



COUNCIL SUMMONS

YOU ARE REQUESTED TO ATTEND A MEETING OF THE TAUNTON DEANE BOROUGH COUNCIL TO BE HELD IN THE PRINCIPAL COMMITTEE ROOM, THE DEANE HOUSE, BELVEDERE ROAD, TAUNTON ON TUESDAY 12TH OCTOBER 2004 AT 18:30.

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 20 July 2004 (enclosed).
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. Part I - To deal with questions to and receive recommendations from the Executive:-
 - (i) Councillor Williams (Leader of the Executive)
Recommendations relating to:-
 - (a) Corporate Strategy 2004 - 2007 (enclosed)
 - (b) Capital Strategy 2004 - 2007 (enclosed)
 - (c) Budget Monitoring 2004/2005 (enclosed)
 - (ii) Councillor Bishop (Planning Policy and Transportation)
 - (a) Public Rights of Way Agreement (enclosed)
 - (b) Taunton Deane Local Plan Modifications (enclosed)
7. Part II -To receive reports from the following members of the Executive:-
 - (i) Councillor Williams (Leader of the Executive)
 - (ii) Councillor Bishop (Planning Policy and Transportation)
 - (iii) Councillor Mrs Bradley (Leisure, Arts and Culture)
 - (iv) Councillor Mrs Bryant (Communications)
 - (v) Councillor Cavill (Economic Development, Property and Tourism)
 - (vi) Councillor Edwards (Environmental Services)
 - (vii) Councillor Garner (Housing Services)
 - (viii) Councillor Hall (Resources)
 - (ix) Councillor Mrs Lewin-Harris (Community Leadership)

G P DYKE
Member Services Manager

The Deane House
Belvedere Road
TAUNTON
Somerset

TA1 1HE

04 October 2004

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 20 July 2004 at 6.30 pm.

Present: The Mayor (Councillor Mrs Allgrove)

The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Lees)

Councillors Beaven, Mrs Biscoe, Bishop, Bowrah, Mrs Bradley, Mrs Bryant, N P Cavill, Miss Cavill, Croad, Davies, Denington, Durdan, Edwards, Floyd, Garner, Guerrier, Hall, Hayward, Mrs Hill, Hindley, Mrs Lewin-Harris, Lisgo, Meikle, Mullins, Murphy, Ms Peppard, Phillips, Prior-Sankey, Ms Priscott, Slattery, Mrs Smith, , Stone, Stuart-Thorn, Trollope, Vail, Watson, Wedderkopp, Weston and Williams

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of the Council held on 5 and 10 May 2004, copies having been sent to each member, were signed by the Mayor.

2. Apologies

Councillors Bone, C Cluff, Mrs Cluff, Gill, Govier, Henley, House, Mrs Nixon, Paul, Mrs Whitmarsh and Mrs Wilson

3. Public Question Time

- (a) Daniella Robins stated that when the dog warden had taken her dog and she asked why, no one had told her, she was advised that they were not allowed to speak to her father. Why has the Council Leader not looked into this?

Councillor Edwards replied that he was not aware of this issue and that he would investigate further.

- (b) Paul Wheeler asked the following questions in relation to the Housing Stock Options Appraisal:

(i) Would selling the Council's housing stock not result in a loss of democratic control over social housing?

(ii) Is not the future of Council housing an issue in which all resident have an interest?

(iii) Does the Stock Options Appraisal process not indicate that the Government want to get rid of Council housing? Are the Council succumbing to Government pressure?

(iv) Why risk £500,000 on balloting tenants?

- (c) Wellington Town Councillor E Warren asked why it had taken so long before any funds had been spent on Council owned PRC dwellings.

- (d) Patricia Rowe drew attention to the differences between secure and assured tenancies. She asked if the Council could guarantee that the rights tenants currently had would remain under assured tenancies. What rights would they be losing?
- (e) Nigel Behan asked if Councillors had read the LGIU document "Right to Choose". Were they aware of the 'Fourth Option'?
- (f) Jo Hickey asked what plans there were to encourage cohesive communities. Would the new proposals dissuade people from coming together as a community?
- (g) Mrs Shirley Miller asked why the Council were selling off Council houses when all the options had not been explored.

She also claimed that information relating to her Ward Councillors was not readily available, particularly in the local Library.

Councillor Williams drew attention to the many sources of information that were available in relation to Borough Councillors.

He also stated that funding in relation to PRC dwellings had slipped because of their excellent condition.

It was not a question of not doing anything – just a question of timing.

In view of the interest in the Housing Stock Options Appraisal, Executive Councillor Garner read the following statement:

"Tonight members of this Council are being asked to make a decision that will have an impact on the future of it's housing stock.

To date Taunton Deane has enjoyed an enviable record as a landlord... and rightly so, a recent satisfaction survey of tenants returned satisfaction levels of our tenants in excess of 90%, this is a testimony to members and officers not only of previous years but also of prior generations. These levels are not achieved by fluke, they are achieved through hard work and commitment by officers and members alike. As a Council we should be justifiably proud of where we are today in Housing. The recent CPA inspection was also very complimentary in this regard.

Given this Council's high level of achievement, I can fully appreciate the concerns of the public, officers and members when we begin to discuss the possible transfer of our corporate crown jewels to an outside body.

About the housing stock options process.

The housing stock option appraisal process has now reached a crucial stage....*but some background first*. The detailed stock options appraisal started in earnest back in August 2003 however the **initial** process actually dates back to the late summer of 2002, this was when consultants HACAS Chapman Hendy were commissioned to undertake an initial study to get a feel for our stock condition and gain an outline of the financial consequences. Following the HACAs report, a decision was taken to carry out a more comprehensive review which would run in parallel with the best value review with the intention at the time of discussing stock options at Full Council in April 2004. It was decided however to delay this until today giving the Council and stakeholders time to consider the findings in more detail.

As members are probably aware this whole process was instigated by central government in July 2000, it was then that a decent homes standard was established, and stipulated that Councils had to meet this decent homes standard by 2010. In addition, all Councils were to vote or have voted by their July 2005 Full council in relation to their preferred option. I therefore emphasize that this is not a Taunton Deane initiative, we, like all other Councils are following government policy.

To help facilitate the housing stock options process, professional advisors have been employed, Price Waterhouse Coopers and DOME. With PWC advising the Council and DOME assisting tenants. The options reviewed should by now be familiar to members but they are:

1. Retention
2. Almo (Arms Length Management Organisation)
3. PFI (Private Finance Initiative)
4. Whole stock transfer to a housing association

Central government doesn't recognise the first option (*retention*), Almo's are costly to set up, they are unpopular with the government and Councils have to be unable to meet the decent standard before they even qualify for funding and even then, the amount of funding they might receive is uncertain (*just because you ask for an amount doesn't mean to say that will be the amount received*). PFI, this is specialist funding and more appropriate to major municipal councils and is inappropriate for Taunton Deane. These options have been discussed by the stock options steering group, the Tenants Forum and the Housing review panel. The preferred option of those committees was for whole stock transfer which, it has to be said, comes as no surprise.

In addition, the Insight Group was formed at the beginning of the new year and comprised tenants that had attended various DOME road shows and who had expressed a particular interest in taking part in the process as a sounding board. About 200 tenants volunteered to take part in the process although an average of about 30 regularly attended the fortnightly sessions. Having fully aired the options The Insight Group also voted in favour of transfer.

Let us talk about Housing Associations for a minute

Transfer to a housing Association makes sense. If **tenants** ultimately vote to transfer, it is strongly envisaged that our current housing officers will transfer to the newly created housing association therefore the impact on service levels and continuity with individuals should be retained.

Housing Associations also have access to government funding, this will enable tenants to continue to receive the Taunton Deane Gold standard of service.

If tenants vote for transfer the task of members and officers will be to manage change.

I have referred above to the tenants vote. *Please understand* that If Council votes tonight to continue with the stock options process the next stage will be a comprehensive consultation with our tenants (not merely on a sample but all 6400 of them), The consultation would start in the new year and conclude in the spring of 2006.

The tenants will then vote on who they want as landlord. **Therefore stock transfer is the tenants decision not this Councils!**

If tenants vote no to transfer then we will have to carry out the process all over again and this will cost money (approx £500k) but as there is no provision for this expenditure, this will have to be found from existing housing resources which can only mean a cut in service. We will be unable to deliver the gold standard and will probably slip to bronze. *Should the council continue to lose the tenants vote the implications to service levels and Council finances are unthinkable Nobody wins.*

Frequently asked questions were:

Can we delay the decision in the hope of a change of Government.

This was a Conservative initiative, neither of the two major political parties want the expense of Council housing. There is no point in waiting as this will simply have a detrimental impact on service levels and council finances.

If it is not broke why fix it. ?

Currently *it is not broken, if we have to meet decent homes without extra funding, then service levels will suffer as will Council finances, so eventually it will become broken and the Council will become broke.*

Now what!

We now have to decide whether to support the position of the executive and the other committees and that is to continue the stock options process. This will involve a **massive** consultation process with all tenants leading to their ballot in spring 2006.

Ordeny tenants their democratic rights and watch service levels deteriorate.

Finally Members will be aware that the decision we are making **is not about us** but more about the provision of housing for our children and grandchildren. We have to ensure that we continue the good work of our predecessors and consider the needs of future generations.

I started by saying that members of this Council are being asked to make a decision that will have an impact on the future of its housing stock.

I believe that our tenants should also play a major part in the process and I now urge members to vote in favour of continuing with the stock option process and in doing so, allow our tenants to be consulted and to vote on their preferred landlord. “

He then answered the individual questions raised at Public Question Time as follows:

The make up of a newly formed Housing Association Management Board (who ultimately make all decisions) consists equally of Council Members of all political parties, tenants and officers of the Housing Association.

A transfer provides an opportunity to start with a clean slate and agree through an SLA what and who should do what.

Shelter had been involved in work to date as a representative on the Steering Group and have worked with potential future tenants, asking those on the waiting list for examples of what type of service they like, etc.

The Stock Options process is not about transfer but about a Council's housing service, examining how they operate and can it be undertaken differently/better and to ensure tenants and future tenants have the best service possible. Each authority will choose an option to suit its particular situation – hence more than transfer being an option.

It would be irresponsible to risk £½m and not to allow tenants a democratic choice? Also it is right to allow all tenants to know all the facts then make a decision?

The comments made by Town Councillor Warren were agreed.

The rights of tenants would be totally unaffected in the event of a stock transfer.

The 'Fourth Option' was not an option. The Government had clearly indicated that they were not prepared to consider any alternative to the options already proposed.

4. Recommendations to the Council from the Executive

(a) Draft Performance Plan 2004/05

Reported that Councils were required by legislation to produce an annual Performance Plan. This year's draft Plan had been considered by the Review Board at its meeting on 9 June 2004.

An updated version was also considered and approved by the Executive at its meeting on 23 June 2004. A copy of the Plan had been sent to all Members.

The Performance Plan would become the focus of the Council's improvement planning by articulating priorities for improvement, including how weaknesses would be addressed, opportunities exploited and better outcomes delivered for local people. It would set targets for improved future performance.

On the motion of Councillor Williams it was RESOLVED that the draft Performance Plan 2004/05 be agreed.

(b) Outturn Report 2003/04

The Executive had considered, noted and agreed the Council's General Fund and Housing Revenue Account outturn for 2003/04.

The report contained details of the major spending and income variations and there were two issues that needed to come before Council.

In April 2004, it was reported that £97,000 of monies set aside for the repayment of VAT would no longer be required. The Executive had previously agreed to transfer these monies to unallocated capital resources and a Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay had been created in 2003/04 to reflect this. However, this would require the approval of a virement by Council.

The current budget required a total of £1,031,806 from the General Fund Reserve to support expenditure, the underspend shown in the report would now reduce this to £791,671. In order to increase the level of capital resources available, it was proposed that this underspend of £240,135 be transferred via the Revenue Account in 2004/05 to unallocated capital resources. This would require approval by Council of a Supplementary Estimate.

On the motion of Councillor Williams it was RESOLVED:

- (i) £97,000 of monies previously set aside for the repayment of VAT be vired to unallocated Capital Resources.
 - (ii) A Supplementary Estimate be made in 2004/05 of an RCCO for the 2003/04 General Fund underspend of £240,135.
- (c) Establishment of a Leisure Trust – Tone Leisure (South West) Limited

The Executive had considered a report, which recommended the transfer of the Council's leisure facilities and its health and sport development services to Tone Leisure (South West) Limited. The report revisited the issues outlined in a report submitted to the Executive on 22 December 2003, when the decision was made to defer transfer for a period of six months.

In October 2002 the Council approved in principle the establishment of a Leisure Trust to operate its leisure centres, development services and Vivary Park Golf Course. However there were a number of outstanding issues at that time and it was subsequently agreed to defer the decision for six months. Progress that had now been made on the issues that led to the decision to defer the Leisure Trust six months previously.

The formation of a Leisure Trust would allow the Council to generate tax based savings through reduced NNDR costs and through an improved VAT recovery regime, which the Trust was able to take advantage of.

The Council's consultants, Strategic Leisure Limited, had been involved in this project since its inception and submitted their objective assessment on the proposed transfer. Strategic Leisure believed that sufficient progress had been made on the unresolved items to unequivocally recommend that the transfer should proceed.

Now that the majority of outstanding issues had either been resolved or were likely to be resolved in the near future, the point had been reached where a transfer could be recommended.

Full details of all the issues surrounding this proposal were contained in an exempt report which was circulated to all Councillors with the agenda for the Executive meeting on 23 June 2004.

The Leisure Trust remained the best value method of service delivery and the last six months of negotiation, especially around the leases, pensions and service review, had significantly reduced the risks to the Authority.

On the motion of Councillor Mrs Bradley it was RESOLVED that:

- (i) the Council's leisure facilities and its health and sport development services be transferred to Tone Leisure (South West) Limited on the terms described in the report and as set out in the associated documentation;
- (ii) the level of deficit funding required for Tone Leisure to operate the services (excluding Blackbrook) for the first 8 months of £452,000 be agreed;
- (iii) Standing Orders be suspended to enable the Council to enter into an 8 months management contract with Tone Leisure in relation to Blackbrook and the management fee for the first 8 months be £535,000. The income from this arrangement to be returned to the Council's General Fund budget;
- (iv) Somerset County Council be provided with a Pensions Guarantee;
- (v) the residual savings, including reduced costs, NNDR and an improved VAT recovery regime, generated by the formation of the Trust be ring fenced for reinvestment in the facilities managed by the Trust;
- (vi) an interest free loan of £50,000 be made to Tone Leisure, subject to the loan being repaid over the following 6 years with the first payment taking place in August 2006.
- (vii) the appropriate officers be thanked for their hard work in reaching this position and the Health and Leisure Review Panel be thanked for its constructive contribution to the process.

(Councillors Durdan and Ms Priscott both declared a prejudicial interest in this matter as Shadow Trustees of Tone Leisure (South West) Limited and left the meeting during its consideration).

(d) The Future of Waste Collection and Recycling in Taunton Deane

A joint meeting of the Executive and the Health and Leisure Review Panel held on 30 June 2004 had considered proposals for changes in the methods of collection of household waste for disposal and recycling. The proposals concerned the introduction of services that would achieve the statutory recycling/composing targets in 2005/06. In addition to this joint meeting this matter was also considered by the Health and Leisure Review Panel at its meeting on 1 April 2004.

Consideration, in some detail, was given to the options, issues and implications of the service developments necessary to deliver the statutory recycling targets for 2005/06 and beyond.

In order to achieve the level of performance required for 2005/06 it would be necessary to:

- Provide a multi material collection service including glass to all the main residential areas of the Deane.
- Increase access to, and participation in collection services for garden and food wastes.
- Constrain waste arisings through enforcement of a waste minimisation/collection policy and by the provision of containers for wastes.

On the motion of Councillor Edwards it was RESOLVED that:

- (a) Supplementary Estimates be made in 2004/05 to implement Option 8 as shown in the report to the Joint Executive/Health and Leisure Review Panel at its meeting on 30 June 2004:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------|
| • from unallocated Capital Resources | £622,290 |
| • from General Fund Reserve | £9,113 |

- (b) the ongoing reserve costs associated with Option 8 (as shown in the report) be included in the Authority's Medium Term Financial Plan and future years' budgets (ongoing eventual costs of £294,947).

On the motion of Councillor Meikle, seconded by Councillor Denington, the following amendment was moved and accepted by the Council:

- (c) Whilst fully supporting the principle of recycling, this Council protests to government that their proper requirement for Councils to achieve a new and higher level of recycling is not supported by any additional annual grant to meet the very high extra cost per annum which is £300,000 year upon year. Council Tax payers and particularly pensioners, should note that this one item could add £8 of itself to next year's Council Tax, again exposing Councillors to the accusation of initiating new spending, when in fact it is another example of government dictating new responsibilities and leaving Local Government to make its excuses to its electorate.

- (d) Council Housing Stock Option Appraisal

The Council were required to carry out an Options Appraisal of its housing stock and to consider the best option for the stock within its over arching housing strategy. An essential element of the appraisal was the consideration of the Decent Homes standard. This was a minimum standard of refurbishment and the Council's current housing objectives included, non-landlord housing priorities and the Option Appraisal had evaluated the extent to which any of the available options could provide additional resources to improve the Council's ability to meet short, medium and long term housing demand within

the Borough. In addition the Council had established five housing priorities, details of which were submitted.

The appraisal process was in two parts. Phase A was financially based and officers worked closely with the Council's specialist help Pricewaterhouse Coopers. Phase B was based on consultation, with officers, independent tenants advisor consultants DOME and the Insight Group, a working group of tenants, working together.

The following four options, had been considered for the future of the Council's housing stock.

- Retention
- Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO)
- Private Finance Initiative (PFI)
- Stock Transfer

The overall financial points had been looked at in depth and a final financial position had been produced by Pricewaterhouse Coopers. The financial projections indicated that the Council would not have sufficient resources to maintain the housing stock to a decent homes standard after 2010.

The Council's housing financial position was not sustainable in the medium to long term and significant resources were needed from one of the options. If the Council did nothing to address this, substantial cut backs in the capital programme for the next ten years would be necessary within the next 12-18 months.

A mix of options was not considered appropriate given the needs, nature and size of the Council's Housing Stock. Neither ALMO or PFI appeared to offer any financial solutions for the Council. A 'Whole Stock Transfer' solution appeared to be the only option that provided resources for the short, medium and long term investment in the stock and providers provided a significant capital receipt for use on the Council's wider housing priorities.

The Insight Group of tenants wished to maintain and enhance the existing standards and service delivery that the Council provided and achieve the Council's five housing priorities. The Group had therefore recommended that of the options available to the Council it should start to consult now and ultimately ballot tenants on a 'Whole Stock Transfer solution'.

The Tenants Forum, the Housing Review Panel and the Executive had also recommended this course of action.

Councillor Prior-Sankey moved that a Recorded Vote be taken. This motion was not supported by the number of Councillors required in accordance with S.O. 19(2)(b).

On the motion of Councillor Garner it was RESOLVED that:

- (i) the report be noted;

- (ii) the recommendations made by the Insight Group, Tenants Forum and Housing Review Panel that a Whole Stock Transfer solution be investigated now, leading to a tenants' ballot be noted;
- (iii) the recommendations of the Insight Group Tenants Forum, Housing Review Panel and the Executive be agreed and that a Whole Stock Transfer solution be investigated now leading to a tenants' ballot.

On the motion of Councillor Mrs Biscoe, seconded by Councillor Weston, the following amendment was moved and accepted by the Council:

- (iv) In addition, this Council should continue to lobby central Government for the same funding opportunities that other housing service providers can access. This would enable this Council to continue as the housing provider in the event of a 'No' vote.

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

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

(i) Leader of the Council (Councillor Williams)

Councillor Williams' report covered the following topics:

- Investors in People
- Freedom of the Borough – Councillor Meikle
- A welcome to the new Mayor and Deputy Mayor
- Comprehensive Performance Assessment
- Waste Collection
- Somerset and Exmoor National Park Structure Plan Alteration
- LGA Annual Conference
- Vision for Taunton
- Leisure Trust
- Housing Stock Options

(Councillor Mrs Bryant declared a prejudicial interest in the Somerset Structure Plan item as an employee of a local firm of surveyors and estate agents) and left the meeting during its consideration).

(Councillor Prior-Sankey declared a personal interest in the same item as a County Councillor and as a relative was an employee of a local transport company).

(ii) Planning Policy and Transportation (Councillor Bishop)

Councillor Bishop submitted this report, which drew attention to the following:

- Monkton Heathfield Development Guide
- Planning Website
- ASDA planning application
- Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act

- Somerset and Exmoor National Park Structure Plan
- Transportation issues

(Councillor N P Cavill and Miss S E L Cavill both declared prejudicial interests as landowners in the Monkton Heathfield area and left the meeting during consideration of the above item).

(Councillor Hayward declared a prejudicial interest as a property owner in close proximity to certain sites identified in the Somerset Structure Plan and left the meeting during consideration of the above item).

(Councillor Mrs Bryant declared a prejudicial interest as an employee of a local firm of surveyors and estate agents and left the meeting during consideration of the above item).

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

The report from Councillor Mrs Bradley dealt with:

- Sports development
- Leisure Service activities
- Parks and Green Spaces
- Culture and Art
- Networking

(iv) Communications (Councillor Mrs Bryant)

Councillor Mrs Bryant submitted her report which covered the following areas:

- Press Office/Public relations
- Press Releases
- Internal Communications
- Deane Dispatch
- Weekly Bulletin

(Councillor Prior-Sankey declared a personal interest as a County Councillor in relation to an article on the Silk Mills Bridge which appeared in the Deane Dispatch)

(v) Economic Development, Asset Management and Tourism (Councillor N Cavill)

The report from Councillor Cavill covered:

- Vision for Taunton
- Business Survey
- Taunton Town Centre Partnership
- Asset Management Plan
- Valuation
- Tourism and TIC
- Broadband
- Rural Renaissance
- TDBC Agricultural Development

(vi) Environmental Services (Councillor Edwards)

Councillor Edwards submitted his report which covered the following issues:

- Waste Services
- Cemeteries and Crematorium
- Highways DLO
- Cleansing DLO
- Environmental Health

(vii) Housing Services (Councillor Garner)

Councillor Garner reported upon Housing Stock Options Appraisal and the Deane DLO Scheme which helped young people choose their careers.

(viii) Resources (Councillor Hall)

The report from Councillor Hall provided an update on the following areas of his portfolio:

- Customer Services
- Office Services
- Benefits
- Revenues
- Financial Services
- Member Services
- Information Systems
- Internal Audit

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

Councillor Mrs Lewin-Harris submitted her report which covered:

- Regional Assembly
- Taunton Deane Local Strategic Partnership
- Feedback from Conference – Ensuring Local Strategic Partnerships Deliver

(Councillor Watson arrived at the meeting at 7.30 pm, Councillor Weston left at 9.12 pm and Councillor Mrs Biscoe at 9.30 pm)

(The meeting ended at 9.45 pm).

TAUNTON DEANE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING – 12 OCTOBER 2004

Part I

To deal with written questions to and receive recommendations to the Council from the Executive.

1. COUNCILLOR WILLIAMS – LEADER OF THE EXECUTIVE

a. Corporate Strategy 2004-2007

The Corporate Strategy is reviewed on an annual basis. It is used to determine the allocation of resources across the Council through the Medium Term Financial Plan and service budgets.

The Corporate Strategy was published in June 2004 together with the Performance Plan. Through a series of workshops and meetings including the Review Board, the objectives and outcomes of the Corporate Strategy's ETCHED Action Plans were determined for each year to 2007/2008.

Delivering the Vision for Taunton remains the Council's highest priority, followed by working with partners to tackle transport issues, tackling anti-social behaviour and housing.

It is therefore RECOMMENDED that the Corporate Strategy ETCHED Action Plans 2004/2007, a copy of which is attached, be agreed.

b. Capital Strategy 2004-2007

Although the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister have now removed the requirement for the Council to submit to Regional Government Offices the annual Capital Strategy and Asset Management Plan. It is considered good practice to continue to prepare and AMP and Capital Strategy annually.

The Capital Strategy is a summary of the Council's approach to capital investment including:

- Development and ongoing management of the Capital Programme
- Partnership working on capital projects
- Consultation
- Performance Measurement

The revised draft strategy for 2004-2007 has been updated from the 2003 version by taking recent developments in the corporate strategy and other corporate developments and incorporating them into the revised document.

The Review Board have considered the draft strategy and their comments have been taken into account.

It is therefore RECOMMENDED that the Draft Capital Strategy for 2004-2007 as set out in the attached Appendix be agreed.

c. Budget Monitoring 2004/2005

The Review Board at its meeting on 9 September 2004 received the results of the Quarter 1 Budget monitoring exercise. As a result it is necessary to submit to Council a request for a number of Supplementary Estimates to support certain variations to the budget.

It is therefore RECOMMENDED that Supplementary Estimates be made to support the following variations:

- The General Fund expected underspend of £28,980 to be returned to the General Fund Reserve;
- Returning the 2004/2005 pay award underspend of £65,000 to the General Fund Reserve;
- The Housing Revenue Account expected overspend of £70,590 from the Housing Revenue Account working balance;
- The General Fund Capital Programme overspend of £76,375 from unallocated General Fund capital resources;
- The Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme overspend, due to slippage, of £585,700 from unallocated Housing Revenue Account capital resources; and
- The increase of £3,000 in the working balance on the Piper Trading Account.

Councillor J R Williams

2. COUNCILLOR BISHOP – PLANNING POLICY AND TRANSPORTATION

a. Public Rights of Way Agreement

Somerset County Council as Highways Authority would normally be responsible for the maintenance of all public rights of way (Footpaths, Bridleways and RUPPs). Under an Agency Agreement the maintenance of unsurfaced public rights of way is currently carried out by Taunton Deane Borough Council. This Council currently contributes £54,160 per annum to this particular service and the County Council contributes £42,500. The Agreement can be terminated by either party on 31 March in any year providing appropriate notice is served. Faced with the need for economies in the Council's budget all services are being reviewed in the light of the corporate priorities and statutory obligations. Consideration has therefore been given as to whether this Council should inform the County Council that it intended to terminate the existing agreement.

The report considered by the Executive contained details of the staffing implications of relinquishing the agency agreement together with the budget implications and the result of consultations with Parish and Town Councils. The Rights of Way Service is a statutory function of County Councils and there is no evidence to suggest that the level of service provided by the County Council will be less than under the Agency Agreement. By terminating the agency agreement the Borough Council would save £39,780 per annum at current prices. We noted that the County Council had applied for increased funding for this service. If it were successful, this Council might seek to renegotiate the terms of the Agency Agreement and continue to provide the service in the event of the County Council agreeing to cover the full costs.

In the circumstances the Executive considered that existing Rights of Way Agency Agreement with Somerset County Council be ended on 31 March 2005 and notice of such be served on the County Council.

It is therefore RECOMMENDED that:

- a) the decision to serve notice on Somerset County Council be confirmed;
- b) the necessary amendments be made to the Council's base budget;
- c) the existing Parish Grants budget to assist with the delivery of footpath maintenance be maintained;
- d) any associated one off costs of termination be met within approved budgets of the Council;
- e) consideration be given to renegotiation of the Agency Agreement in the event of the County Council being in a position to cover the full costs of the service.

b. Taunton Deane Local Plan Modifications

At its meeting on 28 September 2004 the Strategic Planning, Transportation and Economic Development Review Panel considered the proposed responses to the representations which were received during the public consultation period to the

proposed modifications to the Taunton Deane Local Plan. Copies of the responses and the proposed modifications have been previously circulated to all members.

After careful consideration the Review Panel recommended that the responses to the representations which were submitted in respect of the Proposed Modifications be agreed. The Executive agreed with this recommendation.

It is therefore RECOMMENDED that Council agree the adoption of the Taunton Deane Local Plan.

Councillor C W Bishop

Corporate Strategy 2004/5 – 2007/8

ECONOMY										
Priority	Objective	Ref	2004/5 Outcome	2005/6 Outcome	2006/7 Outcome	2007/8 Outcome	Executive Portfolio	Lead Officer	Potential Constraints	Links
Very High	Develop the planning framework to enable the Vision for Taunton* to be achieved *A vision for 2025 and beyond to deliver economic, social and cultural targets for Taunton as a 21 st century market town	Ec1	We will agree and adopt an Urban Design Framework and Urban Extension Study	All Area Action Plans will be complete We will develop a programme for introducing Supplementary Planning Guidance for development sites	We will adopt the Core Strategy We will adopt the Town Centre Area Action Plan		Planning Policy & Transportation	Ralph Willoughby-Foster	Debate on Inner Relief Road could delay progress	Local Development Framework Local Transport Plan Taunton Transport Strategy Review
Very High	Develop key sites to bring about the Vision for Taunton	Ec2	Work will begin on key sites in the town centre and on our Local Plan sites The state aid, planning, finance and legal issues relating to relocation of the livestock market at J 26 will be resolved	The livestock and stall markets will be relocated to free up their current sites for development We will have vacant possession of the vacated livestock market site	Redevelopment of the former livestock market site will commence	Redevelopment of the former livestock market site will be completed to high design standards and an application made for a design award	Economic Development Property & Tourism	Mark Green	Planning permission at new site State aid issues Funding Investor and Developer interest	Asset Management Plan Capital Strategy
Very High	Ensure that the social benefits of the Vision for Taunton are realised for the wider community	Ec3		With our partners we will assess the anticipated benefits of the Vision for training, skills and employment	The social benefits will be incorporated into the second Taunton Deane Community Strategy		Economic Development Property and Tourism	Mark Green		LSP and Community Strategy

ECONOMY										
Priority	Objective	Ref	2004/5 Outcome	2005/6 Outcome	2006/7 Outcome	2007/8 Outcome	Executive Portfolio	Lead Officer	Potential Constraints	Links
Very High	Publicise and promote the Vision for Taunton, and Taunton Deane Borough, locally, regionally, nationally and internationally	Ec4	<p>We will seek expressions of interest for relocation to Taunton (Lyons Review)</p> <p>We will develop closer joint working with South West tourism, Visit Britain and other key agencies, through joint promotional material, our website and a new tourism strategy</p>	<p>A marketing and promotion strategy for Taunton will be agreed with our key partners (SCC and RDA)</p>	<p>We will work with others to continue to raise the profile of Taunton town and the Borough</p>	<p>We will see the relocation of Government Departments to Taunton</p>	Economic Development Property and Tourism	Mark Green	Limited funding contributions from partners	Tourism Strategy
High	To encourage businesses to start up and grow in Taunton Deane	EC5	<p>We will carry out a detailed assessment of business land and premises and a survey of business requirements</p> <p>We will work with Taunton Town Centre Partnership to establish a Business Improvement District (BID)</p>	<p>We will identify land and funding mechanisms</p> <p>An application for the BID will be made</p>	<p>The BID will be implemented</p>	<p>There will be an adequate supply of serviced land for businesses</p> <p>Town Centre enhancements will be achieved as a result of the BID</p>	Economic Development, Property & Tourism	Mark Green	Funding	Economic Development Strategy Town Centre Partnership BID Partnership

ECONOMY										
Priority	Objective	Ref	2004/5 Outcome	2005/6 Outcome	2006/7 Outcome	2007/8 Outcome	Executive Portfolio	Lead Officer	Potential Constraints	Links
High	To target resources to areas of greatest need in the Borough	EC6		We will work with our partners to put in place a strategy for Taunton East and North Taunton to include support for business start ups			Economic Development, Property & Tourism	Mark Green	Funding	Economic Development Partnership LSP and Community Strategy

TRANSPORT										
Priority	Objective	Ref	2004/5 Outcome	2005/6 Outcome	2006/7 Outcome	2007/8 Outcome	Executive Portfolio	Lead Officer	Potential Constraints	Links
High	To ensure the strategic transport investment necessary to fulfil Taunton's role as a PUA	T1	The Government decision on the A358/A303 will inform our future plans We will influence the content of the LTP2 to enable the Vision for Taunton Town Centre regeneration to be implemented	We will lobby the SRA and relevant Train Operating Companies to maintain Taunton's role as an important strategic location on the West of England Mainline			Planning Policy & Transportation	Ralph Willoughby-Foster	Government decision influenced through local campaigning Government funding and policy decisions	SWARMMS Local Transport Plan Structure Plan Local Development Framework

TRANSPORT										
Priority	Objective	Ref	2004/5 Outcome	2005/6 Outcome	2006/7 Outcome	2007/8 Outcome	Executive Portfolio	Lead Officer	Potential Constraints	Links
High	To reduce traffic congestion in Taunton	T2	<p>We will integrate our Transport, Land Use and Economic Development strategies through the Local Development Framework</p> <p>We will lobby others to improve the cycle and pedestrian networks as envisaged in the Local Transport Plan</p> <p>We will work with SCC and Bus Operators to establish a Bus Users Surgery to see improvements in services</p> <p>We will sign up to the Congestion Protocol</p>	<p>The North West Taunton Package will be complete (bridge over Silk Mills will be open, Park and Ride constructed, and bus lanes and bus gate in place)</p> <p>We will review our car parking strategy to ensure the outcomes are in line with our transport objectives</p> <p>We will lobby to see the completion of the Ruishton link on the Wessex Sustrans route</p> <p>We will deliver actions in the Congestion Protocol</p>	<p>We will deliver actions in the Congestion Protocol</p>	Park and Ride east of Taunton will be operational	Planning Policy & Transportation	Ralph Willoughby Foster	<p>Government Funding</p> <p>SCC funding and SCC decisions relating to priorities for investment</p>	<p>Community Strategy and LSP</p> <p>Local Transport Plan and Taunton Transport Strategy Review</p> <p>North West Taunton Transport Package SWARMMS</p>

TRANSPORT										
Priority	Objective	Ref	2004/5 Outcome	2005/6 Outcome	2006/7 Outcome	2007/8 Outcome	Executive Portfolio	Lead Officer	Potential Constraints	Links
High	To improve the choice and availability of transport options, particularly for rural and disadvantaged people	T3	We will commence a review of our role in community transport partnerships and initiatives	<p>We will complete a review of our role in community transport partnerships and initiatives</p> <p>We will work with local communities within the Community Planning and Local Development Framework in order to identify issues</p>			Planning Policy and Transportation	Ralph Willoughby Foster	Accessing Funds	Somerset Community Transport Network

CRIME										
Priority	Objective	Ref	2004/5 Outcome	2005/6 Outcome	2006/7 Outcome	2007/8 Outcome	Executive Portfolio	Lead Officer	Potential Constraints	Links
High	To identify, measure and reduce anti-social behaviour in our communities	C1	We will pilot a targeted programme of diversionary activities	We will evaluate, review and amend programmes to include all groups at risk of offending			Leisure, Arts & Culture	Karen Dyson	Government Funding	Green spaces Strategy Crime and Disorder Strategy Tone Leisure Business Plan
			Four Neighbourhood/ Parish Wardens will be transferred to Police Community Support Officers	We will work with partners to investigate the possibility of extending the geographical area(s) that PCSOs cover We will seek, where necessary, to find funding to employ additional PCSOs			Community Leadership	Deb Davley	Funding	Crime and Disorder Strategy
			A protocol for implementing Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs) and Anti Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) will be in place	Through the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership we will employ an officer to focus on tackling Anti Social Behaviour	ABCs and ASBOs will be used to assist in the reduction of anti-social behaviour		Community Leadership	Deb Davley		Crime and Disorder Strategy
			We will secure funding and purchase a relocatable CCTV system package	Priority criteria will determine the deployment of the unit	The system will be used at identified problem areas in the Borough		Community Leadership	Deb Davley		Crime and Disorder Strategy

CRIME										
Priority	Objective	Ref	2004/5 Outcome	2005/6 Outcome	2006/7 Outcome	2007/8 Outcome	Executive Portfolio	Lead Officer	Potential Constraints	Links
			A Licensing Committee will be established to manage statutory liquor licensing reforms	The Licensing Committee will review licences where anti-social behaviour has been deemed to exist			Environmental Services	Jim Hunter		Crime and Disorder Strategy
High	To use our influence in all that we do to reduce crime and disorder	C2	We will prepare a statutory Section 17 Crime and Disorder Action Plan with input from all our services	50% of our services will demonstrate that they take crime and disorder into account in service delivery	100% of our services will demonstrate that they take crime and disorder into account in service delivery	Our services are seen as playing a major contribution to reducing crime and disorder in the Borough	Community Leadership	Deb Davley		Section 17 Crime & Disorder Act 1998

HEALTH										
Priority	Objective	Ref	2004/5 Outcome	2005/6 Outcome	2006/7 Outcome	2007/8 Outcome	Executive Portfolio	Lead Officer	Potential Constraints	Links
High	To meet the requirements of those with greatest housing need	H1	<p>A programme of 393 new build social housing units over 3 years is rolled out</p> <p>A strategic housing and planning policy protocol is established to meet longer term social housing targets</p> <p>A Homeless prevention programme is developed with other agencies and targets for delivery set</p> <p>Targets for reducing homelessness, particularly for use of B&B for families, and average length of stay in B&B for others are met</p>	<p>The programme of 393 new build social housing units over 3 years continues</p> <p>Targets for Homeless prevention and temporary accommodation are met</p>	<p>The target of 393 new build social housing units is met</p> <p>Revised house building targets are set following a repeat Housing Needs survey in 2005/06</p> <p>Targets for Homeless prevention and temporary accommodation are met</p>	<p>Revised new build social housing unit targets are met</p> <p>Targets for Homeless prevention and temporary accommodation are met</p>	Housing Services	Malcolm Western	<p>Negotiating 106 agreements with developers</p> <p>Funding</p> <p>Availability of accommodation</p>	<p>Housing Strategy</p> <p>Homeless Strategy</p>

HEALTH										
Priority	Objective	Ref	2004/5 Outcome	2005/6 Outcome	2006/7 Outcome	2007/8 Outcome	Executive Portfolio	Lead Officer	Potential Constraints	Links
High	To support the health needs of vulnerable people through advice, grants and loans on home energy, maintenance and independent living	H2	<p>A Home Improvement Agency is established following a successful bid for ODPM funds, and targets are set for delivery</p> <p>A campaign has been launched to eradicate fuel poverty in Taunton Deane by 2011</p>	<p>HIA targets are met</p> <p>Revised targets have been set following a repeat Private Sector Stock Condition Survey</p> <p>100 people will be brought out of fuel poverty</p>	<p>Further HIA targets are met</p> <p>A further 200 people will be brought out of fuel poverty</p>	<p>Further HIA targets are met</p> <p>A further 250 people will be brought out of fuel poverty</p>	Housing Services	Malcolm Western	Funding	Housing Strategy
Medium	To contribute to the physical and mental health and well-being of our residents in partnership with other key organisations	H3		<p>Partnership plans will be in place to achieve the Government target of 50% of the population being reasonably active by 2020</p> <p>We will increase the current levels of physical activity within the Borough to 32%</p>	<p>We will increase the current levels of physical activity within the Borough to 34%</p>	<p>We will increase the current levels of physical activity within the Borough to 36%</p>	Leisure, Arts & Culture	Karen Dyson	Partnership working	<p>Public Health Network</p> <p>Greenspaces Strategy</p> <p>Somerset Activity & Sports Partnership</p> <p>Tone Leisure Business Plan</p>

ENVIRONMENT

Priority	Objective	Ref	2004/5 Outcome	2005/6 Outcome	2006/7 Outcome	2007/8 Outcome	Executive Portfolio	Lead Officer	Potential Constraints	Links
Medium	Manage a clean and safe environment	En1	<p>By promoting our litter hotline and our Crisp and Clean Policy we will reduce the evidence of antisocial behaviour through schemes such as removal of abandoned vehicles and graffiti</p> <p>There will be Borough-wide access to kerbside recycling</p>	<p>We will meet the public service agreement target of 34% of households recycling their waste</p> <p>We will review our current methods of service delivery in order to achieve greater improvements in delivering a clean and safe environment</p>	New contractual arrangements will be in place for waste collection services		Environmental Services	Bruce Carpenter	Funding User take-up	Somerset Waste Partnership

ENVIRONMENT										
Medium	Protect and enhance the quality of our physical environment	En2	We have agreed a Norton Fitzwarren flood alleviation scheme which meets Planning Inspectorate requirements	The flood alleviation scheme will have been agreed with developers	The flood alleviation scheme will be complete		Planning Policy & Transportation	Andrew Wilcox	Developer contributions	River Parret Catchment Plan
			We will adopt and be delivering our Greenspaces Strategy and Action Plan for the Borough, including Park	We will deliver our Greenspaces Action Plan, including achieving Green Flag Award status for a public open space and improving facility provision on 3 other public open spaces	We will deliver our Greenspaces Action Plan, including achieving Green Flag Award status for a public open space and improving facility provision on 3 more public open spaces	We will deliver our Greenspaces Action Plan, including achieving Green Flag Award status for a public open space and improving facility provision on 3 more public open spaces	Leisure, Arts & Culture	Karen Dyson	Developer contributions and capital budget	Local Plan/ Local Development Framework Parks Management Plans

DELIVERY										
Priority	Objective	Ref	2004/5 Outcome	2005/6 Outcome	2006/7 Outcome	2007/8 Outcome	Executive Portfolio	Lead Officer	Potential Constraints	Links
High	Deliver services in line with our corporate priorities	D1	50% of service reviews will be carried out Resources will be reallocated to ensure priority services are funded	All service reviews will be completed	Priority and non-priority services are delivered against budget and performance criteria	A sustainable, and affordable medium term financial plan will be in place	Corporate Resources	Shirlene Adam		Medium Term Financial Plan Asset Management Plan Capital Strategy
High	Effectively manage and improve our performance	D2	100% of Heads and Team Plans will be prepared We will develop our Scrutiny function in performance management and determine a monitoring and review process for our performance management framework	We will deliver 100% of our Heads and Team plans 100% of staff will effectively participate in PREDS and 100% of training plans will be in place We will complete an evaluation exercise for PREDS We will have developed our suite of performance indicators	We will monitor and review each level of our performance management framework	We will monitor and review each level of our performance management framework	Community Leadership Corporate Resources	Brendan Cleere Kevin Toller		Performance Management Framework

DELIVERY										
Priority	Objective	Ref	2004/5 Outcome	2005/6 Outcome	2006/7 Outcome	2007/8 Outcome	Executive Portfolio	Lead Officer	Potential Constraints	Links
High	Work in partnership to deliver shared priorities	D3	The LSP will have a core and associate membership structure and agreed its top priorities	<p>The Community Strategy will have informed our Corporate Strategy, Heads and Team plans</p> <p>We will have in place a revised structure for awarding grants and for service level agreements with other organisations</p>	<p>The LSP will have prepared their second Community Strategy</p> <p>We will demonstrate measurable benefits for all the partnerships we are involved with</p>	We will demonstrate service delivery through key partnerships	Community Leadership	Alison Templeton		<p>Community Strategy</p> <p>Voluntary Sector</p>
High	Meet our minimum statutory requirements	D4	We will have identified mandatory service requirements and established the level at which services will be provided	<p>Our Heads and Team plans will detail our service delivery in mandatory and non-mandatory areas</p> <p>We will establish a corporate approach to delivering sustainability in all our services</p>	<p>We will be demonstrating cost effective delivery of our statutory requirements</p> <p>50% of our services demonstrate that they deliver their services against sustainability criteria</p>	<p>100% of our services demonstrate that they are delivering their services against sustainability criteria</p>	All	CMT		

DELIVERY										
Priority	Objective	Ref	2004/5 Outcome	2005/6 Outcome	2006/7 Outcome	2007/8 Outcome	Executive Portfolio	Lead Officer	Potential Constraints	Links
High	Develop, motivate and empower our staff to reach their full potential	D5	<p>We are an Investors in People organisation and are implementing our IIP Action Plan</p> <p>We will have developed a Healthy Workplace Strategy and Action Plan</p> <p>We will have completed our People Management Strategy and agreed our Action Plan</p>	<p>We will have achieved improved levels of staff satisfaction (identified through our second staff satisfaction survey)</p> <p>Sickness absence will be reduced</p> <p>Individual staff performance will increase</p>	Investment in our staff contributes to increased levels of satisfaction amongst our customers		Corporate Resources	Kevin Toller		

DELIVERY										
Priority	Objective	Ref	2004/5 Outcome	2005/6 Outcome	2006/7 Outcome	2007/8 Outcome	Executive Portfolio	Lead Officer	Potential Constraints	Links
Medium	Respond to customers' needs and promote equality of opportunity in all that we do	D6	<p>We will achieve Level 1 of the Equality Standard for Local Government and actions will be embedded in Heads, Team plans and PREDS</p> <p>We will review our consultation and complaints procedures and be using these to inform improvements to service delivery and customer satisfaction</p>	<p>We will achieve Level 2 of the Equality Standard for Local Government and actions will be embedded in Heads, Team plans and PREDS</p> <p>We have an annual corporate consultation plan in place</p>	<p>We will achieve Level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government and actions will be embedded in Heads, Team plans and PREDS</p> <p>We will be working with other organisations to carry out consultation and meet customers' needs</p>	<p>We will achieve Level 4 of the Equality Standard for Local Government and actions will be embedded in Heads, Team plans and PREDS</p> <p>We will be putting plans in place to achieve Level 5 in 2008/09</p>	Community Leadership	Brendan Cleere		Equality Policy

DELIVERY										
Priority	Objective	Ref	2004/5 Outcome	2005/6 Outcome	2006/7 Outcome	2007/8 Outcome	Executive Portfolio	Lead Officer	Potential Constraints	Links
Medium	Improve access to Council information and services	D7	<p>We will adopt and be delivering a Corporate Communications Strategy</p> <p>60% of phone calls are dealt with at first point of contact</p> <p>We will complete a strategic review of access to services, including the use of main reception at the Deane House</p>	<p>Communications and customer focus are embedded in our Heads and Team plans</p> <p>80% of phone calls are dealt with at first point of contact</p> <p>We have consistency of information across all access channels</p>	We will meet our e-government targets		Corporate Resources	<p>Kevin Toller</p> <p>Brendan Cleere</p>	Funding	E-government strategy

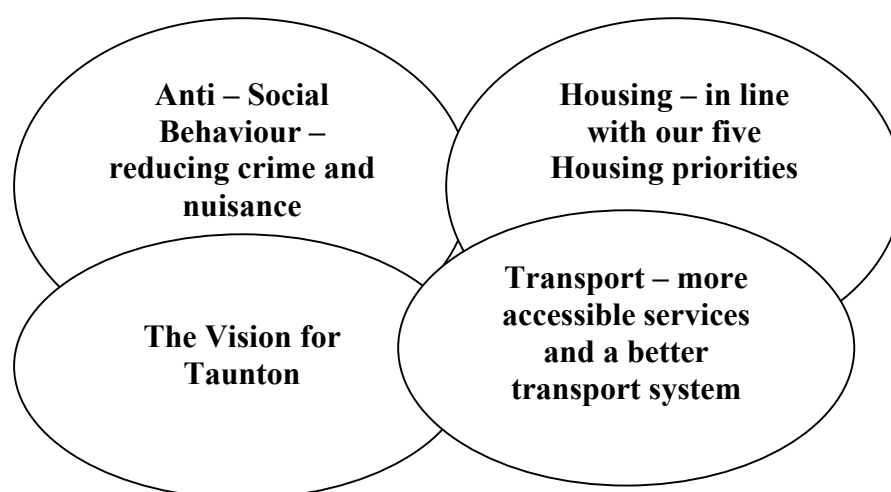
ABC	Acceptable Behaviour Contract	PCSO	Police Community Support Officers
ASBO	Anti-social Behaviour Order	PREDS	Performance Review and Employee Development Scheme
B&B	Bed and Breakfast	PUA	Principle Urban Area
BID	Business Improvement District	RDA	Regional Development Agency
CCTV	Closed-Circuit Television	SCC	Somerset County Council
CMT	Corporate Management Team	Section 17	Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998
HIA	Home Improvement Agency	SRA	Strategic Rail Authority
IIP	Investors in People	SWARMMS	South West Area Regional Multi Modal Study
J 26	Junction 26 of the M5		
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership		
LTP2	Local Transport Plan 2006-2011		
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister		

Taunton Deane Borough Council Capital Strategy 2004-2007

Appendix A

1 Our Priorities

- 1.1 This Capital Strategy shows how Taunton Deane BC sets the direction of its capital spending plans, and also considers the effective utilisation of our capital assets and resources.
- 1.2 Full Council will be considering the updated Corporate Strategy in October 2004; this will help focus resources towards four key areas within our six agreed corporate priorities; which are our prime drivers for the medium term. The four areas are:



- 1.3 The Corporate Strategy sets out clearly which projects the Council will implement and lead on. Naturally these priorities give focus to our service planning and budget process and our revenue and capital resources will be directed to the projects in this strategy.
- 1.4 Below are actions within the Corporate Strategy that show how the Council will use its capital resources to achieve our priorities:
- **The Vision for Taunton** – partnership funding from the Borough Council, the County Council, the Regional Development Agency and the Environment Agency will kick start this exciting development. Developer contributions will enable the development of social housing, education, open spaces, cultural and transport initiatives within the Vision area. Capital receipts gained from the sale of assets and land disposals arising from the Vision, will be re-invested to deliver this priority project. This Council is currently reviewing all of its land holdings to ensure it is in a strong position to support the delivery of this key project. A land strategy will be developed to support this over the coming months.

- **Transport** – Taunton has recently been designated a Principal Urban Area and needs to ensure that there is sufficient transport investment to meet these demands. To do this the Council supports the North West Taunton Package and has provided £399,000 in its budget for its contribution. In addition a further £200,000 will be made available if required by the County Council. The Council also supports the operation of a Park and Ride site east of Taunton. Finally the Council has budgets for improving the performance and safety of its car parks.
- **Anti-Social Behaviour** – the Council plays a key role in this area through the local Crime and Disorder Partnership. The majority of Council support in this area relates to revenue support, however many schemes in the capital programme contribute towards this priority. For example the refurbishment of public conveniences and the removal from the Council's asset base of derelict/poorly maintained assets reduce opportunities for anti-social behaviour. Many of the improvements to the Council's housing stock ie double glazing programmes and door entry systems contribute to the reduction of crime. In addition the Council will secure funding for a re-locatable CCTV system.
- **Housing** – the Council as a major landlord has a significant capital programme, ranging from investment in its own stock to investment in the private sector through to grants to Registered Social Landlords and grants for private sector household renovation projects. The total housing capital programme for 2004/05 totals £7.4m. The Council has recently resolved to ballot tenants on a Large Scale Voluntary Transfer, which, if endorsed by tenants will result in the creation of a Housing Association separate from the Council.

2 **Capital Assets – Taunton Deane in Context.**

- 2.1 The Council is an active Housing Authority with over 6,000 Council Houses and Flats. In addition the Council owns several Leisure Centres, Parks, Car Parks and other operational assets. The Council also has numerous land holdings and investment properties. The value of the total asset base of the Council is in excess of £380m. Further details may be found in the annual Statement of Accounts for 2003/04.

3 **The Capital Programme**

- 3.1 A summary of budgeted capital spending for the period 2003/04 to 2006/07 is shown below. This covers a period of four years for General Fund services and two years for Housing services.

Portfolio	2003/04 £000	2004/05 £000	2005/06 £000	2006/07 £000	Total £000
Corporate Resources	419	290	85	85	879
Eco. Dev. Tourism & Council Businesses	479	653	127	0	1,259
Environmental Policy	705	120	0	0	825
Housing	5,788	7,410	0	0	13,198
Leisure, Arts & Culture	3,162	420	117	117	3,816
Planning & Transportation	673	30	0	0	703
Total	11,226	8,923	329	202	20,680

3.2 The Council recognises that the Capital programme must be affordable and it carefully monitors the resources available to finance the programme. The majority of capital investment will come from revenue contributions, capital receipts or new borrowing. New capital schemes, which generate additional revenue income, will, where possible, be funded through revenue contributions. For example refurbishments to the Taunton crematorium are being funded through increased income receipts. This enables some projects to be resourced on a self-financing basis.

3.3 We will seek to maximise capital resources by the following actions:

- The disposal of surplus property and other assets in line with our land strategy,
- Making the most of partnerships with other organisations, including partnerships with commercial bodies,
- Seeking National Lottery funding (where applicable),
- Bidding for Central Government Grants (ie E-Govt),
- Securing S106 agreements,
- Making appropriate contributions from Revenue to fund specific capital schemes,
- Borrowing in line with the requirements of the “Prudential Code”,
- PFI & PPP partnership working (although no schemes have been identified as yet).

4 Capital Investment Prioritisation and Bidding Regime

4.1 The Authority has in place an established system to enable Corporate Management Team and the Executive to prioritise bids for new capital schemes. This system is known locally as the Project Appraisal Report (PARs) system. The purpose of the PAR is to provide comprehensive information on each new scheme, thereby enabling informed choices to be made

4.2 A PAR requires the following areas to be considered:

- Project Outline and Description,
- Category of Scheme (ie legal obligation, service necessity, service maintenance or service necessity),
- Establishment of Need – appropriate analysis of need and rationale,
- Fit with Corporate Priorities,
- Fit with Service planning objectives,
- Sustainability,
- Option appraisal – ie “do nothing”, full scheme, partial scheme, scheme provided by other agencies, scheme provided through partnership working,
- Risk identification,
- Overall project evaluation,
- Resource implications, capital and revenue, monetary and non-monetary,
- Timescale for implementation,
- Recommendations.

4.3 The Council is enhancing the PAR process through the development of a model which will score both financial and non financial factors when considering capital investment. This will be complete by Autumn 2004. The scores generated by the model will be used to decide which schemes are recommended for inclusion in the capital programme.

4.4 It is important that we do not forget the impact on the revenue budget of capital decisions, therefore the Council’s Medium Term Financial Plan includes specific details on the likely impact of the capital programme on the revenue budget.

4.5 The Council recognises that it is prudent to ensure that not all capital resources are committed at any one time and therefore the level of unallocated resources is carefully monitored. This enables financial flexibility to be retained in the event of new unexpected opportunities presenting themselves.

5 **Management of the Capital Programme**

5.1 The capital programme is reviewed and reported on a quarterly basis (along with all other budgets of the Council) to ensure not only spend against budget but also progress of each scheme against other non-financial aspects such as timetable and construction progress.

5.2 The process of strategic risk management is employed for high spend/risk/profile capital projects. Where applicable, multi discipline project teams are formed to manage these schemes and to report progress and risks to Corporate Management Team on a regular basis. Post project reviews are used to improve overall future project management techniques.

6 **Partnership Working**

6.1 The Council already works with a number of key agencies and bodies within the Borough. The Council chairs the Local Strategic Partnership, which includes representatives from the voluntary sector, private business and other public sector bodies such as the County Council and the Health Authority. The LSP is developing our Community Strategy and this is helping to shape the Councils Corporate Strategy and our key priorities. Ultimately this shapes the way in which Council services are delivered. This is shown below:



6.2 We recognise that the Council needs to work with partners to provide services that benefit the Borough. We cannot ignore the expertise that partners bring to the table, this can be either technical, administrative or financial expertise. The following is a schedule of some of the partners, which are actively engaged on schemes within our existing capital programme:

Capital Project	Other Partners
Implementing E Government	Other Somerset Local Authorities/Police Authority/ ODPM
North West Taunton Package	County Council/ Highway Agency/ GOSW
Flood Alleviation Schemes	Private Housing Developers/Environment Agency/ Parish Councils
Contributions towards Social Housing Projects	Housing Corporation/ Registered Social Landlords/Private Developers
Recycling Boxes	Other Somerset District Councils/Somerset County Council/Central Govt.
Somerset Direct (Funded via Government Grant)	Other Somerset District Councils/Somerset County Council/Central Govt.
Community Facilities Cotford St Luke	County Council/ Local Developers/ Community
Grants to Village Halls/ Play Equipment Grants	Parish Councils/ Local Village Hall & Playing Field Committees
Bridgwater & Taunton Canal	County Council/British Waterways

7 Consultation

7.1 The Council is committed to informing, consulting and involving residents in planning its services. To support this, consultation has shaped many capital projects both through the initial identification of need through to scheme design and implementation.

- 7.2 The Council has an extensive budget consultation process in place which allows the views of the public to shape specific capital investment proposals.

8 Performance Measurement and Procurement

- 8.1 The Council works within a performance management framework that brings together the various processes for setting objectives, priorities and targets at corporate, service and individual level.
- 8.2 As mentioned in section 5 of this document, financial monitoring of capital schemes takes place already, but this has been enhanced recently by providing Members with a comprehensive analysis of performance against the Corporate Strategy as well as financial performance. This is reported quarterly to the Council's Review Board.
- 8.3 Further developments are in progress and we communicate progress to residents in our Council newspaper, the Deane Dispatch.
- 8.4 The Council will use its dedicated Purchasing Unit to ensure that best value is obtained for all contracts. Recently revised tendering procedures and contractual standing orders supplement this process.

9 The Future for Capital Investment

- 9.1 At present the Council has surplus capital resources, however it anticipates that this will not be sufficient in the short term. In order to meet our priorities we will need to critically review our existing levels of service provision and review the levels of capital investment required. Indeed the service review process will identify surplus assets whose capital receipts can be directed towards achieving our key priority of the Vision for Taunton.
- 9.2 The Council has a clear vision and an agreed Corporate Plan. Capital investment is key to achieving our aims and we recognise that we cannot do this without help from partners.
- 9.3 The Capital Strategy will continue to develop over the forthcoming year in line with the Corporate Strategy.

COUNCIL MEETING 12 OCTOBER 2004

PART II

To receive reports from the Executive:

Councillor Williams Leader of the Executive
Councillor Bishop Planning Policy and Transportation
Councillor Mrs Bradley Leisure, Arts and Culture
Councillor Mrs Bryant Communications
Councillor Cavill Economic Development, Property and Tourism
Councillor Edwards Environmental Services
Councillor Garner Housing Services
Councillor Hall Resources
Councillor Mrs Lewin-Harris Community Leadership

COUNCIL MEETING 12 OCTOBER 2004

REPORT OF COUNCILLOR JOHN WILLIAMS – LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

We now have our CPA result and it is a tremendous result which reflects the good work of this Council over the years, but particularly of the present administration of the Council. The “Excellent” rating was gained because the “Achievement of improvement” and future “Ambition” were singled out as being major factors in gaining what is the highest award possible. It is particularly gratifying when compared with performance in the rest of the South West region as we are one of only three Councils to have received recognition as being an “Excellent Council”.

It is also good to read in the report that we are recognised as a Council for the whole community across Taunton Deane, not just Taunton, and that clear leadership and officer/Member relationships are important factors in securing the award and I quote from the report “Effective leadership by the Chief Executive is supported by clear roles and responsibilities and mutual respect between councillors and Staff.”

The people of Taunton Deane may very well say; “congratulating ourselves over being an Excellent Council is all very well, but what does this mean to us the taxpayer?” It is very good news because we are now granted an inspection holiday for up to three years, (other than the usual annual audit) which saves huge amounts in direct costs and indirect costs of staff gathering and presenting the required information for assessment. In addition we are given much greater freedom to trade: where we do a service well we can also sell this to other authorities or in general to increase our income other than through taxes.

Having achieved this award it does not mean to say we can rest on our laurels, we have to address the weak points highlighted and ensure we continue operating efficiently in other areas. However, the team effort and hard work from all who contributed, including our external partners, is very much appreciated, and I offer my congratulations and sincere thanks; without everybody’s contribution it would not have been possible.

In affirmation of our status as an “Excellent Council” we have also been awarded “Business Britain Local Authority of the Year 2004/2005”. This was an unsolicited award from the national magazine, Business Britain, where professionals independently assessed us following a comprehensive review of local authorities across England against strict criteria. The conclusion was reached that Taunton Deane leads by example in attracting inward investment with many attributes such as:

Range of Services – What services are in place to ensure companies in Taunton Deane are supported and are allowed to prosper.

Additional Services – looking at the additional services made available such as housing, planning, economic development, customer relations, location and Infrastructure. Available Resources, ongoing Development and Redevelopment Programmes,

Future Visions, marketing and promotion – how well Taunton Deane’s inclusion worked in Business Britain and also what additional marketing is being done.

Appropriateness to Business Britain Readers – obviously they are looking to ultimately recommend the location to their readers so had to ensure the award was of relevance.

There is no doubt, it was our clear articulation of our future plans and the way we have approached the implementation of urban regeneration together with our proactive approach towards business, whether inward relocation or assistance to existing, that secured us this award. Coupled with our “excellent” status this has to be good news for Taunton Deane.

Budget Setting

The challenge of trying to achieve a balanced budget becomes even more challenging and the process appears to commence ever earlier! We were aware last year that our present financial position is not sustainable, costs are rising substantially above our income by about £600,000 per annum and next year, with such one offs as recycling of waste, we face a shortfall of around £1.2M. A detailed paper setting this out has already been presented to the Review Board at their meeting last week. This amount was not altogether unexpected, and it led to our bringing before the Council earlier this year our proposals for financial restructuring which set out the need for a hard look at our services to ensure they matched the priorities of the people and we ceased, or reduced cost, on non-priority or non-statutory duties. This financial strategy was accepted and approved by Full Council in April 2004. In fulfilment of this we have presently embarked upon a major assessment of our services in full consultation with managers and staff, and efficiency savings are being sought right across the whole range of Council services, or increased income where realistic. This will result in further consideration by the Review Board, open to all Councillors, during November and December in order to inform the Executive in the budget setting process for initial consideration by all Councillors in January 2005.

Make no mistake, we all have to make some hard choices if we are reduce our base budget to achieve a sound and sustainable financial future. An example of these difficult decisions that have to be made is the decision of the Executive, before you tonight for ratification, to return footpaths to the Somerset County Council as the responsible authority because it is costing us about £100,000 for which we receive £45,000. Although I accept this is not a universally popular decision it does not make economic sense to continue a service at such great cost to Taunton Deane taxpayers and I urge you all to support this decision. This can be regarded as the first test of our resolve to seriously address our unsustainable budget situation.

Vision for Taunton

Although not highly visible at present much is happening behind the scene, the all important infrastructure and viability studies have been prepared and are being studied by officers at present. An integral part of this has been the further studies into the value of an inner relief road and possible alternative designs. The “third way” as it has become known has now been developed showing an alternative route through Tangier and the river crossing; it does look good but I still have concerns about its discharge into Bridge Street and will be monitoring this aspect closely. The proposals for this alternative route have already been presented to Councillors at a joint SCC/TDBC meeting and will be the subject of public consultation as from the 18 October.

The County Cricket Club are still strongly promoting their plans for a complete redevelopment of the ground to allow hosting of the all important one day international matches. I am able to confirm that their plans will not mean the closure of the Brewhouse Theatre, this can still operate. Having said this it is still our intention to include a new and larger theatre in our redevelopment of the town centre, and the “third way” inner relief road as mentioned above would allow this. I am aware that Abbey Manor Development, who have planning consent for development of the East Goods Yard at Firepool, are in the process of agreeing final design with the Planning Department and once agreed wish to commence works on site. This will truly be the beginning of work on the ground in respect of the Vision for Taunton. Another essential ingredient for the Vision process is the relocation of the livestock market from its present site. An application for a new site adjacent J26 at Chelston has been received and is presently being processed ready for consideration. It is imperative that a successful relocation be achieved in order to maintain such a vibrant business within Taunton Deane and release the present site for redevelopment.

Adoption of Local Plan

This is before us for final adoption this evening and I commend it to all Members. If approved we would hope to have it fully adopted by the end of the year, thus ensuring a considerable degree of clarity and certainty for the public, developers and our planning department. This document is vital to ensuring that the necessary development within Taunton Deane takes place against an overall strategy for development and comprehensive infrastructure and community facilities are provided including the vital social housing element. This will also incorporate areas of the Vision development allowing them to proceed with the full authority of the Local Plan in support.

Areas of the Taunton Vision, such as Tangier area, not presently covered by the Local Plan will be dealt with under a new procedure recently introduced by central Government being the Local Development Framework. These have to be prepared and agreed with Government Office SW by April 2005.

The Local Plan is a vital policy document for this authority and involves a huge amount of work, I commend all those involved in our planning department, and Member review, for their commitment and hard work in bringing this to what I hope will be a satisfactory conclusion tonight. Not all will be satisfied with the end result but I hope they will be able to accept that we have delivered as equitable plan as possible within the constraints imposed upon us by the Inspector who conducted the public examination of it.

Cornhill, Wellington

It is disappointing to note the level of criticism and negative comment aimed at this Council over the assumed failure to act sufficiently promptly to gain improvements to Cornhill. It may not be high profile but Members and officers have been working together to bring about change. That within our control we have effected quickly, what is not within our control we have been trying to enable, to bring much needed improvement in what we recognise could be a very attractive street; an asset to Wellington, not run down as at present. Even more disappointing is that representatives of this Council, who watched Cornhill deteriorate as it has done over the last twelve years, are now so critical of our efforts because we have not resolved this long

outstanding problem in such a relatively short time. However, I am delighted to note that some Wellington Members are promoting a constructive approach with the proposal to set up a working group of interested parties and Wellington Town Councillors, the group will be able to monitor the progress of improvements, be kept up to date with potential future plans and input ideas so better progress may be made. This working group has direct access to a relevant Taunton Deane officer and the Portfolio Holders responsible. I have no illusions that success in achieving regeneration will require commitment and hard work but with a constructive approach this will be much quicker than the destructive negative approach we have witnessed to date.

Car Parking Charges

There is much vocal comment about our parking charge policy but I can only reiterate that we have to implement these charges to fulfil our agreements of the Taunton Parking and Congestion Strategy, a strategy signed up to by the previous administration. Failure to do this would probably invoke penalties from central government and certainly do nothing to aid our commitment to reduce congestion. I accept this is ahead of a decent bus service but it has to be recognised, we are in a very difficult situation, the bus services have been in a spiral of decline for many years, the bus company will do nothing about this because the serious congestion problems do not allow them to run a reasonable service, therefore people refuse to use the bus thus making the service even more uneconomic. We must break into this spiral and assist the bus company to run a sensible service thus attracting more people back on public transport. This, with alternative means of travel, will have an impact on our congestion problems and regrettably it has to be linked to higher parking charges so that driving and parking is no longer the easy option as at present. It will focus peoples minds to giving serious thought to alternative means of travel.

I recently attended a Taunton Town Centre partnership meeting where I explained our parking charging strategy. Although I acknowledge the concerns raised, there appeared to be a general acceptance that we had to do something about the very serious congestion, particularly during the rush hours, and that the proposed increases were in line with the agreed Taunton Transport Strategy. It was also agreed our parking charges were quite favourable to a lot of comparable towns and cities.

To do nothing is not an option if we are to combat our congestion problems.

In conclusion it would be wrong of me not to acknowledge the further wonderful accolade bestowed on Taunton Deane when we were awarded the Tesco Cup and Gold Medal for Taunton and the Portman Cup and Gold Medal for Wellington in the South West in Bloom competition. This has to be great credit to Shaun Cregan for Taunton and Isabel Ward for Wellington and of course the tremendous band of helpers that contribute. My congratulations and thanks to you all for making Taunton Deane such a great place to live, work and visit, please do keep up the great work you do.

Councillor John Williams
Leader of the Council

COUNCIL MEETING – 12 OCTOBER 2004

REPORT OF COUNCILLOR BISHOP – PLANNING POLICY AND TRANSPORTATION

Planning Fees

The ODPM has announced that it aims to raise an extra £30million to fund planning services in 2005 – 06 by raising application fees.

Launching a consultation on the structure of fees, Planning Minister, Keith Hill said that although councils had been given a boost by planning delivery grant (PDG), it was still the case that fees are short of the costs of dealing with applications, especially major applications.

The paper, proposes that councils that meet the targets for determining major applications should be allowed to increase their application fees by up to ten per cent. Fees should be structured in proportion to the size of the application, as research commissioned by ODPM found that it is the largest applications where fees are furthest from achieving cost recovery.

The Minister, Keith Hill said “Any increase in fees must be accompanied by raising the bar when it comes to quality. We don’t expect people to pay more and get less. Councils will be encouraged to work harder to meet targets”

Parliamentary Statement

On 14th September Keith Hill the Minister for Housing and Planning and Lord Rooker the Minister of State made statements in the House of Commons and House of Lords respectively on the Government’s revised strategy of support and engagement with local planning authorities that are performing poorly in their handling of planning applications

The ministers statements name and congratulate 39 local planning authorities that have demonstrated significant improvements in performance and as Taunton Deane was included in the list I congratulate all staff who are involved in the delivery of the planning service.

Joint Structure Plan Alteration

Proposed alternative to proceeding to Examination in Public

I recently attended meetings of the County Council’s Environment and Transportation Policy Panel and the Strategic Planning Conference where it was agreed not to proceed to an Examination in Public and that a recommendation would be put to a future meeting of the County’s Executive Committee and Full Council.

Included in the recommendation and of particular importance to Taunton Deane are:-

1. That further discussions and if necessary further investigations take place with the South West Regional Assembly (SWRA) and District Planning Authorities. These discussions and investigations are to focus on the spatial planning policies contained in the plan alteration, and the emerging spatial planning options set out in the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) “Possible Development Strategies for the Region” consultation report .

2. That agreement be sought with SWRA and relevant District Planning Authorities to a future spatial strategy that results in Taunton retaining its “Principal Urban Area” designation, and Yeovil achieving an “Other Designated Centre for Growth” designation.
3. That objections to the Joint Structure Plan Alteration that were received in accordance with the statutory requirements be considered and assessed at this time and that a report be prepared on these objections for consideration by the Panel, Executive Board, and ultimately Full Council.
4. That the issues raised and the views offered in the objections received during the JPSA deposit period be taken into account in conducting any further work in the context of recommendations 1 and 2 above.
5. That the County should, in consultation with the districts, embark on an exercise to establish the housing numbers requirement for Somerset.

Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West (RSS) 2006 – 2026

The Regional Assembly are consulting on the most appropriate way for development to happen in the South West over the next 20 years and they would like your views in order to help the Assembly develop a strategy to recommend to Ministers, which is most likely to meet all our needs, and those of the region as a whole. The consultation period ends on 26th November 2004, and it is likely that a Draft Regional Spatial Strategy will be prepared by March 2005.

The information contained in the draft RSS will be taken into account in the preparation of the Local Development Framework (LDF).

Development at Tone Mill, Wellington

An application has been submitted for 147 dwellings and Commercial units and the following statements have been forwarded with the planning application:-

Planning and Design Statement
 Flood risk Assessment
 Transport Impact Assessment
 Conservation Plan

Tone Mill Partnership

Tenders have been invited from appropriate consultants to undertake a Feasibility Study of the proposed Regeneration Project. At the close of the tender period five consultants had responded. Their bids will now be evaluated and the contract offered to the successful consultancy.

Public Transport Review

At the invitation of the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee of Somerset County Council I attended the first evidence-taking session where information was obtained from transport operators, interest groups, providers and users. At our next meeting on 7th October we shall be evaluating the options for future provision and on 4th November we shall be discussing the proposed priorities and an action plan. The Integrated Passenger Transport Unit at County Hall would welcome your views which will be fed into the Review Process..

Consultation Housing and Planning in the Region

The Deputy Prime Minister has issued a consultation paper setting out plans to strengthen links between housing and planning strategies at regional level. The 12-week consultation sets out plans to do this by merging Regional Housing Boards with Regional Planning Bodies, to bolster the Government's commitment to create thriving and sustainable communities in all regions. Regional Housing Boards are non-statutory advisory bodies. Regional Planning Bodies (which the Deputy Prime Minister will soon direct in each region to be the Regional Assembly) are formally constituted and have a statutory role in the planning process. Because of this the Government considers that the most effective way forward would be for Regional Assemblies to take on responsibility for functions currently undertaken by the Regional Housing Boards: i.e. producing a Regional Housing Strategy and making funding recommendations to Ministers.

Planning Obligations

In the light of the Barker Review of Housing Supply, the Government has reviewed its plans for taking forward the reform of planning obligations.

The Government proposed in its November 2003 consultation paper a number of measures aimed at improving the current negotiation arrangements under Section 106 and a new optional planning charge. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 provide powers to make regulations to implement changes to the planning obligations system.

The Barker Report recommended that the Government should introduce a planning-gain supplement (PGS) tied to the granting of planning permission so that part of the landowner development gains could contribute to wider benefits for the community. The Government agreed that it was in principle acceptable to fund social housing and other measures out of the uplift in land values associated with the development process and in the Budget Report last March the Chancellor of the Exchequer said that he would consider proposals for a national PGS and make a decision by the end of 2005.

The Government now proposes to take matters forward as follows :-

The Government will press ahead with identifying and implementing changes to the current arrangements for negotiated agreements. It will do this by revising the current Circular 1/97 on Planning Obligations and publishing good practice guidance for local authorities and developers and the draft revised circular should be issued in the autumn with a view to putting the new arrangements in place early in 2005.

In parallel the Government will work up proposals for an optional planning charge, on a timetable consistent with that for decisions on the PGS.

Councillor Cliff Bishop

COUNCIL MEETING OCTOBER 2004

REPORT OF COUNCILLOR MRS. D. BRADLEY – LEISURE, ART AND CULTURE

Tribute Band and Proms Concerts

The annual tribute band and proms concerts were held this year on Friday 13 August and Saturday 14 August in Vivary Park, organised for the second year by Performing Arts Management. On Friday night the FABBA Girls, an ABBA tribute band, performed some of ABBA's greatest hits. The following evening, the Performing Arts Symphony Orchestra accompanied by the soprano Annette Wardell performed a host of popular classics along with the traditional proms favourites. Both concerts saw an increase on the previous year in numbers attending, approximately 3,000 at the tribute band and approximately 1,800 – 2,000 at the proms concert.

Cultural Quarter Consortium

The Cultural Quarter Consortium, originally set up to promote the cultural quarter as part of the Vision for Taunton met on 6 September. Esther Scott from SWERDA outlined the current planning and delivery stages of the Vision for Taunton. Bill Ferguson of Integria Solutions gave a presentation on his Options Appraisal of the potential for the Brewhouse and Hunts Court as a Creative Industries Hub, This appraisal was commissioned by TDBC, Somerset Art Gallery Trust and the Somerset Local Authority Arts Council England Partnership. The final report was due at the end of September.

Somerset Art Week

Somerset Art Week (SAW) ran from 11 to 26 September. The sixth biennial showcase of visual arts has over 300 venues across Somerset. Over 110 artists are showing at 50 venues across the Deane. This year, SAW has gained significant sponsorship from Wessex Trains to enable SAW posters to be put up in train stations from Reading to Penzance, alongside a billboard campaign. The small signs appear to have been everywhere.

Wellington Skate Park

The work to create the skate park, adjacent to the Wellington Sports Centre, is now complete and was opened for use for the August Bank holiday. Two ramps, a fun box and grind rail have been installed on the existing tarmac area and safety fencing around the perimeter in accordance with the safety audit. Taunton Deane made money available to Wellington Town Council to work with the skateboarders of Wellington to choose and site their equipment. I

Taunton and Wellington in Bloom 2004

On behalf of all in this Council I would like to congratulate Shaun Cregan and the Taunton and Wellington in Bloom Committees for their brilliant success. The

competitions are not just about floral displays and permanent planting but also street cleaning, sustainability and community involvement. I would also like to thank all the Deane staff for their work too.

Taunton and Wellington were entered in the South West Region of the Britain in Bloom competition organised by the Royal Horticultural Society.

Taunton won the Tesco Cup for towns with a population of 25,000 to 69,999 competing against Torquay, Weymouth, Paignton, Exmouth and Yeovil.

Wellington won the Portman Cup for towns with a population of 12,000 to 14,999 competing against Penzance, Thornbury, Corsham and Portland.

PARKS & GREEN SPACES

Taunton Flower Show was again a great success, receiving visitors around 19,000 visitors over the two days. On behalf of Taunton Deane I would like to thank the Chairman and Committee of the Taunton Floricultural and Horticultural Society for a very well planned and laid out event which we all enjoyed very much and to congratulate Colin Trewen and the Parks department for winning a Silver Gilt Medal for their stand with its sophisticated display of not just flowers but grasses too. The comments we have received show that people really do appreciate all the floral displays which enhance the town for both residents and visitors alike.

Green Spaces Strategy: this has now been adopted and provides a framework for negotiating s.106 agreements to help fund the provision of open spaces. However its implementation involves a lot of work at ground level with local communities and it is that local involvement which can draw down funds. We are especially committed to provision of youth facilities as the research shows a dearth of these and our consultations back this up.

STONE LEISURE LIMITED ACTIVITIES

Partnership Work with Taunton Deane Primary Care Trust (TDPCT)

Stone Leisure Limited, in partnership with TDPCT, are about to 'pilot' a new Lifestyle Referral Programme based in local Taunton Deane GP Surgeries. TDPCT will be contributing £12,500 to the project in year one and this will then be reviewed based on the success of the programme. The longer term objective is to operate schemes from four surgeries (two in Taunton, one in Wellington and one in Wiveliscombe). The purpose of the Lifestyle Programme is to focus specifically on reducing levels of obesity, reducing levels of diabetes type 2, promoting take-up of smoking cessation programmes and decreasing the risk of coronary heart disease. The Lifestyle Referral Programme differs from the already successful ProActive GP Referral Programmes in that Stone Leisure staff will be operating the scheme from the surgeries and the focus is not entirely on physical activity, but a variety of lifestyle factors.

Health Works

At the beginning of September Tone Leisure launched a new interactive health information section to their website on www.toneleisure.com. The 'Health Works' website offers visitors the opportunity to complete healthy living questionnaires, measure their body mass index online, enter competitions, provide advice and health tips, undertake a national research poll and to view both local and national health news and information.

Diversionsary Activities

Tone Leisure is playing an active role in the Taunton Deane Diversionsary Delivery Team and over recent months young people have enjoyed access to some interesting and imaginative projects. These have provided an effective and popular diversion from crime and anti-social behaviour and into physical activity and sport participation.

- **Vibe Sport**

This is an attractive blend of music and activity based at Wellsprings Leisure Centre on Friday nights from 7-9 pm. Tone Leisure secured funding from the Crime and Disorder Partnership enabling the activities to run for a year. Sports Coaches and Somerset County Youth Workers have been available to help local 13-19 year olds get involved in a whole range of sports and activities and the general consensus has been "We want more of this - it's fun". In the words of one young enthusiast, "I would never have tried body combat without coming here".

- **Summer Holiday Activity Programme**

These programmes targeted 13-17 year olds and operated at Wellsprings Leisure Centre, Blackbrook Pavilion and Wellington Sports Centre. Funded by Connexions, the programme involved Tone Leisure coaches, instructors and local clubs working alongside Connexions Personal Advisors and Somerset County Youth Workers.

- **Football Programme at Lyngford Park**

Building on last year's success the scheme ran on Thursday afternoons for the 5 weeks of the holiday. The programme was jointly funded by Tone Leisure and the Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership and organised by Alison Cottey, Community Development Worker for North Taunton Partnership. The sessions were hugely successful, attracting lots of local young people and were supported by local Police Officers, Community Wardens and the Co-Op.

The success of the above projects is a tribute to the Taunton Deane Diversionsary Delivery Team - an effective partnership between the Somerset County Youth Service, Tone Leisure, Connexions, the Police, Young Somerset and Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership. Arrangements are already in place to plan an

annual programme of events for next year and for the partnership to put together joint applications for funding bids.

NETWORKING

Rural Commission and Conference; this took place in the Bath Assembly rooms and included a civic reception in the Roman Baths with their original Roman flagstones. We were assured that the government expects local authorities to be their agents for delivery beneath the plethora of Quangos directing operations with their strategies. I attended a workshop led by the CAB and Shelter who made a very good case for being our agents in helping us to deliver on the economy and on social inclusion. The other workshop was on Food, Farming and local government; with interesting reflections from a consultant who pointed out that water is coming up the Agenda. Jane Thompson the Corporate Sustainability Officer from South Gloucestershire then explained how successful they had been in promoting local food from local farmers to local schools through their procurement officer. This was keeping the land North of Bristol under cultivation. Cumbria and Carlisle had their own stand which was an impressive bit of promotion; the Foot & Mouth epidemic had forced them forward into new ways of working on the ground. The message is clear: get out there and work alongside communities on small and clearly focused projects.

Councillor Mrs Dilly Bradley

COUNCIL MEETING – 12 OCTOBER 2004

REPORT OF COUNCILLOR MRS BRYANT

“Deane Leads the Way”, “TDBC has been recognised as one of the best local authorities in the country...”, and “Green machine wins Government praise”. Great headlines like these in the local press acknowledge the work of TDBC staff and members is producing positive results and improvements to the benefit of people living in Taunton Deane.

The first is about the EXCELLENT rating we were awarded in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) –we were one of only 3 councils in the South West to achieve this. The second refers to an unsolicited award from Business Britain whose judges felt Taunton Deane Council leads by example in attracting inward investment to the area and praised the Vision for Taunton. In the latter, Government Minister for the Environment, Elliot Morley, MP, congratulated the Council for saving up to 18% household waste.

In addition, the press office has fielded several radio interviews for Somerset Sound and Orchard FM and since last full council has issued press releases on a wide range of council services, which in the main generated a positive response from the media. These included:

Upgrade planned for Taunton Deane Crematorium
Housing Stock Transfer to be Investigated
Proposals for the Future of Flagship Park (Vivary)
Successful Prosecution for Food Safety Offences (with pic)
Plans for Late Night Taxi Rank
Safety Scheme Proposed for Deane (Drink Safe)
Walk Well in Wellington Park
Roving Rangers in the Deane (with pic)
Young People Get Active in North Taunton
Child Labour Findings
Seagulls Give Cause for Concern
Leisure Under New Management (with pic)
Green Boxes Go Rural (with pic)
Street Cleaning Continues to Improve
Heritage Open Days in the Heart of Somerset
Last Orders Called for Underage Drinking
Wellington Skateboard Facilities are Open (with pic)
Licensees Fined for Breaching Public Entertainment Conditions
Residents Given Chance to Sample Delights of the Deane (Residents Weekend)
Drop-In Sessions Planned for Tenants
Deane Licensing Policy Out for Consultation
Taunton Deane Descendants Make Civic Visit (with pic)
Panel Recommends Review of Artwork Proposals

The commitment given at the last Full Council to circulate press releases to those members who wish to receive them has now been fulfilled and over the coming weeks we will be reviewing the media protocol.

Deane Dispatch

The winter 2004 edition of Deane Dispatch is in preparation and will be distributed towards the end of November.

Press Office/Public Relations

I would like to take this opportunity to warmly welcome Emma Brewster to Taunton Deane. Emma has recently taken up the role of public relations officer. Emma has a wealth of experience having worked for two international public relations agencies based in Singapore working with multi-national clients to develop communications plans, messaging handbooks, day-to-day account servicing, event management and extensive media / analyst relations.

Last but not least, I would like to thank Becky Brown for the work she has done whilst manning the press office. She has done an excellent job, dealing with officers and members, as well as the media, with discretion and patience. I wish her and her family every success in the future.

Councillor Gwyneth Bryant

COUNCIL MEETING 12 OCTOBER 2004

REPORT OF COUNCILLOR CAVILL **ECONOMIC, ASSET MANAGEMENT AND TOURISM**

Tourism and TIC

Discussions with SCC regarding the future administration of the TIC are continuing. The TIC has been very successful this year in the services that have been provided to the public. To date they have achieved a 3% increase on enquiries and income against the previous year, a 15% increase in the number of accommodation bookings and the value of those bookings has increased by 32%. The TIC has acted as one of National Express's agents via its octopus booking system, enabling the variety and value of travel bookings to be increased. The committed staff of the TIC are looking at additional services they can offer in 2004.

Neroche Project

Forest Enterprise is organising a project bid for Lottery funding, to restore and improve important historic landscapes, and provide training. This proposed project will be of great benefit to Taunton Deane and the local community, providing a new major tourism attraction. The time-scale seems quite long, but within the report of the Executive Committee held on 22nd September there is a considerable list of works to be undertaken.

Valuation

All of our maps have gone through a first GIS, however some errors have been thrown up and it will be the end of October before the scanning is complete. To date there are over 800 problems for the Valuation Service to check through, in addition to the written documents. To assist with this matter a property assistant has been taken on, part-time, who will be starting shortly.

As ToR has produced the draft final reports on the UDF, it has enabled us to proceed with some small parcels of land, not required within the Vision. One such is the area of land in Upper High Street, which should provide 6 additional homes.

Asset Management Plan

The updated AMP is now progressing through the Panels. It recognises that in the medium term there is a considerable amount of work that has to be addressed, and that we still have some under-performing properties particularly the OMB, which will in itself require innovative solution. Off Bindon Road we have an area of land on which in the near future we hope to be able to develop into small starter business units.

Economic Development

A conference was recently held in London for those interested in re-locating as identified in the Lyons Report. The Economic Development Team designed a fresh

literature to promote Taunton and the Vision and have also developed a fresh web-site: www.Firepool-Taunton.co.uk. Our stall at the Fair attracted considerable interest, possibly due to the miniature cider brandies and other local products available. Our thanks must go to a developer who assisted in the promotion without prejudice.

For some time now we have been in discussion with a number of landowners to assist in the bringing forward of allocated employment land. These will require some initial finding from the Council, enabling us to provide additional employment units.

The business survey has received a 20% reply, the results are being correlated at the moment.

During the summer a number of events were held Deane-wide. Of particular note was the Food Festival held in the centre of Taunton in partnership with DEFRA, which was well received and a great attraction.

The section has been strengthened by the transfer in of Lorraine Bush. Lorraine, with Hattie and Emma, has been holding Community and Business Planning events. The information gathered at these events will form part of the Community Strategy Document.

Councillor Norman P Cavill

COUNCIL MEETING – 12 OCTOBER 2004

REPORT OF COUNCILLOR MARK EDWARDS – ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND LICENSING

Pest Control

The months of July, August and September were exceptionally busy ones for our small Pest Control Team, mainly due to record numbers of wasps nests reported. This was a national problem.

Comparisons between these months, for wasps only, between 2004 and the average of the last three years, (in brackets, below) puts this into perspective:

July 50 (38)	Aug 206 (112)	Sep (as at 20 th) 172 (62)
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Despite the increased demand, the Team managed to respond to the challenge, in addition to their routine work and only two comments have been received indicating dissatisfaction over waiting times for treatment.

Air Quality

Following wide consultation on the options for improving air quality in our two Air Quality Management Areas (at Henlade and East Reach), we are now in the final stages of completing the Action Plan.

Noise Abatement

Stereo equipment was seized by noise control officers, acting under a Magistrates' Warrant, from a Council tenant in the Halcon area.

This action was necessary because the tenant had ignored a Noise Abatement Notice and was continuing to play loud music, causing a statutory nuisance to his neighbours.

A prosecution case is being prepared.

Emergency Response

Our Procedures for responding to Environmental Health emergencies out of normal hours have been completely updated and re-written. All Officers on the out of hours Rota have received training, which included a comprehensive desktop Exercise.

We have taken advantage of the significant amount of effort that this involved, to market a 'Dealing with Emergencies' package and training Seminar for delegates from all over the Country.

The Seminar, to be held in November, is already fully subscribed.

Seagulls

Although the Council has no statutory duty to deal with complaints of seagulls, we have responded to public concerns about growing numbers of these pests in the town centre area of Taunton. Inland urban gulls are an increasing national problem, with experts estimating that populations will escalate by around 30%, year on year.

Every food premises in the area has been given a leaflet reminding them of the need to control food waste. Operators of non-food Businesses occupying premises on which these birds are roosting or nesting have been given advice on proofing measures and another leaflet, giving general advice to members of the public has been made available to anyone who makes enquiries about this problem.

If the necessary funding is made available, it is hoped to commission an expert study before the next breeding season, with a view to establishing a cost effective control strategy. Any such strategy will specifically exclude culling.

Customer Services Training

Training has now been given to all but three Customer Services staff on how to deal with enquiries relating to Environmental Health.

This is in preparation for the Service going 'live' with Customer Services in the next tranche.

The training consisted of a two hour PowerPoint presentation on the structure and functions of the Department, supported by a Manual, and was well received.

CEMETERIES & CREMATORIUM

Enlarged Waiting Room/Upgraded Office

Companies wishing to tender for both the waiting room and office improvements have been assessing the work. Tenders are due by the 4th October. Works involved will be taking place in a very sensitive area so contractors will be required to work around funeral services, visitors and staff.

Cremator Probes

A seminar was held at the Taunton Crematorium demonstrating the effectiveness of the recently fitted probes. Following it's success it is hoped that future seminars will be held for Environmental Health Officers.

Recycling Of Metals Following Cremation

The Federation Of British Cremation Authorities is currently looking at the recycling of metals following cremation. Legal opinion is being sought to determine whether this is possible.

Abatement of Mercury

Crematoria have been regulated under Part 1 of the Environmental Protection Act since 1991. Substantial improvements have been made through the requirement to use Best Available Techniques Not Entailing Excessive Costs (BATNEEC) and the statutory government guidance, known as the process guidance note PG5/2. The controls have not, however, so far addressed the emissions of mercury. In response to this DEFRA has consulted with the industry on whether or not to specify gas cleaning of mercury in the next revision of the statutory guidance, this guidance is due at the end of the year.

WASTE SERVICES

Waste Collection and recycling

The leader John Williams has received a letter from Elliot Morley, Minister for the Environment, congratulating the Council on achieving the statutory recycling and composting target of 18% by March 2003.

Performance data for the first quarter of 2004/05 indicates that the Council is still making progress and the recycling and composting rate is now 20.5%. However, the next statutory target is still a major challenge as the Council must achieve a diversion rate from landfill of 34% by the end of March 2006.

The first phase of service developments required to reach this target was introduced in late August when the collection service for dry recyclable materials was extended to include a full range of materials from almost all households in the Deane. This involved the reconfiguration of the entire service and required most households to be sent a leaflet notifying them of changes to the collection arrangements. Inevitably with such huge task there were some teething problems. The improved service has now settled down and any remaining houses that have not been introduced to the service will be included as soon as possible.

In November phase 2 of the service developments will be introduced. This will involve aligning the refuse and recycling collections in preparation for phase 3 when the weekly recycling/food waste collections and the fortnightly refuse collections are introduced to 5000 properties. This is now programmed for February.

Street Cleansing

Recent monitoring of the quality of street cleansing in the Deane indicates that improvements are continuing to be made. BVPI 199 requires that over 300 sites are inspected every 4 months. The sites are randomly selected and the selection criteria ensure that they are representative of the borough. The results of the inspections have been validated by ENCAMS and show that 79% of the inspections were of an acceptable or high standard. This is the second year that data has been collected for BVPI 199 and the results show a 2% improvement in performance.

Public conveniences

The public convenience service was taken back in house in July. Since then the toilets have been cleaned by staff transferred to Deane DLO from the previous contractor. The change has resulted in an improvement in the quality of cleaning and the moral of the staff who have recently undergone a training programme. The training which was provided by the British Institute of Cleansing Science resulted in six members of Deane DLO staff being awarded sanitary cleansing certificates.

Councillor Mark J Edwards

COUNCIL MEETING – 12 OCTOBER 2004

REPORT OF COUNCILLOR GARNER – HOUSING SERVICES

This report will focus on two areas within the Housing Portfolio. The first is to provide an update on Housing Stock Options and the second will be to make members aware of the current situation in respect to homelessness.

Housing Stock Options

The debate on this subject continues at both local and national levels. This subject will therefore be a regular feature of future reports where I shall advise members of action taken since the last meeting of Full Council, ie the last three months and the action planned for the next quarter.

Past three months:

- The services of DOME have been retained as independent Tenants Advisors. Their first task was to set up, operate and advise all of our tenants and leaseholders of a free phone number (0800 919994) established to address any queries in relation to housing stock transfer. This is a service that is additional to the option of speaking directly to Taunton Deane housing officers.
- Following the last Full Council we issued a press release and also spoke on local radio stations advising tenants of the decision taken, why it was taken and what were the next steps.
- The next major step was to consult with our tenants about the type of Housing Association they would prefer should they vote for stock transfer; either a new, stand alone operation or to join with an existing Housing Association. Members and staff were sent details on this in the middle of September.
- The first part of this process was to arrange drop in sessions for tenants and these took place across the Deane from the 30th September to the 2nd October and were conducted by DOME.
- Discussions have taken place with the Government Office South West (GOSW) who continues to indicate their satisfaction with the work being undertaken and the progress being made. It is anticipated that the Housing Stock Options Appraisal process will be “signed off” by GOSW in November.
- Staff are also being kept informed through briefing sessions throughout September and October, they will also be asked their preferred choice of Housing Association should a transfer took place.

The next three months:

- The outcome of the drop in sessions will be relayed back to all tenants asking them to also express a preference. The outcome will be notified to Members in November.
- A partner's day is being arranged for the 5th November. The purpose is to both update them and also seek their views.
- In January we will formally apply to be placed on the Governments Stock Transfer Programme and work has started on compiling all the necessary information. PricewaterhouseCoopers will assist officers with the preparation of the application. However, it must be stressed this does not mean we will transfer, this is advising Government that this may happen.
- A project team will be created early next year to manage the stock option consultation process, this will largely comprise housing staff but will also comprise non-housing staff to ensure corporate involvement and that the Council rather than Housing owns this process.

Homelessness

This Council successfully met the target set by the ODPM of ensuring that no families were housed in bed and breakfast accommodation for more than six weeks. The deadline was April 2004, a target that we hit and have continued to comply with to date.

My concern now is that of single homeless people. My concern lies around the overall effect that homelessness has on the individuals concerned and also the financial cost to this Council in meeting its obligations in this respect.

The homeless situation was exacerbated following the 2002 Couttie Report. This effectively brought more people into the vulnerable people category; previously vulnerable people were defined as people with mental and/or physical disabilities. The Couttie report also brought 16 and 17 year olds into the net and it is this influx that is putting considerable demands on our resources.

Average numbers of single homeless:

2002	12 people per night
2003	25 people per night
2004	35 people per night

This Council's resources are under pressure both financially and from a manpower perspective. The average cost per night is £35 per person and we are forced to place individuals as far away as Minehead, Burnham on Sea and Weston Super Mare!

The vulnerable group showing the largest increase is the 16 and 17 year olds because basically the word has got around that the Council are obliged to house them.

To add to this pressure, the ODPM (letter dated 24th September 2004) has introduced two further targets that must be met by 31st March 2005:

1. Reduce the level of Rough sleepers by at least two thirds below the 1998 level.
2. Reduce the use of temporary accommodation for families with children from the level recorded in the year commencing April 2003. (In other words we need more long-term solutions).

Needless to say that following the Couttie Report no additional funding has been forthcoming to support the delivery or assist achieving these targets.

However we are determined to meet this challenge head on, and will require the same level of blue-sky thinking and new initiatives that helped this Council meet the families' situation. These new initiatives are currently being formulated and include:

- Negotiating more favourable terms with existing suppliers (price).
- Looking to expand our pool of private sector accommodation.
- Introduction of a cash incentive scheme for flats.

Members please note that under existing rules and considering the existing vulnerable people profile within the Borough of Taunton Deane (i.e 16/17 year olds) the situation could continue to worsen, as we become the victim of our own success.

Councillor Greg Garner

COUNCIL MEETING – 12 OCTOBER 2004
REPORT OF COUNCILLOR HALL – RESOURCES

1 Financial Services

Within Financial Services work has started on the preparation of the 2005/06 budget, this includes updating the Medium Term Financial Plan, meeting with Managers and providing costings for the forthcoming service review process. This work will occupy the Unit until well into 2005. In addition to this a project team has been set up to manage the implementation of the new Financial Management System which is due to go live in October 2005. In the near future some staff resources will be dedicated full time to this important project.

In addition the Unit is gearing up for the second quarterly monitoring exercise of 2004/05, which will be completed in October and reported to the Review Board in November. Finally the Unit has been undertaking financial awareness training for the Deane DLO.

2 Member's Services

A Members Web Site facility has now been introduced. All members will have been informed of this new service, which is now ready to go live. An example has already been posted on the TDBC web site and members who wish to take advantage should submit the proposed content of their individual pages to the Member Services Unit. Contents are subject to an Acceptable Use Policy.

A short time ago members were surveyed on whether they wanted to continue to receive agendas in hard copies or electronically. A new distribution system is almost ready to be introduced which will ensure that members get this information in the format they have requested. Internal distribution of hard copies will be radically reduced with an email alert being sent to most officers instead of the usual hard copy. This will reduce the distribution and printing costs quite significantly. It also complies fully with the Government's e-government aims.

3 Benefits

The embargo on outcome of our assessment from the Benefits Fraud Inspectorate was removed with the announcement of the Council's CPA results. We achieved 94% compliance with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Performance Standards and have put together an action plan to address any identified weaknesses. We received a letter from the DWP advising us to expect an increase in the time it takes us to work out the effects on benefit from a customer's change in circumstances. The decline is attributed to the new review regime and our results so far would support this. We have analysed the feedback customers gave us from the satisfaction survey carried out in 2003/2004 and this shows improved satisfaction in many areas. We are working on those areas where customers are less happy with our service.

4 Information Systems

The contract to supply and install the storage area network has been issued to Taurus Informatics. We are expecting all hardware to be delivered by the middle of October, and the project plan shows a go live date in mid November. We now have only about 100 days worth of free disk space before we start to get very worried.

We have advertised for a project coordinator, and will be recruiting an additional technical resource, both on a temporary IEG funded basis.

We have commenced projects to deliver the National Priority Outcomes. In particular, we are in the process of signing up with the Government Gateway to allow secure authenticated access to personal information.

This is the key to delivering more services electronically as we can be sure of the identity of the person requesting the service.

We have started a pilot project to look at Electronic Document Management, based on some software call Sharepoint Portal Server from Microsoft. One of the things included in the pilot is a Corporate Digital Image library, which we hope to have running by the end of October.

We are working on replacing the ageing handheld hardware used by the parking attendants with something more up to date (and cheaper!). We hope to be able to go live with this in early November.

In conjunction with the print room, we have instigated a project to look at reducing the complexity and costs associated with printing in TDBC. Xerox is doing some (free) investigation and claim that a 66% reduction in printers (and associated costs) may be possible. We wait with interest the outcome of this study.

Our 2 new students from Plymouth University (on a one year placements part of their 4 year degree) have now started and are again demonstrating the value to both TDBC and the students of this arrangement.

5 Revenues

The major areas of the Revenues Team Plan for 2004/05 currently being worked on are as follows:

- *Cash Deposit Machines Implementation* – tenders have been invited and submitted from 3 potential suppliers. References are currently being sought in respect of each supplier and visits are being conducted to other Council's in order to view machines in action.
- *Council Tax & NNDR Collection Rates* – collection rates remain on target and as yet the change to the instalment date appears to have had no adverse effect.
- *Business Rates 2005 Revaluation* – central government have only recently released the draft proposals for the new transitional relief scheme, which will be

effective from 1 April 2004. We are currently undertaking work in order to identify the IT system changes that will be required to operate the new scheme.

- *Small Business Relief* – draft regulations have recently been introduced relating to the introduction of the new small business relief scheme. Work is being undertaken to interpret these regulations and to identify the changes that will be required to our IT system.
- *Business Rates Discretionary Relief Guidelines* – a rough draft of new guidelines for awarding discretionary relief has now been completed. This will be ‘fine-tuned’ during the next month or so before being put before members for approval.
- *IT System Development* – major changes are to be made to our Council Tax system during the next 12 months in order to improve its functionality and make it e-govt compliant. A complete specification of the changes required has been drawn up and agreed with the IT section.

6 Internal Audit Services

The Audit & Review function has been split (with the Review function being merged into the newly formed Policy and Performance Unit) and the Council’s Internal Audit Section moved to the ground floor within the Deane House. The section has continued to progress with the system-based audits during the last quarter, which include Council Tax, National Non-Domestic Rates and Housing Benefits. It has also started to explore ways in which it can work more closely with the other Somerset Districts.

Highlights from some of the non-audit duties and other areas of audit the section gets involved with include: -

- Data Protection – Continued provision of general advice and guidance on data protection issues (Dealing with subject access requests, providing guidance to staff on disclosures).
- Risk Management – Facilitation of Risk Management sessions and ongoing involvement in the creation of new risk registers covering each of the six Heads of Service.
- Wessex Reinvestment Trust – Advice and guidance on audit and risk management issues.
- Partnering – Provision of advice on the Council’s future partnering arrangements regarding the awarding of kitchen refurbishment contracts.

7 Office Services

Additional funds from the e-government budget have meant that the Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Team has been able to digitise the Council’s land holding Terrier and Council housing stock ahead of the original programme. Both sets of information are being checked by Valuation Services before being available for general use. The Team is now working closely with Land Charges to help them move towards electronic delivery of Searches. It has recently acquired a portable GPS unit

that will help with pinpointing locations of data in the field, where our historic information is not as good as it could be, for example Tree Preservation Orders.

Stricter adherence to the use of Second Class Post and closer monitoring of outgoing mail by the Office Services Team has reduced overall postage costs by £1400 a month so far this year. I hope this trend will continue.

8 Personnel

We are very pleased to report that the Council as a whole has been accredited with the Investors in People Standard. This is a significant achievement for the Council and thanks go to the efforts of all staff that have contributed towards making this possible.

As part of implementing the Best Value Improvement Plan, work has now been completed on a comprehensive management development programme. This programme, which has been designed and developed in-house, is shortly to be piloted through the Corporate Management Team. It is intended that this programme should then be rolled out across the Council so that other managers may also benefit from it.

Finally, we have now secured the services of an on-site Occupational Health nurse, who holds a weekly drop in session at the Deane House. These sessions will help managers by providing speedy and accessible advice and support, which will enable sickness absence to be managed effectively. It is hoped this will in turn improve the Council's sickness absence levels.

Councillor Terry Hall

COUNCIL MEETING – 12 OCTOBER 2004

REPORT OF COUNCILLOR MRS LEWIN-HARRIS – COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

“The council is providing effective community leadership via its many partnerships”.

This very positive statement from our Comprehensive Performance Assessment points to one of the strengths of this council that contributed to our Excellent result. It demonstrates that we are an outward-looking council that seeks ways to work jointly with others to the benefit of the people of Taunton Deane and it is pleasing to note that the Auditors saw added value in the way our partnerships are bringing real improvements. Credit and thanks are due to the many officers and members who are involved in our various partnerships for the commitment and effort they have shown in making these partnerships effective.

LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

The Local Strategic Partnership recently agreed spending plans for the £143,000 raised by increased council tax on second homes. The partnership set up priority areas where it wanted to see the money spent, and a group of officers from the different partners then met and agreed where the money should go. This was the first time the LSP had taken on this responsibility and I would like to thank the officers who undertook this task so effectively. For the LSP to genuinely add value, the different partners need to show commitment to the priorities of the Community Strategy and area strategies rather than the priorities of their own organisation, and this is beginning to happen.

Now that the LSP is responsible for spending money raised from the council tax payer, it is important that the public are made aware of where that funding is going. The next edition of Deane Dispatch will carry information on the schemes to which that funding has been allocated. Details of this are also on the LSP website. I will not list them all here, but will pick out a few that may be of particular interest to members of this council:

- £25K to the Police for further Police Community Support Officers. This sum has been matched funded by the Police from their own resources.
- £5K for a project led by the County Youth Service to pull together information gathered from various youth consultations undertaken by different partners, map any gaps and make the outcomes available on a website. This is good for this council, because it addresses one of the areas where CPA identified a weakness. It is also an example of where I hope the LSP will be increasingly effective, i.e. in the sharing/pooling of information among partners.
- £15K towards local schemes identified in the emerging area strategies for the different areas in Taunton Deane.
- £15K towards three schemes in the most deprived wards in Taunton Deane: a feasibility study on the redevelopment of the Boys Club site at Priorswood as a community resource, support for the newly formed Taunton East Action

Trust to secure the development officer post to the end of March 2005 and to enable community involvement in the development of a feasibility study to redevelop Tonedale Mill

- £5K towards projects identified by Local Action Teams to help with anti social behaviour in specific areas
- £5K towards helping young people design and commission their own Youth Shelters.

CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION PARTNERSHIP (CDRP)

The Partnership has been allocated Home Office funding to tackle anti-social behaviour. The money, awarded for two consecutive years, 2004/05 and 2005/06 was particularly “ring fenced” to tackle anti-social behaviour issues.

The CDRP has agreed to spend their award in recruiting a Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) specifically to tackle anti-social behaviour identified by Taunton Deane Borough Council and the CDRP. Employed by the Constabulary the PCSO will receive their initial 5 week training from the Police but will then be based in Deane House working with the Community Safety Team.

Whilst not finalised it is anticipated that the PCSO will work on a five week rolling shift pattern to allow for some evening/late night working on a weekly basis. This will assist with patrols, tackling anti-social behaviour as it is reported and linking with additional initiatives such as the drug testing equipment.

The list below, though not exhaustive, outlines some of the areas which the PCSO will be working on in the future.

- Pro-active patrolling of identified problem areas received and prioritised by TDBC (out of hours if necessary)
- Answering complaints received by members of public about ASB.
- Assisting with joint work with licensing e.g. Drugs Testing Machine, trading standards checks, under age drinking
- Devising a system for officially recognising ASB and recording baseline data from reports received
- Point of contact for ASB steering group – liaison with legal team over prospective cases for ABC's & ASBO's
- Signposting service for Community Beat Manager's and Community Beat Officers and the Local Action Team co-ordinator
- Dealing with replying to complaints of low level general nuisance and quality of life issues.

The recruitment of a PCSO to work from the Deane House is the result of close working with the police and is an positive step forward in enabling this Authority to take an improved pro-active response to those who write into the Council with complaints about anti-social behaviour. Currently we have limited resources to deal with these complaints and this can, on occasion, give the impression that we are not interested and/or “passing the buck”. This new PCSO will be an added valuable resource in a position to compliment the existing work of the CDRP and Community

Safety and will be a lead officer in tackling the anti-social behaviour and quality of life issues that can affect everyone in the community.

EQUALITIES CO-ORDINATOR

I am pleased to report that Harry Connery takes up the post of Equalities Co-ordinator from 11 October 2004.

Our CPA process identified a weakness in the Council's approach to equality and diversity, and this post will be instrumental in helping all services to address our commitments and statutory responsibilities in this important area.

Councillor Joanna Lewin-Harris