



## 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 13TH DECEMBER 2005 AT 18:30.

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### AGENDA

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

1. To receive the Minutes of the Meetings of the Council held on 11 October 2005 (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. TO RECEIVE A PRESENTATION ON THE VISION FOR TAUNTON FROM IAN FRANKLIN, VISION DELIVERY TEAM PROJECT DIRECTOR
7. Members' Allowances 2006/07  
To receive recommendations from David Baker OBE, Chair of the independent Members' Allowances Panel and Councillor Mrs Whitmarsh, Chair of Resources Review Panel (enclosed)
8. Car Parking Charges 2006/07  
To receive a recommendation from Councillor Bishop, Executive Councillor, Planning and Transportation, following a meeting of the Traffic Regulation Order Panel held on 29 November 2005 (enclosed)
9. Part 1 - To deal with questions and receive recommendations from the Executive
  - (i) Joint recommendation from Councillors Mrs Bradley, Garner and Hall (Leisure Arts and Culture, Housing Services and Resources)  
  
Capital Programme Update 2005/06
    - (ii) Councillor Hall (Resources)
      - (a) Revenues and Benefits Software
      - (b) The Local Government Pay and Workforce Strategy
      - (c) Council Tax Section 13A Reductions Procedure
    - (iii) Recommendations from Councillors Hall and Edwards on Fees and Charges:

- (a) Land Charges
- (b) Licensing
- (c) Cemeteries and Crematorium

The Executive will be considering fees and charges for the above services at its meeting on 7 December 2005. Details of the recommendations arising will be circulated as soon as possible after the meeting of the Executive.

10. Part II -To receive reports from the following members of the Executive:-
- (i) Councillor Williams (Leader of the Executive)
  - (ii) Councillor Leighton (Communications)
  - (iii) Councillor Bishop (Planning Policy and Transportation)
  - (iv) Councillor Mrs Bradley (Leisure, Arts and Culture)
  - (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)

11. Appointment of Civic Marshall

For the past few years the post of Civic Marshall has been efficiently carried out by Councillor Mrs Mary Whitmarsh. Councillor Mrs Whitmarsh now wishes to relinquish this role and it is therefore necessary to appoint a successor. Councillor Mrs Jean Allgrove, a past Mayor of the Council, has indicated that she is willing to undertake the duties of Civic Marshall. Many members will know that Councillor Mrs Allgrove successfully stood in as Civic Marshall during the recent civic Remembrance events.

It is therefore RECOMMENDED that Councillor Mrs Jean Allgrove be appointed as Civic Marshall.

G P DYKE  
Member Services Manager

The Deane House  
Belvedere Road  
TAUNTON  
Somerset

TA1 1HE

06 December 2005







Members of the public are welcome to attend the meeting and listen to the discussion. Lift access to the main committee room on the first floor of the building is available from the main ground floor entrance. Toilet facilities, with wheelchair access, are also available. There is a time set aside at the beginning of the meeting to allow the public to ask questions



An induction loop operates to enhance sound for anyone wearing a hearing aid or using a transmitter. If you require any further information, please contact Greg Dyke on:



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Website: [www.tauntondeane.gov.uk](http://www.tauntondeane.gov.uk) (Council, Executive, Review Board & Review Panel Agenda, Reports and Minutes are available on the Website)

## 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 11 October 2005 at 6.30 pm.

Present: The Mayor (Councillor Lees)  
The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Hindley)  
Councillors Mrs Allgrove, Beaven, Mrs Biscoe, Bishop, Bowrah, Mrs Bradley, N Cavill, Ms S Cavill, Clark, Croad, Davies, Denington, Floyd, Govier, Guerrier, Hall, Hayward, Henley, Mrs Marcia Hill, House, Leighton, Mrs Lewin-Harris, Lisgo, Meikle, Morrell, Mullins, Paul, Phillips, Prior-Sankey, Ms Priscott, Slattery, Mrs Smith, Stone, Stuart-Thorn, Vail, Watson, Wedderkopp, Weston, Mrs Whitmarsh, Williams and Mrs Wilson

### 1. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 19 July and 5 September 2005 copies having been sent to each Members were signed by the Mayor.

### 2. Apologies

Councillors Bone, Mrs Cluff, Coles, Durdan, Edwards, Garner, C Hill, Mrs Marcia Hill and Mrs Jones.

### 3. Lloyd Fouracre

The Mayor reported the tragic death of Lloyd Fouracre a young Taunton Deane resident. The Council stood in silence in his memory. The Mayor informed Members that he had written to Lloyd's family expressing the sincere condolences of both the Council and the Taunton Deane community.

### 4. Public Question Time

- (i) Mr T Morgan drew attention to the new Community Handyman service which he noted with some interest. He asked that as in the past DLO's would not necessarily have been permitted to advertise and to trade in this manner, could an explanation be given as to how and in what way Rules, Regulation and Legislation had changed to make this proposed service possible.

Councillor Williams replied that this was not a DLO service. It was a service provided by Taunton Deane and South Somerset Home Aid Partnership. In this instance the DLO were acting in the capacity of an appointed contractor. The DLO were not responsible for the advertisement and promotion of this service and all such activities had been carried out by members of the Home Aid team.

As a supplementary question Mr Morgan drew attention to the minimum wage of £5.05 and asked how the service could be achieved without some kind of financial subsidy from the Council.

Councillor Williams answered that a fee was charged for the service rather than as an hourly rate. £5 per hour charged for people on benefits and £10 per hour for others. It was the intention that the service would go some way to helping people stay in their homes and live independently for longer periods.

- (ii) Mr B Nowlan asked a question regarding the prohibition of parking commercial vehicles outside of houses in the Priorswood area of Taunton. He asked that the Council made sure that its own vehicles were stored at its own depots when not being used and not utilised as private transport by public employees. He drew attention in particular to a DLO lorry parked next to his home.

Councillor Williams replied that he was surprised that Mr Nowlem had had to come to the Council meeting with this question as it was something he had previously asked and had partially been dealt with. Councillor Williams had taken up the question of the DLO van and had been assured that it would be removed and replaced with a small closed van. He was unaware of the covenants referred to by Mr Nowlem in his question. Councillor Williams undertook to pursue further the question as to why the pick up truck owned by the DLO was still being used.

Mr Nowlem clarified that the pick up truck had not reappeared that he wished to make a general point about the use of public assets in this way.

- (iii) Ms D Robins asked a number of questions on behalf of her father Mr S Robins concerning properties in his ownership at The Clock Tower, Cotford St Luke and 40 Silver Street, Taunton.

Councillor Williams informed the Council that he was currently unwilling to deal with questions from Ms Robins following an incident at a previous meeting of the Executive. He reminded Ms Robins that there was a set protocol and a specific line of communication to deal with issues relating to her father and his properties and he suggested that this be followed. He drew the Council's attention to the fact that liability orders previously served on Mr Robins had recently been confirmed by the Court and that this was the place to confirm or deny any accusations being made by Mr Robins.

5. Recommendation to Council from the Executive

Capital Strategy 2005-2008

Reported that although the ODPM had removed the requirement of the Council to submit to Regional Government Offices the Annual Capital Strategy and Asset Management Plan it is was considered to be good practice to continue to prepare an AMP and Capital Strategy annually.

The Capital Strategy was a summary of the Council's approach to capital investment and included

- The Council's aims for capital investment
- Development and ongoing management of the capital programme
- Partnership working on capital projects
- Performance Measurement

The revised Strategy for 2005 to 2008 a copy of which had been circulated had been updated from the last year's version. The Review Board had considered the draft Strategy and made no amendment to the document.

On the motion of Councillor Williams it was RESOLVED that the draft Capital Strategy for 2005-2008 be agreed.

6. 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.

- Budget pressures
- The decision in relation to the unauthorised gypsy encampments in Oxen Lane, North Curry
- A recent incident which had resulted in damage to property at Oxen Lane, North Curry together with details of increased police patrols and security measures in and around North Curry.
- Possible redevelopment of Taunton Swimming Pools.
- Consultation prior to ballot for the Housing Stock Transfer options.
- Additional covered tennis courts.



- Livestock market at Junction 26.
- Toilets at North Street, Wellington.
- Access to the Community Office at Wellington.
- A major new software programme for Revenues and Benefits.
- The ISIS project.
- A study by the Leadership Centre.
- Enhancement and upgrading of French Weir Park.
- TDBC staff travel plans.
- The Old Municipal Buildings.
- Possible funding from Cycle England for the development of cycling in Taunton.
- Taunton Vision.

(ii) Planning Policy and Transportation (Councillor Bishop)

Councillor Bishop submitted his report which drew attention to the following:-

- Bus Users UK
- Taunton Railway Station
- The Slinky Bus
- Cycling England
- RTPI South West Planning Achievement Awards
- New Development Control Provisions
- Planning Delivery Grant
- LDF Briefing Sessions
- Planning Training for Members of Parish Councils

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

The report from Councillor Mrs Bradley dealt with activities taking place in the following areas:-

- Sport
- Parks
- Tone Leisure Ltd Activities
- Community Arts and Development.

(iv) Economic Development Asset Management and Tourism (Councillor N P Cavill)

The report from Councillor Cavill covered:-

- Tourism
- TIC
- Rural Regeneration
- ADO
- Economic Development
- Asset Management
- Community Arts
- Taunton Town Centre Company

(v) Environmental Services (Councillor Edwards)

The report from Councillor Edwards presented in his absence by Councillor Williams covered the following issues:-

- Licensing
- Health and Safety
- Food Safety
- Environmental Protection
- Waste Services and Cemeteries and Crematorium.

(vi) Housing Services (Councillor Garner)

Councillor Garner's report presented by Councillor Williams in his absence focused on two areas within the Housing Portfolio:-

- Housing Stock Transfer Update
- The Community Handyman Service

(vii) Resources (Councillor Hall)

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

- ISIS
- Revenues

- Financial Services
- Member Services
- Revenues and Benefits Project
- Internal Audit Services
- Information Services
- Customer Service

(viii) Communications (Councillor Gwyneth Leighton)

Councillor Leighton submitted her report which covered the following areas:-

- Integration of the Communications function across the organisation
- Improvements to the Council's website.
- The launch of the Handyman Service.
- The Development of a Joint Communications Strategy and Action Plan with Somerset County Council for the ISIS project.
- A media monitoring and evaluation system.
- The restyling of the Weekly Bulletin.
- Deane Dispatch.
- The new post of Communications and Information Manager.

(ix) Community Leadership (Councillor Mrs Lewin Harris)

Councillor Mrs Lewin Harris's report focussed on the following areas within her portfolio:-

- Taunton Deane Crime and Disorder Partnership.
- Operation Relentless.
- Taunton Deane Local Strategic Partnership.
- Local Area Agreements.
- Community Strategies for North and East Taunton.
- Thanks to Volunteers.

7. Exclusion of the Press and Public

RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the item number 8 on the Agenda because of the likelihood that exempt information would otherwise be disclosed relating to Clause 9 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

8. Proposed Acquisition of Part of Land at Blackbrook, Taunton

Reported that the Executive had considered reports regarding negotiations that had taken place to acquire the freehold interest in part of the land leased to the Council at Blackbrook, Taunton.

Terms and conditions had now been provisionally agreed. A copy of the full report of the Chief Valuer which had been submitted to the Executive was

circulated to all Members. Whilst agreeing to the proposed terms and conditions the Council were asked to agree a Supplementary Estimate to cover the costs of land acquisition.

On the motion of Councillor N P Cavill it was RESOLVED that a Supplementary Estimate be made from unallocated reserves of £65,000 in order to fund the purchase of the freehold interest in the land.

(Councillor Ms Priscott declared a prejudicial interest in the above item as a Director of Tone Leisure and left the meeting).

(Councillor Govier arrived at the meeting at 6.45 pm and Councillors Stone and Weston at 7 pm).

(Councillor Mrs Marcia Hill left the meeting at 8.35 pm and Councillor Ms Cavill at 9.00 pm).

(The meeting at 9.15 pm)

(The Press were in attendance)

## **COUNCIL MEETING – 13 DECEMBER 2005**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL FROM DAVID BAKER OBE, CHAIR, INDEPENDENT MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES PANEL AND COUNCILLOR MRS WHITMARSH, CHAIR RESOURCES REVIEW PANEL**

#### **Members' Allowances**

##### (a) Recommendations from Members' Allowances Panel

The independent Members' Allowances Panel completed its annual review of members' allowances in November

The report and recommendations were circulated with the papers for the Resources Review Panel which considered the matter at its meeting on 10 November 2005. Our recommendations were arrived at following consideration of background information and comparisons with other local authorities in Taunton Deane's "family" group.

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

We reached the following conclusions:-

##### **Carers Allowance**

There is still little evidence that this is an issue with the current membership of the Council. However, we remain of the view that every opportunity should be given to any individual who might want to stand as a candidate. We are therefore recommending that the carer's allowance be increased to reflect the standard rate payable by Social Services.

##### **Affordability**

We did not see it as part of our remit to consider the affordability of our recommendations. We have deliberately not received any advice on the financial implications of our recommendations, as it was felt that this was a consideration to be made solely by the Council itself.

##### **Basic Allowances**

Once more we would like to emphasise that the basic allowance is not a full and proper recompense for the duties performed and that it does not reflect a similar level of responsibility in the private sector. The recommendations reflect the fact that a proportion of any councillor's work continues to be voluntary.

Our comparisons with other authorities, including those in our “Family Group”, indicate that the level of basic allowance and special responsibility allowances at Taunton Deane are below the average for a local authority of this size.

We believe that the basic allowance should be increased to reflect the commitment in time necessary to be an effective local councillor. An increase of 10% would, we consider, result in a basic allowance that would give parity with other, similar sized local authorities.

#### Special Responsibility Allowances

We saw no reason to make any alteration to the posts previously identified as having special responsibilities. We now have a good understanding of the responsibilities of those offices that attract special responsibility allowances. The “Cabinet” system has meant greater responsibility and time commitment for those given Executive roles. It is also evident from the figures of the other “family” authorities that there is now a general recognition of the extra responsibilities that such Councillors have. We feel that the level of special responsibility allowances should also be increased by 10%. The amount recommended more accurately compensates Councillors for these important and time consuming duties, which now form such an integral part of administering a modern local authority.

#### Mayor and Deputy Mayor Allowance

We have received information about the role and duties of both the Mayor and Deputy Mayor. It is obvious that the nature of their duties is such that their expenses during their year of office are considerably more than that required by other councillors. Having looked at the amount of allowances that have been paid historically, we are satisfied that they have been pitched more or less at the correct level. However, we have noticed that the allowances have remained at the same level for the past two financial years. We are, therefore, recommending an increase in line with the level of inflation for those two years.

#### Approved Duties

Since the Council extended its list of approved duties four years ago, we are happy that this list is satisfactory.

Concern has been raised in the past regarding the non-payment of expenses for attending political group meetings. The Panel can still see no evidence which would make it recommend a change in the Members Allowances Regulations. These clearly state that the basic allowance is intended to cover time spent at political meetings and that approved duty payments should not be made in respect of single party meetings.

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

Appendix.

### Parish Council Allowances

Existing powers to pay Parish Councillors allowances were repealed at the end of 2003 and replaced with a new system which involves this Panel.

Under the new system, although a Parish Council would determine the level of allowances payable itself, it has to have regard to the advice received from the Panel.

Allowances payable include a basic 'participation allowance' which could be paid to the Chairman only or to all members and 'travelling and subsistence allowance' which can be claimed for duties within the parish as well as those outside.

As far as the participation allowance was concerned, the general view from Parish Councils nationally was that they wished to retain the existing practice whereby Parish Councillors were 'unpaid'. The advice we have received from the Parish Liaison Officer is that Parish Councils within the Deane are currently not seeking any kind of allowance. We feel therefore, that there is no need to consider the matter until a formal request for advice as to the level of allowance that should be paid is received.

As well as seeking the Panel's views on the level of travelling and subsistence that should be payable to Parish Councillors, we were also previously asked to comment in relation to proposals for Parish Councils to meet the cost of minor expenses incurred by its members, such as the replacement of computer consumables used in respect of parish business

We came to the conclusion that:

- (a) no advice on a level of participation allowance for Parish Councils be offered by the Panel until a formal request was received from a Parish Council;
- (b) allowances for travelling and subsistence should be identical to those payable to Borough Councillors and that the same level of such allowances should apply for all Parishes throughout Taunton Deane; and
- (c) it would be in order for Parish Councillors to seek the reimbursement of the actual cost of items used for Parish Council business, such as computer consumables, or a nominal sum, provided such payments were approved by the Parish Council.

### Travel and Subsistence Allowances

The new Regulations now allow local authorities to determine their own

travel and subsistence allowances after having regard to the recommendation of their independent remuneration panels.

As far as mileage rates are concerned, the Panel consider that car expenses should be limited to the tax free amount allowed by the Inland Revenue.

It was therefore felt that the basic mileage allowance should remain at the limit which the Inland Revenue would not treat as a taxable benefit – 40p per mile. The rate would apply whatever the size of car engine, because the size of car was a matter for the individual.

With regard to subsistence allowances, the Panel feel that the subsistence rates should be the same as those paid to the Council's officers.

### Pensions for Councillors

The Government have previously given local authorities the power to admit councillors to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS).

The Regulations require that Council's independent remuneration panel will make binding recommendations on which councillors may be eligible for access to the LGPS.

We have previously taken advice from the Pensions Fund Advisor from Somerset County Council on this matter.

The original rationale behind the Governments' decision to admit councillors to the LGPS was to compensate those members who spent so much time on Council duties that it affected the amount they were able to contribute to a work based pension.

This was the position taken by the Government when the legislation was in its draft form.

Following representations, the Government decided not to restrict membership of the LGPS just to members of a local authority's Executive and Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The independent remuneration panel can now make recommendations as to which members (under 70 years of age) should be entitled to membership of the Scheme and whether the basic allowance or the special responsibility allowance or both should be made pensionable.

This was a matter that we have considered very carefully in the past. Our view remains unchanged. We acknowledge that the current level of basic allowance might not make membership of the Scheme worthwhile for many councillors. However, we agree with the principle that all councillors should be treated equally on this issue. Every opportunity should be taken to encourage individuals to stand as



candidates and an enhancement of the overall remuneration package for councillors will help this aim. We continue to feel, therefore, that the Scheme should be made available to all councillors who want to take advantage of its benefits. We were pleased to see that the Council accepted this recommendation last year. We do not intend to make any change to our previous recommendation.

### Renunciation

The Panel noted that a Member may, by notice in writing, elect to forgo any part of his/her entitlement to an allowance and associated benefits.

### Time Limit

As previously recommended, councillors should submit their allowance claims regularly and we suggest a time limit of 6 months for backdated claims.

### Co-optees

Regulations also make allowance for the payment by the Council of allowances for persons co-opted onto the Council. The only category of person this would affect currently would be the Council's Standards Committee. However, for obvious reasons, the Panel do not want to make any recommendation in this respect. Instead they have asked the Member Services Manager to make it clear to the Council that a number of Councils have already set allowances for Standards Committees but that the present co-optees on the Committee are not seeking any kind of remuneration.

### Performance Indicators

As the payment of allowances becomes more refined and the levels increase, we feel that councillors should be in a position to justify their payment. To this end, if re-appointed, we will be carrying out further research next year with a view to introducing some basic but meaningful performance indicators. This will confirm the amount of time councillors spend on their duties and the value for money achieved by the payment of allowances.

### Future Reviews

As a Panel we consider that we are getting close to the point where we will be able to recommend that annual adjustments of allowance levels are made by reference to an index rather than by a full scale review unless there are significant changes to responsibilities. We think that this should take effect from the financial year 2007/2008 with a full review every four years.

The Panel therefore submits the following recommendations for consideration by the Council:

1. The existing Members' Allowance Scheme be discontinued and replaced with the following scheme with effect from 1 April 2006.

	£
Basic Allowance (payable to all members)	3873
Leader	10,891
Executive Councillors (8)	4236
Chair, Planning Committee	3631
Chair, Licensing Committee	2200
Chair, Review Board	3631
Chairs, Review Panels	1210
Mayor	8100
Deputy Mayor	1480

2.
  - (i) Travelling and subsistence allowances shall be payable to councillors when incurred by them in the necessary carrying out of those official activities as a councillor as appear on the list of "Approved Duties" set out in the Appendix to this report.
  - (ii) The mileage rate remains at 40p per mile. The rate for motorcycles to be 24p per mile and bicycles to be 20p per mile.
  - (iii) Subsistence rates as set out below:

Breakfast	£4.48
Lunch	£6.17
Tea	£2.43
Evening Meal	£7.64
3. Payment for the care of Councillors' Dependents be increased to £5.10 per hour and to be in accordance with the following conditions:
  - (a) Councillors shall be reimbursed, up to a specified maximum limit, for costs actually incurred in providing care for any of the following who are at the time part of the claimant's household living with him/her and who would normally be looked after by him/her, whilst the claimant is undertaking an "approved duty".
    - i. children under the age of 14
    - ii. elderly person (aged 60 and over)
    - iii. people with disabilities
    - iv. people with learning difficulties

- (b) In addition to living as part of the claimant's household the dependent must be unable to be left unsupervised by the carer.
  - (c) The carer must not be someone who ordinarily lives with the claimant as part of the household.
  - (d) For the purposes of (a) above:
    - (i) "approved duty" would be a duty under the Council's scheme
    - (ii) the maximum hourly rate repayable should be consistent with the statutory minimum wage
  - (e) The claimant must produce a receipt for payments he/she has made to the carer and must sign a certificate which, amongst other things, will state that the costs were properly and necessarily incurred in the course of, or to permit, him/her undertaking his/her duties as a Councillor.
- 4.
- (a) no advice on a level of participation allowance for Parish Councillors be offered by the Panel until a formal request be received from a Parish Council;
  - (b) allowances for travelling and subsistence be identical to those payable to Borough Councillors and the same level of such allowances should apply for all Parishes throughout Taunton Deane;
  - (c) Parish Councillors be permitted to seek reimbursement of the actual cost of items used for Parish Council business, such as computer consumables, or a nominal sum, provided such payments were approved by the Parish Council.
- 5.
- (a) that all members of the Council be entitled to membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme;
  - (b) both the basic and special responsibility allowance be treated as amounts in respect of which such pensions are payable.

David Baker O.B.E., D.L.  
Chair  
on behalf of the Members' Allowances Review Panel

(b) Recommendations of Resources Review Panel

The Resources Review Panel at its meeting on 10 November 2005 considered the report on the annual review of Members' Allowances undertaken by the independent Members' Allowances Panel.

The Resources Review Panel RECOMMEND that the recommendations of the independent Members' Allowances Panel be agreed.

Councillor Mrs M Whitmarsh  
Chair, Resources Review Panel

## **RECOMMENDED LIST OF APPROVED DUTIES**

Approved duties for the payment of travelling and subsistence allowances:

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

**COUNCIL MEETING – 13 DECEMBER 2005**

**CAR PARKING CHARGES 2006/2007**

**RECOMMENDATION FROM COUNCILLOR BISHOP, EXECUTIVE  
COUNCILLOR FOR PLANNING POLICY AND TRANSPORTATION**

1. At the meeting of the Traffic Regulation Orders Panel on 29 November 2005 consideration was given to the various proposed changes to car park tariffs in Taunton and Wellington for 2006/2007. A full breakdown of the proposed charges, as advertised, is set out in Appendix 1. The Traffic Orders Regulation Panel recommended to Councillor Bishop that the parking tariffs be increased as advertised and that the appropriate Traffic Regulation Order be confirmed.
  
2. It is therefore RECOMMENDED that:-
  - (a) the parking tariffs for 2006/2007 be increased as set out in Appendix 1;  
and
  - (b) the appropriate Traffic Regulation Order be confirmed.

Councillor Cliff Bishop  
Executive Councillor, Planning Policy and Transportation

**APPENDIX A**

**PUBLIC NOTICE AFFECTING ALL PUBLIC CAR PARKS IN TAUNTON AND WELLINGTON**

**PROPOSED CAR PARKING CHARGES 2006/2007**

**THE TAUNTON DEANE BOROUGH (OFF STREET PARKING PLACES)  
(NO. 27 AMENDMENT) ORDER 2005**

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Taunton Deane Borough Council, proposes making an Order under Sections 35 (1), (3) and (6) and Part IV of Schedule 9 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act, 1984, the effects of which will be:-

**TAUNTON**

1. To increase the car parking tariff in the Castle Green and Whirligig 'Limited Stay Car Parks' as follows:-

1 <u>Car Parks</u> Castle Green and Whirligig	Up to	1 Hr	2 Hrs
	Current	£1.00	£2.00
	<b>Proposed</b>	<b>£1.20</b>	<b>£2.30</b>

2. To increase the car parking tariff in the 'Shopper Group 1 Car Parks' as follows:-

<u>Car Parks</u>	Up to	1 Hr	2 Hrs	3 Hrs	4 Hrs	5 Hrs	6 Hrs	7 Hrs	Over 7 Hrs
Canon Street, Coal Orchard, High Street, Levels 1, 1A, 2, 2A, 3 & 3A Old Market Shoppers (Paul Street) and Crescent Car Park (maximum stay 4 hours)	Current	70p	£1.10	£1.60	£2.00	£3.50	£4.00	£4.50	£5.00
	<b>Proposed</b>	<b>80p</b>	<b>£1.30</b>	<b>£1.90</b>	<b>£2.40</b>	<b>£4.00</b>	<b>£4.50</b>	<b>£5.00</b>	<b>£5.50</b>

3. To increase the car parking tariff in the 'Shopper Group 2 Car Parks' as follows:-

<u>Car Parks</u>	Up to	1 Hr	2 Hrs	3 Hrs	4 Hrs	5 Hrs	6 Hrs	7 Hrs	Over 7 Hrs
Belvedere Road, Castle Street, Duke Street, Elms Parade, Greenbrook Terrace, Wood Street, Levels 4, 4A, 5 and 5A Old Market Shoppers (Paul Street) and on Saturdays only at Shire Hall/The Well/County Hall Car Park at the rear of Block A and 31 spaces at the front of Block A	Current	60p	£1.00	£1.20	£1.50	£2.00	£2.50	£3.00	£3.50
	<b>Proposed</b>	<b>70p</b>	<b>£1.20</b>	<b>£1.40</b>	<b>£1.80</b>	<b>£2.50</b>	<b>£3.00</b>	<b>£3.50</b>	<b>£4.00</b>

4. To increase the car parking tariff in the 'Commuter Car Parks' as follows:-

<u>Car Parks</u>	Up to	1 Hr	2 Hrs	3 Hrs	4 Hrs	5 Hrs	6 Hrs	7 Hrs	Over 7 Hrs
Enfield, Kilkenny, Tangier, Priory	Current	60p	1.20p	£1.40	£1.70	£2.10	£2.50	-	£3.00



Bridge Road and Victoria Gate	<b>Proposed</b>	<b>70p</b>	<b>£1.20</b>	<b>£1.40</b>	<b>£1.80</b>	<b>£2.50</b>	<b>£3.00</b>	<b>£3.20</b>	<b>£3.50</b>
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5. To increase the Season Ticket (6 months) charges in the Taunton 'Shopper Group 1' Car Parks (namely Canon Street, Coal Orchard, High Street and Levels 1, 1A, 2, 2A, 3 & 3A Old Market Shoppers (Paul Street) from £585 to **£640**.
6. To increase the Season Ticket (6 months) charges in the Taunton 'Shopper Group 2 Car Parks' (namely Belvedere Road, Castle Street, Duke Street, Elms Parade, Greenbrook Terrace, Levels 4, 4A, 5 and 5A Old Market Shoppers (Paul Street) and on Saturdays only at Shire Hall/The Well/County Hall Car Park at the rear of Block A and 31 spaces at the front of Block A from £410 to **£465**.
7. To increase the Season Ticket (6 months) charges in the Taunton 'Commuter Car Parks' (namely Enfield, Kilkenny, Tangier, Priory Bridge Road and Victoria Gate) from £350 to **£410**.

### **WELLINGTON**

8. To increase the parking tariff in the South Street 'Shopper Car Park' as follows:-

<u>Car Park</u>	Up to	1 Hr	2 Hrs	3 Hrs
South Street (maximum stay 3 hours)	Current	40p	70p	£1.00
	<b>Proposed</b>	<b>50p</b>	<b>80p</b>	<b>£1.20</b>

9. To increase the parking tariff in the 'Commuter Car Parks' as follows:-

<u>Car Parks</u>	Up to	2 Hrs	3 Hrs	4 Hrs	All Day
Longforth Road and North Street	Current	40p	70p	£1.00	£1.30
	<b>Proposed</b>	<b>50p</b>	<b>80p</b>	<b>£1.20</b>	<b>£1.60</b>

10. To increase the Season Ticket (6 months) charges in the Wellington Commuter Car Parks' from £165 to **£185**.

Full details of the proposals are in the draft Order, which may be inspected at The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton, during normal office hours.

If you wish to object to the proposed Order or to make representations in support of the proposals, you should send your grounds, in writing, to reach the undersigned by **Friday, 11 November 2005.**

G P DYKE,  
Member Services Manager,

The Deane House,  
Belvedere Road,  
Taunton, TA1 1HE

20 October 2005



## **COUNCIL MEETING – 13 DECEMBER 2005**

### **PART 1**

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

1. JOINT RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COUNCILLORS MRS BRADLEY, GARNER AND HALL – LEISURE ARTS AND CULTURE, HOUSING SERVICES AND RESOURCES

#### Capital Programme Update 2005/06

Over recent months reports have been submitted to the appropriate Review Panels regarding some expected changes to the Capital Programme of the Council. The Executive has considered a report which consolidated these variations. Changes to the Capital Programme are being sought for the following schemes:-

- Additional funding for the indoor tennis centre extension of £60,000
- Virement of £44,000 from “Grants to Parish Play Areas” budget towards health and safety improvements in TDBC play areas within parishes
- Virement of a total of £28,000 from the Depot Improvements budget to DDA works and to the DLO reserve
- Reductions to the Housing capital programme and an additional RCCO from the HRA working balance (plus associated General Fund revenue costs) to meet a shortfall in Right to Buy capital receipts. This followed the submission of reports to both the Review Board and the Housing Review Panel.

It is RECOMMENDED that the proposed changes to the Capital Programme be supported and the following be agreed.

- (i) Additional funding for the indoor tennis centre extension of £60,000
- (ii) Virement of £44,000 from the “Grants to Parish Play Areas” budget towards health and safety improvements in TDBC play areas within parishes
- (iii) Virement of a total of £28,000 from the Depot Improvements budget to DDA works and to the DLO reserve
- (iv) Reductions to the Housing Capital programme as outlined in the report (A summary of the revised Housing Capital Programme is attached as Appendix A).
- (v) A Supplementary Estimate from the HRA Working Balance of £500,000
- (vi) A Supplementary Estimate from General Fund reserves of £60,000 to meet the additional debt costs that would result from a switch of supported borrowing approvals from the HRA to the General Fund

COUNCILLORS MRS BRADLEY, GARNER AND HALL

## 2. COUNCILLOR HALL - RESOURCES

### (a) Acceptance of a Tender for Revenues and Benefits Software

At its meeting on 21 September 2005 the Executive considered details of the outcome of the procurement exercise undertaken to buy a new suite of Revenues and Benefits software to replace the present in-house systems.

The tender has been awarded but it is necessary to vire £56,000 from Housing Benefit Admin to Revenue contribution to Capital in order to meet the expected shortfall in Capital funding.

It is therefore RECOMMENDED that £56,000 be vired from Housing Benefit admin to Revenue Contribution to Capital.

### (b) The Local Government Pay and Workforce Strategy

In March 2004 a three-year pay settlement was agreed for Local Government. As part of the settlement both employers and the Trade Unions agreed that a number of pay and workforce related issues needed to be progressed and that this should be done through a national framework. A National Pay and Workforce Strategy has been developed and Local Authorities are expected to implement this by the end of the three-year period.

Progress has been made on all fronts in particular in workforce planning and leadership development. There is still much work to be done on the pay and grading review and additional resources will be needed to meet the deadline for this exercise.

Alternatives are currently being looked at to replace the Council's existing job evaluation system with one which meets the requirements of this Strategy. Following on from this it will be necessary to plan for a major review of every job in the organisation and re-evaluate them on the new chosen system. This is a very large piece of work that must be finished by March 2007. Further staff resources are required to achieve this. It is estimated that it will cost in the region of £75,000 which includes staff, computer system support and necessary licences.

It is RECOMMENDED that a Supplementary Estimate from the General Fund Reserve of £75,000 for additional resources to implement the new Job Evaluation Scheme be agreed.

### (c) Council Tax Section 13A Reduction Procedure

The Local Government Act 2003 has introduced various changes to the Council Tax legislation. One of these changes added a new Section "13A Billing Authority's power to reduce the amount of tax payable" to the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

The new powers allow the Billing Authority to reduce the Council Tax payable either for specific classes of cases or for individual cases. The Billing Authority has the power to either reduce or cancel the amount of Council Tax payable.

The new legislation is designed to allow Billing Authorities to create local discounts or exemptions in order to cater for local circumstances. The disadvantage of this change however is that the cost of awarding any such reduction has to be wholly funded by the Billing Authority. No provision is made for the other precepting Authorities to contribute.

This means that the financial implications of any decision to create a class of reduction has to be considered in detail before any such reduction is created. It is anticipated therefore that such reductions will only be awarded in exceptional cases.

The Executive consider that the following procedure should be adopted to deal with such applications on a consistent basis:

(a) Procedure for creating and determining applications for specific classes of reduction

The power to consider and decline applications for the creation of specific classes of reduction should be delegated to the Section 151 Officer and the relevant portfolio holder for Revenues.

Where both the Section 151 Officer and the relevant portfolio holder for Revenues decide that consideration should be given to creating a specific class of reduction a recommendation should be made to the Executive. The Executive should have the delegated power to create, amend or cancel any specific class of reduction.

Once a specific class of reduction has been agreed by the Executive individual applications in respect of that class are to be considered by the Revenues unit. The Revenues unit should have the delegated power to determine individual applications within an agreed class of reduction.

(b) Procedure for determining individual one-off applications for reductions

The power to determine individual one-off applications (ie all applications other than those to create a specific class of reduction or for a reduction under a specific class) should be delegated to the Section 151 Officer.

It is therefore RECOMMENDED that the procedure and delegation of powers as outlined above be agreed when considering applications for Section 13A reductions

## COUNCILLOR HALL

### 3. COUNCILLORS HALL AND EDWARDS – RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

#### Fees and Charges

The Executive will consider recommendations regarding fees and charges at its meeting on 7 December 2005. Details will be circulated as soon as possible after the meeting of recommended fees and charges in respect of:

- Land Charges
- Licensing
- Cemeteries and Crematorium

## COUNCILLORS HALL AND EDWARDS

REVISIONS TO HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2005/06

SCHEME	ORIGINAL BUDGET 2004/05	REVISIONS TO BUDGET		REVISED BUDGET 2005/06	ACTUAL YEAR TO DATE & COMMITTED
		SLIPPAGE 2004/05	REDUCTIONS 2005/06		
<b>HRA</b>					
LOFT CONVERSIONS	90,000.00		(40,000.00)	50,000.00	41,241.01
ENERGY EFFICIENCY/INSULATION					2,088.99
PRIORSWOOD PLACE SHOPPING CENTRE					(3,415.51)
ELDERLY PERSONS CLUBROOM	35,000.00		(20,000.00)	15,000.00	(1,065.50)
STOCK CONDITION SURVEY	80,000.00			80,000.00	142,838.00
MISCELLANEOUS	87,000.00		(40,000.00)	47,000.00	37,560.98
AIDS & ADAPTATIONS	264,800.00		(65,000.00)	199,800.00	111,071.90
COMMUNAL TV AERIALS	30,000.00		(20,000.00)	10,000.00	1,650.00
KITCHEN/BATHROOM REFURBISHMENTS	3,568,000.00	286,719.00		3,854,719.00	2,420,855.46
SHELTERED WARDENS	90,000.00		(25,000.00)	65,000.00	47,603.38
ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY MEASURES	65,000.00		(45,000.00)	20,000.00	10,302.04
PIPER SYSTEMS	45,000.00			45,000.00	24,396.16
TENANT IMPROVEMENTS	5,000.00			5,000.00	561.32
TENANTS INCENTIVE SCHEME	250,000.00		(8,500.00)	241,500.00	241,500.00
HOUSING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM	300,000.00		(200,000.00)	100,000.00	310.00
DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS	200,000.00			200,000.00	77,510.38
REDUCTION IN FEES INCLUDED ABOVE			(20,000.00)	(20,000.00)	
	5,109,800.00	286,719.00	(483,500.00)	4,913,019.00	3,155,008.61
<b>NON-HRA</b>					
PRIVATE SECTOR RENEWAL SCHEMES	118,000.00			118,000.00	69,162.22
RENOVATION GRANTS	880,000.00	90,000.00	(290,000.00)	680,000.00	457,014.37
HOUSING ASSOCIATION GRANTS	850,000.00	(99,000.00)		751,000.00	361,584.00
	<b>6,957,800.00</b>	<b>277,719.00</b>	<b>(773,500.00)</b>	<b>6,462,019.00</b>	<b>4,042,769.20</b>

LATEST ESTIMATE	
<b>FUNDING</b>	
MAJOR REPAIRS ALLOWANCE	3,427,317.00
CONTRIBUTION FROM HRA 04/05	59,340.00
CONTRIBUTION FROM HRA 05/06	700,000.00
RIGHT TO BUY SALES 04/05	289,952.00
RIGHT TO BUY SALES 05/06	387,249.00
SCA FOR DFSGS	174,000.00
APPROVED BORROWING	869,799.00
SHIP FUNDING	118,000.00
	<hr/>
	6,025,657.00
ADDITIONAL RCCO	500,000.00
	<hr/>
	<b>6,525,657.00</b>
	<hr/>
LESS REVISED BUDGET	<b>(6,462,019.00)</b>
	<hr/>
<b>SURPLUS</b>	<b>63,638.00</b>



## **Part II Reports from the Executive**

### **COUNCIL MEETING 13 DECEMBER 2005 REPORT OF COUNCILLOR JOHN WILLIAMS – LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

A merry Christmas and successful New Year to all our Officers and Members and I thank everybody for their commitment and hard work during yet another successful year.

The immediate major issue confronting us is establishing the budget for 2006/07 which is made difficult at present by the lack of information from central Government regarding the amount of Revenue Support Grant they are likely to award. By the time of Full Council this information will be available and at least the uncertainty will be over. From rumours circulating it heralds a difficult time ahead because only a nominal increase is being forecast. I hope this is proved wrong for the sake of our community.

Notwithstanding this we have made good progress in reducing our budget deficit of £0.7m as reported to the Review Board recently down to £50k using best guesses as to what the Revenue Support Grant will be. This has been achieved so far by increasing income and reducing costs without any use of reserves, a position we have previously managed to achieve that no recurring costs are funded from reserves and a situation we will maintain.

Our greatest challenge is the delivery of more effective services at less cost. The arguments surrounding Council Tax are legendary but suffice to say because of justifiable public outcry we must keep any increases as small as humanly possible, whilst accommodating all the extra directives from Central Government which are not fully funded. For instance, it is decreed by Government that we will provide free bus passes for all senior citizens from April 2006, this is estimated to increase our present costs from £330,000 by another £320,000 to the huge amount of £650,000 – of the £320,000 extra cost, our officers best guess is only half of this will be funded by Government (although directing us to do it) leaving local taxpayers to pick up the bill for £160,000. This problem extends much wider because of inadequate Revenue Support Grant allowances meaning we must find efficiency savings to mitigate the extra burden on the local taxpayer. The headline costs/services not fully funded are re-cycling of waste, new licensing costs, increased costs of staff salaries and services we buy. Pensions and the huge costs associated with homelessness being particularly exacerbated by Government changes as to who we must house when they present themselves as homeless.

2006 should see the building blocks in place for commencement of the regeneration programme for Taunton in earnest. Since August 2005 a dedicated team has been in place fully supported and financed by TDBC, SCC and SWRDA. They are working through the logistics of facilitating the development of this huge project in an orderly fashion. County Council have designed additional roads necessary for implementation of the redevelopment and we are hopeful that funding will be available through Local Transport Plan 2 now under consideration by GOSW. The Environment Agency have been modelling flood prevention schemes the results of which should be available in 2006. Early indications are positive that relatively economical measures can be

carried out to prevent flooding. The all important car parking strategy is presently being worked on and will be available early 2006, this is vital to the future prosperity of the town and we must get it right. Under the new car parking schemes it is intended to use advance signing to notify motorists of available spaces and pay on exit charging systems, both will be a major improvement on the existing.

Final decisions will be made regarding relocation of the Livestock Market which will free up the single most important site in the regeneration programme with circa 2,000 homes, 600,000 sq ft of office/business space, multi-storey car park and new hotel. Also, we must not forget the wonderful opportunity this will bring to enhance the riverside with attractive walkways, riverside bars and cafes. I must clearly and unequivocally state that there is the will and the commitment from this Council to facilitate a successful relocation of the livestock market to J26 Chelston, we have in place the mechanism to assist with the cost of redevelopment and our officers are presently working with TMA as to the likely amount we will be able to invest.

Somerset County Cricket Club are rapidly progressing plans to redevelop their ground to accommodate one day international matches. The latest plans show a scaled back version of what was proposed originally to completely remodel the ground including new stands. I understand the more recently built stands will now be retained making the whole project much more viable. We will, of course, be working closely with the Cricket Club to assist where possible, for instance, some of the Deane Coal Orchard car park will be required, we are fully aware of the Club being a jewel in Taunton's crown, therefore, will do all possible to assist their redevelopment.

Tangier area is also becoming a prime candidate for development, a company called Second Site have recently agreed the final Section 106 terms to allow construction of a major residential development. This is a prime site overlooking the river and is a significant move forward. In addition, the County Council are seeking permission to develop a new prestigious civic building to house Somerset Archives and a learning centre, this would be a major boost to the development of a cultural quarter for the area.

There is considerable interest in the development of the High Street/Crescent Car Park area which, if constructed, provides an extremely central bus station as a drop off point for the prime shopping areas. Besides multi-storey car parking this new development will provide in excess of 300,000 sq ft of new retail area and some residential development.

Besides the central station it is crucial that an interchange station for buses is provided at the railway station if we are to encourage greater rail use.

All of the foregoing clearly indicates why the Vision for Taunton planning over the last 3 years has been vitally important – without a masterplan in place we, the Planning Authority, would not be able to assess the merits of the individual disparate projects as to how they fit into the overall picture when brought forward. This hopefully avoiding the piecemeal, sometimes unacceptable, development of Taunton that has occurred.

It goes without saying that quality of the built environment must be paramount in all of our future development plans. This must include quality public realm buildings and spaces with excellent cultural and leisure facilities. Economic development will be worthless in the long term if we leave behind it, a barren cultural wasteland.

I will touch on the Regional Spatial Strategy which will dictate our housing numbers to 2026, this could have huge implications for Taunton as we are identified as a major growth area. As such,

we could be asked to accommodate increases from our present 400 to 500 PA up to possibly 900 PA.

This brings with it huge community and infrastructure problems which I have no confidence that the Government will properly address. Without adequate investment in new roads and community facilities any extra housing growth should be limited. Regrettably, these decisions are now outside of our control and in the hands of the Regional Assembly who have been nominated by Government to make decisions that we, as planning authority, will have to implement. I am delighted that the Silk Mills Bridge and Park and Ride scheme are at last operational this will ultimately bring huge benefit for Taunton Deane and all who travel on that side of town. We will not see the full benefits of this until all construction works have been completed and the lights properly sequenced then the traffic flow will improve dramatically I am sure.

Developers, Summerfield, have been working closely with TMA to design a new roundabout on the A38 at Chelston to facilitate access to their own site of 55 acres for employment land and provide the necessary access to the livestock market site opposite. A planning application for development of this employment land is expected imminently which will be excellent news for Wellington. Summerfield are very anxious to bring this site forward because they have recently completed development of phase 3 at Chelston and there is still an unmet demand for further employment space. Good news for Taunton Deane that we are able to attract and sustain employment opportunities.

You will note that my colleague Cllr Lewin-Harris has referred to the Review and Scrutiny process and the recognised need for improvement. This is now definitely being addressed with the appointment of a Policy and Performance Manager, Simon Lewis who is to be congratulated on his promotion and we look forward to Alistair Higton joining us in the New Year as Scrutiny Officer in order to provide the support and assistance to make scrutiny and review work. These posts have been provided within our existing staff budgets and demonstrate our administrations commitment to making scrutiny a worthwhile process for the benefit of the community to ensure we deliver the most effective services.

Finally, good news for Taunton, for those of you that did not attend the turning on of the Christmas lights the 20 November it was a huge success and I must congratulate the Town Centre Manager, Lucy Ball, and her team for organising such a fantastic day. I cannot recall such large crowds and wonderful atmosphere any time previously. I say day because it was not just the turning on of the lights, it was a complete fun day event with market stalls and events dotted around the traffic free centre culminating in a fantastic firework display. Well done to all again, for the hard work that went into making it such a success.

We must not forget the real ice rink that at the time of writing this report is being constructed. By the meeting it will be fully operational and I am sure will be giving great enjoyment to many. I certainly hope that it will set Taunton apart as a place to visit and enjoy, thus being a magnet for visitors from across the region. We must not forget, it also provides a wonderful facility for our own community. I could not help notice press reports that some traders did not benefit from the crowds visiting Taunton for the turning on of the lights which is to be regretted, but hopefully as the ice rink is in Goodlands Gardens they will gain considerable benefit from this attraction creating extra footfall.

Cllr John Williams  
Leader Taunton Deane Borough Council



## **COUNCIL MEETING 13 DECEMBER 2005**

### **REPORT OF COUNCILLOR GWYNETH LEIGHTON COMMUNICATIONS**

Due to the restructure of Policy and Performance the work carried out by the '*Information*' and '*Consultation*' team has been aligned with and complements the work of the Communications team as a whole and consequently now falls within the remit of the Communications Portfolio.

#### **Information**

Work is currently being carried out to both update the existing Wellington and area profile and to create new profiles for the North Taunton and Taunton East community planning areas. The purpose of these profiles is to provide a base line of information using the most up-to-date data and trends available for these communities. These profiles will provide vital evidence of the economic, social and environmental well being of the areas. The information will then be used to prepare a community strategy for each of the areas and thus begin the process of establishing a long term vision and a supporting action plan. The plan then belongs to local residents and organisations of the areas, reflecting their priorities and hopes.

#### **Consultation**

Planning for the 2006-2007 priorities and budget consultation exercise will start in the spring of 2006.

#### **Local Government Reputation Project**

Like Somerset County Council, the Council has recently signed up to the LGA 'Local Government Reputation Programme'. Using research undertaken by MORI and drawing on the expertise of approximately 400 local authority communications practitioners, the LGA working with the IDeA have identified five core 'communication actions that, if done well by the council, will have a significant impact on its reputation and standing. The research tells us that one of the most important drivers of public satisfaction with local authorities is perceived quality of services overall and perceived value for money and to this end we are committed to delivering the 5 core activities of this programme - these are:

- effective media management
- provide an a-z guide of council services
- publish a regular council magazine/newspaper
- branding - effective and consistent linkage of council brand to community services
- good internal communications

#### ***Weekly Bulletin***

Working well, with a few minor transitional problems but we are aspiring to producing a really useful weekly update for Members.

## **Campaigns**

Several successful campaigns have been rolled out over recent weeks including the Handyman Scheme and the results show that communications has really helped to bring in enquiries so much so that two handy vans are required for a period to deal with the extra workload. Work has included helping with communications to parishes, press releases to the local media and road shows. Our press office continues to support Waste Services and effectively handled a number of difficult media enquiries at the start of the roll out. The recent feature article on the second phase of our 'Sort It' recycling scheme in the Somerset County Gazette was excellent and clearly demonstrates that the public want to participate. In the New Year you can expect a concerted effort to promote the introduction of the Fixed Penalty Notices in respect of litter and before anyone asks we have never had any intention of using Megaphone man despite what you may have read in the local press!!

The Vision Guide has been well received and is used by the Vision Delivery Team. The PR team are working well (TDBC, SCC, EA, RDA), which has resulted in good coverage in several national trade publications. Consultation with the public has confirmed the Vision is and should remain one of our top priorities. However the research also identified that we need to do more work to promote a better public understanding of the Vision and this is now being worked on in conjunction with the local press.

## **Media Training**

Media training has now taken place with CMT and the Executive.

## **Deane Dispatch**

Winter edition is now out and we have received many compliments on the improvement in editorial style over the past 12 months.

Last, but not least I would like to thank both staff and members for their continued dedication and hard work during the past year. This is much appreciated. I wish all of you a happy Christmas and good fortune in the New Year.

Gwyneth Leighton  
Executive Councillor for Communications

December 2005

## **COUNCIL MEETING 13 December 2005**

### **REPORT OF COUNCILLOR BISHOP PLANNING POLICY AND TRANSPORTATION**

Schools' half term was no holiday for Taunton Deane's Building Control Service, who once again took over the Castle Sports and School complex to stage their seventeenth annual Conference and Exhibition.

Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> October was set-up day, as the Sports Hall was transformed into an exhibition arena hosting 40 trade stands and an all-day coffee and refreshments bar, while the installation of temporary staging, discreet lighting, sound and projection systems and plush seating transformed the school hall into an excellent conference theatre.

Deane Parks Service provided the planting displays, and Deane DLO the men and materials to make the transformation complete.

Conference day, 26<sup>th</sup> October, saw over 200 delegates assembled in the hall to hear the opening address from the Mayor, Councillor Richard Lees. Then it was into a packed programme involving speakers from the Office of The Deputy Prime Minister, Plymouth University and various other practices and organisations. Principal theme of this year's Conference was the forthcoming changes to the Building Regulations aimed at reducing the carbon emissions which buildings and building use contribute to the environment. An excellent buffet lunch and exhibition viewing provided a break before the delegates re-assembled for the afternoon session.

I have been a keen supporter of the Building Control Conference over a number of years, and I congratulate, Brian Yates and the Building Control staff, for making this an outstanding event in the conference calendar which is supported and recognised nationally both by the delegates and exhibitors, and puts Taunton really on the map.

Delegates went home happy at four o'clock after another hugely successful event, while the Building Control team just had time for a quick cup of tea before setting-to and clearing the whole show away in time for the Sports Hall to resume business at seven in the evening.

Eight months in preparation, one grand performance and gone in a flash – that's show business for you!

#### **Planning training**

Since my last report, three more training sessions have been held for Parish Councils and an excellent training session for Taunton Deane members was held with Judith Jackson and John Hardy making a presentation on Planning Enforcement followed by Di Hartnell, with a presentation on the many aspects of her work dealing with conservation issues.

At the last meeting with Parish Councils, the members present were all in favour of attending a meeting at the Deane House, at which all councils will be invited to see a presentation on Planning Enforcement, similar to that given to our Members. I will

arrange for everyone to be given adequate notice of the date when we propose to hold the training session.

### **Planning applications and decisions**

A section 106 has been agreed and planning permission granted for the outline application, submitted by the Agents acting for Second Site Property Holdings, for residential development. new site accesses, car parking and associated works on Former Gas Storage site at Castle Street, Taunton. The appeal, submitted for failure to determine an application within the appropriate time, has now been withdrawn.

An outline application has been submitted by Redrow Homes, Persimmon Homes Ltd and Westbury Homes Ltd (The Monkton Heathfield Consortium) for 900 dwellings, an employment site of up to 13 hectares for B1a, B1c and B8 uses, a Local Centre site of 2.72 hectares with a minimum of 600 sq metres of retail floor space, a Primary school site of 2 hectares, Green Spaces, including leaps and neaps of 12.96 hectares and the A38 Relief Road.

### **Regional Transport Strategy**

The RTS is being progressed and contains the following sections :-

Progress and relationship of the RTS to other regional documents;

Themes of the RTS;

Prioritisation of investment;

Likely impacts of policies on Somerset; and

Summary and conclusions

The RTS is not a distinct document in its own right but is part of the Regional Spatial Strategy which is expected to be submitted to Central Government by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2006.

### **Public Transport Forum**

At a recent meeting I was pleased to hear that the bus shelters in Taunton Deane are maintained to a better standard than in some other areas within the County.

**Cliff Bishop**



## **COUNCIL MEETING 13 DECEMBER 2005**

### **REPORT OF COUNCILLOR MRS.D. BRADLEY – LEISURE, ARTS AND CULTURE**

#### COMMUNITY ARTS AND ARTS DEVELOPMENT

##### **Cultural Quarter**

The report “The Cultural Quarter; A Catalyst for cultural regeneration and renewal in Taunton and Somerset” was launched at the Brewhouse Theatre on 17<sup>th</sup> November. It was born out of a workshop held by Terence O’Rourke which led to the setting up of a working party of stakeholders. These include the County Museum, The Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society, the Brewhouse Theatre, the Tacchi-Morris Centre, the Town Centre Company, Richard Huiish, Somerset Art Gallery Trust, Taunton Civic Society, the Chamber of Commerce SCAT, the Taunton Association of Performing Arts, the County and Taunton Deane. Together they have shared information on future plans and reached a consensus on what is needed to develop a cultural quarter. The report is one of substance and considerable value and owes an immense debt to the chairman Max Hebditch (ex London Museum). I would publicly like to express not only my own thanks but those of Taunton Deane for the very considerable time and expertise that he has given to us. The report is also of value and importance in our approach to outside funding bodies.

The Consortium has identified the following components to build the cultural infrastructure:

- A new centre for the performing and visual arts – an expansion of the Brewhouse
- A redeveloped County Museum and “Centre of Excellence”
- Development of a regional art gallery, possibly at the Brewhouse or the Museum
- Redevelopment of Castle Green for markets, performances and public activities
- High quality design of architecture and public space
- Support for the Creative Industries

Taunton Deane Borough Council is now looking for accommodation for a Creative Enterprise Resource Centre in Taunton for which funding has been obtained from the rural Renaissance Fund. We are also now starting to draft a public art and design policy

The Consortium itself is now revising its terms of reference in order to contribute to the Taunton Vision delivery team on matters cultural.

##### **The Brewhouse**

Robert Miles, the new director of The Brewhouse Theatre, attended the Health and Leisure Panel to introduce himself. He is working closely with the local amateur groups to build a stronger relationship between the two. He comes from the Theatre Royal Stratford East, a ground breaking London producing theatre which has been instrumental in bringing change into a run down part of the East End. He is particularly interested in working with young people and in outreach. He has a real vision of how Taunton can become a premier arts venue for Somerset. Geographically there is a huge constituency and the potential to draw in locals and tourist from a large area

### **Ann Frank Exhibition**

The international touring exhibition “Ann Frank and you” will be coming to Taunton in March 2006. This Council is supporting the exhibition with a £1500 grant from community planning as well as programming arts events around the exhibition.

## **PARKS**

### **Victoria Park**

Work is planned to start on a new children’s play area and a multi-use games area for young people in Victoria Park in the New Year. For safety and management reasons these are being centrally located. They will be followed with a community project to create a community garden and wildlife-friendly garden on the sites of the old play areas in the Spring.

#### **Play Areas**

Refurbishment and safety improvements will be carried out at various childrens’ play areas throughout the borough over the coming months.

#### **North Taunton**

The Blackthorn Gardens MUGA and children's play area have been refurbished and improved with work just about complete. The new youth shelter at Lyngford Park will also be installed before Christmas.

#### **French Weir Park**

A master plan for the development of French Weir Park has been drawn up based on recent consultations and an exhibition held in the park to seek the public’s opinions on the proposals. A meeting of people interested in becoming more involved in the further development of the proposals is being held in January.

## **SPORTS**

### **Vivary Chalet**

The chalet walls and roof are now completed and works to ‘finish’ the building will continue through December with the project estimated to be completed by Christmas 2005. The chalet will house a café for the park, new public toilets and a reception area for the golf and mini golf facilities.

The current golf kiosk will then be converted into a changing facility for pay and play golfers – it is anticipated that this will be completed in January 2006.

### **Taunton Tennis Centre**

The project to convert 2 external courts at Blackbrook into an indoor facility is being tendered in early December with a tender return date of January 2006. TDBC, Tone Leisure and the Lawn Tennis Association are funding the project.

The building will be a ‘framed fabric’ structure, which has advantages over traditional build of speed and cost.

### **Barclays Space For Sports**

An application has been made to Barclays Space For Sports for £50,000 to convert an under utilized tennis court on the Taunton Green site into a Multi Use Games Area.

The application could also attract up to £20,000 revenue/development funding to enable coaching courses to take place at the new facility.

It is anticipated that the result of our application will be heard early in 2006.

### **Facility Investment**

The investment programme for improving and maintaining the sports facilities is shared by the Council and Tone Leisure. Recent and planned projects include:

- Refurbishment and upgrade of upper hall at Wellington Sports Centre to include air conditioning ceiling, lighting and flooring.

- Refurbishment and upgrade of lockers and changing rooms at Blackbrook Pavilion.
- Installation of high quality golf practice area at Vivary Golf Course.
- Refreshment of front of house area at Station Road Pool.
- Upgraded flooring and drape system at Wellsprings Leisure Centre.

### **Tone Leisure Limited Events**

Two successful entertainment events have been held at Wellsprings recently - Jethro and Killer Queen, the latter attracting a crowd of around 850.

Forthcoming Events include:

- Junior triathlon run by the Pony Club at Wellington Sports Centre on 2nd January.
- “The Big Party” nights at Wellsprings are proving to be very popular, with four of the six evenings already fully sold out. Each party accommodates up to 450 guests.
- An evening of 70s pop bands (December - Slade, Mud and tribute band T-Rextasy) at Wellsprings on 21<sup>st</sup>.
- Chaplin’s Pantos production of Cinderella at Wellsprings on 3rd January
- Aquathlon (swim followed by run) 19th February at Wellington Sports Centre.

### **NET WORKING**

I attended a workshop on the Local Area Agreement at the Exchange and joined the workshop on the Economic block to argue the case for the creative industries.

I travelled by train and on foot to Dartington Hall to a presentation by English Heritage on their Third Strategic Plan. What is contained in their “Our Heritage, Our Future, Your Say” appears to me to tie in well with our evolving “Waterscapes” bid.

This is an application to the Big Lottery Fund on the theme of the Waterways of Somerset (deadline 6<sup>th</sup> January 2006). It is a collaborative approach involving County, Districts and the Voluntary sector and will bring together flood prevention on the levels, the Tone in Taunton, the canals, improved cycling, walking and river based recreational opportunities, industrial archaeology, training and educational facilities and the renovation and interpretation of a number of historic features of national importance.

English Heritage also flagged up their concern over the demands made upon their resources by the numerous village churches in the region. I would therefore ask whether perhaps we as community leaders should not be seeking to promote greater community use and enjoyment of these precious historic buildings through our current strategies and grants.

I have also been approached by a Real Tennis enthusiast seeking fellow enthusiasts with a view to locating a court in Taunton Deane. May I ask such enthusiasts to get in touch with Stephen Hughes or myself.

Finally may I thank our officers for the immense hard work they have put in on so many fronts towards creating that level of momentum to move us all forward into this very different world of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Cllr Dilly Bradley

## **COUNCIL MEETING 13 DECEMBER 2005**

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

#### **Asset Management**

As part of the continuing CPA process, in the summer of this year the Audit Commission focussed on aspects of the Council's performance over the previous year and our planned course of action for the future. Since its inception in 2001, we have produced an asset management plan, AMP, each year. The AMP contains the relevant information on our assets and how they are performing regarding energy consumption, profitability, their condition, and what is being built, modified, sold, acquired, or demolished. Although since 2003, we have not been required to produce an AMP, we have continued as it was considered a beneficial process and produced a meaningful document. This Autumn, the 2005 AMP was submitted, together with additional information, to CPA inspectors. (The AMP is on the Council's intranet). It is understood that having interviewed officers and members, the CPA inspectors were satisfied that the council's assets were being satisfactorily maintained and that adequate plans for the future were in place.

Expressions of interest have been requested from developers for the development at Blackdown Business Park. Tender documents will be sent in the next two weeks to interested parties who satisfy TDBC criteria.

#### **Economic Development**

The primary focus of the Business Support Team over recent weeks has been the development of a transparent and modernised Business Support Grant, that both client companies and our partner Business Link can understand. This has involved developing a section of the Ec Dev web-site, which now carries details of the scheme.

There has been a good response to the first round of this scheme, which has resulted in five local small businesses (or new start companies) each receiving £2000 towards the set-up costs of their enterprise. In particular these exemplar companies employ 15 people, and their future business plans indicate that a further 12 new jobs will be created as a result of the support received.

All applicants to this scheme attend a series of business development workshops, run by Business Link, are introduced and encouraged to improve their own level of skills through courses run by either Somerset Skills Alliance or SCAT. The scheme has proved to be of benefit to all businesses attending, whether one of the award winners or not.

#### **Tourism**

Both the Taunton and Wellington TICs have received Bronze Award from South West Tourism, as a result of their 2005 Mystery Shopper service. This service provides a detailed feedback to the TICs, there are different types of enquiry, which include written, telephone, out of hours phone service, e-mail and a personal visit. It is a credit to our TICs, that the report from SW Tourism noted that the Taunton TIC, '...gives excellent support to local craftspeople and promoting their quality products as well as selling an excellent range of small gifts, maps, books and postcards/cards.

Excellent selection of free visitor information with excellent light, bright and well organised office.'

### **Rural Economy**

Our ADO has organised a second series of marketing courses designed specifically for farmers which was delivered in partnership with Business Link. In the face of growing adverse conditions and increasing levels of regulation, sheer economic necessity is forcing many farming businesses to consider new ventures. These developing enterprises, by definition, require new skills concerned with promotion, advertising and customer support. To help farmers understand these essential skills for a new marketplace, a series of 'Marketing for Profit' workshops have been commissioned. To ensure we are delivering what the delegate wants, we commission feedback from each delegate before the course ends. I am pleased to say that, for both programmes delivered to date the response has been very positive: high marks for relevance and quality of the programme. In line with DEFRA and Government policy to encourage cooperation and group working, we are helping delegates to form a marketing discussion group so they can continue to work together share ideas and gain benefit from each other. So far these workshops have assisted businesses employing in excess of 70 people, and all businesses are actively pursuing their proposals.

A further range of courses is being developed by the partners that will give farming businesses the skills to assess the potential of diversification projects. This is likely to take place in early 2006.

### **Ice Rink**

By the time you have this report, the ice rink will have been constructed and I hope you will all have had an opportunity to practice your skating. Although we have not been successful in attracting the initial sponsorship that we had hoped for, 6 banners around the rink have now been sold. The promotion campaign has been well received and we have had local, regional, and national promotion for Taunton. The event is advertised on the back of buses in Yeovil, Exeter, Minehead and Weston. Ticket sales, individual and block bookings, are going exceptionally well. I am sure that the ice rink with its publicity is, and will be, a considerable boon to the community of Taunton Deane and around and increase footfall to the shops of Taunton.

**Councillor Norman Cavill**

## **COUNCIL MEETING – 13 December 2005.**

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

#### **1.0 ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH.**

##### **1.1 Licensing Unit**

The new licensing arrangements have now “gone live” following the second appointed day on 24<sup>th</sup> November. Following decisions made by the Council’s Licensing Sub Committee five appeals were lodged with the Magistrates Court. All of these appeals have now either been heard in Court with the Council’s decision upheld or have since been withdrawn.

Taunton Deane Borough Council has been appointed as one of only ten local authorities in England and Wales to work with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport as a Scrutiny Council over the next six months to monitor and evaluate the licensing reforms. Officers from the group of councils that also includes Birmingham, Blackpool, Brighton, Bristol, Cardiff, Havering, Manchester, Newcastle and Nottingham, will be working with the DCMS, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Home Office to establish an in-depth partnership between local delivery and central policy makers.

##### **1.2 Health and Safety Team**

###### **National Ladders Campaign 14 - 25 November 2005.**

Last year 13 people died from falls while working on a ladder and over 1,200 people suffered major injuries. In support of the Health & Safety Executive’s (HSE) ‘National Ladders Campaign’, the Health and Safety Team distributed information leaflets to help raise awareness of the risks associated with ladder use and giving advice on how to use them safely. Visits were also made by Environmental Health Officers to local premises to provide practical advice and guidance in order to help prevent future incidents in Taunton Deane.

##### **1.3 Food Safety Team**

A Formal Caution has been accepted by the proprietors of a town centre restaurant as an alternative to prosecution. The offence was contamination of a meal with a piece of wire from a sieve used in food preparation.

Two Contractors have now been appointed to deliver our *Safer Food Better Business* (SFBB) programme. Both have attended a two-day Coaching Seminar and will be applying for full accreditation as SFBB Tutors within the next few weeks, after further practical training.

##### **1.4 Environmental Protection Team**

###### **Water Sampling**

With the phased abolition of the Somerset County Council’s precept allowance for water sampling, the Team has developed a strategy for ensuring that we continue to provide a service to owners of “single premises” Private Water Supplies. There is no statutory duty to provide a sampling service for these residents and we cannot continue our current free programme with the reduced funding. Affected residents are

now being offered a sampling programme for which they will have to pay but for which the costs have been kept as low as possible.

Depending upon the level of analysis they select, from a wide range, the costs will be from £10 to £140 per visit. The customer will also choose the sampling frequency. Of the 374 questionnaires sent out explaining the new scheme 358 (96%) have been returned, with 46 of these expressing an active interest in the Project. The questionnaire also proved very useful in updating the Team's Private Water Supply database.

### Land Contamination.

Team members were involved in a contamination incident resulting from a domestic heating oil spill in Capland. Though the storage tank was nearly new it had fractured, allowing some 500 litres of oil to pollute two gardens and threaten nearby surface waters. The Environment Agency was notified and is monitoring water courses. Team members are continuing to negotiate with the owner's insurance companies to ensure that the affected land is cleaned up to a satisfactory standard.

### Air Quality.

Team members gave an evening presentation to Ruishton Parish Council concerning air quality issues. One of the Council's two Air Quality Action Areas is in Ruishton and the presentation centred on the Action Plan that has been developed to deal with marginally elevated levels of Nitrogen Dioxide, arising from vehicle exhaust emissions.

## **2.0 WASTE SERVICES**

### **2.1 Toilet Cleansing**

Tancred Street toilets have now been sold and ceased operation on 17<sup>th</sup> November.

One of the attendants at Castle Green ladies toilets is on long term sick leave, we have been fortunate and found a replacement who has been employed on a casual basis.

### **2.2 Street Cleansing**

The Autumn leaf fall is stretching resources but the support of the "Swingo" precinct sweeper is proving invaluable with its ability to sweep footways.

### **2.3 Abandoned Vehicles**

With the continued cooperation of the Police and their Community Support officers the number of vehicles removed in the period April to September was 54 compared with 83 for the same period last year. Apart from this cooperation and the proactive approach the reduction in numbers could be caused by the increased value of scrap metal.

### **3.0 TAUNTON DEANE CEMETERIES AND CREMATORIUM**

#### **Crematorium Organ**

Work has almost been completed on repairing and renovating the crematorium organ. The renovation has provided a far better depth of sound and improved usage of the system. To demonstrate this improvement the crematorium organist is hoping to hold a recital in the New Year.

#### **Taunton Deane Cemetery & Crematorium Car Park Lighting**

Following a "risk assessment" the necessity for car park lighting was identified. Demonstrations of various systems available are currently arranged. It is hoped that an environmentally friendly system such as solar powered lighting can be used. The lighting will be financed from income generated by the crematorium.

#### **Crematoria Abatement of Mercury Emissions**

Legislation requiring 50% of cremations in this country to be abated for mercury by 2012 has been issued. The Health & Leisure Review Panel has approved a recommendation to increase the cremation fee and save for the extension necessary to the crematorium building, and purchase the filtration equipment required. The revenue generated from the increase in the cremation fee will be placed into a ring-fenced fund.

#### **Wellington Cemetery Extension**

For several years now both the estates and planning sections of Taunton Deane have been looking for suitable land at Wellington to use as future burial ground. As yet no land has been identified, although enquiries continued to be made.

#### **Taunton Deane Cemetery Extension**

The Council owns land at the crematorium, which will be used for future burial. This land requires developing for the service. An entrance road, paths, drainage, planting etc have to be in place before its use can commence. It is anticipated that work to prepare this land will be undertaken over the next few years.

#### **Funeral Directors Room**

A small room has been provided for use by funeral directors at the crematorium. This provides a comfortable shelter for their staff between services.

[Mark Edwards](#)



## **COUNCIL MEETING 13 DECEMBER 2005**

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

This report will focus on two areas within the Housing Portfolio. The first is to provide the usual update on Housing Stock Options and the second will be to update members on the position regarding homelessness in Taunton Deane.

#### **Housing Stock Transfer Update**

##### Last three months

There has been a great deal of work undertaken since October, with the Project Team communicating to Tenants, Staff, Councillors and our Partners and generally driving the consultation process forward.

Since the last Full Council update, there has been:

- i) A mop up briefing to all Housing and Building DLO Staff
- ii) Briefings to Non Housing Staff
- iii) Door Knocking and Drop-In-Sessions across the Borough
- iv) Analysis of returned Priority Survey
- v) Discussions at various Council Meetings on key areas such as Savills Stock Condition Survey and PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) Financial Update
- vi) Meetings of the Officer Steering Group, Communication Group, Staff Forum and Tenants' Panel and Tenants' Forum
- vii) The Shadow Board has met three times covering areas such as:
  - October: Introduction to governance
  - November: Duties and responsibilities, TUPE
  - December: Housing finance, rents and service charges

Presentation by Housing Corporation and the Community Housing Task Force at the quarterly Members Briefing

#### **Key Messages:**

##### **Tenants Priority Survey:**

Nearly 50% of the tenant population returned the priority survey indicating a high level of engagement by tenants. The results of the survey are being analysed and details will be presented in the new calendar year.

Early indications suggest that tenants concerns are mainly in the following areas:

Improved kitchens and bathrooms

Improved access and amenities for people who are disabled

Faster repair times

Improved security around their homes

A proactive approach to dealing with anti-social behaviour.

##### **Door Knocking and Drop In Sessions across the Borough:**

The Project Team undertook 10 days of localised door knocking and drop-in-sessions. They met with and consulted tenants on the proposal of transferring the housing stock to a not-for-profit, locally based and totally independent Registered Social Landlord (RSL).

During this period staff spoke to 20% of the tenant population with a further 20% of the tenant population being left calling cards.

Door knocking - Geographical areas covered:

Broomfield House, Taunton Bulford, Wellington Darby Way, Bishop Lydeard Dorchester Road, Taunton Dowell Close, Taunton Greenlands, Taunton	Hope Corner Lane, Taunton Lodge Close, Wellington Middleway, Taunton Moorland Place, Taunton Newton Road, Taunton Normandy Drive, Taunton	Parmin Close, Taunton Roland Close, Taunton Taunfield Close, Taunton Treborough Close, Taunton Wellesley Street, Taunton
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### **Financial Position:**

The work undertaken by Savills on the completed stock condition survey, combined with inputting these findings into the Housing Financial Budgetary Models by staff and PricewaterhouseCoopers, has resulted in a more stark position. Over the next five years alone, there is an annual £2.1 million shortfall on resources against predicted expenditure in achieving the Decent Homes Standard and Statutory Obligations, which, as a benchmark, is considerably less than what the Council currently provides to tenants.

#### Next three months

- i) Further Tenants and Staff Newsletters will be sent
- ii) Further Council meetings where there will be an introduction to the “Offer Document” and more information on the findings on the Priority Survey
- iii) Meetings of the Officer Steering Group, Communication Group, Staff Forum and Tenants’ Panel and Tenants’ Forum
- iv) Two further Shadow Board Meetings (covering Business planning, Tenants draft offer, culture of RSL’s, Skills audit feedback).
- v) Undertaking Tenants’ Days to talk to tenants to understand more about the areas they have asked for improvements in, from the returned Priority Survey
- vi) Further Door Knocking
- vii) A Partners Day

### **Homelessness**

We continue to experience high levels of homelessness and in recent weeks have had an increase from households with children, single households and couples without children. Traditionally the biggest cause of homelessness has been the ending of assured short hold tenancies (private sector landlords) but recently we have seen an increase in the number of all household types being evicted by friends and family, we are monitoring this closely to ascertain whether this is seasonal or a long term trend.

The 6 week target for families in B&B remains challenging but generally we are meeting this target in the majority of cases.

Work on homeless prevention continues but is largely confined to assisting households in moving in to the private sector through the provision of deposits and rent in advance. We had hoped to develop a “Finders Fee” scheme with the other four Somerset Districts but unfortunately failed in our bid for funding from the ODPM (a finders fee scheme is where local authorities offer landlords an incentive to take families on two year instead of standard 6 month lets) . We continue to do home visits wherever possible and are looking to develop further preventative measures such as our own finders fee scheme and mediation etc. Such initiatives will be developed as staff gain more experience and workloads allow.

Cllr Greg Garner

## **COUNCIL MEETING 13 DECEMBER 2005**

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

#### **1 Boundary Review**

The Boundary Committee has published its draft recommendations into the future electoral arrangements for Taunton Deane. The Council has until 6th March to respond to the draft.

The Boundary Committee has accepted the Council's proposal to increase the number of Councillors by adding one more each at West Monkton and Norton Fitzwarren.

Under the Committee's proposals three seat wards will be created at Bishops Lydeard, and another by the combination of Creech, North Curry, and Stoke St Gregory. Two seat wards will be created by the combination of Ruishton and Neroche and also Milverton and Bradford on Tone.

To achieve better levels of electoral equality boundary adjustments are proposed at a number of other wards.

#### **2 Customer Service**

Since the middle of November the telephone speed of answer by Customer Service has markedly improved. This has resulted from a decline in the number of calls arising from the 'Sort It' rollout and by increasing the number of reception staff.

On average the speed of answer is now consistently under 30 seconds and the abandonment rate well under 10%. We plan to maintain this satisfactory situation.

#### **3 Improving Services In Somerset (ISIS)**

As members will know Avon and Somerset Police have reluctantly had to withdraw from this project because of proposed amalgamations of Forces in the South West Region.

Meanwhile progress is continuing at pace towards obtaining a preferred private sector bidder to join SCC and TDBC in this exciting venture. It is planned to publish the European Union tender notice (OJEU) at the end of December 2005 and in the Local Government Chronicle early in January 2006. A bidders information pack will be completed by the end of the year and a bidders open day will be held on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2006.

Interested companies will be short-listed by the end of March with the objective of award of contract by December 2006.

#### **4 Financial Services Unit**

The Financial Services Unit have been continuing their work on the 2006/07 budget process and have been updating both the Review Board and Executive on progress to date. Alongside the detailed number crunching there is also a lot of work, which supports the budget process for example officers have been presenting reports on the

expected level of fees and charges for 2006/07 and also calculating the expected Council tax base for next year. We have also recently received the initial estimate of the amount of housing subsidy, which the authority will have to bear in 2006/07. All of these things help to pull together our overall expected financial picture for next year.

The unit are also supporting many other corporate projects such as the following, Vision for Taunton, Waste Contract Integration, ISIS and the Housing options work."

## **5 Members Services**

Following concern expressed at the last Council meeting regarding the microphone system, arrangements were made to get the original installers back to have a look at it. It has now been serviced and adjusted to provide a better quality of sound. The induction loop system was also checked and an order has been placed for 3 lapel microphones for use during presentations.

The Overview and Scrutiny review continues and as requested by the Review Board further consultation is being undertaken with the political groups. Appropriate officers have so far attended one group meeting and as a result much useful and positive feedback was obtained.

Incredible as it may seem the next Borough Council elections are only 18 months away. With this in mind preparatory work has already started on action to attract candidates and prepare an induction process for any new members.

## **6 Internal Audit**

Internal Audit staff working as part of the South West Audit Partnership continue to be involved in a wide range of initiatives across the Council including: -

- Undertaking a wide range of financial and non-financial audits
- Rolling out Risk Management at service level with a number of workshops being facilitated by members of the Internal Audit Section.
- Ongoing provision of Data Protection and Freedom of Information advice.
- Playing a vital assurance role in some of the major projects that the Council is working on including ISIS, replacement Revenues / Benefits and Housing Systems.

On 1st October West Somerset and Mendip District Council formally joined the partnership providing further opportunities for us to develop our skills and learn from others. The Internal Audit team is currently operating with a full-time vacancy but has been strengthened by the return from secondment of the part-time member of staff who is now employed full-time within the Audit Partnership as a Computer Auditor / Audit Assistant.

## **7 Benefits Unit**

On 15 November 2005, the Benefits Service submitted their self-assessment against the DWP's new Performance Standards. This was based on our performance in the

first half of 2005/2006 in delivering against 19 Performance Measures and 65 “Enablers”. Under the new scoring methodology, the Benefits Service is rated as “good” although improvements in October in the area of Customer Focus have now seen us move into the “Excellent” category.

We are currently recruiting new staff for a Benefit Advice Team that will allow us to focus more on the needs of our customers. Through internal re-organisation, we now have a permanent Investigation Team Leader, Helen Vile. North Somerset Council will continue to provide professional support until 31 March 2006 when Helen will complete her training. Her move to Investigations will bring much needed stability to the team.

Finally, we have increased the number of staff "home working" to nearly 25% of FTE's in the unit. So far, the benefits of this initiative have been significant through:

- Increased productivity;
- Improved quality;
- Reduced absence as the result of sickness
- Improved morale

Over the next year, we will be evaluating the success and the pitfalls of home working as we consider rolling out this initiative to more staff.

## **8 Revenues**

- Payment kiosks – the payment machines are now operational at both the Taunton & Wellington cash offices. Staffs at both offices are explaining to customers how to use the machines. Currently the machines are running in conjunction with face-to-face cashiering. However, the face-to-face cashiering service is scheduled to end at both sites from Friday 20 January 2006.
- Revenues & Benefits IT System Replacement Project – contracts have been finalised with IBS and work has started on the implementation of the new system. Initially this will involve our converting over the information held on our current systems. This is a major task and will be undertaken by a project team comprised of staff from the Revenues, Benefits & IT units.
- Council Tax & Business Rates Collection – the statistics at the end of October 2005 indicate that we are on target with both debts.
- Year-End for Council Tax & Business Rates – Revenues, Benefits & IT staff has met to timetable and plan the new-year billing exercise. This exercise will take place at the beginning of March 2006 and will involve the production and issue of some 50,000 Business Rate and Council Tax bills. The Council Tax booklet, which accompanies all bills, is being produced in conjunction with the other 4 districts and the County. This will help to minimise production costs.

- Small Business Rate Relief – application forms are shortly to be issued to all ‘small businesses’ inviting them to apply, or re-apply, for Small Business Relief for the coming financial year. Successful applicants can receive up to a 50% reduction in their rate bill. We anticipate issuing applications to roughly a third of the business properties.

**Terry Hall**

## **COUNCIL MEETING 13 DECEMBER 2005**

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

#### **LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT (LAA)**

The first draft Local Area Agreement has now been through the Scrutiny process at Taunton Deane and was submitted to Government Office by the County Council at the end of November. Here are a few headline aims and targets that have particular relevance to this council. I would, however, stress that these are just some examples and in no way show the full extent of the LAA. Further information is available from Brendan Cleere, who is the lead officer for the Council on the LAA Multi-Agency Steering Group. A final draft LAA will come to the Review Board in January.

#### **Children and Young People**

Aim: Achieve personal and social development and enjoy recreation  
Target/Indicators: Take up of Sporting opportunities by 5 – 16 year olds  
Take up of cultural and sporting opportunities among over 16's

National standards to include:

Access to two hours per week of sporting activity

Access to two hours per week of other constructive activities in clubs, youth groups or classes

#### **Older People:**

Aim: To increase older people's inclusion and participation through primary prevention.

Target/Indicator: The number of older people helped to live at home

Aim: Increased use of 'mainstream' services by older people.

Target/Indicator: The number of older people who enrol on learning and leisure (inc arts / cultural) courses and activities.

Aim: Improved use of preventive technology.

Target/Indicator: Increased number of users of community alarm services and related provision

#### **Safer Communities**

Aim: To reduce crime and reassure the public reducing the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour

Target/Indicator: Large businesses who regularly do drinks promotions encouraged to pay for door staff training and other initiatives to deal with drink related problems in a given area.

Licensed premises encouraged to switch to toughened or plastic glasses where they have not already done so, where it can be shown that toughened or plastic glasses would lead to reduction in glass related injuries.

The Three Strikes initiative (based in Taunton) expanded across Somerset  
Expand diversionary activities, such as the Taunton Deane based VIBE Project, to engage young people living in areas of deprivation and isolated rural areas.

#### **Stronger Communities**

Aim: A more thriving and vibrant Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) in Somerset, which is in a stronger position to represent and support our communities

Target/Indicators: Increasing the proportion of key public services delivered by the VCS  
Increasing the number of "self-sufficient" VCS organisations (e.g. less reliance on grant funding)  
Increasing the number of "social enterprises"



Aim:	To empower local people to have a greater voice and influence over local decision making and the delivery of services
Target/Indicators:	Increasing the number of volunteers Increasing the diversity of volunteers (including those at risk of social exclusion) Improving the quality of training of volunteers (e.g. accreditation) Broader and better use of village halls
Aim:	Maximising opportunities to meet the affordable housing needs of communities in Somerset
Target/Indicator	Number of new affordable housing units as a % of identified Housing Need The ratio of lower quartile house prices to lower quartile earnings

### **Economic Development**

Aims:	Increase investment levels and business competitiveness in Somerset Increase growth and sustainability of small businesses in Somerset More sustainable Somerset rural communities
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### **POLICY AND PERFORMANCE UNIT**

Following a restructure in this unit, interviews have taken place for three vacant posts. I hope that a new Scrutiny and Performance Manager, a new Strategy and Partnerships Manager and a new Scrutiny Officer will take up their posts in the New Year and will strengthen the team. It is important to emphasise that these new posts are all funded from within existing budgets.

### **SCRUTINY**

CPA flagged it up, and the recent work by Stephen Taylor of the Leadership Centre also flagged it up – scrutiny is not working very well at Taunton Deane. Officers from the Members Services Unit are working on proposals to make scrutiny more effective and rewarding, and they are currently discussing these proposals with the different political groups. While not wanting to pre-empt the outcome of this, I think it is fair to say that “continue as before” is not an option.

### **RELOCATABLE CCTV CAMERA**

A letter has recently been sent to all Parish Councils and Local Action Teams, the North Taunton Partnership and the Taunton East Development Trust asking if they would like to apply to use the system. Monkton and Creech Local Action Team have requested that the camera to be located at Blackbrook Park Avenue where there has been an ongoing problem with anti-social behaviour. The police strongly support this request and a suitable site has been identified. Therefore the decision has been made to re-site the camera to Blackbrook Park Avenue as soon as possible.

### **COMMUNITY PLANNING**

Taunton Deane and the LSP have jointly appointed consultants (Bakers and 2md) to help with consultation on the Local Development Framework and Community Strategy Review. The consultants are currently preparing a strategy to consult under represented groups on the review of the Community Strategy, the Town Centre Area Action Plan, and the area based plans for Taunton East and North. The consultation will take place between January and March 2006.

### **LOCAL ACTION TEAMS**

£10,000 is available in the LSP budget to support Local Action Teams (LAT's). £2000 of this is being used to support a mobile Youth Shelter project and the remaining £8000 is available to support other LAT projects. LAT's have recently had a letter advising them of this.

Joanna Lewin-Harris