



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 10TH OCTOBER 2006 AT 18:00.

AGENDA

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

1. PLEASE NOTE THE DIFFERENT START TIME FOR THIS MEETING - AS THERE IS TO BE A PRESENTATION THE MEETING HAS BEEN BROUGHT FORWARD BY 30 MINUTES AND WILL BEGIN AT 6 P.M.
2. To receive the Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 13 September 2006 (attached)
3. To report any apologies for absence
4. To receive any communications
5. To receive petitions from Local Government electors under Standing Order 17
6. To receive questions from Local Government electors under Standing Order 18
7. Vision for Taunton - To receive a presentation on the Masterplanning work that has been undertaken
8. Part 1 - To deal with questions and receive recommendations from the Executive:-
 - (i) Councillor Clark (Leisure Arts and Culture)Recommendation regarding a Supplementary Estimate in relation the Westival Festival
9. Part II - To receive reports from the following members of the Executive:-
 - (i) Councillor Williams (Leader of the Council)
 - (ii) Councillor Bishop (Planning Policy and Transportation)
 - (iii) Councillor Bradley (Environmental Services)
 - (iv) Councillor Cavill (Economic Development Property and Tourism)
 - (v) Councillor Clark (Leisure Arts and Culture)
 - (vi) Councillor Garner (Housing Services)
 - (vii) Councillor Hall (Resources)
 - (viii) Councillor Leighton (Communications)
 - (ix) Councillor Mrs Lewin-Harris (Community Leadership)
10. Standards Committee

There has, for a little while, been two vacancies for independent members on the

Council's Standards Committee. Following public advertisement and circulation of details to as many voluntary and community organisations as possible, two candidates were interviewed for the vacancies.

The interviews were carried out by David Baker, Chair of our Standards Committee and Councillor Mrs Mary Whitmarsh, the Independent councillor on the Committee. The two candidates were David Gollin a retired Chartered Engineer and Chartered Fuel Technologist and a former independent member of Surrey County Council and Harold Inder who will be well known to many as the co-ordinator for Friends of Konigslutter. He has a local government background having been employed in it for the whole of his working life and has also been actively involved in various aspects of voluntary work.

The interviewing group think that these two candidates would be useful additions to the Standards Committee and recommend that they be appointed. Details have also previously been circulated to Group Leaders and they have raised no objection to their appointment. In order to comply with the terms of the Council's Constitution these appointments have to be formally made by Council.

It is therefore RECOMMENDED that David Gollin and Harold Inder be appointed as independent members of the Council's Standards Committee.

G P DYKE
Member Services Manager
03 October 2006

PLEASE NOTE THE SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT START TIME FOR THIS MEETING. AS THERE IS TO BE A PRESENTATION IT WAS FELT THAT THE TIME OF THE MEETING SHOULD BE BROUGHT FORWARD 30 MINUTES.



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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Taunton Deane Borough Council

At a meeting of Taunton Deane Borough Council held in the Principal Committee Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton on 13 September 2006 at 8.00p.m.

Present: The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Hayward) (in the Chair)
Councillors Mrs Allgrove, Beaven, Mrs Biscoe, Bishop, Bowrah, Mrs Bradley, Miss Cavill, Clark, C Cluff, Coles, Croad, Edwards, Floyd, Garner, Guerrier, Hall, Henley, House, Lees, Leighton, Mrs Lewin-Harris, Meikle, Morrell, Mullins, Murphy, Paul, Phillips, Slattery, Vail, Mrs Whitmarsh, Williams, and Mrs Wilson.

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2006 were taken as read and were signed.

2. Apologies

Councillors Bone, N Cavill, Davies, Denington, Durdan, Govier, C Hill, Mrs Marie Hill,, The Mayor (Councillor Hindley), Lisgo, Prior-Sankey, Mrs Smith, P Smith, Stuart-Thorn, and Weston

3. Public Question Time

- i) Paul Partington referred to Footpath T 18/3 at Norton Fitzwarren and asked:
1. Was the decision to seek an extinguishment order on this public path made by an Executive Councillor, an officer or by a Committee or full Council ?
 2. If an Executive Councillor, which Councillor ?
 3. What was the costs to Taunton Deane Borough Council in 2002 in clearing the northern half of the section of the path
 4. What has been the financial cost to Taunton Deane Borough Council in officer time and any other cost since 2002 to today ?

Councillor Garner replied that the initial decision to apply for an extinguishment of Footpath T 18/3 at Norton Fitzwarren was an operational decision made by Housing officers as a housing management issue. At a meeting on the 29 March this year he was advised as the relevant portfolio holder that an application for extinguishment had been made following consultation with residents and at the request of the Parish Council. He had endorsed the approach that was being taken but was advised that as the decision was an operational one it was not necessary to make the decision formally.

It had not been possible in time for this meeting to identify the costs incurred in clearing the path in 2002 but this information would be forwarded when available. It was not possible to quantify the costs incurred in officer time since 2002 in progressing this matter, but no costs other than officer time had been incurred.

ii) Patricia Rowe referred to consultation with tenants and said that vital messages were not being put across. For instance it was not generally known that once the housing stock had been transferred it could never return to Council ownership.

Councillor Williams replied that this was not a privatisation of the housing stock. The Council would still retain responsibility for housing and the homeless and would continue to have a duty to see that the housing stock was maintained.

4. Declarations of interest

Councillor Mrs Biscoe declared a personal interest in Agenda item no 7 as a member of the Shadow Board and as a tenant of a Council owned garage..

Councillors C Cluff and Morrell both declared a personal interest in Agenda item no 7 as members of a company which was involved in providing valuations in respect of Right to Buy properties.

Councillor Mrs Allgrove declared a personal interest in Agenda item no 7 as a member of the Shadow Board

Councillor Mrs Bradley declared a personal interest in Agenda item no 7 as a relative had purchased a Council property

5. Housing Transfer Offer Document

Following the meeting of the Executive which had taken place immediately before this meeting consideration was given to a recommendation that the Council should take the next step towards balloting the tenants on transferring the housing stock to Deane Housing.

Further special meetings of the Executive and Council had been arranged to take place on Monday 13 November 2006, when the Council must decide whether or not to proceed to ballot.

RESOLVED that the recommendation of the Executive be agreed, the offer document be "signed off" and stage one of the ballot process be implemented with tenants being issued with a copy of the offer document.

(The meeting ended at 9.02p.m.)

TAUNTON DEANE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING 10 OCTOBER 2006

Part I

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

1. COUNCILLOR CLARK

Funding to support the 2006 Westival

the Westival Is a new Arts Festival which was launched in Taunton this summer. It was put on by the Brewhouse Theatre, Taunton Music Trust and Taunton Town Centre Company together with others working in collaboration with each other. The aims were to establish Westival as an Annual Festival that would grow in size and prominence over the next three years and make Taunton a cultural destination, bringing increased tourism and wealth into the area.

Various other businesses and organisations had pledged their support and £8,500 had been raised in sponsorship. The Westival was working on the usual financial models for Annual Festivals and they expected to lose money in the first year, break even in the second and make a profit in the third year. The sponsorship money was used to underwrite those events which would not pay for themselves but additional funding was required for the marketing which was crucial to the success of the Westival and to the administration of bookings. The organisers had actively sought funding and although £8,500 had already been raised many had indicated that they would be willing to sponsor year two of the Westival which gave them more notice in allocating budgets. The Council had already contributed £500 from its Tourism Promotion Budget and £2,000 from the 2005/06 Arts Budget towards marketing.

However in order for the first year of the Westival to be a success the marketing needed to be significant. The higher the marketing spend the bigger the reach. The Westival organisers considered that the programme had national significance. It was therefore considered that this Council should provide a further contribution of £19,000 from reserves to add to the marketing budget and to support the efficient administration of the event.

It is therefore RECOMMENDED that a Supplementary Estimate of £19,000 be made from General Funds to provide a grant in support of the Westival 2006.

Councillor John Clark

Part II Reports from the Executive

COUNCIL MEETING 10 OCTOBER 2006

Report of Councillor Williams – Leader of the Council

Traditionally the summer months, particularly August, are regarded as quiet months for Council business but the pattern has certainly been broken this year and we have been working frenetically on the many ongoing projects and initiatives that we have. I report on the major projects we have been dealing with as a Council.

Regeneration of Taunton

At last we are leaving the “Vision” stage and it is now called “Project Taunton” to send a clear message that we mean business and we are moving forward leaving the planning and discussion stage behind. For some time it has been considered that the term 'Vision' be dropped as it is felt we have passed this stage. There are also 'visions' for Bridgwater, Yeovil and other locations, so it makes sense to clearly differentiate from these. We will, therefore, start to use the term 'Project Taunton', to describe the activity, and to give the team a positive name when responding to enquiries. The 'delivery team' will be known as the 'project team' to support this. Accompanying this is a new brand image which is to create a renewed sense of pride and excitement about Taunton, both within the local community and amongst those looking at us from outside. It will be used widely to support the marketing of the regeneration of Taunton, over the coming months and years.

In addition a major new website for Project Taunton is currently under development, with a launch date scheduled for December and I will ensure its address is widely publicised when available.

Another major step forward is that by the time of this meeting I should be able to confirm the bid details are being despatched to potential developers for redevelopment of the Firepool area following the placing of an OJEU Notice (European Union Notice because of size of project). This documentation will set out the parameters of the design and outcome but will leave it flexible for developers to propose how that outcome is achieved. This does not then limit the ability to bring innovation and creativity into the final proposals for the development. Let us not be in doubt though, we will be demanding high quality design that produces a desirable place to live, work and play that contributes to the wonderful facilities we enjoy and further enhances Taunton's position as a sub-regional centre of the South West.

I could not fail to offer my congratulations to the County Cricket Club for their success in attracting the England Ladies Cricket Team to Taunton as its headquarters. Particularly this year as they are the World champions having won the Ashes this season. No small part in contributing to the decision to relocate from Lords to Taunton was the ambitious and exciting plans the County Cricket Club have for redevelopment of their ground to host International one day matches and ensure the ground offers a far greater diversity of services to the local community. I would suggest that anybody seeing the excellent redevelopment proposals for the ground could not fail to be impressed for its bold but sympathetic design to respect the wonderful views from the ground as presently enjoyed by many. After all, Taunton cricket ground is instantly recognisable from those landmark features of the church towers when picked up by the television cameras. These ambitious plans are also becoming reality with the Cricket Club having already entered into an agreement with developers to commence detailed plans for the new stand and residential units bordering the Coal Orchard car park. As Members will no doubt recall we have already determined in principle that we will sell a portion of the Coal Orchard car park to assist the Cricket Club with their redevelopment and this demonstrates the Authorities commitment to ensuring that the ground as a "Jewel in the Crown of Taunton" remains here. We have always accepted that redevelopment of the cricket ground is an essential component part of our overall redevelopment plans for Taunton without which we will not achieve the high quality riverside space we are seeking.

Also at this meeting we will be seeing the very first public presentation of the new plans for high quality development of public open space from the Brewhouse area through Goodlands Gardens, around the museum and Castle Green. I have requested the Project Team to arrange this with their Architects as I would wish to share what I am told are exciting proposals with Members at the earliest time possible and be assured, these plans are hot off the press, having only just been completed.

In addition to these high profile development plans much work is being carried out to resolve essential elements such as flooding, car parking strategy, leisure and culture requirements, public transport, Section 106 type agreements to fund the foregoing and the essential public realm requirements if we are to meet the publics aspirations of very high quality development that enhances our living environment, not detract from it. It is worth noting that we have already received a huge vote of confidence in our plans because Government have committed substantial funds to help us provide essential infrastructure in the form of the inner relief road, Northern inner distributor road and for a major park and ride to the East of Taunton.

Finally I must pay tribute to the excellent partnership working of a lot of organisations that contribute towards the running and management of this major

redevelopment programme and particularly to our funding partners for the project administration being SWRDA, SCC and ourselves. Our strength in driving this forward undoubtedly comes from the absolute commitment from everybody involved from the planning of policies and strategies, the project planning and now the implementation. My sincere thanks to all for the commitment shown because, although it seems a long time, in terms of development projects of this magnitude and complexity, it really has moved forward apace from the original "Vision for Taunton Commission" in 2002.

New Growth Point Funding Programme from DCLG

I am pleased to report that we have recently received confirmation that we are included in this programme and if successful we will be awarded extra funds to assist with the provision of infrastructure and other essential public realm facilities. We entered this programme on the basis that our rate of development under the Regional Spatial Strategy already qualified us as an eligible authority but obviously we will be able to deliver more effectively and efficiently should we gain extra funding.

The main criteria that need to be satisfied are with answers in bold;

- Is overall housing growth in the local authority area at least 500 homes per year, net? **The RPG10 base figure is 525 DPA, the RSS calls for 660 PA 2006 to 2016 and then higher growth 2016 to 2026.**
- does the proposal offer at least 20% housing growth above the 2003 RPG baseline. **The RSS figures represent a 33.3% increase 2006 to 2026**
- Is there commitment to growth by local partners. **The partnership working around the RSS submission clearly indicates this in my view.**
- Are delivery arrangements clearly explained. **With our plans for regeneration and urban extension well advanced we meet this requirement.**

As can be seen we more than adequately satisfy these conditions so hopefully can use our position to gain the vital funding needed to ensure adequate infrastructure and public realm provision. We are not aware of the amounts on offer other than it is an allocation by DCLG which will be distributed based on the merits of the case presented. We await the final decision with interest.

Proposed Housing Transfer Ballot

I was pleased that in the recent debate we received strong cross party support with a vote 23 for to 9 against, for the Council's decision to proceed with the issue of the "Formal Offer Document" and that we should continue with our promotion of the facts to the tenants. It was disappointing that the LibDems

attending the meeting should be so negative about the process and wish to deny the tenants the choice by calling for the process to be stopped thus depriving tenants of the ability to choose. As I said at the meeting

“I do hope those clamouring for a no vote will examine their conscience and explain to the tenants they seek to persuade, what a no vote will actually mean. Where is the near £2m per year shortfall to be found to meet the decent homes standard, also explain that the decent homes standard does not represent the Taunton Deane standard that tenants have become accustomed to.”

Those opposing the transfer claim tenants are not being given the facts, I can assure all Members and the wider community this claim is totally disingenuous. Everything that is produced from this Council is vetted and approved by Price Waterhouse, Aldbourne Associates, Savills and Government Office SW besides our own internal team. This is specifically done to ensure we do not allow bias to enter our literature and influence the final outcome. We are charged with the responsibility of ensuring full, fair and factual information is made available to every tenant to allow them to make a choice. So, I can only reiterate, whoever tries to encourage a no vote please do ensure that the consequences of a no vote are fully explained, because, I regret to say I see no indication of this happening to date, in fact the opposite, a deliberate attempt to destabilize the process with a tissue of misinformation and factually incorrect statements. I can only implore everybody let us work for the good of the community not trying to score what I can only assume to be political points of self interest. After all it was the previous administration that started this process as far back as 2002, we inherited it and we will seek to implement it in the best interests of our tenants and the community generally.

In all of this we must not forget the huge commitment and absolute dedication given by our Housing staff, they of all people are working tirelessly at the sharp end with many years of experience and they deserve our unanimous support and appreciation. After all, they are in the best position to determine if a transfer is in the best interest of tenants or not and their credentials for ensuring a first class housing service is being delivered is beyond question. The question has to be asked is if dedicated and committed staff are fully supportive of transfer then why are a small group of Members who are not directly involved and refuse to engage with the facts, so against?

Wellington and the Livestock Market

What a delight for me to attend the “Wellington Food Fair” promotion and see such enthusiasm from local business for making it work, sincere congratulations to the Wellington Economic Partnership, Wellington Chamber of Commerce and Wellington Town Council and this Authority’s Economic Development department for setting this up and driving it forward. I am sure this has the distinct

possibility of becoming that “unique selling point” that will enhance business prospects in Wellington and around. Add to this the excellent news as reported at the last meeting that following the annual survey of empty premises carried out by our Forward Plan department, Wellington is enjoying the best trading conditions since the survey commenced. The least empty retail premises ever recorded.

Development of employment units on the Blackdown Business Park is well advanced which will provide much needed space for new or relocating businesses in the town. It reaffirms our commitment to serving the whole of Taunton Deane not just Taunton.

What I do regret is the many negative comments made locally about the alleged demolition of the Community Centre and criticism of attempts to find a solution to the ongoing problem of unsuitable access to the Town Council offices and chamber in Wellington. If the report as prepared by officers was read, it can be clearly seen that it did not recommend demolition of the Community Centre. As for “pie in the sky” about the possibility of finding a better site for a multi purpose community centre I can only say at least we are trying and have not ignored the problem despite its difficulties! No attempts to improve the situation were evident during the 12 year tenure of the previous administration. I would prefer we were criticised for trying, rather than doing nothing!

The relocation of the livestock market has still not been confirmed to us but it is reported that work is under way on a new site in Sedgemoor. However I can confirm that the applicants for the Chelston site have recently concluded the section 106 agreement which validates the planning consent. On enquiry to TMA we have been advised that a final decision is imminent.

Improving Services In Somerset Project

I spent an absolutely fascinating few hours at a workshop arranged by one of the bidders, the theme was, how can we add value to Somerset. The whole idea was to examine what Somerset (and Taunton Deane) had to offer and how it could be made more attractive to companies seeking to relocate. It is encouraging that we are getting exciting information from all the bidders in relation to economic development.

Bishop Fox’s School Education Business Partnership

I was delighted to be invited to attend seminars with business and other partner interests that Bishop Fox School is organising an Education Business Partnership to develop their Students work related skills. This to help alleviate the criticism heard from employers that students leave school without the vital knowledge of work/life experience. I applaud the initiative of the school in taking

this forward and for our part the Chief Executive and I will be offering presentations and tours of the areas of regeneration in Taunton. Also generally making students more aware of the good quality employment opportunities in public services as this was an area not being considered previously. This fits well with our Economic Development departments ongoing initiative with “Young Enterprise” and their involvement with Richard Huish School recently and the plans to involve primary school children in business related skills over the next three years starting at 600 children per year rising to 840 in year three.

Each year the programme envisages a one-hour session per week for 5 weeks. Over the 3 years the ethos and culture of interactive learning (about work and enterprise) hopefully will become embedded in the curriculum. This time frame also allows for the development of the wider community interest and links to be developed between businesses and each of the schools. As these students progress into secondary education it is hoped that they will embrace more readily the Young Enterprise Business programmes, such as that run at Richard Huish School and Bishop Fox’s.

Regional Spatial Strategy

I recently became aware of a reported difference in opinion between two regional bodies, the Regional Assembly and South West Regional Development Agency over the Regional Spatial Strategy figures for new development in the South West. SWRDA claim that the development proposed under the RSS is wholly inadequate, is not ambitious enough and does not build upon the strong growth already experienced in the SW Region over the last 10 years. They are allegedly preparing alternative proposals that they intend presenting to the Inspector during the public examination of the proposals in 2007.

- If this is correct it can only be regarded as an appalling situation where we have two regional bodies wrangling in a public forum.
- Worse still, why have they not worked together to resolve this
- why have local authorities not been made aware of the differences of opinion which I only discovered from reading an article in the press.
- why have local authorities in the South West not been informed (Officers at SCC were not aware)
- what is the likely impact of any alternative proposals on Taunton Deane and the wider Somerset.

We are continually being exhorted by Government to work in partnership but here we have the absolutely worst example of “silo mentality” with apparently each organisation doing their own thing. They are ignoring the democratically elected authorities that will ultimately have to deal with whatever is decided, but no input into that decision. Is this the Government’s method of “getting closer to communities”?

Affordable Housing

I am pleased to report that having raised the profile of the shortage of affordable housing that we have developers proposing sites for consideration. The Planning Committee recently approved a development of 36 homes near Chelston. These are affordable homes for sale and will remain at the same level of affordability in perpetuity. This will greatly assist Taunton Deane to provide a supply of affordable houses for those less well off in the community but would like to own their own home to provide the privacy and pride this brings with it. As a Council we are actively seeking similar sites for development because it allows a two bedroom house to be brought to the market for circa £65,000 without subsidy from the public purse and without any shared equity, This truly has to be regarded as affordable in these difficult times with house price to average earnings ratio running at around 10 to 1. A very similar ratio to central London prices which I believe places it in perspective and reaffirms why exceptional action must be taken if we are to provide much needed affordable housing for those in need.

Cllr John Williams Leader, Taunton Deane Borough Council

COUNCIL MEETING 10 OCTOBER, 2006

Report of Councillor Bishop

STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The Borough Council has recently "Submitted" the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) to the Secretary of State. This coincides with a six-week public consultation period, ending Thursday 19th October 2006. The SCI is widely available, and can be viewed at all council and community offices, all public libraries and on the Council's Web site. The SCI explains:

- How the Borough Council shall consult on preparing the Local Development Framework (which replaces the Local Plan)
- Advice to applicants on how they should consult before submitting planning applications
- How the Borough Council shall consult when we receive planning applications
- How we shall join the Local Development Framework to the Community Strategy.

Because of the links to the Community Strategy, the SCI has been developed as a partnership project between the Borough Council and the Local Strategic Partnership.

Following the current consultation period, the Planning Inspectorate will hold an Examination of the SCI. An independently appointed inspector will consider any objections and assess the "soundness" of the SCI. This is likely to occur in April or May 2007. The content of the Inspector's Report will be binding on the Council.

Blackdown Hills – The Neroche Scheme

The Heritage Lottery Fund, at its Regional Meeting on 14th September, approved a £2million cash boost towards the scheme which covers 35 square miles around the northern ridge of the Blackdown area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The programme of works will start this month and will increase opportunities for learning among the landscape through 'forest schools' and 'health walks'. It will also train apprentices in land management skills and help landowners to work together and share skills and knowledge of the land in the area. The wildlife habitats will be preserved and enhanced by conifer felling which will create open spaces to enable low-density cattle grazing.

Members will be interested to note that about 70% of the area covered by the scheme is in Taunton Deane and that for every £1 that we are investing £36 will be provided by other sources, that the benefits are increased to in excess

of £40 per pound invested if we consider the economic benefits of the scheme.

I would like to congratulate all the Members of the partnership for the amount of work , over a long period , that they have put in to achieve this tremendous result.

Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA)

As a result of a landmark case in the European Court of Justice , it may be necessary to carry out a further EIA before approval of reserved matters is granted , even where an initial EIA was submitted with the application for outline planning permission.

- As a result of this decision , the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has issued interim guidance to planning authorities on EIAs. In particular the DCLG advises that;
- The effects which the project may have on the environment must continue to be identified and assessed at the earliest stage possible (ie when considering the grant of outline planning permission)
- It is only if those effects which are not identifiable until the time when the reserved matters approval is considered that an EIA should be considered again.
- Consideration should be given to an EIA at reserved matters approval stage where likely significant effects are identified which either :
were not identifiable or identified at outline planning stage; or
were identifiable but which now require fresh Assessment

In view of the current uncertainty surrounding EIAs, the DCLG also “strongly advises” planning authorities to “seek guidance from their own legal advisors” on a case by case basis. It is equally important for developers to obtain appropriate advice before submitting an application for reserved matters approval.

Introduction of standard planning application form

The government has announced a timetable for the rolling out of a standard online planning application form across England, which is expected to become the only valid method of submitting an application from July 2007.

Currently, individual LPAs produce their own versions of planning application forms that differ in style , content and the information required. Work is now underway on developing the technology which LPAs will require to implement the new digital system. With testing scheduled for October 2006 on a specifically developed platform, the Government is aiming to go live with the form from November 2006. The standard form will then be rolled out to LPAs around the country in the run up to July 2007, when the form will become mandatory.

Planning Legislation – Time limits for planning permission

Changes introduced from 24 August 2006 mean that developers will no longer be able to obtain planning permission but wait a number of years until the time was right to implement the permission and start work on the site.

The changes

It will no longer be possible to apply to renew the life of a planning permission due to expire because it has not been implemented in time.

The default life of a planning permission and listed building consent will reduce from five years to three years

Planning Authorities may refuse to determine repeat applications and are likely to do so where the developer's intention appears to be to wear down resistance, over time, to controversial development.

The government hopes that these reforms will reduce uncertainty, speed up the planning system and defeat the practice of "land banking". The reforms may also however make it harder for developers and property owners to adopt a long term strategy for land holdings.

Housing Appeal

The Secretary of State has granted planning permission for 300 homes and associated infrastructure on part of a green wedge in Berkshire after overruling a call-in inquiry inspector's recommendation.

The local plan identified the site as falling in a green wedge and its policies required that it should be retained as public open space and private land. However the Council supported the scheme in view of a pressing need for larger affordable dwellings to meet the needs of families on low incomes.

The secretary of state agreed that the shortage of suitable sites might require the council to re-examine whether the application site should be retained as a green wedge. The scheme would deliver three and four bedroomed properties that would meet the needs of low –income families with children, she held. The serious shortage of housing in the South East and the need for affordable housing represented particularly compelling reasons to grant permission, she concluded.

Councillor Cliff Bishop

COUNCIL MEETING – 10th October 2006.

REPORT OF COUNCILLOR DOROTHEA BRADLEY–ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

1.0 ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH.

1.1 Licensing

Town Centre Licensing

Taunton Deane Borough Council has been selected as one of just half a dozen authorities chosen to host a seminar on How To Manage A Town Centre particularly focusing on the Licensing Act 2003 and effective town centre management. The other areas chosen are all large cities. These seminars will provide an opportunity for those involved in licensing and policing behaviour in town centres to hear from those at the cutting edge of implementing the Act. They will also provide an opportunity to engage with officials from DCLG, DCMS and the Home Office, through facilitated discussion, to provide immediate feedback and shape future guidance. Taunton has been chosen after the successful work we did as a Scrutiny Council and because of the Business Improvement District (Bids) programme we are currently working on with the DCLG.

1.2 Health and Safety

Occupational Asthma in Bakeries

The Health and Safety Team have recently carried out a number of inspections of the bakery departments of local large supermarkets as part of a national Health and Safety Executive (HSE) initiative to reduce the incidence of occupational asthma suffered by bakery workers. Many local bakeries will be inspected over coming weeks. Exposure to flour dust and other flour additives may result in bakery staff contracting occupational asthma if safe working methods are not adopted. National guidelines on what is deemed acceptable working practices to ensure compliance with the relevant legislation have been produced by the HSE, and the Health and Safety Team will ensure that all the inspected premises receive detailed reports raising the improvements needed to reduce the risk to employees to an acceptable level.

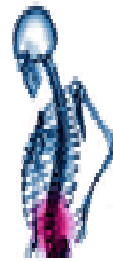


“Don’t take the gamble”

The Health and Safety Team are also promoting 'Don't take the gamble' a national campaign which is taking place from September to October 2006. The campaign is aimed at those workers who may carry out work on asbestos that falls outside the licensing regime (it will however remind workers and dutyholders that certain asbestos work does require a licence). Local building supply companies will be asked to display campaign posters and will also be given free packs of cards highlighting the message to be given out to customers. The campaign will also target dutyholders within the small and medium enterprise range and facilities management organisations.

Better Backs!

In the coming month the team will also be focusing on the Better Backs campaign. The campaign will aim to reduce the incidence of back pain caused or made worse by work, its impact and the number of working days lost due to back pain. Inspections will be carried out of premises where there is a history of bad working practices and high reports of accidents causing back injuries.



**Better
Backs
Campaign**

This national campaign will be launched locally by the Health and Safety Executive, Taunton Deane and Somerset County Council at Castle School on 9th October. The campaign will focus on the holistic approach needed to manage back pain. It will promote sensible workplace precautions that reduce the risk of back pain and emphasise the positive benefits of staying active with back pain. At the same time, it will encourage employers and employees to work together to help people return to normal activities including work.

Dermatitis.

In November the Team will be giving a talk at SCAT as part of a national campaign to increase awareness of the risks of dermatitis to workers employed in hairdressers and florists. Repeated or prolonged contact with water and other chemicals as well as the handling of some plants is known to result in a high proportion of workers in these trades contracting skin problems. This is again part of a national initiative to promote greater awareness to the these trades. Visits to hairdressers and florists will be undertaken as part of this campaign.

1.3 Environmental Protection

Dog Micro Chipping Day

The Dog Warden service and The DogsTrust, recently teamed up to undertake a dog micro chipping day at Wiveliscombe. The day was a great success with over 50 dogs micro chipped, and information and advice given out to local dog owners.

2.0 WASTE COLLECTION AND RECYCLING

***SORT IT!* PHASE 4**

The preparations to introduce *SORT IT!* to the remaining properties in the Borough are well advanced. Containers are now being delivered with collection calendars and service leaflets in time for the first collections to take place on 16 October.

The previous phases of *SORT IT!* continue to perform well and are achieving recycling rates in excess of 50%.

SOMERSET WASTE PARTNERSHIP (SWP) PROCUREMENT

The select list of suppliers for the SWP integrated recycling and waste collection contract will be submitting their bids for evaluation on 27 October. The intense period of evaluation that follows this will enable a preferred bidder to be identified with whom the SWP will negotiate the service package that will be introduced in October 2007.

The “client side” arrangements for managing the new contract are also being developed. A consultation event was recently held at the Deane House to provide further information to all the waste services staff of the six Somerset Councils.

PLASTICS

It is anticipated that the joint procurement of the integrated recycling and waste collection service will result in savings through economies of scale. The bidders have been asked to submit prices for the collection of plastic bottles and cardboard from the kerbside and it is hoped that the procurement process will provide the best means of adding these materials to the services at an affordable price.

Last year the Review Board received a presentation from Bath and North East Somerset Council that identified the high cost of collecting plastics from the kerbside. This is due to the low value of the collected materials, their light weight, the costs of sorting and the absence of local processing facilities.

3.0 TAUNTON DEANE CEMETERIES AND CREMATORIUM

The Federation of British Cremation Authorities provides its Members with a comprehensive Technical Advisory Service. Representatives from the Federation and The Department For Constitutional Affairs inspected Taunton crematorium. The inspection covered a number of areas including; Operational, Administration, Health & Safety, Environmental Protection Act, Buildings, Grounds etc. They reported the crematorium to be well run with a very high standard of maintenance and that all the statutory documents inspected complied with the appropriate regulations. My congratulations to all concerned for receiving such a favorable report.

Cllr Dilly Bradley

COUNCIL MEETING 10th OCTOBER 2006

REPORT OF COUNCILLOR CAVILL ECONOMIC ASSET MANAGEMENT AND TOURISM

Asset Management

Blackdown Business Park: Our industrial park in Wellington will shortly be enhanced by the completion of 7 new starter units. Several enquiries have already been made by businesses that wish to lease, and one unit has been provisionally let. Not only does this represent a substantial investment by Taunton Deane in Wellington, but also the regeneration a site which has been derelict for many years.

Bindon Road/Frobisher Way: At last vacant possession has been obtained on this piece of land. This will now allow us to continue with a joint development of this site, with a developer. This will, in turn, provide additional starter business units for the District.

Proposed new Nursery: Investigations and design work have started for this new complex. Many energy saving and sustainable features are being considered, and if economically viable will be incorporated into the design. The dwelling occupying part of the land which is now surplus to our requirements is due to go to auction on 16th November.

The Bike Park: Planning permission has been granted for the required work and meetings have been held with the ROK Group. A start date has been determined as 9th October and the project should be completed before Christmas. At the time of writing the lease is still due to be signed by the NHS, which should take place on 3rd October.

Wellington Food Town

The Steering Group and partners had an opportunity on 8th and 9th September, at the invitation of Graeme Kidd, to visit Ludlow Food Fair. This Food Fair has been running for some 12 years, and confines producers taking part in the festival to those within 30 miles of Ludlow. It also has a remarkably low level of public expenditure, and is basically run by enthusiastic volunteers, businesses, Chamber of Commerce and some Councillors. Ludlow is also connected with the Slow Food Movement, or Cittaslow movement. The Cittaslow charter covers a number of environmental issues, the quality of urban fabric, the encouragement of local produce and products, and hospitality in the community. All who attended would agree that it was a very worthwhile information gathering visit and reinforces the idea that Wellington should join the Cittaslow movement.

Unfortunately, the first Food Expo, planned for 21st October has been cancelled. Concern had been expressed that the date clashed with other events being organised in Wellington, and could be to their detriment. This may represent a missed opportunity as it was intended that the Food Expo would complement other events in the town. Another date is being given consideration in early December, when it hoped that a longer term view will be taken.

Tourism and TIC

The TIC has gone from strength to strength. It has been out and about at the

Flower Show, the Steam Rally, Meet the Expert with Brittany Ferries. It has acted as the box office for number of events including those at the Tacchi-Morris whilst they were closed during school holidays, and the TIC will be acting as the box office for the Ice Rink. They have had a most successful year to date with accommodation bookings and other income streams including the launch of their own range of greetings cards and calendars.

The Tourism Officer has been particularly busy; in addition to his usual work producing 'Heart of Somerset', 'Eating Out Guide', 'Welcome to Taunton' leaflets and so on, he has been part of the pilot group setting up the Destination Management Organisation. The initial work is to come up with a brand for Somerset and a marketing plan that can be used in conjunction with all promotional materials. A business case document is being prepared to demonstrate the benefits of all five districts co-operating together. This is in conjunction with the Destination Management System, DMS, which is a local (Somerset) web-based system through which everyone can access tourist information. It will link in with EnglandNet, which will automatically be presented on the visitengland.com, and Visit Britain. The joining up of England Tourism should not only give better access but also increase business for all involved.

Economic Development

Waterlinks: This is the name of the application to the Living Landscapes competition. Waterlinks contains 51 projects and the initial application was one of the 6 selected for the finals. To enable us to compete in the finals a grant of £500k was allocated, but to achieve this our application needed additional refinement and had to be submitted by the end of September. This has now been done. This project can justly be described as a celebration of water landscape and nature. It will be linking existing tourist attractions and visitor centres using green modes of travel. One project plans to create a new attraction, in the form of a climate change centre. Others, to preserve and enhance the historic environments of the waterfront in Taunton and Bridgwater, to improve access to the wildlife and wetland reserves as well as the wetland archaeology in Somerset. Last but of course not least, to improve and extend our canal and navigable river network. This project aims to provide a role for everyone, promote active lifestyles for the health and wellbeing of the community.

Young Enterprise: It is intended to roll out a Young Enterprise scheme to involve Primary School children; in the first instance, in the more deprived areas of Taunton and Wellington. It is hoped that this scheme will not only dovetail into present educational requirements but also be an incentive to the aspirations of young children.

The Economic Development Department are also working with the Steering Group for the Wiveliscombe Town Hall Trust, where they are considering the option appraisal, the restoration, conversion and development of the former Town Hall. They intend to apply for part funding in the first instance from the Archeological Heritage Fund; if successful, to bring back into use an amenity of considerable benefit for Wiveliscombe and surrounding areas.

Councillor Norman P Cavill

COUNCIL MEETING 10 OCTOBER 2006

Report of Councillor Clark – Leisure Arts and Culture

Britain in Bloom

The competition is judged on floral displays, permanent landscaping, cleanliness, sustainability, public awareness and community involvement Taunton won the gold medal and the TESCO CUP ahead of Bath. Wellington was a very close second in its category and won silver gilt and the PORTMAN CUP.(No Gold was awarded this year.)

Events

The popular Vivary Park summer season of free bandstand concerts ran successfully from June – September.

The family fun day held in French Weir, was a great success. This event attracted hundreds of families who enjoyed activities including mask making, fencing, scrap recycling, river boat trips, football coaching and a real life silent movie show. The Friends of French Weir Park were kept busy all day explaining the plans for the development of the park to the public and enlisted a large number of new members.

The large scale concerts returned to the park this year with a tribute to the music of Abba and Queen on one evening and The Glen Miller Tribute Orchestra on the second evening. The concerts were provided and run by Stage Electrics for the first time this year who paid a hire fee to the Council and praised the Tourist Information Centre for its outstanding work in selling tickets and promoting the events.

The Chinese State Circus and world famous Shaolin Wu-Shu warriors paid a visit to Vivary Park in September. This proved to be another popular event which attracted many visitors from outside of Taunton Deane.

Community Grants

Capital grant aid has been awarded to Ash Priors Village Hall for disabled access and refurbishment, Comeytrowe Community Centre for emergency roof repairs and Wiveliscombe Community Centre for a new kitchen. An application for funding from 2007/08 has been received from Langford Budville for a village hall.

TONE LEISURE LIMITED ACTIVITIES

Facility News

Taunton Pool will be assessed against the ISRM Pool Safety Award Criteria. The standard covers areas including pool water quality, health and safety, customer care and maintenance.

Blackbrook Pavilion will be assessed against the Quest criteria. The Blackbrook staff are hoping to equal the efforts of their colleagues at Wellington and Wellsprings, where the standard was achieved earlier this year.

Facility investment

Vivary Golf Course

An enhanced waste management system is being installed to the Greenkeepers' Workshop area at Vivary. This is an important improvement, which will enhance our environmental management.

Blackbrook Pavilion and Tennis Centre

The Young Persons' Activity Zone. The Zone aims to improve health, fitness and activity for six to sixteen year olds. Activities include machine dance using state of the art platforms, indoor cycling, weight management classes, fun sessions and sports specific activity sessions, together with lots of advice and motivation from trained staff. In partnership with the Tone Schools Partnership two days of fun-filled sporting activity took place in September. Blackbrook was closed to allow up to 1,000 children per day to try out a range of activities including tennis, climbing, team sports and fitness classes. There will also be an opportunity for the students to try out the new "Zone" area.

Works to install automatic doors and enhance the Reception area in the Tennis area are being completed to coincide with the completion of the new indoor tennis courts.

St. James Street Baths

Works to improve the Reception area at St. James Street Baths will be carried out during October. The enhanced area will offer a modern, open plan Reception area, which will provide an enhanced level of customer service.

Station Road Swimming Pool

The vending area furniture has been replaced and upgraded and the Reception and lobby areas have been re-decorated.

A new music system (for background music around the building as well as the pool hall) is to be installed soon. This system will also be linked to a new Public Address system.

Wellington Sports Centre

Air conditioning was installed in the Upper Hall earlier this year (along with a new ceiling and lighting). This has proved a major success throughout the summer, with participation in fitness classes increasing by 21% from last summer.

It has been agreed to invest in some new equipment and quotes are currently being collated for: new Fitness Gym cardio machines, gymnastics equipment, judo mats and basketball hoops.

Forthcoming Events, Service and Programme Developments

Wellsprings Leisure Centre

Wellsprings will soon be host to the first "Sportswall" to be launched in the South West. The interactive wall has over 900 programmes built in and with these come numerous schemes of work suitable for Key stage 1 to 4, sport specific groups, inclusive sports and adult programmes such as circuits.

Wellington Sports Centre

There is to be a 'Family Fitness' Open Day on Sunday, 8th October, where new kids/teens fitness sessions are to be launched, as well as the latest releases of our popular fitness class programmes.

New swimming lane sessions have been introduced to the pool programme, hoping to attract more fitness swimmers. Swimskool continues to be very successful, maintaining 90% occupancy throughout the difficult summer months. New Synchronised Swimming sessions have been launched, and have proved very popular.

ARTS SERVICE

Somerset Art Week

750 artists took part in 364 locations across Somerset and a huge amount of activity took place in Taunton Deane. This biennial visual arts festival recorded over 60,000 visitors and generated sales of over £300,000 in 2004 and so we look forward to the collation of this year's figures. Highlights in Taunton included the 'Anti Static' Micro Festival at the Brewhouse Theatre, sculpture in the garden of the Castle Hotel, exhibitions in the County Museum and collaboration with the Design Network Forum. Barns, village halls, farm buildings and pubs opened their doors across the Deane with artists in Milverton, Wiveliscombe, Burrowbridge and North Curry, and the Blackdown Hills promoting their work together through shared cluster maps and workshops.

The value of the arts

Taunton Deane Borough Council have collaborated with the other Somerset local authorities, the Arts Council England and Somerset Arts Promoters group to produce a short advocacy film called 'The Arts Adding Value in Somerset'. Taunton's Westival also got off to a good start at the end of July & beginning of August with audiences coming from Devon and Dorset and further afield.

Museum Heritage Lottery bid.

The Executive have agreed to support the Museum's bid for £6.3 million.

Councillor John Clark

COUNCIL MEETING 10 OCTOBER 2006

Report of Councillor Greg Garner – Housing Services

This report for Full Council will focus on two areas: First the usual update on the Housing Stock Transfer Project, second is an update on energy efficiency.

Housing stock transfer

The end of this process is now in sight. By the time of the next routine Full Council in 2007 it is anticipated that the tenants ballot with regard to the future of their homes will have been decided.

In addition to the usual day to day activity, the Housing Stock Transfer Project (HSTP) has placed particular strain on the housing department, and this pressure will continue post ballot. In addition to the day job and the HSTP, TDBC will soon be involved in a mock civic disaster exercise spanning two days. These exercises are traditionally carried out mainly by housing officers and also involve a number of other agencies. This training is essential however the timing on this occasion is far from ideal.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank all of our housing officers for their hard work and professionalism throughout the entire HSTP, I acknowledge unreservedly that it has been far from easy to undertake a project of this magnitude whilst also ensuring that we not only maintain but in certain areas have improved day to day service delivery to our community.

A snapshot of recent HSTP activity is as follows:

Last three months

- Tenants and Residents meetings attended various events around the Borough
- Coffee morning at Sheltered Schemes continued.
- Trained Housing Staff door knocking continued through July and August - statistical information collated
- Various banners/posters displayed.
- Events Trailer and Roadshow went live in August.
- Housing Transfer Advice desk set up in Deane Housing Reception. Further display boards arranged.
- Policies & Offer document finalised
- Policies working group set up
- Events list organised and circulated to Managers, Councillors – stands also set up in Supermarkets.
- Staff team meetings attended
- Staff briefing day completed 15/8/06
- Leaseholders factsheet & drop in sessions organised (August)
- Transfer News Issue 2 (August)
- Staff News Update (August)

- SMSR Opinion Testing undertaken in August.
- Staff factsheet produced – 2nd version.
- Article for Tenants Talk & Deane Dispatch.
- Visit to Stroud District Council
- Offer Document completed ready for printing including Summary Document and covering letter for secure tenants and leaseholders (September) – Large print, audio versions.
- DVD/Video completed (September)
- Transfer News Update (September)
- Meetings of Officer Steering Group, Communications Group, Staff Forum, Tenants Panel and Forum
- Activities matrix organised to coincide with door knocking.

In addition The Shadow Board has met twice covering:

August	Policies & Offer Document.
September	Starter Tenancies for Deane Housing Business Plan Content of Offer Document & Tenancy Agreement.

Events and venues attended by the HSTP team:

15/7/06 – Procters Farm – Monkton Heathfield
 22/7/06 – Bishops Lydeard Flower Show.
 05/08/06 – Bishops Lydeard Steam Fair
 06/08/06 – French Weir Fun Day
 22/08/06 – Asda Superstore Stand
 24-26 /08/06 – Co-op Wellington Store
 09/09/06 - Wilton & Sherford Celebration Day
 16/09/06 - Halcon Estate Community Day
 30/09/06 - Carnival Wellington

Next Three Months

- Training for Housing staff for door knocking.
- Next round of Door knocking based on Offer Document (October)
- Public viewings of DVD/Video
- Offer document powerpoint presentation in Reception.
- Training for non housing staff
- Organise drop in sessions and existing events – Roadshow/Trailer to visit rural areas.
- Further Tenants and Staff Newsletter to be sent out.
- Second Opinion testing to be carried out by SMSR
- Full Council – Executive Meeting to decide to proceed to Stage II.
- Ballot (November) – Electoral Reform Services to carry out confidential postal ballot
-

Further points to note:

Blair Loses Council Housing Vote

The Labour leadership suffered a defeat at its annual conference in Manchester as delegates backed a motion calling on the Government to give more money for council houses "as a matter of urgency". It was approved by a margin of almost two-to-one on a card vote heavily bolstered by the union block vote. However, Ministers opposed the motion, saying they could not give a "blank cheque", but stating that they are already committed to ensuring extra homes are built, including more council properties. (27/9/06. CIHO.)

Door Knocking & Delivery of Offer Document.

9th October 2006 all Council secure tenants will receive an offer document, dvd, summary document and covering letter. The offer document will contain a Reply card and all views will be considered before the Council decides whether to hold a formal ballot in Winter 2006. Tenants and leaseholders will have 28 days in which to comment on the offer document.

A door knocking strategy has been produced, with housing staff volunteering to carry out the doorknocking once the offer document has been delivered. Training for all front line staff and doorknockers will be provided.

Energy efficiency

Working with British Gas for just over a year, TDBC has achieved the highest number of cavity wall insulation installations in the country. To date 836 households have been surveyed with 604 installations completed.

Based on BG figures, the average saving on fuel cost per household is £216 per annum, which equates to circa £130k on the 604 houses above. This also equates to 219 tonnes less carbon and 804 tonnes less carbon dioxide entering our atmosphere from those houses.

BG and TDBC funded this scheme jointly. Each organisation contributed £50.00 per household, which was deducted from the council tax bill of those participating in the scheme.

Following this success we will seek to continue this scheme but, in addition, we are also actively looking to introduce further initiatives that are similarly cost effective and environmentally beneficial.

Cllr Greg Garner

COUNCIL MEETING 10 OCTOBER 2006

Report of Councillor Terry Hall – Resources

CORPORATE SUPPORT

Print and Design:

Over 60% of the colour print work we used to outsource is now being printed in house following the purchase of the digital printer in March 2006. In addition, we have been able to undertake significant new pieces of work. The Design team have also managed to move more work internally following the upgrade of their Apple Mac's in April 2006.

A full 6-month report on Design and Print will be available at the end of October 2006.

Customer Services

We continue to improve on our call volumes and answer rates with the abandonment rate figures for September shown below

Only 2.6% of calls abandoned
84.3% answered in 30 seconds

Currently we are resolving an average of 60% of calls at first point of contact and are investigating ways of improving further on this target.

Benefits face-to-face service moved back to the Benefits team as the final part of removing their complicated queries from Customer Services. The main reception desk and Benefits desk continue to work closely together to provide assistance to customers who want a simple query answered (e.g., new application form).

Wellington Community Office:

Throughput remains at about 3,000 per month – a decrease on last year of about 500 as expected with the instigation of the payment kiosk and web/phone payments continuing to grow. The Tourist Information section continues to remain steady but National Express ticket requests/purchased have increased dramatically from ~£500 per month to ~£2,000 per month over the past couple of months.

“ISIS ” – (IMPROVING SERVICES IN SOMERSET)

Members will all have recently received their copies of the September ISIS Newsletter.

The bidders are currently working up their bids, which entails considerable contact from them with the project office and in scope services over details.

A proposed method of evaluating the three bids has been agreed. Consideration is being given to how the JV may be branded and marketed.

ISiS will be the main topic of the Members Briefing on December 5th. I urge all members to try and attend if possible as shortly afterwards we will be asked to decide whether to proceed to establishment of a partnership with a private sector company

PROCUREMENT

We are developing a Joint Procurement Strategy with Somerset County Council. We recognise that we share many of the same suppliers and contractors and have very similar local issues and priorities. The new Strategy will provide a joined-up approach to future Procurement allowing better economies of scale and the sharing of expertise and skills. This will make it easier for businesses to work with us, providing a standard approach to engaging with our contracts. This will also provide us with a head start for when ISiS commences.

Early work on this includes a workshop with members to prioritise the community benefits to deliver through procurement in the future. Members helped identify community benefits that Procurement could support such as the local economy, sustainability and environmental issues, equalities and supporting small and medium enterprises.

We are aiming to have a draft Joint Procurement Strategy for member consideration by the end of the year.

MEMBER SERVICES

The IDeA in conjunction with SWPE is launching a Member Development Charter in the next few weeks - it will be democratic services equivalent to IIP. Although it is voluntary it will certainly be used as a measurement of competence by the inspectors and regulators. The many facets of the Charter will include Member Development and skills frameworks. A further requirement is that we establish a Member Steering Group so councillors will have an opportunity to contribute to this whole process.

FINANCIAL SERVICES

The external audit of the 2005/06 Statement of Accounts has now been completed and it is pleasing to note that the authority has received an unqualified opinion from the auditor. This was recently reported to the Corporate Governance Committee

Work will start shortly on the second quarterly budget monitoring exercise for

2006/07 and it is hoped that we will be able to identify under spends will help to offset the overspends reported to the Review Board back in September, particularly around homelessness and concessionary fares. Work on progressing the 2007/08 budget has started and the Review Board will receive an update on the budget process and timetable at their meeting on 5 October.

Work is also continuing with supporting many of the key projects which the Council is actively pursuing such as Waste Contract Integration, the Vision for Taunton, Housing Transfer and of course ISIS

REVENUES

Council Tax software conversion

The system conversion exercise has now been completed and staff are processing on the new system. However due to a combination of staff taking time to adjust to the new system and the one month downtime for conversion, a backlog of post has accumulated. This backlog currently stands at 3,000 items. External resource is shortly being introduced in order to help clear this backlog. Additionally, recovery action will be recommenced on the new system in the near future.

Business Rates software conversion

The conversion of our Business Rates system to the new software is scheduled to take place at the end of November 2006. The Business Rates conversion process is complex due to the intricacies of Business Rates legislation, but is not cumbersome as we are only dealing with a comparatively small number of accounts.

BENEFITS

At the time of writing this report an investigation is under way into the accuracy of the management information provided by the Benefits System software.

I will give members an oral update at the Council meeting

INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Pressure on the resources of the unit remains very high - whilst the new revenues and benefits system went live in July, we are still working on interfaces to customer services and the web site, and work on converting the NDR has also now commenced. Meanwhile, the work on implementing the new housing system is also significant and growing as the target live date gets nearer. We are seeing the consequences of delivering these 2 major projects concurrently as our ability to support other systems is put under severe strain.

Our 2 new students have settled well into the unit, and are proving valuable members of our team.

Congratulations to Jackie Hayes, who has now passed the foundation level ITIL examination. ITIL (Information Technology Infrastructure Library) is a framework based on ISO 20000 for ICT service delivery, and covers every aspect of our service. We expect to move over time to a more formal adoption of ISO 20000, and anticipate that as ISIS evolves our customers will mandate a service accredited to this standard. We now have 3 members of our team qualified to this level.

Terry Hall

COUNCIL MEETING 10 October 2006

Report of Councillor Gwyneth Leighton - Communications

Consultation

The **Best Value General Survey** is currently underway in Taunton Deane. This questionnaire measures residents' satisfaction with the overall authority and some of our specific services. A random sample of 3,500 residents has been mailed the questionnaire and will receive two reminder letters in order for us to meet the minimum 1,100 responses required.

The Audit Commission uses the information to monitor public services across the country and has made it a statutory requirement for this information to be collected by local councils every three years. TDBC has received top quartile satisfaction ratings compared to other English districts in the past and this year's results will provide a benchmarking opportunity.

An independent market research agency - Ipsos MORI - is carrying out this survey on our behalf. A presentation of the results both across Somerset and at district level will be made by MORI in January.

'Your Council, Your Views'

The Government is placing a greater emphasis on the work that local authorities undertake to engage with the local community. The results of this survey give a very important and useful insight into the issues that matter to local people. They will also inform the Council's future priorities for the area and how we spend public money. A presentation of key messages from the Your Council, Your Views exercise was made to the September Review Board which recommended that the outcomes be considered by the Executive when making budget and priorities decisions.

Overall, respondents' perception of the Council, its staff and councillors was positive with the majority saying that the Council overall is 'excellent' or 'good'. Issues such as putting residents first and listening to customers were some of the themes emerging. There was strong support for reducing anti-social behaviour and increasing community safety. Likewise, continuing to tackle traffic congestion was seen as something that would make living in Taunton Deane better. Continuing on the subject of priorities, it was found that 77% of respondents agreed that affordable housing should be a top priority for the Council and 71% of respondents felt that 'Project Taunton', as the Vision is now known, was of high importance too.

A clear majority of residents said they would rather see a cost of inflation rise in Council Tax than cuts to local services. There was also strong support for the Council to explore other options. The services seen as the most important were those that contribute towards community safety and a cleaner environment.

Information Management

A profile of Taunton Deane's older population is currently being finalised and will give us a more detailed analysis of current issues and predicted trends with our ageing population. We need to take this into account at every level in the Council, from the setting of overall priorities and policies to the delivery of front-line services.

Corporate Complaints Procedure

The Corporate Complaints Procedure currently is currently being reviewed. The aim is to give us a more consistent, efficient and effective approach process, leading to more satisfied customers.

Issues being examined include: What the definition of a complaint should be; the number of stages a complaint can go through internally prior to going to the Local Government Ombudsman; customer access and communication issues. The results will be drafted into action points and areas to work on.

Public Relations and Media Relations

During the period July – September the Council issued 46 **press releases** and handled over 80 enquiries from the media on a wide range of issues. Oxen Lane has been on the radar screen during August and September and generated numerous enquiries at a local and regional level. The High Court action recently agreed by the Planning Committee will inevitably bring the case and TDBC back into the National spotlight.

Project Taunton is the new name for the Vision. The Delivery team have recently appointed two freelance PR professionals on a part-time basis to handle the public relations on behalf of the partners PR team. Our PR officer will continue working to ensure that TDBC's inextricable involvement in Project Taunton remains prominent in the eyes of the public.

'Waterlinks' - A joint PR & Marketing group has been set up with partners across Somerset to look at how to raise awareness, enthusiasm and consult with the community on the various 'Waterlinks' projects. The group agrees that partnership is key and that a strong 'Waterlinks' identity should be developed. We are working with partners to make sure that the community is kept informed and encouraged to participate fully in this exciting venture.

Finally ...

The summer issue of **Deane Dispatch** has been distributed and we have received positive feedback from members of the public. As ever we are working to ensure that it contains features, which are fresh and engaging.

Gwyneth Leighton
Executive Councillor for Communications

October 2006

COUNCIL MEETING 10 OCTOBER 2006

Report of Councillor Mrs Joanna Lewin-Harris – Community Leadership

POLICY COMMISSION

Members from the County Council, the five District Councils, Somerset's Primary Care Trusts and the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) came together in a Policy Commission to consider the nature of the voluntary and community sector in Somerset and how best to enable it to go from strength to strength.

Jane Chipp, Taunton Deane's Strategy and Partnerships Manager, joined me as Taunton Deane's representatives on the Policy Commission.

There were two particular drivers for the Policy Commission. The first is the Somerset Compact. The compact aims to improve the relationship between the VCS and public bodies. Its vision is that "in Somerset, the voluntary and community sector will act as equal partners. They will recognize each other's strengths and work together for the benefit of the people of Somerset".

The Local Area Agreement (LAA) is the second driver for the Policy Commission. One of the outcomes of the LAA is to create a more thriving and vibrant Voluntary Sector in Somerset, which is in a stronger position to represent and support our communities. It is proposed to achieve this by increasing the proportion of key public services delivered by the VCS and increasing the number of self-sufficient VCS organizations. Further it aims to increase the number, training and diversity of volunteers in Somerset.

The key recommendations of the Policy Commission will include strengthening the Voluntary Sector infrastructure, simplifying funding and reporting arrangements and annual collection of core information so that progress can be measured.

The Policy Commission will shortly publish its final report and will invite all partners to adopt it.

LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Apprenticeship Scheme

One of the schemes that came out of the LSP Away Day in 2005 was the LSP Apprenticeship Scheme. The aim of this is to give young people (aged 16-19) the chance to work across a range of the partner organizations in the LSP. The scheme focuses on career progression through combining 'on the job' experience with studying towards a nationally recognized qualification. There are 12 confirmed placements for 2006, including 3 in Taunton Deane Borough Council. However, the scheme has proved attractive to young people and demand for placements has outstripped supply.

The LSP is considering how to find and in particular how the voluntary sector can be helped to join in the scheme.

Somerset Gateway

Somerset Gateway is a community information portal, which provides local information about Somerset at www.somerset.gov.uk/somersetgateway. The database holds information on over 2000 organisations, including advice giving agencies, clubs and societies, leisure and sports activities, self help groups, parish councils and voluntary services. It is a useful website. If you are not familiar with it, I can recommend it as a useful source of information.

The LSP is working with Somerset Gateway to underpin local partnership working through information sharing. The project will deliver improved access to information and build an information-sharing network through the Gateway.

Sustainable Community Strategy

I gave some background to the Sustainable Community Strategy in my report to Full Council in July.

A first draft of this document has now been produced, based on the feedback from Talking Tomorrow's Taunton Deane. The draft follows the Talking Tomorrow's Taunton Deane themes:

- Learning and Working
- Getting About and Finding Out
- Safer Places, Safer Communities
- Your Health and Your Home
- Where you Live, Work and Play

Each theme has three sections:

- Introduction
- What we know through Facts, Figures and Trends
- What you told us through Talking Tomorrow's Taunton Deane.

There are also specific chapters on North and East Taunton as these are the two areas where local Community Planning is currently focused.

The proposal is that this will be a 10 year strategy, with a regularly updated Action Plan. The first Action Plan is planned to cover two years. This means it will be updated at the same time as the Local Area Agreement.

LSP Review

Again, I gave some background to this in my July report to Full Council. This is still work in progress. The Local Government White Paper, due late October, will have a significant bearing on the way forward.

Meanwhile, it is agreed that the LSP should focus on:

- Drawing up and reviewing a Sustainable Community Strategy
- Overseeing community well-being and ensuring the joining up of local agendas
- Its community leadership, lobbying and advocacy role
- Adding value – making things happen that would not happen without the LSP

This should be done in the context of:

- Better connection with the SSP and other key partnerships such as the Vision for Taunton and the CDRP
- Complementing not duplicating existing or emerging governance arrangements
- Focusing on a limited number of priority outcomes
- Capacity issues

The recommended new structure includes an LSP Board of 20-30 members, a smaller management team, links to existing bodies delivering the LAA at the district level, scrutiny arrangements and an occasional community event.

CRIME AND DISORDER PARTNERSHIP

The items for the September meeting of the Taunton Deane Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) were an update on the work of the CDRP-funded anti-social behaviour coordinator, Local Action Teams, Neighbourhood Policing and an update on crime performance.

Taunton Deane's anti-social behaviour data-base has gone live and reports of anti-social behaviour are now being logged centrally. This will enable TDBC to check hot-spot areas and allocate resources appropriately. It is anticipated that data from other agencies would be used to inform this process in due course.

Some very positive results are now coming from Local Action Teams. Claudine Wall of Lambrook Local Action Team had been recognised in the national 'Taking a Stand' awards, receiving £1,000 to carry out further work. Holway LAT were using the YMCA as a conduit for young people, setting up a youth café. Galmington Local Action Team had successfully piloted a mobile youth shelter, and subsequently erected a permanent structure with help from a local business and CDRP funding.

Chief Superintendent John Snell briefed the meeting on Neighbourhood Policing. Taunton Deane beats have now been divided into 5 clusters, each with a Sergeant in charge. A further 16 Police Community Support Officers will be appointed during the next few months. These posts will be fully funded by the Government next year, but after that 25% of the costs will have to be found locally.

Crime statistics remain available in detail on the Avon and Somerset Constabulary website www.avonandsomerset.police.uk. Burglaries had decreased, but there had been an increase in criminal damage through the summer months, largely associated with alcohol. There had been particular problems in Vivary Park and Goodlands Gardens. To date, 17 people have been arrested.

EQUALITIES SURVEY

Thanks to those of you who completed the Equalities Survey. There were 303 responses from staff and 20 from members. A summary of the results and the answers to the quiz part will go in the weekly bulletin once analysis has been completed.

CPA INSPECTION

Our Use of Resources and Value for Money and Direction of Travel CPA inspection will take place between 18 and 20 October.

CORPORATE STRATEGY

A draft of the Corporate Strategy 2007 –2010 will be coming to members later in the year.

Joanna Lewin-Harris