158.18	182.52	219.02
Pitminster	77.91	90.89	103.87	116.86	142.83	168.80	194.77	233.72
Ruishton/Thorntalton	84.70	98.80	112.92	127.04	155.28	183.50	211.74	254.08
Sampford Arundel	88.36	103.07	117.80	132.53	161.99	191.43	220.89	265.06
Staplegrave	79.14	92.32	105.51	118.70	145.08	171.45	197.84	237.40
Stawley	78.94	92.08	105.24	118.40	144.72	171.02	197.34	236.80
Stoke St Gregory	83.38	97.26	111.16	125.06	152.86	180.64	208.44	250.12
Stoke St Mary	76.46	89.20	101.94	114.69	140.18	165.66	191.15	229.38
Taunton	74.11	86.45	98.81	111.16	135.87	160.56	185.27	222.32
Trull	78.02	91.02	104.02	117.03	143.04	169.04	195.05	234.06
Wellington	84.01	98.00	112.01	126.01	154.02	182.01	210.02	252.02
Wellington W/out	81.09	94.60	108.11	121.63	148.66	175.69	202.72	243.26
West Bagborough	77.30	90.18	103.06	115.95	141.72	167.48	193.25	231.90
West Buckland	84.92	99.06	113.22	127.37	155.68	183.98	212.29	254.74
West Hatch	82.28	95.98	109.70	123.41	150.84	178.26	205.69	246.82
West Monkton	77.58	90.50	103.43	116.36	142.22	168.07	193.94	232.72
Wiveliscombe	82.66	96.42	110.20	123.98	151.54	179.08	206.64	247.96

being the amounts given by multiplying the amounts at (h) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands (Council Tax for Individual Parishes and the Borough).

That it be noted that for the year 2002/03 the Somerset County Council and the Avon & Somerset Police Authority have stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:-

Somerset County Council	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Avon & Somerset Police Authority	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00



9.2.4 That, having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at 9.2.2 (i) and 9.2.3 above, the Council, in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the following amounts as the amounts of council tax for the year 2003/04 for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:-

Valuation Band	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Ash Priors	719.68	839.61	959.57	1079.51	1319.41	1559.29	1799.19	2159.02
Ashbriattle	730.39	852.10	973.85	1095.57	1339.04	1582.49	1825.96	2191.14
Bathealton	724.67	845.44	966.23	1087.00	1328.56	1570.11	1811.67	2174.00
Bishops Hull	728.21	849.56	970.94	1092.30	1335.04	1577.76	1820.51	2184.60
Bishops Lydeard/Cothelstone	727.99	849.31	970.65	1091.98	1334.65	1577.30	1819.97	2183.96
Bradford On Tone	728.29	849.66	971.05	1092.43	1335.20	1577.95	1820.72	2184.86
Burrowbridge	734.67	857.10	979.56	1102.00	1346.90	1591.78	1836.67	2204.00
Cheddron Fitzpaine	725.07	845.90	966.76	1087.60	1329.30	1570.98	1812.67	2175.20
Chipstable	728.78	850.23	971.70	1093.16	1336.09	1579.01	1821.94	2186.32
Churchstanton	731.33	853.21	975.11	1096.99	1340.77	1584.54	1828.32	2193.98
Combe Florey	726.81	847.92	969.07	1090.20	1332.48	1574.73	1817.01	2180.40
Comeytrove	723.71	844.32	964.95	1085.56	1326.80	1568.03	1809.27	2171.12
Corfe	724.39	845.11	965.85	1086.58	1328.05	1569.50	1810.97	2173.16
Creecch St Michael	727.13	848.31	969.51	1090.69	1333.07	1575.44	1817.82	2181.38
Durston	720.15	840.15	960.19	1080.21	1320.27	1560.30	1800.36	2160.42
Fitzhead	729.07	850.56	972.09	1093.59	1336.62	1579.63	1822.66	2187.18
Halse	727.99	849.30	970.65	1091.97	1334.64	1577.29	1819.96	2183.94
Hatch Beauchamp	726.86	847.99	969.14	1090.28	1332.57	1574.85	1817.14	2180.56
Kingston St Mary	729.05	850.55	972.07	1093.57	1336.59	1579.60	1822.62	2187.14
Langford Budville	724.89	845.68	966.51	1087.32	1328.96	1570.57	1812.21	2174.64
Lydeard St Lawrence/Tolland	726.75	847.86	969.00	1090.12	1332.38	1574.62	1816.87	2180.24
Milverton	725.33	846.21	967.11	1087.99	1329.77	1571.54	1813.32	2175.98
Neroche	730.72	852.49	974.29	1096.07	1339.65	1583.21	1826.79	2192.14
North Curry	731.33	853.20	975.10	1096.98	1340.76	1584.52	1828.31	2193.96
Norton Fitzwarren	728.99	850.48	971.99	1093.48	1336.48	1579.47	1822.47	2186.96
Nynehead	726.27	847.29	968.35	1089.39	1331.49	1573.56	1815.66	2178.78
Oake	719.68	839.61	959.57	1079.51	1319.41	1559.29	1799.19	2159.02
Otterford	724.58	845.33	966.10	1086.86	1328.39	1569.91	1811.44	2173.72
Pitminster	731.37	853.24	975.15	1097.04	1340.84	1584.61	1828.41	2194.08
Ruishon/Thornfalcon	735.03	857.51	980.03	1102.53	1347.55	1592.54	1837.56	2203.06
Sampford Arundel	725.81	846.76	967.74	1088.70	1330.64	1572.56	1814.51	2177.40
Staplegrove	730.65	846.52	967.47	1088.40	1330.28	1572.13	1814.01	2176.80
Stawley	725.61	846.52	967.47	1088.40	1330.28	1572.13	1814.01	2176.80
Stoke St Gregory	730.05	851.70	973.39	1095.06	1338.42	1581.75	1825.11	2190.12
Stoke St Mary	723.13	843.64	964.17	1084.69	1325.74	1566.77	1807.82	2169.38
Taunton	720.78	840.89	961.04	1081.16	1321.43	1561.67	1801.94	2162.32
Trull	724.69	845.46	966.25	1087.03	1328.60	1570.15	1811.72	2174.06
Wellington	730.68	852.44	974.24	1096.01	1339.58	1583.12	1826.69	2192.02
Wellington W/out	727.76	849.04	970.34	1091.63	1334.22	1576.80	1819.39	2183.26
West Bagborough	723.97	844.62	965.29	1085.95	1327.28	1568.59	1809.92	2171.90
West Buckland	731.59	853.50	975.45	1097.37	1341.24	1585.09	1828.96	2194.74
West Hatch	728.95	850.42	971.93	1093.41	1336.40	1579.37	1822.36	2186.82
West Monkton	724.25	844.94	965.66	1086.36	1327.78	1569.78	1810.61	2172.72
Wiveliscombe	729.33	850.86	972.43	1093.98	1337.10	1580.19	1823.31	2187.96

(d) Borrowing Limit

Local Authorities are statutorily required to determine for each Financial Year (a) their overall borrowing limit; (b) their short-term borrowing limit, and (c) a limit on the proportion of interest that was payable by them at variable rates.

The determination has to be made by the Council before the beginning of the Financial Year.

The borrowing limit is a total of (d) the current level of outstanding debt; (e) the anticipated authorised new borrowing in 2003/04; (f) provision for possible temporary revenue borrowing in anticipation of income being received.

Limits set by the Council in February 2002 have been in place for a number of years and are still considered to be adequate. No changes are therefore proposed.

The Council are therefore RECOMMENDED that for 2003/04:-

- (a) the overall borrowing be fixed at £44,000,000;
- (b) the short-term borrowing at any time should not exceed £11,000,000 representing 25% of the borrowing limit, and
- (c) that no more than 50% of the total amount of interest payable may be at variable interest rates.

Councillor Jefferson Horsley

## **APPENDIX A**

### **TAUNTON DEANE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**COUNCIL - 25 FEBRUARY 2003**

#### **REPORT OF THE FINANCIAL SERVICES MANAGER**

**This Matter Is The Responsibility of Executive Cllr Horsley (Leader of the Council)**

#### **GENERAL FUND REVENUE ESTIMATES 2003/04**

##### **1.0 Purpose**

1.1 To consider the draft forward estimates for general fund revenue expenditure for the next financial year 2003/04.

##### **2.0 Background**

2.1 The 2002/03 budget setting report, which was considered by full Council in February 2002 required only £83k of General Fund Reserves to support spending. This was a significant step forward in this Council's drive to set a sustainable budget and leave reserves in a healthy position, sufficient to deliver the Council's key corporate priorities.

2.2 Members of the Executive, along with Corporate Management Team (CMT), started work on the authority's medium term financial plan in the summer of 2002. The financial model was refined and updated to predict the Council's financial position over a three-year period. The model showed quite clearly the predicted "budget gap" that had to be resolved for 2003/04, and allowed the Executive to refine their financial strategy in the longer term.

2.3 As the year progressed, and the picture with our capital programme became ever more gloomy, it was clear that some difficult decisions would be required in this budget round. The primary objective has been to present a budget for 2003/04 that keeps the Council's reserves at an acceptable level, the Council Tax increase at a minimum, and also allows the Authority the flexibility to deliver key projects.

2.4 The model highlighted a budget gap, which eventually settled at £1.164m. The Executive's proposals for "closing the gap" were issued for consultation to all Councillors in late December (yellow folder). The political groups have also considered the proposals and the Executive has been informed of their comments.

##### **3.0 The General Fund**

3.1 The General Fund Revenue Account is the Council's main fund and shows the income and expenditure relating to the provision of services which residents,

visitors and businesses all have access to including Planning, Environmental Services, Car Parks, Leisure Services, certain Housing functions, Community Services and Corporate Services.

- 3.2 The Council makes charges for some of its services that reduce the net cost of providing them. The expenditure that remains is funded by central government via the Revenue Support Grant (RSG-31%), and National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR-32%). The remainder is primarily funded by the Council Taxpayer (37%).

**4.0 Local Government Finance Settlement 2002/03**

- 4.1 This is the first year of the new grant system for the distribution of local government funding. In their provisional announcement on 5 December 2002 the Government have allocated £7.066m of grant to Taunton Deane (compared to our actual grant received in 2002/03 of £6.913m).

- 4.2 Further analysis of the settlement papers showed that there was also a proposal to fund the Housing Benefit Administration and Council Tax Benefit Administration grant separately this year (direct from Dept of Works and Pensions (DWP)), and this added another £278k to our total government funding in 2003/04.

- 4.3 The final settlement figures have now been received and the Government’s agreed contribution towards our spending requirement has fallen by £27,823 from the draft figures produced in December.

- 4.3 In order to compare this years settlement with last years figures, we need to look at the total picture of Revenue Support Grant (RSG), National Non-Domestic Rates and the HB/CT Administration Grant as follows:-

	2002/03	2003/04	Variance	
	£'000	£'000	£'000	%
Revenue Support Grant (RSG)	2,673	3,458	785	
NNDR Contribution	4,239	3,579	-660	
HB/CT Admin Grant Paid by DWP	224	502	278	
	7,136	7,539	403	5.6%

In total, the Government’s contribution towards our spending requirement has risen by £403k (5.6%).

- 4.4 In comparison with the national average, and in particular, our Somerset neighbours, this was a fairly poor result:-

	% Increase	Floor %	Ceiling %
Shire Districts	7.6	3.0	12.5
County Councils	5.7	} 3.5	8.0
Shire Unitaries	6.3		
Metropolitans	7.2		
London Boroughs	5.4		

	<b>2002/03</b>	<b>2003/04</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>£ Per</b>
	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>	<b>Increase</b>	<b>Population</b>
Mendip	6,818	7,660	12.36	73.68
Sedgemoor	7,764	8,480	9.23	79.99
South Somerset	10,268	10,584	3.08	70.07
<b>Taunton Deane</b>	<b>7,136</b>	<b>7,540</b>	<b>5.66</b>	<b>73.50</b>
West Somerset	3,344	3,627	8.49	103.39
Somerset CC	257,167	274,081	6.58	549.58

4.4 The tables show that Taunton Deane Borough Council had a below average settlement. One obvious reason why it is significantly lower than our neighbours is the result of a new aspect of the grant allocation formula (resource equalisation concept). This aims to take into account a Councils' ability to raise council tax locally. It looks at the actual council tax level of each authority compared with the national average, and their taxbase compared with the national average. Due to our lower than average Band D Tax, **and** our greater than average proportion of higher banded properties, Taunton Deane have not fared too well on this new aspect of the formula.

4.5 Further detail on our neighbouring authorities Band D tax position is set out in Appendix A.

#### **5.0 Budget Strategy For 2003/04**

5.1 As mentioned in the background section of this report, the mission this year has been to present a budget for 2003/04 that keeps the Council's reserves at an acceptable level (to allow flexibility in funding key projects), and the Council Tax increase at a minimum.

5.2 The sound principles of medium term financial planning introduced last year have been continued and built upon this year. The current problems with the capital programme emphasise even more the importance of planning not just for the budget year ahead, but for the years ahead. Not only do we face the challenge of funding Wellsprings, and Silk Mills, but are likely to face significant revenue funding problems in future years due to further increases in the employers pension fund contributions.

5.3 Reserves are significantly higher than this time last year, mainly due to the CSL settlement being released from earmarked reserves. This does offer some flexibility in the budget funding decision but the overriding principle of ensuring the authority's underlying expenditure is not reliant on reserves remains.

5.4 As with earlier years, there is no contingency built into the 2003/04 budget. All requests for new funding must be presented as supplementary estimates from the General Fund Reserve.

## 6.0 Budget Consultation

6.1 All Councillors have been consulted on the Executives' budget proposals, as in previous years. In addition, two forms of public consultation have been undertaken:-

- Consultation Workshops
- Deane Dispatch

6.2 The results of both exercises are reproduced in full at Appendix B (Deane Dispatch) and Appendix C (Consultation Workshops).

6.3 The results have been considered by the Executive in preparing their budget proposals, and have been extremely useful in trying to target both spending bids and cuts.

## 7.0 General Fund Budget Proposals 2003/04

7.1 The following section outlines the draft proposals of the Executive. For ease of reference, the table presented in the budget consultation packs (yellow folders Appendix A) has been reproduced below. There have been a few amendments made to their proposals, and these are shown separately at the end of the table. The figures shown below, and the resultant budget gap have assumed a 4.5% council tax increase.

7.2 Executive's Proposals To Close The Budget Gap – Draft

Dir	Exec Cllr	Service	Proposal	Saving £	Remaining Budget Gap £
<b><u>BUDGET GAP</u></b>					1,163,519
JJT	PP	R05 Land Charges	Increase Fees & Charges	45,530	1,117,989
JJT	RB	F01 Concessionary Travel	Reduce Postage, Travel, Consultancy Budgets	25,170	1,092,819
JJT	JH	R02 Members Services	Reduce Travel & Subsistence Budget	2,000	1,090,819
JJT	RB	S06 Car Parking	Increase Fees & Charges	50,000	1,040,819
JJT	PP	Central Support	Restructure of Central Services	13,700	1,027,119
JJT	PP	R41 Financial Services	Reduce Training, Printing & Banking Budgets	3,730	1,023,389
JJT	PP	R42 Financial Services	Reduce Postage Budget	3,500	1,019,889

JJT	PP	R77 Central Training	Remove Lease Car Budget	5,090	1,014,799
JJT	PP	R06 Reg. of Electors	Reduce Advertisement & Employee	410	1,014,389
JJT	PP	R05 Legal Services	Charge For s106 Agmts	3,000	1,011,389
JD	MM	C02 Crematorium	Increase Fees & Charges	30,000	981,389
JD	RH	C04 Parks	Plants in Deane House	4,000	977,389
JD	RH	C04 Parks	Reduce Plant Stock in Nursery	16,000	961,389
JD	RH	C04 Parks	Roundabouts – replace floral planting - shrubs	6,000	955,389
AH	CC	C01 Publicity & Tourism	Remove Road side visitor Facilities	3,080	952,309
AH	CC	R45 Valuation Services	Reduce consultancy budget	2,000	950,309
AH	CC	S01 Economic Dev.	Reduce new business directory budget	1,000	949,309
AH	CC	S01 Economic Dev.	Reduce 4 commercial property register	2,000	947,309
AH	CC	S03 Planning Misc	Reduce Env. Schemes	4,000	943,309
PJ	RH	C04 Parks	Reduce Parks Contract Spec	38,000	905,309
PJ	RH	C16 Leisure Dev.	End Funding of Playworker	8,500	896,809
JJT	JH	Corporate	Impact of Draft Local Govt Settlement	326,795	570,014
JJT	RB	S06 Car Parking	VAT on Penalty Charges	10,000	560,014
<b>AMENDMENTS TO BUDGET GAP IN CONSULTATION PACK</b>					
SF	LL	P05 Community Initiative	Reduction in Priority 1 bid for LSP Funding	(5,000)	555,014
JJT	JH	Corporate	Collection Fund Surplus	(50,114)	504,900
JJT	JH	Corporate	Impact of Final Local Govt Settlement	27,823	532,723
PJ	RH	C12 Leisure	Error in Leisure Salaries Estimates	52,460	585,183

7.3 The gap has risen from £560,014 at budget consultation, to £585,183 as shown above.

## 8.0 General Fund Reserve Position - Options

- 8.1 The 2001/02 Statement of Accounts has now been formally signed off by our auditors and has received an unqualified audit opinion.
- 8.2 A summary of the predicted General Fund Reserve position, prior to the budget setting decision is as follows:-

	£
Opening Balance 1.4.02	2,122,409
Less / Amount Used To Support 2002/03 Budget	83,184
Less/ Amount Earmarked For VAT	70,000
Less / Supplementary Estimates Agreed To Date	747,775
	1,221,450
Add / CSL Earmarked Reserves Released For General Use	350,000
Add/ Refund of NNDR Due To Revaluation Of Assets	229,320
Add/ Quarter 2 Reported Underspend	188,300
Add/ Corporate Priorities Fund Underspends Returned To Reserve	13,737
Predicted Balance Before Budget Setting	2,002,807

- 8.3 The remaining budget gap of £585,183 could be funded by the use of reserves or by amending the council tax level from the 4.5% already included. The following table shows some of the options available:-

% Increase in Ctax	2%	3%	4%	5%	6%	7%	8%	9%	10%
Ctax Amount (£'000)	-102	-61	-20	20	61	102	143	184	225
Reserves (£'000)	687	646	605	565	524	483	442	401	360
	585	585	585	585	585	585	585	585	585
<u>Reserves</u>									
Predicted Balance	2,003	2,003	2,003	2,003	2,003	2,003	2,003	2,003	2,003
Use of Reserves	687	646	605	565	524	483	442	401	360
How much is left?	1,316	1,357	1,398	1,438	1,479	1,520	1,561	1,602	1,643

## 9.0 Review Board Proposal

- 9.1 The Review Board considered the Councils budget position at their meeting on 30th January 2003 and agreed that the Executive should be requested to consider one amendment to their proposed budget.



	<b>Proposal</b>	<b>Saving £</b>	<b>Remaining Budget Gap £</b>
			585,183
Add Back/	Proposal to end funding of playworker (It was recognised that the above post no longer existed, but the Review Board proposed that this funding be reinstated to the budget for use on “childrens play”)	8,500	593,683

## **10. Proposed General Fund Budget 2003/04**

- 10.1 The budget amendment submitted by the Review Board has been fully considered by Executive Councillors, and a sum of £5,000 will be added back to the budget. The Councils’ Inclusion Officer will use this on “Childrens Play” issues.
- 10.2 This increases the budget gap shown in 7.2 from £585,183 to £590,183.
- 10.3 The Executive wishes to present the following proposal to close the remaining budget gap.

	<b>Revenue Generated £’000</b>
<b>Proposed Total Council Tax Increase = 2%</b> (the amount shown opposite is the reduction in income generated by the 4.5% included in the budget estimates presented to the Review Board)	-102
Use of Revenue Reserves	692
<b>Total</b>	<b>590</b>

- 10.4 The following table compares the proposed budget with the original budget for the current year.

	<b>Original Estimate 2002/03 £</b>	<b>Forward Estimate 2003/04 £</b>
Total Spending on Services	15,183,550	14,959,130
Revenue Financing of Capital	73,790	75,910
Asset Management Revenue Account	(3,678,720)	(2,521,593)
Contribution To DLO Reserve	148,190	155,762
Loans Fund Principal	(542,593)	(556,832)
Contribution to Vehicle & Plant Account	73,400	61,777

Interest Income	(231,160)	(219,140)
Contribution From General Fund Balances	(83,184)	(692,499)
<b>AUTHORITY EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>10,943,273</b>	<b>11,262,515</b>

- 10.5 A separate booklet, circulated with the agenda, contains the summarised revenue, capital, and HRA estimates.
- 10.6 Only the priority 1 development bid items have been included in the proposed budget. These have been analysed between recurring and non-recurring items in Appendix D.
- 10.7 Fees and charges have been increased in line with inflation unless shown in the specifically listed in section 7.2 of this report. A summary of the proposals on the major fees and charges areas of the budget is set out in Appendix E. Many of these have already been approved by the relevant Executive Councillor, but are included here for completeness.

## **11. General Fund Reserve**

- 11.1 The impact of this proposal on the Councils reserves, should the current year outturn match the original current year budget prediction, is as follows:-

	£
Predicted Balance Before Budget Setting (see 8.2)	2,002,807
Less / Amount Used To Support 2003/04 Budget	692,499
Predicted Balance at 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2004	<u>1,310,308</u>

- 11.2 The predicted balance shown above represents 6 weeks worth of Authority Expenditure.
- 11.3 The Authority does have other Reserves and Provisions in place, but they are all earmarked funds, and cannot be used for any other purpose.

## **12. Adequacy of Reserves**

- 12.1 With the existing statutory and regulatory framework, it is the responsibility of the s151 Officer (Financial Services Manager) to advise the Council about the level of reserves that they should hold.
- 12.2 The predicted General Fund Reserve position is set out in section 10.1. A sum of £692,499 is required from this reserve to support spending in 2003/04. This support is being used for one-off items, such as the £500,000 RCCO and £141,757 of priority 1 development bids. The predicted balance on this reserve, having set the 2003/04 budget is £1,310,308.

- 12.3 In order to assess the adequacy of this level of reserve balance, I have reviewed, alongside our medium term financial plan, the strategic, operational, and financial risks facing this Council. The key financial risk areas facing this Council requiring careful attention are listed below:-
- Wellsprings. Our project managers will provide the final cost of completion in the next few weeks, but the outcome of our application for funding from Sport Lottery will not be known until mid April. The budget has been prepared assuming that costs will be in line with the latest estimate, and the funding bid will be successful. Should either change, then the Council will review its holding of reserves and assets.
  - As Members are aware, the budget for bed and breakfast for those declared homeless in TDBC has risen during the last year or so. The 2002/03 budget is predicted to overspend by £90,000. A range of measures have been put in place to try and address the problem, but the current spending pattern is expected to continue and has been built into the 2003/04 budget.
  - Car Park Income has fluctuated over the last two years. This is a significant source of income for this Council and small variations can have a noticeable impact on our bottom line budget position. The 2003/04 budget has been prepared on a prudent basis, assuming that income will be at similar levels to those predicted for the 2002/03 original budget.
  - The regulations for housing benefit are being fundamentally changed for 2003/04. It is difficult to assess the impact of the changes on either the HB subsidy grant or the HB admin grant. The position will be carefully monitored during 2003/04.
  - Silk Mills. For the last two years this Council has contributed significant sums of capital towards this project. It is expected that this Council will contribute further in future years, but at this stage, no further provision has been made in the capital programme. Each year the overall financial position will be reassessed and a decision will be taken on whether or not funding can be made available for this scheme.
- 12.4 In making my recommendation below, I have also considered the assumptions underpinning the 2003/04 budget (eg inflation, provision for capital receipts), and the current financial management arrangements (frequency and robustness of budget monitoring regime).
- 12.5 I have also considered the level of earmarked reserves and provisions (significant balances shown in Appendix F).
- 12.6 The predicted balance on the General Fund Reserve represents 6 weeks worth of authority expenditure, or 11.3% of this Council's budget requirement.
- 12.7 Based on the above, I am pleased to report that I believe the Council's reserves to be adequate and the estimates used in preparing the 2003/04 budget sufficiently robust.

### **13. Council Tax**

- 13.1 The Council Tax calculation and formal tax setting resolution is considered in a separate report on this agenda. The proposed budget for Taunton Deane shown above will result in a Band D Council Tax of £109.51; and increase of £2.15 (2%) on 2002/03.
- 13.2 This represents an increase of only 4 pence per week.
- 13.3 The Band D Taxpayer receives all the services provided by the Borough Council at a cost of £2.11 per week.

### **14. Taunton Unparished Area**

- 14.1 The estimated expenses chargeable to the non-parished area of Taunton in 2003/04 amounts to £25,000 and this forms part of the total net expenditure of the Council. The precept in 2002/03 was particularly low at £7,710 and took advantage of some reserves that had been built up in previous years. This is not an option for 2003/04, but the charge is still considerably lower than that imposed historically.
- 14.2 The special expenses represent costs arising in respect of street / footway lighting and bus shelters.

### **15. Recommendations**

- 15.1 The Executive is asked to recommend to full Council the budget for general fund services for 2003/04 as outlined above. In particular the Executive is requested recommend to full Council to:
- (a) Approve the transfer for any underspend in 2002/03 back to General Fund Reserves.
  - (b) Approve the use of £692,499 from General Fund Reserves to support the 2003/04 budget
  - (c) Approve the development bids outlined in Appendix D.
  - (d) Approve the increases to fees and charges listed in Appendix E.
  - (e) Approve the proposed 2003/04 budget, being Authority Expenditure of £11,262,515, and Special Expenses of £25,000 in accordance with the Local Government Act 1992.
  - (g) Note the predicted General Fund Reserve balance at 31.3.04 of £1,310,308.

**Shirlene Adam**

**Financial Services Manager (01823 356418)**

[s.adam@tauntondeane.gov.uk](mailto:s.adam@tauntondeane.gov.uk)

## **COUNCIL MEETING 25 FEBRUARY 2003**

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

Election fever is in the air. I hope however that reason and a sharing of views is not replaced by point scoring and evocative comments. The Liberal Democrats have always prided themselves on their reasoned approach towards policy and decision-making. As a minority administration I believe that we have shared our burden with the council on every item, notwithstanding the new system mitigating against this

#### **1. ASYLUM SEEKERS**

The meeting for the members briefing with Clearsprings the private sector company appointed by the Home Office has now been scheduled for 6.00pm on Monday 17 March. This will give members the chance of hearing for themselves the steps that are being taken. Clearsprings enjoy a good reputation with Refugee Action an independent non-government organisation whose volunteers work closely with asylum seekers in Bristol and other parts of the United Kingdom.

There are three things which should guide us in our approach:-

- a) We should support the government's policy of dispersing asylum seekers nationwide. It is right to redistribute the disproportionate burden on services borne by the Home Counties and London.
- b) We should insist that a thorough testing of the availability of resources in local services is undertaken before the number of refugees is determined for Taunton. Asylum seekers deserve the same standards of support as our own disadvantaged households and homeless. We cannot have our own waiting lists increased whether accommodation, health or education by their arrival.
- c) We should, in conjunction with Somerset County Council and Sedgemoor District Council jointly appoint a project manager to handle all our problems to our mutual satisfaction, working in collaboration with all the other stakeholders in the community such as the police, the NHS and with the voluntary sector.

We have an overall responsibility to manage this politically, keeping the lid on emotions and allowing reason and common sense to prevail.

#### **2. WELLSPRINGS CENTRE**

The "Due Diligence" report is with you. Let us dwell for a minute on its two main conclusions. Firstly the District Auditor makes clear that the council neither acted improperly or imprudently. Secondly, the District Auditor's letter to the Chief Executive states "...whilst stronger processes in these areas might have resulted in bringing matters to a head earlier, *it is unlikely that the end result would have been different*" (my italics).

## **Page 2**

I draw some solace from this. Firstly it illustrates that if there is to be a “blame” culture about what went wrong, it should lie fairly and squarely on the shoulders of the contractor. Fortunately the courts are seeing it that way on the few times we have had adjudication so far. Secondly it means that we can concentrate on getting the project finished.

It is without pride that I say the stakeholders have been let down. We are going to be two years behind delivering the sports centre and it is way over its original budget. The end is in sight and I believe that we will be no further contributions from the tax payer.

That is an achievement in itself and whilst recognising that we have had to use reserves which could have been identified for other projects, the consummate skill in which we have managed the affairs of the council and kept the Council Tax down to 2% is a tribute to years of good financial management by this Executive. I would remind councillors, too, that we will still be claiming strongly against the contractor for non-performance and failure to complete as well as for the rectification work to be undertaken.

What I am proud of is the extraordinary work that has gone on to bring together the proposal that was sent to Sport England on 13 February. To draw in our partners such as the County Council, Ladymead school itself and start the dialogue with Sport England as well as working with our consultants Symonds to get the maximum price identified was real hard work and dedication on the part of our hard-pressed team of officers. The Council will get an early opportunity to discuss the final position once Symonds have received the final tenders on behalf of Bluestone plc our appointed contractor.

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

I am including the relocation of the livestock market under this heading as we cannot separate it from the redevelopment potential of the Firepool area we are working on with the RDA.

The Executive has agreed to explore further the suitability of Junction 26 as a possible site for a regional agricultural centre. The Council’s costs of this will be minimum as they are likely to be split between the auctioneers and the RDA.

At a time of agricultural decline, and with markets closing nationwide, it was right to explore with Sedgemoor the possibility of merging Taunton and Highbridge livestock markets. That this is unlikely to go ahead means that we must explore elsewhere.

Junction 26 makes a lot of economic sense and can probably be delivered quickly and cost-effectively. It may not have the lure of Junction 24 for ancillary businesses which makes it more likely to be closer to a relocation. There could be an opportunity to attract tourist interests there.

**Page 3**

In the meantime, it frees up the use of Firepool, combining our land with neighbouring Network Rail land to start the regeneration of north Taunton. The Master Plan approved in the budget will enable us to be most flexible in what use we put this land to. We have added the County Cricket Ground and the Coal Orchard site to this study which gives us tremendous scope to put together ideas that will enhance Taunton's role as a regional centre of significance and influence in the future.

The Vision is dynamic. It will influence people's lives for generations to come. We need to seize this chance to drive on the very prosperity that this district has achieved over the past twenty years.

We need infrastructure improvements. We need better public services. We need to protect the environment. We need to care for our people. We need relief from flooding. We need more affordable homes. We need excellent education on hand. We are working in harmony with the private sector to help deliver this. We need to talk Taunton up and aim high.

**JEFFERSON HORSLEY**





**RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL**  
**COUNCILLOR STONE - HOUSING SERVICES**

(a) Housing Revenue Account - Revenue Estimates and Rent Levels 2003/2004

The Executive have considered the proposed Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for 2003/2004 which also includes details relating to the new rent level, arrangements for calculating service charges and information on the Piper Trading Account.

Both the Housing Review Panel and the Review Board have considered this report and the recommendations submitted reflects the views raised at those meetings.

The Council are therefore RECOMMENDED that the revised Housing Revenue Account Budget be approved.

(b) Housing Capital Programme 2003/2004

The Executive have also considered the proposed Housing Capital Programme for 2003/2004. It includes details of the resources available as well as recommendations for how they should be allocated. Investment focuses on the three areas of maintaining and improving the Council Housing stock to a decent home standard, providing grants to registered Social Landlords to build new homes and providing grants to individual home owners to reduce levels of unfitnes in private sector properties.

This has also been considered by both the Housing Review Panel and the Review Board and the recommendation reflects the views of those meetings. It should be noted that the Budget for the Cash Incentive Scheme is to be increased from nil to £30,000.

The Council are therefore RECOMMENDED that the Housing Capital Programme for 2003/2004 be approved.

Councillor Phil Stone

## **COUNCIL MEETING - 25 FEBRUARY 2003**

### **REPORT OF COUNCILLOR STONE - HOUSING SERVICES**

New affordable housing in the Deane.

We expect to see the completion of 108 affordable houses for rent during the current year, 2002-2003. This includes 15 units at Lisieux Way, 12 at the former rugby ground, 10 at Cory Road, Eastwick Road and 10 at Milson Road, Cotford St Luke.

Projections for 2003-2004 shows a target of approximately 100 houses, the larger sites being at Tonedale, Cotford St Luke and at Wellington United Reform Church.

Given the limited amount of funding available from Government grants for new housing these figures represent a good performance from the enabling team.

The housing waiting list however is still standing at over 1,400 households and we badly need additional funding from Government to enable increased provision. The South West suffers from high house prices, relatively low wages and is not being given the special allocation of social housing grant recently awarded to the South East.

Plans for housing funds to be allocated at a Regional level will not help the position unless the total allocation for the South West is significantly increased and the differing needs within the region are recognised and addressed.

Councillor Phil Stone

REPORT OF COUNCILLOR BULGIN –PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION

The Government has indicated that the proposed change to the planning system is a high priority. Parliamentary time is being sought that could result in introduction of the new system to replace structure and local plans in 2004/5. However the Government wants structure plan making work to continue pending legislation and it would be sensible to carry it out with a view to a smooth transition to the new system. Detailed transitional guidance is likely to follow any Government announcement. In the light of this, Somerset Strategic Planning Conference has given great thought to this and has produced a draft Memorandum of Understanding embracing the District Councils of Somerset, Somerset County Council and the Exmoor National Park concerning development arrangements arising from enactment of the Planning Bill. This memorandum seeks to pre-empt some of this issues, such as involvement of members of the business community and other agencies in the system, and sets down a process to ensure the adoption of new procedures happens as smoothly as possible. This process is being looked at by other local authorities, we seem to be in the fore front on this.

I am pleased that the Lloyds/TSB building issues have now been resolved and that we shall soon see it brought back into use. Members will no doubt be pleased that it will not be yet another late night watering hole, but we are assured, a high quality retail outlet. I am thankful to the Town Centre Manager, officers of the Planning, Licensing and Conservation sections of TDBC, Somerset C.C. Highways and Planning sections for the effort put in to resolve the access issue with this property. We held a joint officers meeting to thrash out the issues and to reach common corporate agreement on what could be achieved. Thus we were all ‘singing from the same hymn sheet’. A following meeting with Lloyds/TSB cleared the air on the same issues, together with exploring options within the building. The outcome was what we see now, a relatively speedy outcome to the problem that had been dragging on for two years. A flagship building being brought back into use in the centre of Taunton.

Councillor Roy Bulgin



COUNCIL MEETING – 25 FEBRUARY 2003.

REPORT OF COUNCILLOR COLIN CROAD -ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TOURISM AND COUNCIL BUILDINGS.

At long last we seem to have addressed the staffing problems that have beset Economic Development for the last 12 months. We have appointed Stephen Vinson from Caradon to head this critical area. Steve will report directly to the Director of Development, and will join us on 19<sup>th</sup> May. He will operate at an S.U.M. level. We have also appointed a new Tourism Officer, David McCribbin and we are about to shortlist applicants for the post of Business Development Officer, to replace Jasmine Nelson. Although remaining staff have struggled hard to fill the gaps, there is no doubt that our effectiveness has been reduced by our lack of resources.

Economic Development.

We have recently been advised of Sovereign/Heritage/Fortis reluctance to sign the Heads of Terms for the development of The Crescent Car Park site. The developers wish to undertake a thorough review of the scheme and this will take two to three months. This also means that the developers are not prepared to make any further contributions to the Council's Consultants costs until the Heads of Terms are signed.

Our consultants C Hillier Parker have been asked to provide potential options for consideration by the Council. These will be reviewed by the all-party Members Panel before the next full Meeting of the Council, but after this report is submitted.

The fourth and last Rural Workshop is about to take place as I write this report. They have been well attended and many stimulating ideas have emerged. I would like to record my thanks to Cllr David House for the way he has lead these workshops. They are very much in line with the thrust of the Government's Rural White Paper. The outcome will be a Rural Charter which sets out this Council's statement of intent. They will also inform the Best Value cross cutting review, now taking place, on Economic Development and Community Regeneration.

The Way Forward Tourism Group have continued work on developing a strategy for Somerset. The vision we have defined is "Working together to promote Somerset as a premier tourist destination". The strategy will be based on the following themes:

Marketing Somerset

A Quality Destination

A Dynamic Cohesive Public/Private Partnership

Making the Best Uses of our Combined Resources

Seeking funding from outside agencies

Spreading the benefits of Tourism among the local economy

There is no doubt that both the RDA and SW Tourism recognise that the formation of sub regional groups based on county boundaries, is an essential requisite for delivery of a high quality tourism product. It is clear that only those groups who can demonstrate that an effective private/public partnership exists will receive funding for their initiatives.

Councillor Colin Croad



REPORT OF COUNCILLOR Richard LEES - COMMUNICATIONS

Although I am the member with responsibility for Communications much of my attention since our last Council meeting has been turned to financial concerns; as have other members of the Executive.

For the first time major consultation events have been held to learn the concerns and interests of the public about the shape of the Council's Budget for the next financial year.

Our corporate publication the Deane Dispatch played a part in this. You will remember that the front page of the December edition explained the context of Council's Budget setting difficulties for the next financial year and invited residents to tell us what they thought our top three priorities should be.

We were delighted to receive from this invitation over 220 replies and every one was read and considered. Many of the slips returned from the Deane Dispatch had letters attached with serious contributions to the debate on budget priorities. Every respondent has received a personal letter thanking them for their involvement.

Another new idea in production is a booklet that will go out with the Council Tax bills at the end of March. The clearly written booklet will set out what can be a mass of information in a coherent and organised way.

This work is directly in line with my determination to ensure the Council communicates early and communicates well to reflect the good work that is done, and also to report at the earliest stage our future plans.

Finally I have been continuing my research about access for all within the Borough of Taunton Deane in this European Year for the Disabled.

Executive Councillor Richard Lees  
Communications





REPORT OF COUNCILLOR LISGO – COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

1. Introduction.

1.1. I am pleased to be able to report to Council that good progress is being made in a number of important areas of the Community Leadership portfolio.

2. Equalities Best Value Review.

2.1. This piece of work will be completed by the end of March. Many partner agencies have been involved in this review and have helped to develop the action points that comprise the improvement programme for the future.

2.2. My thanks go to everyone who has been involved in this crucial area of work.

3. Community Strategies.

3.1. The Community Strategy for Taunton Deane will be published by the end of April following consideration of the final draft by the Local Strategic Partnership at their next meeting on 13 March.

3.2. The local strategy for West Deane will be published in May following involvement and views given by hundreds of local residents. The Wiveliscombe Area Partnership are to be particularly congratulated on the success of their consultation process.

4. Taunton Surestart Programme.

4.1. This is a new government funded programme aimed at working with the 0-4's and their families in order to achieve a good start in life. The scheme in Taunton covers Taunton North and Taunton East.

4.2. Taunton Deane Borough Council is an active partner in this scheme and proposals are to be further considered by the Executive on 12 March.

5. Grant Giving.

5.1. Following changes to the way Taunton Deane Borough Council operates their grant giving, Service Level Agreements are being developed with a number of local organisations such as the Council for Voluntary Service, Citizens Advice Bureau, relate etc.... This will achieve more stable funding regimes for the organisations involved as well as enhancing the Councils procurement strategy for the purchase of services from the voluntary sector.

6. "Hear by Right."

6.1. Taunton Deane Borough Council has adopted the "Hear by Right" standard, providing a framework to ensure that the views of young people are considered in all that we do as service provider and policy maker.

Councillor Libby Lisgo.



REPORT OF COUNCILLOR MULLINS – ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

- **Licensing**

At a recent council meeting concern was raised that the new licensing bill included a proposal that churches would be charged for a Public Entertainment Licence (PEL), following these concerns letters were sent from the council to Adrian Flook MP and Tessa Jowell MP (Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport) expressing TDBC's concerns.

The Government has now announced that secular entertainment in places of worship shall be allowed without a licence once the new Licensing Bill comes into force.

Tessa Jowell has announced that the Government has tabled an amendment to include secular as well as religious music within the Bill's exemptions. This reflects the current position outside of London, and will generally deregulatory measures of the proposed legislation.

The Government has also signalled its intention to exempt church halls, chapels, halls, other places of public worship, village halls, community halls, and other similar buildings from the fees regime under the new laws, due to come into force in 2004.

- **Waste Services**

In addition to the introduction of the kerbside collection of dry recyclables to 38500 properties before the end of March there are further developments in waste and recycling.

The SWP has been successful in bidding for £363, 000 from the second round of the DEFRA Waste Minimisation and Recycling Fund to provide a service for blocks of flats in Taunton Deane, Mendip Sedgemoor and South Somerset. The proposal includes the purchase of two specialist vehicles together with the purchase of various types of containers that will enable fortnightly collections of recyclables from 75 "micro recycling sites" in each district. The funds for this service will be available from April 2003.

The subsidised provision of home composting equipment will be available from Monkton Elm Garden centre or delivered direct to households. This initiative will commence in early March! (containers available from just £5!!)

The organic (garden waste collection service commences again at the beginning of March and this year has been extended into Stoke St. Gregory, North Curry, Hatch Beauchamp, Stoke St. Mary, West Monkton, West Buckland and Bradford on Tone.

- **Food Safety, Health and Safety**

The food safety team is on target to complete its inspection programme by 31st March.

We recently had a successful prosecution of Northcott Catering, (Blackbrook Lay-by). Fined £3000 for on Hygiene issues.

Seminars on the new asbestos regulations and on accident investigation have been well received by the businesses attending

There is to be a H&S seminar for the hair and beauty trades on 17th February, in conjunction with SCAT.

- **Environmental Protection**

Air Quality Management Areas

The Orders declaring the Air Quality Management Areas in East Reach and Henlade have now come into effect.

A draft Project Plan has been produced combining the many deadlines that will lead to the publication of the Action Plan by June 2004. The Action Plan requires a significant commitment from stakeholders outside the Council and will involve wide public and specialist consultation.

Blagdon Hill Sewerage Scheme

Work by Wessex Water to provide first time mains sewerage to parts of Blagdon Hill and Pitminster has now been completed.

The Environmental Protection Team is continuing to identify properties that are causing pollution and whose owners have not yet connected to the new scheme. Attempts will be made to persuade remaining owners and, if this approach fails, enforcement action will need to be contemplated.

Housing Standards

Officers attended a Briefing by Clearsprings and follow up meetings with their management will be held at the end of this month to begin the process of joint working.

- **Flooding and Drainage**

TDDB continues to take an active part in the Parrett Catchment Project. At the well attended 3rd Annual Forum, Andrew Wilcox gave a brief resume of the work associated with sustainable drainage issues. Having secured funding from the European Union and with the full backing of Elliot Morley MP the Project is

progressing on resolving the many problem drainage issues encountered within the catchment. It is encouraging to know that the format adopted by the PCP is being proposed to be adopted throughout England and Wales.

In depth (*no pun intended*), investigations are continuing at Creech St Michael, Bathpool and Lloyd Close Taunton.

Much work has been involved in liaising with local communities and their flood liaison groups, in setting up sandbag stores and in the promotion of the local Flood Wardens.

Councillor Melvyn Mullins



REPORT OF COUNCILLOR PARTINGTON - RESOURCES

Members' Facilities

Every member of the Council has an important role in representing the electorate. Members have different circumstances, e.g. working, disabled, family commitments, carers, rural wards, urban wards, etc, and there are different roles of leaders, executive members, chairmen of panels and backbenchers. The council, the government and other organisations in providing information and consultation are increasingly using information technology. To establish what further facilities and training are required to assist Members, I intend to carry out a consultation exercise with Members on Members' facilities.

Councillor Paul Partington

Coun





**COUNCIL MEETING - 25 FEBRUARY 2003**

**RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR DENINGTON,  
CHAIR, COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP REVIEW PANEL**

**STANDING ORDERS**

The Review Panel has considered a draft of the revised debate Standing Orders (SO's) of the Council.

The Council's current SO's date back some years and no longer fit with the Council's new Constitution.

Although the Constitution was adopted in October 2001, there was a delay in updating the SO's whilst further legislation from the Government was awaited.

Following the publication of the Code of Conduct for Councillors in May 2002, the SO's had been redrafted by the Director of Corporate Resources, in consultation with myself and Councillor Miss Phippen.

Generally, the draft SO's follow the pattern of the previous edition, but have been updated to take account of the new Constitution and the Executive arrangements.

During the discussion of this item, Members requested that the following changes to the draft SO's, should be incorporated:-

- (a) The rewording of SO15(2)(b) (Questions from Councillors) so that it did not contradict SO9(1)(c) (Part II of Executive Councillors' Report). It was also felt that the subject of questions raised under SO15 (2)(b) should be restricted to matters which had not been discussed during the last cycle of meetings.
- (b) The words "have the discretion to" be removed from SO16(5) (Public Question Time), to require the Mayor to seek a contribution from a Ward Councillor on a ward-based issue.
- (c) An aide-memoir be included in the new SO's to remind Councillors of the meetings they were entitled to attend.

The Panel agreed that the above amendments/additions should be incorporated into the draft SO's.

A copy of the amended draft Standing Orders has been circulated to all Councillors for their comments.

The Director of Corporate Resources was authorised, in consultation with me to agree any further minor changes to the draft Standing Orders requested by Members.

It is therefore recommended that Council approve the draft debate Standing Orders.

Councillor Bryan Denington

To consider the following motion to be moved by Councillor Horsley seconded by Councillor Henley.

Taunton Deane Borough Council is charged with looking after the social, economic and environmental well being of its community as per the Local Government Act 2000.

It therefore views the expenditure of a £4.5 billion which is the lowest estimate of the cost of dispatch of UK troops to the Middle East as harmful to the Council Tax Payers of Taunton Deane insofar as it reduces the amount available for central government support of services that local authorities have to provide by way of rate support grant. It also considers that a war against Iraq could divide our ethnic minorities here in Taunton Deane. This could add to the problems of the Crime and Disorder partnership within our Local Community Plan and make the targets harder to attain.

This Council believes the case for war against Iraq isn't proven. There is a genuine fear that that the war against Iraq will a) lead to losses of thousands of innocent lives b) increase the number of refugees which could add to the problem of asylum seekers to this country c) destabilise the Middle East especially the Israeli/Palestinian situation d) increase the probability of acts of terrorism within the United Kingdom and possibly Taunton e) leave a lasting legacy of division between Muslim and Western countries which could take decades to overcome.

In light of the impact of war on the local economy and its consequences especially for those members of the armed forces who are based here in Taunton whom we hope will return unharmed, this Council urges the Government to take every measure to avoid conflict. It urges the Prime Minister to support the containment and disarmament of Saddam Hussein through its use of weapons inspectors and the use of peace-keeping United Nations forces.



To consider the following motion moved by Councillor Mrs. Lewin-Harris seconded by Councillor Mrs. Bradley;-

"This Council regrets the disaster of Wellsprings.

While "there is no evidence that the Council have acted imprudently or improperly in this matter" according to the District Auditor, his Report however, highlights the failure of the Liberal Democrat/Labour administration.

"The contractor's financial reference was marginal" yet the Liberal Democrats and the Labour failed to see or respond to signs that the contract might not be delivered to agreed timescales and budget. In the District Auditor's view the Council should have responded more actively and increased their input and resources in the project management and supervision. There should have been an increase in the level of supervision and project monitoring and management including risk analysis.

This is a clear indictment of the ruling group and the Conservatives reaffirm their assertion that the Liberal Democrat and Labour administration have been inept and incompetent and seek assurance that the business plan be updated to ensure that Wellsprings delivers what the customers want. This is of particular importance since there appears never to have been a clear decision at the outset as to whether The Council was pursuing a sports hall or a sports centre.

The Council regret the huge cost, in excess of £1.5 million now falling upon the council tax payers of Taunton Deane."



**COUNCIL MEETING 25 FEBRUARY 2003**

To consider the following motion moved by Councillor Williams seconded by Councillor Hall:

This Council regrets that despite the advice of both District Auditor and Deane Officers "that every effort must be made to achieve a balanced budget (i.e. a budget that is fully funded by Central Government and the Council tax payer to preserve the authority's reserves), this council is still relying on reserves to balance the budget, and deplores the deficit in financial understanding and responsibility to the taxpayers of Taunton Deane shown by Labour and Liberal Democrat alike.

