



## COUNCIL SUMMONS

YOU ARE REQUESTED TO ATTEND A MEETING OF THE TAUNTON DEANE BOROUGH COUNCIL TO BE HELD IN THE DEANE HOUSE, BELVEDERE ROAD, TAUNTON ON TUESDAY 16TH DECEMBER 2003 AT 18:30.

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### AGENDA

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

1. To receive the Minutes of the Meetings of the Council held on 14 October 2003
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. Vision for Taunton  
Presentation by Ralph Willoughby Foster, Forward Plan and Regeneration Manager
7. To deal with questions to and receive recommendations and reports from the following members of the Executive:-
8. Councillor Williams (Leader of the Executive)  
Recommendation relating to Old Market Shoppers Car Park - Anti suicide measures
9. Councillor Bishop (Transportation and Planning)
10. Councillor Mrs. Bradley (Leisure, Arts and Culture)
11. Councillor Mrs. Bryant (Communications)
12. Councillor Cavill (Economic Development, Property and Tourism)
13. Councillor Edwards (Environmental Services)
14. Councillor Garner (Housing Services)
15. Councillor Hall (Resources)
16. Councillor Mrs. Lewin-Harris (Community Leadership)  
Recommendation relating to Draft Equality Policy
17. The Constitution  
To receive recommendations from Councillor Denington, Chair, Community Leadership

Panel.

G P DYKE  
Member Services Manager

The Deane House  
Belvedere Road  
TAUNTON  
Somerset

TA1 1HE

11 December 2003





## Taunton Deane Borough Council

At a meeting of the Taunton Deane Borough Council held in the Principal Committee Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton on Tuesday 14 October 2003 at 6.30 pm.

Present: The Mayor (Councillor Govier)  
The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Mrs Allgrove)  
Councillors Beaven, Mrs Biscoe, Bishop, Bone, Bowrah, Mrs Bradley, Mrs Bryant, N P Cavill, Miss Cavill, Mrs Cluff, Croad, Denington, Durdan, Edwards, Floyd, Garner, Gill, Hall, Hayward, Henley, Mrs Hill, Hindley, House, Mrs Jones, Lees, Mrs Lewin-Harris, Lisgo, Meikle, Morrell, Mullins, Murphy, Mrs Nixon, Paul, Phillips, Prior-Sankey, Ms Priscott, Slattery, Mrs Smith, Stone, Stuart-Thorn, Trollope, Vail, Watson, Wedderkopp, Weston, Mrs Whitmarsh, Williams and Mrs Wilson.

### 1. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of the Council held on 22 July, 6 August and 8 September 2003, copies having been sent to each member, were signed by the Mayor.

### 2. Apologies

Councillors Cluff, Davies, Guerrier and Miss Peppard.

### 3. Public Question Time

- (a) Mr J Walker, on behalf of David Ridgewell, asked if evening bus services that matched demand could be provided.

Councillor Bishop replied that this matter had been considered recently. It was not in the public interest to subsidise routes that were running at a loss but the Council would continue to look at bus services operating within Taunton Deane.

- (b) Mr J Walker, representing Rail Future, asked if the Council were aware that funding had been attracted to assist in establishing a rail link between Minehead and Taunton.

Councillor Bishop replied that he was not aware that funds had been found but he wished the organisation good luck and said that the Council would offer what support it could.

### 4. Recommendations to Council from the Executive

#### (a) Leisure Trust Virement

On the motion of Councillor Williams, it was RESOLVED that £60,000 be vired from the Partial Exemption VAT Reserve to the Leisure Trust Set Up Budget, subject to the successful completion of the scheduled VAT inspection in September 2003.

(b) Visual Arts and Crafts Improvements in Taunton Deane 2003

On the motion of Councillor Mrs Bradley, it was RESOLVED that the Council in exercise of its responsibility for the economic social and environmental well-being of the Deane, support a step by step approach to a cultural quarter around Castle Green, starting with Hunt's Court. Such support to include the formation of a consortium or working part to steer the development.

(Councillor Mrs Cluff declared a prejudicial interest in this item and left the meeting during its consideration).

(c) Updated Housing Strategy and HRA Business Plans

On the motion of Councillor Garner, it was RESOLVED that the updated Housing Strategy and HRA Business Plan documents be adopted.

5. Questions to and Reports from the Leader of the Council and Executive Councillors

(a) The following question was asked:-

Councillor Paul asked Councillor Williams, the Leader of the Council:

The North West Package proposals have recently received two potential setbacks in funding and timing.

- (i) The probable loss of about 0.5 million in developer's contributions were revealed in the Inspector's findings in the public inquiry into the Local Plan. Councillor Williams has been reported in the Press as being fully committed to securing the funding needed to complete the Project but also as saying that TDBC would make no further contributions.

Would he accept that it would be unwise at this critical stage to rule out further step by step capital contributions by TDBC in addition to those committed by the previous administration, especially in the context of the new borrowing facilities for capital projects available to TDBC.

- (ii) The unofficial "referendum" in Bishops Hull on the site of the Park and Ride conducted by Councillor Morrell seeks to reopen a decision made last year with all party support from both TDBC and SCC.

If this issue were to be reopened, it would mean going back to the central Government with a revised package, risking the loss of funding completely because of the dislocation between the Bridge and the site of the Park and Ride, with no chance of approval until early 2005, then having to start the process of implementation all over again.

In the light of this, would he confirm that the Executive of TDBC are fully committed to the existing proposals and will not change their view whatever the results of Councillor Morrell's survey.

Councillor Williams replied that he had not said that the Council would make no further contributions but that at the moment it could not find funding. He assured Councillor Paul that the Council were still committed to this project and absolutely committed to finding the funding and that the County Council would make a contribution.

The unofficial referendum referred to by Councillor Paul was in fact a survey and not a referendum. The survey highlighted concerns of residents but this did not mean that the Council did not support the Park and Ride proposals.

(b) Reports

The following reports were made to the Council on the main items of current and future business.

(i) Leader of the Council (Councillor Williams)

After welcoming Penny James as the Council's new Chief Executive, the Leader submitted a report which gave an overview of what was happening within Taunton Deane at present. His report covered the Terence O'Rourke study, the Wellsprings Sports Centre, proposed improvements to the Station Road/Priory Bridge Road junction, duelling of the A358 and the budget process for 2004/05.

(ii) Planning Policy and Transportation (Councillor Bishop)

Councillor Bishop's report covered the recently received report of the Inspector in relation to the Taunton Deane Local Plan, Local Development Frameworks, Planning Policy Guidance Note 3 and housing and transportation issues in general.

(iii) Leisure, Arts and Culture (Councillor Mrs Bradley)

Councillor Mrs Bradley gave an update on the current position regarding Wellsprings, the contribution made by Sports Development to health improvement, reduction in crime and disorder and the social inclusion agenda, developments at Wellington, Parks, Playing Pitch Strategy, Green Spaces Strategy and the Arts.

(iv) Communications (Councillor Mrs Bryant)

Councillor Mrs Bryant reported upon the work being done on a Communication Strategy for the Council, the development of the Council's new website, the role played by communications in the Local Plan and public consultation on the Taunton Vision and the budget setting process.

(v) Economic Development, Property and Tourism (Councillor Cavill)

Councillor Cavill's report drew attention to redevelopment of the Norton Fitzwarren Trading Estate, the Lyons Report regarding relocation of sections of the Civil Service and progress in the relocation of Taunton Market.

(vi) Environmental Services (Councillor Edwards)

Councillor Edwards submitted his report and referred to the Best Value Review of Environmental Health, progress made regarding waste management, litter and the street scene. Reference was also made to the cleaning of the River Tone, a review of public toilets in the Deane, out of hours noise and flooding.

(vii) Housing Services (Councillor Garner)

Councillor Garner drew attention in particular to Housing Stock Transfer Options and the Housing Best Value Review, both of which would have far reaching impacts on the housing and tenants of Taunton Deane.

(viii) Resources (Councillor Hall)

Councillor Hall drew attention to developments regarding e-government, proposed improvements to member services, the work of the Independent Members Allowances Panel and current and future developments within Financial Services and Revenue Services. Details were also given of the current and future position regarding Information Systems, Benefits, Fraud Investigations and Somerset Direct.

(ix) Community Leadership (Councillor Mrs Lewin-Harris)

Councillor Mrs Lewin-Harris drew attention to the public consultation exercise currently being carried out in respect of the Council's corporate priorities. She also reported on crime and disorder issues, community planning and the need to find ways to make the Local Strategic Partnership work more effectively.

(Councillor Stone arrived at the meeting at 7.00 pm, Councillors Mrs Jones and Miss Cavill left at 8.20 pm and Councillor Mrs Nixon at 8.45 pm).

(The meeting ended at 8.55 pm).



## COUNCIL MEETING – 16 DECEMBER 2003

### RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL COUNCILLOR WILLIAMS – LEADER OF THE EXECUTIVE

#### 1 Old Market Shoppers Car Park – Anti-Suicide Measures

Since its erection in the early 1970's there have been a number of tragic occurrences at this car park. There have been **four** this year, with two occurring within a four week period **during the summer**. At a recent Inquest the Coroner recommended that the Council should take action to reduce the opportunities for suicide to take place.

The history of events has been subject to public comment and discussion. Taking this into account, and also the number of attempts that have been successfully averted by the actions of our Parking Services staff, I have come to the conclusion, in the full knowledge that there is no legal obligation on the Council to do anything, that it is important that works are undertaken as soon as possible to prevent people being able to jump from any of the parking decks.

Officers are investigating proposals and a planning application has been submitted. A Project Appraisal Report has been prepared for consideration during the budgetary process but **I feel** that due to the urgency of the work formal approval from Council should be sought before the next budget is set.

It is therefore RECOMMENDED that Council approves the principle of the capital scheme to provide anti-suicide fencing to this car park and approves the necessary supplementary estimate of £100,000 from unallocated capital funds. This would leave the unallocated capital funds at £1,964,356.

Councillor J R Williams

## **COUNCIL MEETING 16 DECEMBER 2003**

### **REPORT OF COUNCILLOR WILLIAMS - LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

In my last report to Full Council I commented on the many initiatives being carried forward by your Council and these are still ongoing with a major commitment of our resources into their promotion and organisation. These are the Vision for Taunton proposals, Urban Extension study, response to the Local Plan Inspectors report, relocation of the livestock market, proposals for redeveloping High Street/Crescent car park area, completion of the Wellsprings Sports Centre. Also, measures to ease traffic congestion and promote alternative means of travel, housing stock transfer, setting up of the Leisure Trust, implementing the Licensing Act and not least the budget setting process.

In Wellington we continue to be committed to improvements in the Cornhill, preservation of the important listed Tonedale buildings and its machinery. We are also intent on replacement of the dilapidated and vandalised North Street public toilets subject to funding being available.

Something that we must also try and address is the much underutilised asset of the Old Municipal Buildings, it is a wonderful public building in an excellent town centre position. We must try and find alternative uses that will bring a return instead of being a drain on the public purse as at present. This almost certainly will need investment and lateral thinking to achieve something in keeping with the grand building it is and provides a useful return.

I provide below a more detailed review of some of the above.

#### Terence O'Rourke Planning

At last we have been able to present to the people of Taunton Deane proposals as to how Taunton could look and develop over the next 20/25 years and I must say I consider these to be very exciting. The launch of the plans took place at the Brewhouse in mid-November with our partners the SWRDA and SCC, since then we have extended the exhibition to the library and the Deane House reception area. Finally it will be prominently displayed from the 15 to 18 December by "The Toads" in the Old Market Centre. My personal thanks to the management of the Old Market Centre for making this excellent venue available to us at such a busy time.

The feedback that we are generally receiving is heartening in that it is positive and people like what they see. There is obvious scepticism about the deliverability of such major regeneration plans and that the development will proceed without major infrastructure improvements to our roads and public services. This doubt in peoples minds is perfectly understandable when it is considered against the years of deprivation suffered through

lack of investment in our infrastructure over the preceding years. I have no illusions as to the difficulties ahead in bringing together the many parts of the jigsaw to ensure that we all benefit from the major regeneration and redevelopment proposals as planned.

At present the Treasury Department have appointed Sir Michael Lyons to carry out a wide ranging review to relocate circa 20,000 civil servants from Ministries located in and around central London to the provinces. Can I assure you that Taunton is bidding hard to become one of the towns to be considered for a share in this relocation project. Our proposed redevelopment at Firepool is regarded as eminently suitable and meeting all the criteria of the review such as, urban regeneration, adjacent a main line station, excellent services and schools and plans for being a major regional centre. All this besides an excellent environment to attract people away from London.

### Station Road

I am delighted to report that our meetings with the County Council were successful and that plans are now in hand to commence alteration works the third week in January 04.

This was made possible by holding a specially convened Strategic Planning and Transportation Review Panel followed by an Executive meeting early November, in order that approval could be given to County and the necessary orders placed for work to commence in the New Year. The fact this was brought about so quickly reaffirms this administrations commitment to getting things done.

Although there are some detractors about the fact that it is only Priory Bridge Road returning to two lanes at present, I would answer this criticism by saying we achieved the greatest improvement possible in the shortest possible time. Had we held out for both Priory Bridge and Station Road to be returned to two lanes there is considerable doubt if we would have achieved any alterations by January 2005!!

The Highways Authority did model the traffic flows and assure us that there proposed improvements will reduce congestion substantially with only Priory Bridge Road returned to two lanes, with little extra benefit from Station Road returning to two lanes. It was clearly stated by us that should the planned improvements not happen then we would be revisiting the proposals and seek alterations to Station Road as well.

### Relocation of Livestock Market

We are still very much committed to facilitating the relocation of the livestock market to adjacent junction 26 as are Taunton Market Auctioneers, in fact, I am anticipating a planning application to be submitted in this respect very shortly.

A considerable amount has been printed in the press recently suggesting that J24 was the favoured place and that it was backed by the Regional Development Agency who are our partners in the Taunton Regeneration project. This I am pleased to report is no more than the dissemination of rumour and misinformation presumably to try and strengthen the

case of supporters of J24. They must be concerned that J26 is the most likely future location of a new livestock market.

To clear up confusion, the RDA in a statement issued on 20 November about Taunton Livestock Market, clearly stated "The relocation of the market to an alternative suitable site is important as the current location is a key area in the proposals for the regeneration of Taunton as part of the Taunton Vision. However where it is finally located is a matter for the operators and Councils involved."

This belies any suggestion that the RDA are specifically supporting J24 as the proposed relocation site, as has been suggested.

Taunton Livestock Market, and it will retain this name even at J26, is among the top three best performing markets in the country and I would certainly not wish to see it located outside of Taunton Deane. We have benefited tremendously from the foresight of previous generations in as much that we have Castle Green, a former market site, and the existing market site in Council ownership which are extremely valuable assets. This will assist our present regeneration project and our investment in the new site should be continued for the benefit of generations yet to come.

#### Wellsprings Sports Centre

It is extremely pleasing to report that we are now on schedule for handover before Christmas and a meeting to receive the keys of the building is scheduled for 22 December. Time will then be spent on training and final preparations in readiness to receive the general public as visitors to view the centre on 3 and 4 January 2004, in readiness for the first customers on 5 January.

I made an informal visit to the centre with Cllrs Mrs Bradley, David Gill and James Curry was showing us around. I was very impressed with the space and fitting out of the facilities, it will be a wonderful addition to the leisure facilities for Taunton, particularly the people of North Taunton. The hall is extremely impressive and I would think is one of the largest indoor spaces available in Taunton Deane, finished to the highest standards with excellent acoustics. Besides being a superb sports hall it will provide an excellent venue for concerts, exhibitions and shows and I am sure, be of great benefit to Taunton Deane.

An official opening ceremony is being planned and the date is yet to be announced but likely to be February or March.

#### Budget Setting 2004/05

The initial position showing a circa £670,000 budget gap has already been reported to the Review Board for consideration. Much work is being carried out as to how we can either increase income or reduce costs in order to bridge this gap but it is early days and our deliberations have not reached the stage where they are conclusive. It is not helped in any

way by the fact that we have received preliminary advice of our Revenue Support Grant from the ODPM but this is approximately £700k short of our anticipated amount which I understand is to be topped up by the DWP (Department of Works & Pensions). At the time of writing this I am not aware of the amount we will be receiving, the fears are that it will be substantially less than the £700K anticipated in which case it will seriously exacerbate our already difficult budget position. Notwithstanding all this, we are well aware of the resentment caused by excessive Council Tax increases and will be doing all possible to minimise this.

However, it is apparent our situation has not changed from my report to the last meeting that the budget setting will be extremely difficult and we have some hard choices ahead of us.

#### SWARMMS, A358 Dualling

I could not present a report without exhorting you all to strongly support the dualling of the A358, I am aware that amongst a few there is some sympathy towards dualling of the A303 in preference but I have to say this would be the worst of all options for Taunton in my view. It would not draw any significant amounts of traffic away from the A358 and it would remain the heaviest trafficked road in Somerset, after the M5, it is at present carrying twice its daily design capacity. Any possibility of the Henlade bypass being constructed and improvements, or an alternative, to J25 of the M5 will be set back years.

I would ask that we present a united front and not be deceived by the siren voices that try to persuade that improvements to the A303 will provide far more benefits than improvements to the A358. If you have not already seen a paper issued by English Nature do let me know, this sets out far more explicitly than I can the environmental case as to why the A358 must take precedence over the A303. I will arrange to forward a copy if of interest.

**Councillor John Williams**  
**Leader of the Council**

## **COUNCIL MEETING 16 DECEMBER 2003**

### **Report of Councillor Bishop –Planning Policy and Transportation**

#### **Taunton Deane Local Plan**

Work is progressing on the response to the Inspector's Report. The major issues surrounding the recommendations to delete the whole of the Longforth Farm allocation and part of that at Norton Fitzwarren are being investigated. The views of relevant organisations are being obtained, and a number of meetings have already taken place with, among others, the Government Office, the Regional Development Agency, Environment Agency, Parrett Catchment Project and DEFRA. Counsel's advice on a number of legal and procedural issues is also being sought. In the meantime the Council's response to the large number of recommendations by the Inspector on less complicated and contentious issues, and any consequent changes needed to the Plan, are being written up in readiness for reporting to Members.

#### **Local Development Framework (LDF) – The Vision for Taunton**

All local planning authorities must submit a Local Development Scheme ( LDS ) to the Secretary of State within six months of the commencement of Part 2 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act.

The LDS is a public statement of the Local Planning Authority's programme for a three year project plan and will set out the planned timetable for preparing each Local Development Document (LDD ) and the key milestones to be achieved.

Following a discussion with Government Office we have been advised that, in order to pursue certain aspects of the Vision, we need to get a draft LDS agreed by them in the near future in order that the new planning process can start soon after the commencement of the Bill ( June/July 2004).

A meeting has also been held between GOSW, T.O.R., SWERDA, SCC and ourselves and we are awaiting a response from Government Office on the best way forward for some aspects of the Vision's proposals. The following extracts from the LDF Code of Practice will help to clarify the matter :-

“In considering the LDS the Government Office will look at whether :

“Any of the the proposed supplementary planning documents ought to be prepared as Development Plan Documents because they ought to be subject to independent examination”.

“ the timescale for the preparation of the proposed local development documents are realistic”

We shall be submitting our comments on the LDF draft Planning Policy Statement (PPS 12) to the ODPM by 16.1.04. It is apparent that Members and Officers will need training on this subject before June 2004.

I have arranged to place copies of the documents in the Members Room so that you can see for yourself whether or not the new system will be an improvement on the present local plan system.

#### **STRUCTURE PLAN**

Following discussions between Somerset County Council, Government Office and the Regional Assembly the County Council has appointed consultants , Baker Associates, to prepare a focussed Structure Plan for the period to 2016 and the Plan will be placed on deposit for formal consultation in May 2004.Plans that have reached statutory deposit stage before the Bill is enacted will be saved and will provide the necessary background information for the production of the LDF.

The Structure Plan will provide a settlement strategy up to 2016 and give details of the distribution of development (including housing numbers ) for the settlements in each of the Somerset District Council areas.It will also provide an opportunity to update the policies and take forward the Core Strategy.

It is important that the role of Taunton as a Principal Urban Area is also addressed.

### Transportation

At a meeting of the Somerset Public Transport Forum held on 18<sup>th</sup> November, Paul Jenkins of First Bus set out a series of routes that will be affected by the company's Review of Services in Somerset and some of these are operating at the moment in Taunton Deane. Up until now these routes have been provided on a commercial basis and consequently they carry reasonable passenger numbers, albeit no longer enough to justify commercial operation by First Group.The County Council has informed me that they are doing all they can to find ways of maintaining these services.

### The Green Apple Awards

Earlier in the year we were invited to nominate a building for consideration for a Green Apple Civic Pride Award and we agreed with Di Hartnell, our conservation officer that St .Margaret's Leper Hospital should be nominated.

We have been informed that the entry has been shortlisted for national recognition and that we will definitely be receiving a trophy, but the judges have yet to finalise their decision on who gets Gold , Silver or Bronze. The trophy should arrive in the New Year.

I should like to congratulate Di Hartnell and all concerned with this project for their efforts in ensuring that this building has been protected, enhanced and brought into good use.

**Councillor Cliff Bishop**

## COUNCIL MEETING 16 DECEMBER 2003

### REPORT OF COUNCILLOR MRS. BRADLEY - LEISURE, ARTS AND CULTURE

**Wellsprings:** we expect the handing over of the keys to our new leisure centre at the end of this week. James Curry the manager has been regularly on site dealing with details of fittings and has recruited the majority of staff. It will be open for business on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> January after an Open Weekend of free activities and taster sessions which will include: health & fitness, aerobic and fitness classes, badminton, childrens' activities, crèche, therapies, sauna and steam room. In Wellsprings we have "a hall to end all halls" with excellent acoustics and seating for around 1,000 people. It will provide a venue for regional events and is already attracting bookings for these.

**Leisure Trust:** work is continuing on the formation of the Leisure Trust and the target remains that the Trust will be formed at Midnight on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2003.

**Vivary Golf Course:** temporary changing accommodation (paid for by our insurers) has been provided whilst options are considered for the replacement of the Old Pavilion which was razed to the ground through arson last year. It is a matter of concern to me that 90 days play were lost through flooding over the last year.

**Castle Green Cultural Quarter:** following the Recommendation passed at the last Council meeting a Consortium/Working Party has met to agree a common vision. At a subsequent meeting of the Working Group on the Future of the County Museum, the Archives and Record Office and an Arts Gallery for Somerset, it was agreed that the two groups should merge. The immediate task is to feed clear proposals for Castle Green into the Taunton Vision. The further task is that of realising Somerset's "Your World, Your Story, Your Future" which envisages an exposition centre focussed on Taunton Castle, a discovery centre housing public learning and reference facilities including heritage records, and a support centre to house the extensive collections. It is quite clear that it will not be possible to make a case for funding unless both County and District can agree a common agenda and partnership working with the other stakeholders involved.

**Hunts Court:** the Cultural Quarter Consortium have agreed that Hunts Court and the Old Municipal Buildings are important to retain as part of the Vision for Taunton's Cultural Quarter development. TDBC are leading on a proposal for a Creative Enterprise Centre in Hunts' Court, which could incorporate a contemporary art gallery and artists' studios. A working group including members of Somerset Art Gallery Trust, Somerset Art Week, the Brewhouse, SCAT, TDBC and SCC has been set up to find a practical way to secure at least 2 floors, if not all of the building.

**Somerset Cultural Forum:** I attended the launch of this on 24<sup>th</sup> October at Halsway Manor. Its purpose is to provide a body of people to exchange news and ideas across the cultural sectors and organisations and in particular to make sure that the Cultural



Strategy is happening in practice and to keep it moving forward. This is a part of the Somerset Strategic Partnership Vision.

**Social Inclusion:** we have been awarded £28,330 from Better Play (commencing April04) aimed at providing specialist sessional workers to deliver play opportunities for children with individual needs. The award is for one year only and enables the centres to deliver playschemes which include these children with one-to-one support staff to attend to their needs, plus deliver staff training and a management co-ordination and community liaison role. The scheme will operate out of the sports centres.

**Wellington Park: the Green Flag Award** recently received, is made by the Civic Trust backed by CABI to encourage high standards in public green space. It recognises parks that are safe, clean, well managed, with heritage status and benefiting from community involvement and marketing. Part of the Heritage Lottery Award required the preparation of a management plan. This Wellington Park Management Plan is to be held up as an example of best practice by CABI space and will be in the new edition of the Green Flag Manual as well. Our thanks are due not only to our Parks Department and officers Chris Mulcahy, Karen Dyson and Steven Cuthill but also and especially the Friends of Wellington Park with all their interest, hard work and community building activity together with Mark Norman. He is the gardener who has a new role with being on site and responsible for not only horticulture but site maintenance.

**Councillor Mrs. Dilly Bradley**

## **COUNCIL MEETING 16 DECEMBER 2003**

### **Report Of Councillor Gwyneth Bryant - Communications**

I mentioned in my last report, that we began work in May of this year to produce a Communications Strategy for the Community Services Directorate to pilot the methodology and subsequently roll it out corporately. However, it became clear that key elements of the strategy had corporate implications. It was therefore decided to move straight to the production of a Corporate Communications Strategy. The work on the strategy has been divided into six key areas:

- Consultation
- Public Relations
- Media Relations
- E-Communications
- Corporate Branding and Image
- Internal Communications

We held an informal discussion on Communications for members at the Review Board meeting in November. On January 6 2004 we are holding a *workshop* for all members so you can raise any issues and appraise what we do well and what we can do to improve communications both internally and externally – between members, staff, the public and other stakeholders. I would encourage as many as possible to join in and express your views. The draft strategy will then go to the Review Board for comment at the end of January.

Communications is playing a vital role in telling Council Tenants about the **Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Stock Options Appraisal Project**. This project is one of the biggest exercises that Taunton Deane Borough Council will face with its communication and consultation challenges. Because of the complexities of the Stock Options Appraisal a dedicated **Communications & Consultation Strategy** was launched during October. This strategy helps explain the key elements of communication that run through project and complete with detailed work plans.

**Vision for Taunton** – we formed a joint PR team with Somerset County Council and the RDA and an exhibition on the Vision at the Brewhouse Theatre was launched last month. To help engage even more people in the project and increase awareness we have extended the exhibition period. Further displays have been held at Taunton Library, in reception here at Deane House and it will be on show at the Old Market Centre on 15 – 18 December.

**Wellsprings** – it is exciting to report that we are now preparing details for a successful launch to open this centre during the first weekend in January. It should be a fun weekend and offers the opportunity for all to try out the

facilities free and experience what a wonderful venue this will be for local residents.

**Deane Dispatch** – the December issue is about to drop on to the doorsteps of homes across Taunton Deane. This issue covers many of the major stories that have been highlighted in the press over recent months and many that haven't made the headlines but are equally interesting.

**The Media** – we have attracted wide media coverage this past two months with articles in the press covering much of the Council's work with the community. Areas covered include the Litter Hotline, Crisp and Clean, Recycling, The Vision for Taunton, Station Road Junction, Housing grants, the Local Plan, Wellington pavilion, and the Cornhill. We are told the better informed our public is about the work the Council does, the better the levels of satisfaction they express. Both officers and members have been proactive. Not just in the press, but on the radio and TV too. My thanks go to everyone who has contributed in such a positive manner.

**Councillor Gwyneth Bryant**

## **COUNCIL MEETING 16 DECEMBER 2003**

### **REPORT OF COUNCILLOR N P CAVILL – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, PROPERTY AND TOURISM**

#### **Lyons Report**

Recently, two of our officers attended a presentation meeting in London, along with representatives of some of the Departments likely to relocate. It would appear that the relocation might involve more people than first considered. At this meeting, it was apparent that the preferred relocation sites were two in the Midlands and two in the South West of which Taunton is one. At subsequent presentations both the RDA and SCC said they would assist us in promoting Taunton.

#### **Firepool site**

Further to information provided elsewhere, the planning for this site has moved another step forward. Abbey Manor has been working constructively to produce a positive solution, bearing in mind our Highway requirements for the Firepool site.

#### **Egg packing station at Halcon**

Having, at one stage, believed that we had been seriously outbid for any future redevelopment of this site, Chesterton's have now informed us that the competing bid has been withdrawn.

#### **Broadband**

As a Council we are working with local communities to raise awareness of the benefits of Broadband, for both business and private users. In particular Emma Morrice is working to bring forward the availability of Broadband to all areas of Taunton Deane. There will be two roadshows, 14<sup>th</sup> January at SCAT, and 22<sup>nd</sup> January at Victoria Rooms, Milverton. We are trying to encourage everyone with an interest to register their requirement with BT on the website, [www.bt.com/broadband/](http://www.bt.com/broadband/).

#### **Business networks**

A successful group has been running in Bishops Lydeard for a year, and a similar group is now set up in the Milverton area. They are available to all business people who work from home or sole traders. The potential benefits of these groups have been well recognised by participants.

#### **Agricultural Development Officer**

Our officer Rob Jackson, has recently been involved with FWAG who organised a meeting for people interested in growing *Miscanthus* (Elephant Grass). As an alternative enterprise, it has uses from horse bedding to bio fuel. He also organised a diversification meeting at West Monkton, with presentations from DEFRA, Humberts, Business Link, and ourselves. Both meetings were well attended.

#### **Taste of Taunton Deane**

This event was held in September, in partnership with Somerset Food Links. It has helped to provide producers and buyers the opportunity to come together in one

location, to view and taste samples, create local supply chains, share knowledge and help the Taunton Deane economy.

### **Tourism**

Destination Management System (DMS). We are signing up to this system, as are the other districts. It will be a one-stop shop allowing a quicker more efficient and more cost-effective access for our visitors and ourselves, to holiday and visitor destinations in Taunton Deane. The system facilitates on-line bookings for accommodation and attractions. The data from the system will inform the Visitor Guide.

Tourist Information Centres (T.I.Cs). These are much used facilities, and whilst in three years time, the DMS may replace them, at present it would be a retrograde step to lose them.

### **Asset Management Plan (AMP)**

Recent requirements on plant and equipment within Leisure facilities have meant re-prioritising replacement and improvement of power plant and some equipment.

This will impact on work that we had hoped to do for further improvement of other assets.

**Councillor Norman P Cavill**

## **COUNCIL MEETING - 16 DECEMBER 2003**

### **REPORT OF EXECUTIVE COUNCILLOR MARK EDWARDS – ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES**

#### **Litter**

The Litter Hotline is now operational and taking calls. The number of calls have been limited too date but we are expecting increases as the advertising starts to work. The extra funds have led to an additional member of staff for the street-cleaning programme. We have changed some of the cleaning regimes and as a result are seeing positive comments from members of the public. I am delighted to have been contacted on numerous occasions by telephone and letter thanking me for the stance taken, the efforts being made and the impact being seen. I personally want to thank all of the team from the Street Cleaners to the officers who have taken my position very seriously on this matter and have all pulled together to have a very positive effect. We are not there yet but have moved a considerable way.

#### **Taunton Deane: Crisp and Clean**

The principle of “Crisp and Clean” was discussed by the Health and Leisure Panel and was welcomed by all. The Crisp and Clean policy is an umbrella to cover various aspects of the Street Scene in and around Taunton Deane.

The aspects embraced by Crisp and Clean are:-

- Continuing the targeted increase in Street Cleaning across Taunton Deane.
- Promoting the new litter Hotline.
- Introduction of litter fines.
- Highlight and tackle litter Hot Spots.
- Tackling Fly Tipping.
- The formation of the River Tone Partnership to fund the professional cleaning of the tone.
- Encouraging local business to clean the stonework of their buildings
- The formation of Environmental Wardens to be the Councils eyes across the district.
- Improving the car parks to make them cleaner, more friendly and welcoming.

I am determined that all the departments within the Council take seriously what we are trying to achieve. We need a joined up approach to a district wide issue.

I would finish by adding that when I say “Taunton Deane” I mean the whole district not only Taunton Town Centre.

In addition I would like to thank Cllr Meikle for his assistance in preparing the “Crisp and Clean” paper and his thoughts with regard this policy.

### **Public Toilets**

I have presently still agreed to keep shut the following toilets:-

Kingston Rd.

Hamilton Rd

Victoria Gate

Cheddon Green

French Wier

will be opened on a seasonal basis

Priorswood

shut for some time through vandalism

The other toilets are now fully open and the cleaning regime now in place appears to be working very effectively with a better quality service. There have been no financial gains as a result of this change indeed quite the opposite but we now have cleaner facilities which are open to the hours required certainly an improvement on the previous situation.

In Wellington I am still intending on replacing or refurbishing the North Street Toilets which are a serious concern and I will be speaking to the Town Council in the New Year about what type of facilities would be appropriate.

**Councillor Mark J Edwards**

## **COUNCIL MEETING 16 DECEMBER 2003**

### **REPORT OF COUNCILLOR GREG GARNER - HOUSING SERVICES**

The theme for this quarter's Full Council is to provide a further update on the two major housing projects currently in progress i.e Housing Best Value Review and the Council Housing Stock Option Appraisal. In addition, all Councils are targeted to have nil families in B&B accommodation by April 2004, I will also comment on progress in this area.

#### **Housing Best Value**

Work began in October 2002 with a review of baselines for all 23 housing service areas. Further development of the scope led to a themed approach of:

- Customer Services – ‘the people’ (our role as landlord and service provider)
- Decent Homes for All – ‘the homes’ (the accommodation we provide)
- Capacity Building – ‘our ability’ (back office functions e.g. IT, financial management).

Three theme working groups and specialists in each of the four Cs (Challenge, Compare, Consult and Compete) report to a Core group of representatives from service users, partners, housing and corporate staff, Members and officers.

Customer Services have drawn together a great deal of baseline information around stakeholders, consultation with users and partners, participation, access issues, hard to reach groups and those with particular needs, communications and working with other agencies. We are benchmarking with Best Practice providers.

Decent Homes are looking at partnering arrangements for repairs and planned maintenance. A “voids” working group is improving processes to create greater efficiencies. With respect to the private sector, a County-wide approach is moving towards a Home Improvement Agency. Again, we are benchmarking with Best Practice providers.

A draft improvement plan is being developed during the Best Value process. The review is due for completion in April 2004. As the stock options appraisal is an integral part of the review the decision on this will be included within the improvement plan.

#### **Council Housing Stock Options Appraisal**

Since the beginning of October, a great deal of work has been undertaken by a number of staff, assisted by the Tenants Forum, Members, DOME who are the Tenants Independent Advisors (ITA) and PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) who are the Council's Specialist Help. The main areas of work that has now taken place are:



- i) A number of varied of communications have been produced. For example:
  - a) Article in the Core Brief
  - b) Newsletters to Tenants
  - c) Newsletter type articles to Non Tenants through for example the Weekly Bulletin
  - d) Briefing Note to Members
  - e) Presentations to all Housing Staff and a large number of Non Housing Staff
  - f) Information Pamphlet to all staff in their pay packet
  - g) Setting up a Web Site
  - h) Press Release
  - i) Information Pack to all the Council's Partners
- ii) Undertaking a Risk Assessment
- iii) Options awareness training to the Steering Group, Members of the Housing Review Panel, Executive and Group Leaders.
- iv) Completion of key documents such as the Communication Strategy and Tenant Empowerment Strategy and passing these to the Community Housing Task Force (CHTF) for comment.
- v) DOME sending a newsletter and undertaking Road Shows with Tenants to advise them about the Stock Options Appraisal.
- vi) Initial report completed by PWC.

With reference to point vi above, PWC have produced a report for the Housing Review Panel and the Executive (for presentation w/c 8<sup>th</sup> December), providing a detailed analysis of the first Phase of the Stock Options Appraisal. The report also provides a new financial base position and assessment of the Council's ability to deliver on all of its Housing Priorities through four main options. These options are:

- i) Continued Ownership and Management of the Housing Stock
- ii) Arms Length Management (ALMO)
- iii) Private Finance Initiative (PFI)
- iv) Stock Transfer

The report produced by PWC and the work to date has completed Phase A of the Stock Options Appraisal and is in line with the timetable. The next phase is to communicate further with our tenants, key stakeholders and partners in the new calendar year and fully engage with them to obtain their views. Equally important, is to consider the implementation of the recommendations made by PWC.

In light of the comments made by PWC that we need to undertake a validation of our stock condition survey information, it is believed prudent to move the completion of Phase B of the Stock Options Appraisal from April to July's Full Council. This will enable a more comprehensive assessment to be undertaken of the findings of the Housing Best Value in April and the Comprehensive Performance Assessment in May.

### Bed and Breakfast

At the end of week 35 (Friday 5<sup>th</sup> December) we have spent £216,000 out of an original budget of £243,000 this allocation was increased in June by £50,000. Housing Benefits and charges have brought in income of £46,000 to date i.e. a net spend of £176,000.

As at Friday 5<sup>th</sup> December there are eleven families in Bed and Breakfast and nineteen singles.

We continue to develop new and existing initiatives to help combat the problem of homelessness, recent initiatives include:

#### Cash Incentive Scheme:

The Cash Incentive Scheme is a cost effective way of gaining access to Council Housing by offering existing tenants £20,000 (just increased from £10,000) towards fees and deposit for tenants contemplating home ownership within the private sector. As at 6 weeks ago only one CIS had been completed this year, since the increase in funds, there has been positive response of which 8 are being processed through legal channels.

#### Private Sector Leasing:

This is where the Council enters into a contract with private landlords to house homeless families, but with the Council as tenant. The rent on a three bed house under this scheme costs the Council about £550 per month. This is equivalent to the average expenditure per week for a family in B&B. The Council benefits financially as does the client as they now have their own front door and enhanced self esteem.

We have just completed the first house under the Private Sector Leasing Scheme, four others are going through the legal process. We aim to have eight units in Taunton by April and have just been offered three flats in Wellington.

We expect with careful management that this will be sufficient to meet the Government's target of no families in Bed and Breakfast by April nevertheless we will continue to explore all channels and to keep our minds and options open.

**Councillor Greg Garner**

## **COUNCIL MEETING - 16 DECEMBER 2003**

### **REPORT OF COUNCILLOR HALL - RESOURCES**

#### **1 PROCUREMENT**

The corporate procurement unit has been working on the new standing orders, which will allow us to improve the way we buy the goods and services we require. The impact of the National Procurement Strategy and the way it can best be implemented locally are also being assessed. Local processes e.g. invoice payment, are being re-engineered to reduce the level of administration required. The unit has also been heavily involved in the Housing Stock Options work and Housing Best Value Review also with the Deane Building Design Group in the design of an action plan for the Rethinking Construction Agenda. Bar-coding of all DLO stores is almost completed which will improve stock management.

#### **2 MEMBER'S SERVICES**

The independent Member's Allowance Panel have completed its consideration of allowances for 2004/5. Its recommendations have been submitted to the Resources Review Panel (RRP) for its views and details advertised in the local press (as required by legislation). The independent Panel's recommendations, together with the views of the RRP, will be submitted to the next meeting of Council for a decision to be made in parallel with the budget setting process.

The RRP have also considered and made recommendations on a report, which sought to improve services to Councillors, particularly those that work full time. Its recommendations included a slightly later start time (6.15pm) for most meetings, improvements to some existing services and a menu of options being offered to each Councillor so they can receive communications in a manner that best suits their particular circumstances.

#### **3 FINANCIAL SERVICES**

The Financial Services Unit have been spending much of their time dealing with the forthcoming budget proposals for 2004/5 and investigating requests from Executive members for information concerning closure of the budget gap. They have also been closely involved with the other key corporate projects including the Leisure Trust and implementation of the new Personnel and Payroll package. The impact of many recent legislative changes is being assessed, including the Prudential Code, of which members will be hearing much more shortly.

#### **4 REVENUE SERVICES**

A review of our cashiering services has been conducted and a report outlining the options for change will be made to the Executive meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> December.

The instalment dates for payment of Council Tax will be brought forward in 2004. Work has commenced on advertising and introducing the change, which will have significant benefits for the Council and help to keep increases in council tax as low as possible.

The in year collection rates for Council Tax and NNDR continue to exceed targets and the level of unpaid debt owed to the Council continues to be reduced.

An IT Development Plan has been agreed and finalised for all the revenue systems, this will result in windows based systems, document imaging and work flow being introduced within two years.

## **5 PERSONNEL**

Contracts were recently signed with Northgate to provide the Council with a new integrated personnel and payroll software system, to replace the existing 15 years old pay roll system. Work is currently progressing on installing and setting it up prior to a duplicate run of payroll in February to test the accuracy of the new system with, if all goes well, a go live date in April.

One of the most significant advantages of the Northgate system is its ability to easily produce management information which until now has been either impossible or extremely difficult and time consuming to produce. For example much more detailed and useful information on staff absence will be available.

## **6 BENEFITS**

Disappointingly the first two months of the second quarter have seen deterioration in the speed of processing of claims. This results from a severe attack of maternity in the benefit unit together with mass recalculation of benefit entitlement resulting from introduction of the Pension Credit system. These changes in entitlement have in turn resulted in large increase in enquiries from claimants.

Initial results from the statutory survey show increased satisfaction with the unit's telephone service and the understand ability of our documents. However there has been a reduction in satisfaction in other areas such as the facilities at enquiry points and the speed with which claims are assessed

## **7 RECEPTION AND SOMERSET DIRECT**

Refurbishment of the Reception area has been put on hold for the time being while a review is undertaken of how the Council can best deliver its services in the future. The review will take into account the impacts of the Housing Stock Options process together with the anticipated growth in delivery by e means. This review is expected to take 6 months to complete.

Consequently the Somerset Direct service will open in April 2004 in its original concept as a virtual contact centre using the telephone service only. The Reception area will continue to operate as it does now apart from removal of the 356356-telephone switchboard.

Terry Hall

## **COUNCIL MEETING – 16 DECEMBER 2003**

### **RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL** **COUNCILLOR MRS. LEWIN – HARRIS – COMMUNITY** **LEADERSHIP**

#### **Equality Policy For Taunton Deane Borough Council**

During 2002/03, the Community Leadership Panel was responsible for overseeing a best value review into the Council's performance on equality issues. The review was conducted by the Equality and Diversity Group - a cross departmental team of officers which still meets on a regular basis to ensure that progress is made in this key statutory area.

The Council, on the recommendation of the Community Leadership Panel (9 April 2003), has adopted the 'Equality Standard for Local Government'. The Equality Standard features five levels (level 5 being the most difficult to achieve), providing a framework for the Council to measure planned improvements in equalities practice.

The development of a comprehensive equality policy is a requirement for achieving level 1 of the Equality Standard for Local Government. It is also one of the fundamental action points that emerged from the equalities best value review.

#### **The Draft Equality Policy**

The Equality and Diversity Group has prepared the draft Policy attached as Appendix 'A'. The draft Policy is intended to be comprehensive, not only in the range of Council activities covered, but also in terms of the equality issues covered (race, gender, disability, age and others specified).

Consultation on the draft Equality Policy ended on November 28<sup>th</sup> 2003. The draft Equality Policy attached as Appendix A incorporates comments received by the Community Leadership Panel at two recent meetings (11 and 25 November 2003), together with views expressed by staff and partner agencies.

#### **Impact on Corporate Priorities**

Aside from its various statutory obligations in the equalities area, the Council is committed to 'promoting fairness and equality of opportunity in all that we do' as part of its priority for 'Delivery'.

This Policy, if adopted, will have far reaching implications for Council services and the way they are delivered to all sections of our community.

It is therefore RECOMMENDED that the draft Equality Policy attached as Appendix 'A' be adopted

**Councillor Mrs J. Lewin-Harris**

## **APPENDIX A**

### **TAUNTON DEANE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

#### **DRAFT EQUALITY POLICY**

##### **Our Commitment to Equality**

Taunton Deane Borough Council values diversity and believes that all people have the right to be treated with dignity and respect. We aim to promote equality of opportunity in our role as a service provider, policy maker, employer, purchaser of goods and services and elected leader in the local community.

In promoting equality of opportunity, we will oppose all forms of discrimination, whether on grounds of disability, gender, race, sexuality, age, marital status, religion, national origin or any other condition or requirement which may place a person or group at a disadvantage.

##### **Specific Equality Objectives**

###### **As an employer, we will:**

- Ensure that no employee or job applicant receives less favourable treatment than another on the grounds of disability, gender, race, sexuality, age, marital status, religion and national origin.
- Ensure that advertising and recruitment processes are accessible to all sections of society, as part of our commitment to developing a workforce that reflects the community we serve.
- Ensure that objective job-related criteria apply to all of our employment policies and practices. Appointments and promotions to Council posts will be based on merit, qualification and experience.
- Create and maintain a workplace where all employees are treated with dignity and respect, and where the need to achieve a balance between work and personal/home responsibilities is recognised
- In recruitment of employees, seek to eliminate any assumptions, preferences or judgements that do not relate to the potential abilities of individuals to perform the required job. This principle will apply to every stage of the recruitment process.
- Ensure equality of opportunity for promotion and advancement. A vital element in this is ensuring equal access to training.



- Ensure that all employees understand and receive training as appropriate to promote and encourage equal opportunities.
- Monitor recruitment, promotion and training opportunities and take up, staff absence, harassment, pay, grievances and exit from employment.

**As a provider of services we will:**

- Continuously improve services to ensure that they are accessible and provided fairly to everyone in our community.
- Take action to identify groups in Taunton Deane with specific needs and requirements in accessing our services.
- Integrate equality considerations into everything we do, through the development of service specific equality action plans and targets.
- Monitor the effectiveness of our services in promoting equality of opportunity and address any particular obstacles or difficulties identified.
- Ensure that our complaints procedure is accessible to all service users, and that complaints about unfairness and discrimination are treated in a way that does not promote fear of victimisation and/or recrimination.

**As a purchaser of goods and services we will:**

- Communicate our Equality Policy to contractors delivering services on our behalf, and include equality factors in the awarding and monitoring of contracts.

**As an elected leader in the community we will:**

- Promote good relations within the community and seek to eliminate discrimination, harassment and abuse of any group or individual.
- Raise awareness and promote the Councils equality commitments among staff, members, partner agencies and the wider community
- Develop robust methods to ensure that consultation exercises carried out by the Council are accessible to all groups within our community.

**Implementing the Equality Policy**

To support the implementation of this Policy, the Council will:

- Develop a detailed Corporate Equality Plan (CEP), which translates commitments into specific actions, with targets and timescales for moving

through the levels of the Equality Standard for Local Government. The CEP will also include procedures for self-assessment, audit and scrutiny using national and local performance indicators.

- Monitor progress and revise targets in all areas of action – reporting on a regular basis to elected members and senior management.
- Deliver and keep under regular review the Council’s statutory Race Equality Scheme and other equality related strategies and plans.
- Allocate specific resources to improve equality practice as appropriate.

## **Legal requirements**

The Council recognises its statutory obligations and will comply with all relevant equality based legislation and codes of practice, including:

- Equal Pay Act 1970
- Race Relations Act 1976
- Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
- Human Rights Act 1999
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975

## **Responsibility for the Equality Policy**

The Council has established a framework to ensure that equality is integrated in all that we do. Specifically, a multi-departmental officer team has been set up to ensure that our equality commitments are delivered. The Chief Executive acts as equalities ‘champion’, working with senior management to ensure that active steps are taken across all services to implement this Policy. Most importantly, all employees have a role in implementing and supporting all aspects of this policy.

At elected member level, specific responsibility for overseeing this Policy rests with the Community Leadership Review Panel and the Executive Councillor with responsibility for Community Leadership. However, all Councillors have a responsibility to support the commitments and specific objectives of this Policy.

December 2003

## **COUNCIL MEETING 16 DECEMBER 2003-12-08**

### **REPORT OF COUNCILLOR MRS. LEWIN – HARRIS - COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP**

#### Neighbourhood and Parish Wardens

It is good news that the future of both the Neighbourhood and Parish Wardens now looks secure. From April next year they will be known as Police Community Support Officers. They will have some extra powers, such as the power to issue fixed penalty notices for cycling on pavements, litter or dog fouling. They will also be able to require the name and address of a person acting in an anti-social manner and to confiscate alcohol from a young person. They will keep to their current patrol areas and the local steering groups will continue.

I am grateful to the Avon and Somerset Constabulary for their offer to fund 75% of the cost of these extra PCSO's, leaving Taunton Deane to fund the other 25%. This agreement with the police means that Taunton Deane will now have the benefit of 8 CPSO's – double the number originally proposed.

The work of the Wardens is widely appreciated in their local communities and I know that residents are pleased that they will be able to continue with that work.

#### Community Planning

Work continues on the community planning in the Wellington area, which includes Wellington itself and the villages of Nynehead, Bradford on Tone, Oake, Langford Budville, Sampford Arundell and West Buckland.

A steering group has been formed and the public consultation is well under way. Members of the Community Initiatives unit organised a consultation event last Saturday at Wellington Football Club. There was quite a range of displays and residents were encouraged to come along and have their say. All staff in the unit were present and I do thank them all for turning out on a Saturday and putting a lot of effort into the organisation.

The Consultation period for the Draft Blackdown Hills Strategy, which is a combined Management Plan and Community Strategy for the area has just come to an end and the final Strategy will be produced next year.

Meanwhile, the interest in Parish Plans is increasing. Nynehead, Stoke St Gregory and Waterrow are ahead of the game with Parish Plans either published or about to be published. Bishops Lydeard is well under way, and I understand that Trull, Norton Fitzwarren, Bishops Hull, West Hatch, Stoke St Mary, Chipstable and Lydeard St Lawrence are all expressing interest. I have been closely involved in the development of the Bishops Lydeard, Cotford St Luke and Cothelstone Parish Plan and can say from first hand experience that it is a rewarding experience, though the time and commitment needed should not be underestimated. I do believe that villages that

produce a Parish Plan that gives clear evidence of the needs and wishes of residents will benefit when it comes to the allocation of scarce resources and the capacity to pull down funds from elsewhere.

#### The Local Strategic Partnership

I mentioned in my report to Full Council in October the need to find ways to add value to the work of the LSP and to address the issue of funding. A couple of meetings will shortly take place with some of our partners and I would hope to be able to update you verbally at Full Council with the broad outcomes of those meetings. The aim is to ensure that the LSP is not seen as TDBC's project and that other partners are equally involved. The decision that the proceeds from the extra council tax on second homes will be available to the LSP to help deliver its priorities is very welcome.

#### Tackling Anti-social behaviour

This subject has moved quickly up the political agenda both nationally and locally as it has become more and more evident that communities are fed up with those who spoil the ability others to live in their own homes and go about their business in peace and quiet.

I recently attended a very interesting Problem Solving Seminar organised by the Police. The day was aimed at Parish Councillors and Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinators and included presentations on various tools or ideas that may be helpful in dealing with anti-social behaviour in our communities.

If you have a problem with vehicles speeding through your village or area, Community Speed Watch could well be for you (is speeding through villages anti-social behaviour? I think it is.). The scheme involves volunteers monitoring speed using a hand held speed detection device and recording details of offending vehicles. These details are passed to the police who send warning letters to offenders. Repeat offenders are considered for targeted intervention by the police, or the community itself might decide to "name and shame" offenders. Evidence from other areas shows that Community Speed Watch can be an effective way of reducing speed in local communities. Further information can be obtained from the Community Speed Watch co-ordinator through your local Beat Officer.

The Police have recently appointed a Local Action Team co-ordinator whose job it is to encourage and help communities to set up Local Action Teams to identify local problems and design action plans to deal with them. The idea is to tap into and use the knowledge and experience of local people and for the police and community together to find ways to tackle problems. A meeting about forming a Local Action Team is due to be held in Holway on 15 December, organised by the community beat manager and local councillors.

Another initiative by the Police is the appointment of an Antisocial Behaviour Co-ordinator. The role of Tiina Huovinen is to identify the nature of the antisocial behaviour problems that we face and to organise a co-ordinated response between

different agencies. She will also help set up and monitor Acceptable Behaviour Contracts and Anti-Social Behaviour Orders.

**Councillor Joanna Lewin-Harris**

## **COUNCIL MEETING – 16 DECEMBER 2003**

### **RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL FROM THE COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP REVIEW PANEL**

#### 1. The Constitution

The Community Leadership Review Panel is responsible for overseeing the use being made of the Council's formal Constitution and to recommend changes when necessary.

Three such issues were considered at the Review Panel on 25 November 2003, namely:-

- (a) Contract Standing Orders
- (b) Substitutions
- (c) Proposals for a Corporate Governance Committee

#### **Contract Standing Orders**

The Council is legally obliged to adopt Standing Orders governing the way in which we let our contracts for goods, works and services.

The format of our existing Contract Standing Orders do not embrace modern procurement methods and have largely been in place since local government reorganisation in 1974. A major review of the current standing orders has been carried out and has resulted in a complete re-write in a more modern form. The proposed Contract Standing Orders are attached at Appendix A.

#### **Substitutions**

The procedural rules which govern the way in which the Council carries out its business are largely found in the Constitution which was adopted by the Council in October 2001.

A source of uncertainty since that time has been over the use of substitutes on Board, Panels and Committees – particularly as to whether such substitution could take place part way through a meeting – or for a single item.

The Review Panel considered the advantages and disadvantages of substitutions on both the Planning Committee and on the Review Board and Panels. They concluded that:-

- ❖ some restrictions should be placed on such substitutions at all such meetings; and
- ❖ rather than preventing any substitution at meetings of the Planning Committee provision should be made for some limited substitutions of members so long as some proper safeguards are in place.

## **Corporate Governance Committee**

In preparing the Constitution the aim was that all of the Council's functions both internal and external should fall within the remit of one of the "Overview and Scrutiny Panels", i.e. our Review Panels. One of the areas that is not specifically allocated in this way was the field of 'Corporate Governance'. It is now commonplace amongst councils to reflect the increased importance of this area by the setting up of an "Audit Committee" or "Corporate Governance Committee". Such a committee would have responsibility for the monitoring of the Council's approach to Corporate Governance i.e. the system by which the Council directs and controls its functions and relates to its communities.

By forming such a committee greater reassurance could be achieved that our existing arrangements are operating satisfactorily. The terms of reference of the committee are attached as Appendix B.

It is therefore RECOMMENDED that the Constitution be amended to the following effect:-

- (1) by the inclusion of the revised Contract Standing Orders;
- (2) As to the substitution of members at meetings:-
  - (a) by the inclusion of "Such formal notice must be given to the Member Services Manager not later than the beginning of the meeting concerned and such substitution will last for the whole of that meeting" in the Procedural Rules for Review Board and Panels (page 4-E3);
  - (b) by the insertion of a new paragraph (5.2) in Part 3 (Section 2 – Regulatory Powers of the Council) (Page 3-A6) as follows:-

"Planning Committee – Substitutions – substitution of members at meetings of the Planning Committee may only be effected as follows:-

Such formal notice must be given to the Member Services Manager not later than the beginning of the meeting concerned and such substitution will last for the whole of that meeting. Substitutes may only be appointed from those councillors noted by the Member Services Manager as having undergone recent and satisfactory Planning Committee training. (For the purpose of this paragraph those Planning Committee meetings which require the use of a 'reserve date' shall be treated as two separate meetings)."

- (3) by a Corporate Governance Committee being added to the Council's constitutional arrangements with terms of reference as set out in Appendix B.

- (4) by the Monitoring Officer being authorised to effect these amendments to the Constitution and to circulate the resulting changes to all councillors.

Councillor Denington  
Chairman Community Leadership Review Panel



## APPENDIX A

### CONTRACT STANDING ORDERS

#### Compliance with Contract Standing Orders

1. Every Contract made by the Authority or officer acting on its behalf shall comply with these Contract Procedure Rules, all relevant Statutory Provisions, with any relevant EU Directives currently in force in the United Kingdom, the Councils Financial Regulations and the Strategic Objectives of the Authority.
2. A Contract is an agreement between the Council and an individual or organisation for the individual or organisation to provide works, goods or services (including the engagement of consultants) for which the Council will provide consideration. The following contracts are exempt from the requirements of these rules: contracts relating solely to disposal or acquisition of land; employment contracts and individual agency contracts for the provision of temporary staff.
3. Officers involved in the awarding of a Contract must ensure that the best value for money is obtained. Before commencing a procurement, it is essential that the authorised officer leading the procurement has identified the need and fully assessed the options for meeting those needs. The best use of purchasing power shall be sought by aggregating purchases wherever possible.
4. Exceptions from any of the following provisions of these Contract Procedure Rules may be made under the provisions of Contract Procedure Rule 14 or otherwise by direction of the Council, the Executive or the Executive Member where they are satisfied that the exception is justified in special circumstances. No exception shall apply to Contract Procedure Rule 19. Every exception and the reason therefore shall be recorded in the Tenders Register.
5. The Chief Architect or Procurement Manager or their nominated deputy must be notified of all procurements where the predicted spend is above Threshold 1 (see Appendix 1 for thresholds). They will seek to identify whether their involvement in the procurement will add value to the end result.
6. Arrangements for Contracts shall be made in accordance with the Council's Procurement Strategy

#### Risk & Project Management

7. For procurement where the estimated spend is greater than Threshold 3 the Procurement Risk Management policy must be applied and decisions recorded. Any high risks that exceed the accepted threshold must be reported to Corporate Management Team (CMT). The Corporate Project Management process must be applied.
8. For procurement where the estimated spend is less than Threshold 3 the Service Unit Manager must ensure that all risks are considered and managed, reporting to CMT any consequential risks that may seriously jeopardise the Council.

9. For procurement where the estimated spend is less than Threshold 3 the Corporate Project Management process should be used at the discretion of the Service Unit Manager particularly where the risk of failure would impact on the ability to deliver a service or create a significant consequential risk.

### **Specifications**

11. Enquiries and Invitations to Tender shall be based on a written specification. The specification shall adequately describe the required procurement in sufficient detail to enable effective procurement in accordance with these rules.

### **Supplier Pre-Qualification**

12. The Council shall only enter into a contract with a supplier if it is satisfied as to the supplier's eligibility, financial standing and technical capacity to undertake the contract. For contracts over Threshold 3 the Section 151 Officer will formally vet those companies that have been selected to receive an invitation to tender.

### **Requirement for Quotation / Tender and Public Advertisement**

13. Before entering into a Contract a written quotation/tender for the contract price must be secured. Consideration shall be given to other costs associated with the procurement (Lifetime costings including for example maintenance costs and power consumption). Where these could be significant such as in the final disposal of a product appropriate arrangements shall be put into place to consider these costs against alternative options.
  - a) Contracts below Threshold 1  
At least one written quotation must be obtained, preferably more where there are opportunities for competitive savings.
  - b) Contracts between Threshold 1 and Threshold 2  
Written quotations must be sought from not less than three individuals or organisations that could undertake the contract.
  - c) Contracts between Threshold 2 and Threshold 3
    - 1) A Public Notice must be made in the relevant section of the Council's website, setting out particulars of the contract and inviting persons interested to apply, within a period not less than 10 days, for permission to tender.
    - 2) After the expiration of the period specified in the Public Notice invitations to tender shall be sent to not less than four individuals or organisations that could undertake the contract (or, if fewer than four apply, to those that are suitable).
    - 3) Tenders are to be submitted and opened in accordance with Contract Procedure Rule 18.
  - d) Contracts above Threshold 3

- 1) The procurement shall comply with the requirements of the EU Procurement Directives.
  - 2) A Public Notice must be made in the relevant section of the Council's website.
  - 3) After the expiration of the period specified in the Public Notice invitations to tender shall be sent to not less than four individuals or organisations selected in accordance with the applicable EU Procurement Directives (or, if fewer than four apply, to those that are suitable).
  - 4) Tenders are to be submitted and opened in accordance with Contract Procedure Rule 19.
14. Contract Procedure Rules 13a, 13b and 13c shall not apply to the following but, wherever possible, alternative quotations shall be obtained:
- a) Purchases by auction or at public fairs or markets
  - b) Contracts involving special technical, scientific or artistic knowledge
  - c) Contracts in respect of which there would be no genuine competition (following consultation with the Chief Architect or Procurement Manager)
  - d) Contracts comprising spare or replacement parts of existing machinery or plant or repairs to such machinery or plant
  - e) The Contract to be entered into is to be dealt with in a prescribed manner under agency arrangements entered into by the Council with another authority
  - f) Urgent situations as agreed with the client Director and Executive Councillor where the authority is put at significant risk or significant costs could be incurred by not taking urgent remedial action.
  - g) Emergency situations (as defined in the Council's Disaster Recovery Plans or Emergency Planning procedures)
15. Paragraphs 13a, 13b and 13c (up to Threshold 3) of these Contract Procedure Rules shall not apply to the entering into of contracts by the Deane DLO for the supply of goods or the engagement of sub-contractors where such transactions are necessary to enable the carrying out of contracts obtained by the Deane DLO after competitive tendering, provided that full details of all orders and contracts are maintained in such manner as required from time to time by the Section 151 Officer
16. Every written contract shall specify
- a) the work, materials, matters or things to be furnished, had or done;
  - b) the price to be paid, with a statement of discounts or other deductions (if any); and
  - c) the time or times within which the contract is to be performed.
17. Every contract which exceeds Threshold 3 and is either for the execution of work or the supply of goods or materials shall provide for payment of liquidated damages by the contractor in case the terms of the contract are not performed.

### **Submission of Tenders**

18. Submission Procedures for contracts between Threshold 2 and Threshold 3
  - a) Where an invitation to tender is made, each invitation shall state that no tender will be considered unless it is enclosed in a plain sealed envelope. The envelope shall bear the word '**Tender**' - in large emboldened lettering followed by the subject to which it relates and the Tender reference number (if applicable) but no other name or mark indicating the identity of the sender.
  - b) The tenders shall be kept in the custody of the appropriate Director's nominated officer until the time and date specified for their opening.
  - c) Tenders shall be opened in the presence of (at least) two Council Officers. Tenders shall be date-stamped and signed on all pages containing price information.
19. Submission Procedures for contracts above Threshold 3
  - a) Where an invitation to tender is made, each invitation shall state that no tender will be considered unless it is enclosed in a plain sealed envelope clearly addressed to the Member Services Manager. The envelope shall bear the word '**Tender**' - in large emboldened lettering followed by the subject to which it relates and the Tender reference number (if applicable) but no other name or mark indicating the identity of the sender.
  - b) The tenders shall be kept in the custody of Member Services Manager until the time and date specified for their opening.
  - c) Tenders shall be opened in the presence of (at least) two Council Officers and a Councillor. Tenders shall be date-stamped and signed on all pages containing price information.
  - d) All tenders which were received by the time and date specified shall be recorded in the Tenders Register maintained by the Members Services Manager.
20. Tenders received after the time and date specified in the invitation to tender shall be considered only in exceptional circumstances. A tender received late can only be considered with the approval of the Monitoring Officer or in his absence the Section 151 Officer.
21. Invitations to Tender may be issued by electronic means provided that evidence that the transmission was successfully completed is obtained and recorded.
22. Quotations and tenders may be submitted electronically provided that they are kept in a separate secure folder under the control of the authorised officer which is not opened until the deadline is passed for the receipt of tenders.

#### **Acceptance of Quotations and Tenders**

23. The tender that is most economically advantageous to the Council shall be accepted. Each tender shall be evaluated for price and quality to ascertain the most economically advantageous tender.
24. For procurements over Threshold 3 the questions and scoring system used to evaluate quality shall be written before tenders are received. The basis of this exercise shall be explained in any invitation to tender documentation

25. Impact on Corporate Priorities must be included within the scoring system.
26. Guidance on generating a scoring system is located in Procurement Guidance CP-PG-76.
27. Where the Officer considers it in the best interests of the Council he may negotiate with the tenderers whose tenders are being considered for acceptance. No negotiation on contracts whose value is in excess of Threshold 3 can take place without reference to the Chief Architect or Procurement Manager. Any negotiation which would distort competition is expressly forbidden. Details of the negotiations must be placed on the contract file.
28. Arithmetical errors found in the most economically advantageous tender when checking shall be dealt with as follows:
  - a) Where the arithmetical error if corrected would inflate the cost of the contract to the Council the tenderer shall have the error pointed out to them and be offered the opportunity to stand by their tender or withdraw it
  - b) Where the arithmetical error if corrected would reduce the cost of the contract to the Council the tenderer shall have the error pointed out to them and corrected.

### **Signing or Sealing of Contracts**

29. Every successful quotation/tender shall be accepted in writing, provided that contracts which exceed Threshold 3 in value or amount and such other contracts as the Solicitor to the Council shall determine shall be set out in a formal contract document.

### **Order Controls** (additional to Financial Regulations Order Controls)

30. All orders greater than £250 must be referred to the Corporate Procurement department (except for Deane Building Design Group on buildings related orders).
31. Where corporate framework contracts are in place (as detailed on the intranet) they must be used by all officers.

### **Authority to Commit the Council**

32. Officers are authorised to commit the Council to expenditure on contracts as follows:
 

a)	Chief Executive	£Unlimited
b)	Directors	Up to £1,000,000
c)	Heads of Service, Chief Architect and Procurement Manager	Up to £500,000
d)	Service Unit Managers	Up to Threshold 3
e)	Other staff	As delegated by SUMs, low risk items, level not to exceed Threshold 3 and to be notified to Section 151 Officer.

### **Nominated Sub-Contractors and Suppliers**

33. Where a sub-contractor or supplier is to be nominated to a main contractor, the procurement of the services of the sub-contractor or supplier shall be subject to these Contract Procedure Rules.

### **Bribery**

34. In every contract a clause shall be inserted to secure that the Council shall be entitled to cancel the contract and to recover from the contractor the amount of any loss resulting from such cancellation if the contractor shall have offered or given or agreed to give to any person any gift or consideration of any kind as an inducement or reward for doing or forbearing to do or for having done or forborne to do any action in relation to the obtaining or execution of the contract or any other contract with the Council, or for showing or forbearing to show favour or disfavour to any person in relation to the contract or any other contract with the Council, or if the like acts shall have been done by any person employed by him or acting on his behalf (whether with or without the knowledge of the contractor), or if, in relation to any contract with the Council, the contractor or any person employed by him or acting on his behalf shall have committed any offence under the Prevention of Corruption Acts, 1889 to 1916, or shall have given any fee or reward the receipt of which is an offence under sub-section (2) of Section 117 of the Local Government Act, 1972.

### **Contracts Record**

35. A record of all contracts in excess of Threshold 2 in value placed by the Council shall be kept on the Council's Intranet site. This register shall specify for each contract the name of the contractor, the works to be executed or the goods or services to be supplied, the contract value and the contract period. This is the responsibility of the officer authorising the contract to ensure that a timely entry is completed.

### **Contract Management**

39. Project management shall be practiced at all times in undertaking procurement. However where significant risks or expenditure are identified particularly in procurement projects where the spend is greater than Threshold 3 the Corporate Contract Management process must be used.
37. Any third party who is required to supervise a Contract on behalf of the Council shall comply with the requirements of these Contract Procedure Rules.

### **Performance Monitoring**

38. On a quarterly basis the Chief Architect will publish to CMT and the Executive details as to the progress of all Works contracts in excess of DBDG Threshold 2. The Council's Procurement Manager shall periodically report on the performance of his unit in delivering Best Value.

### **Contract Extensions of Time**

39. In exceptional circumstances where it is in the interests of the Council and good value for money contracts may be extended in accordance with Financial Regulations.

40. For contracts where the value is over Threshold 3 or extension will take the contract value over Threshold 3 such an extension shall be with the prior agreement of the relevant Director and the Council's 151 Officer. A report on this decision shall be posted in the weekly bulletin. If the extension significantly alters the original contract value or purpose the extension can only be made with the additional agreement of the portfolio councillor, who shall post their decision for possible call in accordingly.

#### **Contract Variations to Scope**

41. Any necessary instructions to vary a contract shall be made in writing by the Chief Officer or persons responsible for supervising the contract. Where a variation occurs during the currency of the contract that is material and cannot be met from within the original contract sum an immediate report shall be made to the Council's 151 Officer who shall decide what further action is necessary. Where a supplementary estimate is required this shall be made in accordance with the councils Financial Regulations.

#### **Bonds, Guarantees and Insurances**

42. For procurement projects where the spend is greater than Threshold 3 consideration must be given as part of the pre-qualification assessment and evaluation process as to whether a performance bond and/or parent company guarantee (if applicable) shall be required from the successful tenderer.
43. Consideration must be given as to the appropriate type (employee liability, public liability, professional indemnity, etc.) and level of insurance requirements for each contract.

**CORPORATE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

**TERMS OF REFERENCE**

1. Areas of Responsibility
  - Dealing with (and challenging) action plans arising from the District Auditor's Annual Management letter.
  - Having an overview role in relation to the Council's use of risk management – based upon annual reports.
  - Approval of the Council's annual statement of accounts.
  - Dealing with any related District Audit reports.
  - Acting as support for the Council's internal audit role.
2. Within these broad areas the Committee itself can refine its terms of reference.
3. Frequency of Meetings- it will be for the Committee to define its role more clearly but it is only likely to need to meet at around 6 monthly intervals.
4. Membership - As this Committee would be dealing with “non-Executive” business, and in view of its importance, its membership should be drawn from both the Executive and non-Executive members of the Council. For ‘proportionality’ reasons, the normal size of such a committee would need to be 11 (i.e. 6 Conservative, 3 Liberal Democrat, 1 Labour & 1 Independent).