



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 20TH FEBRUARY 2007 AT 18:30.

AGENDA

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

1. To receive the Minutes of the Meetings of the Council held on 22 January 2007 (attached)
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 16
6. Declarations of Interest
7. Car Parking Charges 2007/08
To receive a recommendation from Councillor Bishop, Executive Councillor, Planning and Transportation, following a meeting of the Traffic Regulation Order Panel held on 1 February 2007 (attached0)
8. Part 1 - To deal with questions to and receive recommendations from the Executive:-

(i) Councillor Williams (Leader of the Council)

Recommendations relating to:-

(a) General Fund Revenue Estimates 2007/08

(b) Capital Programme 2007/08

(c) Council Tax Setting 2007/08

(d) Proposals to refresh the Corporate Management of the Council

(please note that there is an "Exempt" Appendix in relation to this recommendation. If Council enter into any debate in connection with the information contained in the appendix then it will be necessary to pass a resolution to exclude the press and public)

(ii) Councillor Garner (Housing Services)

Recommendation relating to Housing Revenue Account, Revenue Estimates and Rent Levels, Deane Helpline and Deane Building DLO Account 2007/08

(iii) Councillor Bishop (Planning Policy and Transportation)

Recommendation relating to the provision of IT in Development Control

9. Part II - To receive reports from the following members of the Executive:-

- (i) Councillor Williams - Leader of the Council
- (ii) Councillor Mrs Lewin-Harris - Community Leadership
- (iii) Councillor Bishop - Planning Policy and Transportation
- (iv) Councillor Mrs Bradley - Environmental Services
- (v) Councillor Cavill - Economic Development, Property and Tourism
- (vi) Councillor Clark - Leisure, Arts and Culture
- (vii) Councillor Garner - Housing Services
- (viii) Councillor Hall - Resources
- (ix) Councillor Leighton - Communications

10. The Wellsprings Centre

A report on the issues that had arisen out of the recovery of the project to build the Wellsprings Centre was submitted to the Executive at its meeting on 6 December 2006. Although there is no decision to be made by Council on this matter, the Executive felt that in view of the importance of this project, the report should be submitted to Council for information. A copy of the relevant report is therefore attached for the information of members.

The following item is likely to be considered after the exclusion of the press and public because of the likelihood that exempt information would otherwise be disclosed relating to the Clause set out below of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

11. Proposals to Refresh Corporate Management of the Council - Appendix - Clause 1

G P DYKE
Member Services Manager
13 February 2007



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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Fax: 01823 356329
E-Mail: g.dyke@tauntondeane.gov.uk

Website: 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 22 January 2007 at 8.00 pm.

Present: The Mayor (Councillor Hindley)

Councillors Beaven, Mrs Biscoe, Bishop, Bowrah, Mrs Bradley, Cavill, Miss Cavill, Coles, Croad, Davies, Denington, Durdan, Floyd, Govier, Guerrier, Hayward, Henley, C Hill, Mrs Marie Hill, Mrs M Hill, House, Lees, Leighton, Mrs Lewin-Harris, Lisgo, Meikle, Morrell, Mullins, Murphy, Paul, Phillips, Prior-Sankey, Slattery, Mrs Smith, P Smith, Stone, Stuart-Thorn, Vail, Watson, Wedderkopp, and Williams.

1 Minutes

The Minutes of the meetings of the Council held on 12 December 2006 and 19 December 2006, copies having been sent to each Member, were signed by the Mayor.

2. Apologies

Councillors Mrs Allgrove, Clark, Edwards, Garner, Hall, Weston, Mrs Whitmarsh and Mrs Wilson.

3. Declarations of Interest

Councillors Paul, Henley, Govier and Prior-Sankey declared personal but not prejudicial interests as members of Somerset County Council.

4. Response to the White Paper “Strong and Prosperous Communities” on the Proposed Alternatives for Local Government Structure in Somerset

Following the meeting of the Executive, which had taken place immediately before this meeting, further consideration was given to the various options that had been proposed as a response to the above White Paper. Further detailed discussion took place on the strengths and weaknesses of each of the various options.

Council had previously agreed (Minute 6/2006) not to support the decision of the Somerset County Council to prepare a bid for submission to the Government seeking unitary status for the whole of Somerset. Consideration was given to two further options relating to an enhanced partnership approach for working in Somerset and the bid being promoted by Sedgemoor District Council relating to a unitary structure for Somerset West.

Moved by Councillor Prior-Sankey, seconded by Councillor Henley that a recorded vote be taken in relation to this proposal. The motion was put and was not agreed.

RESOLVED that:

- (1) the enhanced partnership approach be supported and the prospectus submitted as Appendix 2 to the report be submitted to the Department of Communities and Local Government as this Council's response to the White Paper.
- (2) any bid for a West Somerset Unitary, covering the areas of West Somerset, Sedgemoor and Taunton Deane be not supported in the event of it coming forward.

Further discussion took place on whether the Council should actively look into the establishment of a Taunton Town Council.

RESOLVED that no further action be taken on this matter.

(The meeting ended at 9.15 pm.)

COUNCIL MEETING 20 FEBRUARY 2007

CAR PARKING CHARGES 2007/08

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

At the meeting of the Traffic Regulation Orders Panel on 1 February 2007 consideration was given to the various proposed changes to car park tariffs in Taunton and Wellington for 2007/08. A full breakdown of the proposed charges, as advertised, is set out in Appendix 1. The Traffic Regulation Orders Panel recommended to Councillor Bishop that the parking tariffs, as advertised, be agreed and that the appropriate Traffic Regulation Order be confirmed. Councillor Bishop decided that rather than make a decision on the Panel's recommendation himself it should be referred to Council for its consideration.

It is therefore RECOMMENDED that Council consider the recommendation of the Traffic Regulation Orders Panel in relation to car park charges for 2007/08.

Councillor Cliff Bishop
Executive Councillor
Planning Policy and Transportation

APPENDIX 1

Public Notice affecting all public car parks in Taunton and Wellington

Proposed Car Parking Charges 2007/2008

The Taunton Deane Borough (Off Street Parking Places) (No. 30 Amendment) Order 2006

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:-

<u>Car Parks</u>	Up to	1 Hr	2 Hrs
Castle Green and Whirligig	Current	£1.20	£2.30
	Proposed	£1.30	£2.50

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	80p	£1.30	£1.90	£2.40	£4.00	£4.50	£5.00	£5.50
	Proposed	90p	£1.40	£2.00	£2.50	£4.50	£5.00	£5.50	£6.00

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
Ash Meadows (maximum stay 3 hours), Belvedere Road, Castle Street, Duke Street, Elms Parade, Fons George (maximum stay 6 hours), 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	70p	£1.20	£1.40	£1.80	£2.50	£3.00	£3.50	£4.00
	Proposed	80p	£1.30	£1.50	£1.90	£2.80	£3.30	£3.90	£4.50

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	70p	£1.20	£1.40	£1.80	£2.50	£3.00	£3.20	£3.50

Bridge Road and Victoria Gate	Proposed	80p	£1.30	£1.50	£1.90	£2.60	£3.10	£3.30	£3.60
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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 £640 to **£700**.
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 £465 to **£525**.
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 £410 to **£420**.

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	50p	80p	£1.20
	Proposed	50p	90p	£1.30

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	50p	80p	£1.20	£1.60
	Proposed	50p	90p	£1.30	£1.70

10. To increase the Season Ticket (6 months) charges in the Wellington 'Commuter Car Parks' from £185 to **£200**.

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, 15 December 2006**.

G P Dyke
Democratic Services Manager

The Deane House
Belvedere Road
Taunton, TA1 1HE
23 November 2006

TAUNTON DEANE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING 20 FEBRUARY 2007

Part I

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

COUNCILLOR WILLIAMS

1. General Fund Revenue Estimates 2007/08

The Executive have considered its final 2007/2008 budget proposals. It contains details on

- (i) the General Fund Revenue budget proposals for 2007/2008 including the proposed Council Tax increase and the Prudential Indicators and
- (ii) draft figures on the predicted financial position of the Council for the following four years.

The proposals have also been considered in detail by the Review Board and details of its views were submitted. Consultation on the budget has taken place.

The Council Tax calculation and formal tax setting resolution is to be considered separately. The proposed budget for Taunton Deane will result in a Band D Council Tax of £128.05 an increase of £2.51 (2%) on 2006/2007. This represents an increase of 4.8p per week. The Band D tax payer will therefore receive all the services provided by the Council in 2007/2008 at a cost of £2.46 per week.

It is a requirement for the Council to prepare not only budgets for the following financial year but also to provide indicative figures for the two years after that. The Medium Term Financial Plan provides an indication of the expected budget gap going forward into 2008/2009 and a summary of this position was submitted.

These figures have been prepared on the assumption of a 4.5% increase in Council Tax each year including 2008/2009. In addition annual growth of 1% in government support has also been assumed. The figures take into account the ongoing impact of all the Executive budget proposals and the 2007/2008 proposed Council Tax level.

It is expected that despite the work done in recent years to close the budget gap and produce a sustainable revenue budget the increasing cost of staff (pay, pensions etc) and other demands on the Council will mean that there will continue to be a budget gap in future years. A report will be submitted early in the new financial year which will review the Medium Term Financial Plan position. The objective being to draw up a plan to resolve the ongoing budget gap for the medium term.

The estimated expenses chargeable to the non-parished area of Taunton in 2007/2008 amounts to £27,870 an increase of 2% and this forms part of the total net expenditure of the Council. The precept in 2006/2007 was £27,320.

As part of the Prudential Code for capital finance there is a requirement for Council to approve the indicators set out in the report to the Executive. These include the borrowing limits and details of the various indicators where submitted.

The Council's Section 151 Officer has a duty to comment as part of the budget setting process upon the robustness of the budget and the adequacy of reserves. Shirlene Adam (Strategic Director), the Council's 151 Officer has thoroughly reviewed the procedures outputs and outcomes of the budget setting process and feels that the Council's reserves are adequate and that the budget estimate used in preparing the 2007/2008 budget were sufficiently robust.

It is therefore RECOMMENDED that the budget for General Fund services for 2007/2008 as outlined in the report to the Executive be agreed and that :-

- (a) the transfer of any potential underspend in 2006/2007 back to General Fund Reserves be agreed;
- (b) the proposed 2007/2008 budget being an Authority expenditure of £13,245,730 and Special Expenses of £27,870 be agreed in accordance with the Local Government Act 1992;
- (c) the predicted General Fund reserve balance at 31 March 2007 of £1,442,400 be agreed;
- (d) the Prudential Indicators for 2007/2008 as set out in the report to the Executive be agreed;
- (e) the revised forecast budget position for 2008/2009 onwards as outlined in the report to the Executive be noted.

2. Capital Programme 2007/08

The Executive have also considered the proposed General Fund (GF) and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) capital programmes for the period 2007/2008 to 2010/2011.

For the General Fund, the estimated unallocated resources available are £17,000. The proposed new schemes amount to £145,000 but are self funding leaving the same £17,000 of unallocated capital resources available for future schemes.

For all Housing schemes, both GF and HRA, the estimated resources available for 2007/2008 amount to £6593k. The proposed capital programme for 2007/2008 amounts to £6402k. It is proposed that the remaining £191,000 be carried forward to support the HRA Decent Homes capital programme into the future.

Both the Housing Review Panel and the Review Board have considered the draft Housing capital programme and have made no formal recommendations.

It is therefore RECOMMENDED that both the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Capital Programmes be agreed.

3. Council Tax Setting

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

The estimated expenses chargeable to the non parished area of Taunton in 2007/2008 amounts to £27,870 and this forms part of the total net expenditure of the Council. We have also received details of the parish precepts levied and the appropriate Council Tax at Band D.

The estimated balance on the Council Tax Collection Fund is a deficit of £45,136. Taunton Deane's share of this amounts to £4,830 and this is reflected in the revenue estimates.

The Council's budget requirement including parish precepts and non parished special expenses is £13,630,000. This amount is then reduced by the amount notified in respect of the Borough's Revenue Support Grant amounting to £1,172,035 and the Non Domestic Rates distribution from the pool amounting to £6,983,855.

The net amount, having taken the Collection Fund position into account, of £5,478,940 is used to calculate the Council Tax at Band D reflects the parish precepts by dividing it by the total of the Council Tax Base as approved by the Executive in December 2006.

The Council Tax for the Borough (excluding parish precepts and special expenses for the non parished area) is £128.05, an increase of £2.51 (2%) compared to the 2006/2007 Council Tax. The total Council Tax including the County Council, Police and Fire Authorities precepts is still subject to confirmation.

It is therefore RECOMMENDED that subject to final determination including the Council Tax for Somerset County Council and the Police and Fire Authorities which is still to be advised.

(The format of the Council Tax setting resolution, which the Council must approve, has been previously agreed between the Local Government Association and the then Department of the Environment, Transport and Regions, and the following recommendations follow that format).

- 9.2.1 That it be noted that at its meeting on 6 December 2006 the Executive calculated the following amounts for the year 2007/08 in accordance with the regulations made under Section 33(5) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended):-

(1) 39,786.35 being the amount calculated by the Council, in accordance with regulation 3 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992, as its Council Tax base for the year.

(2)

Ash Priors	74.00	Neroche	246.02
Ashbrittle	88.39	North Curry	717.91
Bathealton	80.85	Norton Fitzwarren	696.58
Bishops Hull	1,079. 90	Nynehead	153.26
Bishops Lydeard / Cothelstone	1,919. 98	Oake	329.74
Bradford on Tone	278.16	Otterford	166.26
Burrowbridge	203.46	Pitminster	454.24
Cheddon Fitzpaine	643.95	Ruishton / Thornfalcon	620.40
Chipstable	119.73	Sampfard Arundel	131.54
Churchstanton	308.21	Staplegrove	711.86
Combe Florey	122.31	Stawley	120.43
Comeytrowe	2,088. 55	Stoke St Gregory	384.75
Corfe	130.15	Stoke St Mary	210.55
Creech St Michael	943.89	Taunton	15,914.4 0
Durston	57.64	Trull	1,022.07
Fitzhead	123.31	Wellington	4,576.12
Halse	143.54	Wellington (Without)	297.40
Hatch Beauchamp	256.79	West Bagborough	157.33
Kingston St Mary	460.80	West Buckland	405.03
Langford	215.56	West Hatch	141.36

Budville			
Lydeard St Lawrence / Tolland	198.30	West Monkton	1,111.64
Milverton	593.29	Wiveliscombe	1,086.71

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

9.2.2 That the following amounts be calculated by the Council for the year 2007/08 in accordance with Sections 32 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992:-

(a) £69,913,650 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 32(2)(a) of the Act.
(*Gross Expenditure including amount required for working balance*).

(b) £55,398,650 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 32(3)(a) to (c) of the Act.
(*Gross Income including reserves to be used to meet Gross Expenditure*).

(c) £13,630,000 being the amount by which the aggregate at (a) above exceeds the aggregate at (b) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 32(4) of the Act, as its budget requirement for the year.

(d) £8,151,060 being the aggregate of the sums which the Council estimates will be payable for the year into its general fund in respect of redistributed non-domestic rates, revenue support grant, additional grant or SSA reduction grant (increased by the amount of the sums which the Council estimates will be transferred in the year from its Collection Fund to its General Fund in accordance with Section 97(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 (*Council Tax Surplus*) and increased by the amount of any sum which the Council estimates will be transferred from its Collection Fund to its General Fund pursuant to the Collection Fund (Community Charge) directions under Sec. 98(4) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 made on 7th February 1994 (*Community Charge Surplus*).

(e) £137.71 $\frac{(c) - (d)}{9.2.1(1)} = \frac{13,630,000 - 8,151,060}{39,786.35}$

being the amount calculated at (c) above less the amount at (d) above, all divided by the amount at 9.2.1(a) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 33(1) of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year.
(*Average Council Tax at Band D for Borough Including Parish Precepts and Special Expenses*).

(f) £384,270 being the aggregate amount of all special items referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act.

(Parish Precepts and Special Expenses).

$$(g) \text{ £128.05} \quad (e) - \frac{(f)}{9.2.1(1)} = 137.71 - \frac{384,270}{39,786.35}$$

being the amount at (e) above less the result given by dividing the amount at (f) above by the amount at 9.2.1(1) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no special items relate.

(Council Tax at Band D for Borough Excluding Parish Precepts and Special Expenses).

(h)

Ash Priors	131.43	Neroche	141.8 7
Ashbrittle	142.76	North Curry	146.8 5
Bathealton	135.47	Norton Fitzwarren	151.8 2
Bishops Hull	142.87	Nynehead	148.6 0
Bishops Lydeard / Cothelstone	146.42	Oake	140.1 8
Bradford on Tone	145.11	Otterford	128.0 5
Burrowbridge	151.15	Pitminster	141.9 2
Cheddon Fitzpaine	137.37	Ruishton / Thornfalcon	144.1 7
Chipstable	138.91	Sampford Arundel	161.8 0
Churchstanton	150.62	Staplegrove	140.8 3
Combe Florey	142.77	Stawley	139.6 8
Comeytrowe	137.63	Stoke St Gregory	143.6 4
Corfe	136.50	Stoke St Mary	140.9 4
Creech St Michael	143.63	Taunton	129.8 0
	128.74		139.7

Durston		Trull	9
Fitzhead	148.73	Wellington	144.3 1
	144.04	Wellington (Without)	143.1 8
Hatch Beauchamp	141.29	West Bagborough	143.9 4
Kingston St Mary	141.07	West Buckland	148.4 2
Langford Budville	148.93	West Hatch	142.5 5
Lydeard St Lawrence / Tolland	138.19	West Monkton	139.2 9
Milverton	139.01	Wiveliscombe	144.2 5

being the amounts given by adding to the amount at (g) above, the amounts of the special item or items relating to dwellings in those parts of the Council's area mentioned above divided in each case by the amount at 9.2.1(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(3) of the Act, as the basic amounts of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate.

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

- (i) See overleaf

NOTE: Since the meeting of the Executive final notification of all parish precepts have been received. This has resulted in a number of minor amendments to the figures previously submitted.

Also since the meeting, draft figures in relation to the Police Authority precept, the Fire Authority precept and the likely level of the Council Tax for Somerset County Council have been received. Attached as Appendix A and B are the tables which indicate the revised figures.

4. Proposals to refresh the Corporate Management of the Council

Consideration has been given by the Executive to a report which set out details of the drivers for change which will require a refresh of the Council's corporate management structure. The report reflects on the current arrangements and makes proposals for the future. These include personnel changes including proposed early retirements/redundancies. A second phase further review of the entire organisation is also proposed.

The proposals are within existing budgets and could, in large parts, be carried out under the Chief Executives delegated powers. However, elements of the proposals require the agreement of Council and it is also important that the proposal in its entirety is supported by Members.

It is anticipated that the proposed changes will reflect the external and internal drivers for change. The proposals can be met within existing budget levels and after paying back the initial up front cost will return ongoing budget savings of approximately £61,000 per annum to the Council's General Fund. In addition there will be ongoing savings to the Councils Housing Revenue Account which will be detailed in a future report.

The total cost of the proposal is £302,000. The majority of this cost falls in 2006/2007 with the remainder falling in 2007/2008. Savings will start to accrue immediately and will be earmarked for paying back the upfront costs of the General Fund reserve. This will be fully achieved by 2011/2012 meaning that the proposal has a pay back period of 4.9 years.

It is intended that the proposals will ensure that Corporate Management Team remains fit for future as the Council proceeds through a period of unprecedented change and the local government landscape shifts to reflect the issues arising from the local government White Paper.

It is therefore RECOMMENDED that:

- (1) the proposals to refresh Corporate Management Team be agreed;
- (2) the early retirements and voluntary redundancies contained within the proposal for the posts of
 - (a) Head of Housing
 - (b) Head of Environment and Leisure
 - (c) Head of Development be agreed;
- (3) a Supplementary Estimate of £263,000 from General Fund Reserves be agreed. This will be fully paid back to the General Fund reserve by 2011/2012 and thereafter the Council's general fund budget would benefit by approximately £61,000 a year.

Councillor John Williams

COUNCILLOR GARNER

Housing Revenue Account, Revenue Estimates and Rent Levels, Helpline and Deane Building DLO Account 2007/08

The Executive have given consideration to the proposed Housing Revenue Account for 2007/2008 including the new rent levels, service charges and other Housing related charges such as garage rents. We have also looked at information on the Deane Helpline Trading Account and the Deane Building DLO Trading Account.

Following the recent ballot on the future of the Housing stock there is a gap between the funding needed to deliver the Decent Homes Standard to the Council's Housing stock and the funding available of £1.85m per year. We looked at details of how the service will deliver Decent Homes.

Both the Housing Review Panel and the Review Board have considered the 2007/2008 budget report and details of their views were submitted to the Executive. The Housing Review Panel have proposed no formal amendments to the report but have asked that Officers mitigate the removal of the grant to Neighbourhood Care of £11,000 by finding further equivalent savings elsewhere in the Housing Revenue Account.

The Review Board has supported this suggestion that the Neighbourhood Care grant be re-instated and have recommended that Officers identify funding within the HRA to support this. Members of the Review Board have also commented on the increase staffing costs within the Deane Helpline and the effect that this has had on the Helpline's working balance.

It is therefore RECOMMENDED that the Housing Revenue Account budget for 2007/2008 be agreed.

Councillor Greg Garner

COUNCILLOR BISHOP

Provision of Information Technology in Development Control

The Executive has considered the replacement of the current in-house software package for planning application recording, monitoring and historic data retention software with an established external software package.

The national planning system is currently undergoing significant changes and unfortunately the existing software is not suitable.

The quality of the Service which is being provided has declined and Best Value Performance Indicators have fallen. This has resulted in a reduction in Planning Delivery Grant received. The Council has gone from being one of the best performing authorities in the south west to being in the bottom quartile. In view of the problems currently being experienced it is felt necessary to develop an external Planning software package. This will not only improve the Planning function but will assist greatly in delivery of a number of the Council's Corporate Priorities.

It is RECOMMENDED that:-

- (i) the proposal to replace the current in-house software applications for planning application recording, monitoring and historic data retention be agreed in principle;

- (ii) a Supplementary Estimate from General Fund Reserves of £80,000 be agreed. The ongoing revenue costs would be funded from within existing Development budgets.

Councillor Cliff Bishop

Part ii – Reports from the Executive

COUNCIL MEETING 20 FEBRUARY 2007

Report of Councillor Williams – Leader of the Council

Since my last report to Full Council 12 December the ballot for housing stock transfer to a stand alone housing association has resulted in a “no” vote. This Council fully respects that decision and will do all possible to minimize the effect on tenants and staff because of the funding constraints this has caused. Papers are before you at this meeting to confirm the severe cuts necessary in order for us to meet the “Decent Homes” standard required in the allotted time. It is with great regret these savings include the loss of a total of 14 full time jobs, it is sad to think that these same staff could have been gainfully employed in serving the tenants best interests had the result been different. It is worth reflecting on what has been actually lost from Taunton Deane because seeds of uncertainty were sown during the consultation process. Below is a table setting out the amount returned to central government from tenants’ rents that we collect, and the shortfall in funding to meet the “Decent Homes” standard;

Year	Subsidy from rent to* Central Govt	Shortfall of finances to meet Decent Homes Standard
	£ millions	£ millions
2007/08	4.6	1.85
2008/09	5.0	1.85
2009/10	5.5	1.85
2010/11	<u>5.5</u>	<u>1.85</u>
Totals	£20.6	£7.40

* Estimated for 2008/09 and beyond

In accordance with assurances given that we will pursue alternative funding we have requested our MP to take up the case for us. It is totally wrong that in exercising freedom of choice tenants should be so heavily penalised and lose the enormous amount of £28 million pounds from the economy of Taunton Deane over four years, most of which comes straight from the tenants’ pockets via rents.

Local Government Reorganisation

In respect of the White Paper issued by Government the County Council decided unilaterally to press ahead with submission of a single Unitary bid for the whole of Somerset. We and all District Councils are unanimously opposed to this as it would result in a complete loss of focus on the needs of the local community with such an enormous administrative area and over half a million

people to serve. It would automatically result in a huge loss of local democracy as across Somerset circa 300 District and County Councillors will be replaced with only 116 elected Members. As a result the proposed new organisation would be both unwieldy and unresponsive to local needs.

I am pleased to say the majority of Members of Taunton Deane Borough Council overwhelmingly rejected the proposals for any type of Unitary authority for Somerset due to the obvious problems that would arise in managing such a large geographical area and relative sparsity of population. The loss of localism was of great concern to most Members. All other Districts expressed the same concerns but South Somerset DC felt this could be addressed by the Unitary process but two such authorities for Somerset. They proposed incorporating Mendip DC within their own bid. This was not supported by Mendip DC nor indeed by ourselves, Sedgemoor and West Somerset DC's.

In response we have prepared a submission to Government called Team Somerset, how we can maintain democracy local to our communities but deliver our services with greater effectiveness and efficiency by enhanced partnership working. We have gained the support of all District Councils across Somerset for this approach, even South Somerset in the event that their two Unitary proposals for Somerset is not taken forward. The strategic role of the County Council has to be recognised in dealing with the major responsibilities of highways, education and social services but with the many scattered and diverse communities across Somerset it needs the detailed knowledge and local democracy of the District and Borough Councils to deliver the needs of the community. This ensures we continue with local representation, local decision making and deliverable from local resources.

Improving Services in Somerset (ISiS)

A key part of delivering more efficient service to our communities is the ISiS bids of BT, Capita and IBM presently being evaluated. The proposals will lead to a major public/private partnership to bring substantial investment to Taunton Deane and across Somerset. This will extend partnership working to previously unthinkable heights, incorporating the major administrative services of both Taunton Deane and Somerset County Council, with Avon and Somerset Police now having confirmed their intention of joining the partnership.

I do also see this as an excellent vehicle for delivering the efficiencies and underpinning an effective partnership working right across Somerset that will be demanded of us when implementing Team Somerset. In this respect all other District Councils in Somerset have agreed they will join the ISiS partnership if Partnership working is the way Somerset local governance proceeds. The benefits of these proposals are enormous for our communities and must not be ignored. Equally I believe the organisation we are creating will become a beacon for other three tier areas as to how best local governance can be achieved in the most effective and efficient manner. It will be a method that will avoid the huge risks in terms of disruption, loss of local

democracy and financial costs associated with the major reorganisation that would occur for a single Unitary Authority.

I am equally proud to say that Taunton Deane Borough Council has an unarguable record of “partnership working”, so our Team Somerset approach together with the ISiS project is based on substance, not just words. We have clearly demonstrated we can deliver better and more efficiently across a whole range of services with partnership working. The Government and the County Council keep talking about two tier (should be three tier!) local government being inefficient and uneconomic, but do not back this up with any substantiation, particularly when asked to justify the statements in light of the Government’s own statistics as prepared by CIPFA.

Budget Setting

Talking of “efficiencies” I must commend our prudent, balanced budget to you. This has been achieved against the backdrop of unbudgeted, large extra costs, but without using valuable reserves and with only a 2% increase in Council Tax which only represents 5p per week on a Band D rate. We have listened to our community and delivered a below inflation Council Tax increase to ensure we assist those on relatively fixed incomes and thus most hit by increased costs beyond their control.

As always the budget setting process is very challenging as we must continue to deliver the first rate services we provide as an “Excellent” Council but also we have targeted £125,000 of extra funds for important new initiatives that will provide benefit across the community.

The difficult decisions we have taken in earlier years are definitely bearing fruit as we are delivering better services for less, together with delivering the savings imposed on us by central Government. It is worth noting that to the end of 2005/06 we were scheduled to make savings under the Gershon plan of £289,000 we in fact achieved £723,000, an extra saving of 150% over that required. However, even with these extra savings and more efficient services we cannot become complacent because our medium term financial plan still shows us running into deficit. This is why we need to implement major changes through the ISiS project and the Somerset Waste Partnership to seek even greater savings so we may address the perennial problem of costs outstripping our resources.

Project Taunton

At our December meeting I referred to this as having taken a quantum leap forward, I am pleased to say it is now gaining a momentum of its own and the level of quality interest in our proposals is providing its drive. We received a considerable number of high quality bids to the extent that following evaluation we ended up with six bidders of the highest calibre meeting the prequalification requirements. These are now being invited to prepare proposals for development and their offer for the Firepool site, bearing in mind we are seeking a partnership arrangement to maximise the site value.

In order to implement Project Taunton we have to acquire substantial areas of land and property to assemble the site, provide access roads and flood prevention. This has been partnership working at its best with the Environment Agency providing detailed flood prevention plans, the County Council substantial funding from Government via its Local Transport Plan 2 and the South West Regional Development Agency providing in excess of £6 million for acquisition of the land and property. It is a huge credit to our Officers and the Project Taunton Team that all this is being achieved in a timely manner to allow successful site development.

The final piece of the jigsaw has also dropped into place with the conclusion of a deal to relocate Taunton Livestock Market. It is with regret that the new location will be junction 24 but as I have reported for some time, the final location was going to be decided by market forces despite the fact that we had already granted planning consent for a new market site within Taunton Deane at junction 26. We are advised the relocation should be occurring during Autumn 2007 which fits well with the development proposals for the Firepool site.

The cricket ground plans are also well advanced with the application now submitted for phase 1, being the new stand with flats over on the site partially on the adjacent Coal Orchard car park. This really does signify the commencement of the construction phase of Taunton's regeneration as it is anticipated work will commence on site in September 2007. Discussions are presently ongoing with the Cricket Club and developers about the use of the car park and provision of high quality public realm space in an area between the site, Brewhouse and the river, the suggested name for this area is "Somerset Square".

I believe these are exciting times for Taunton Deane as we are now seeing the culmination of many years of hard work and careful planning becoming reality. Taunton as a vibrant, revitalised centre will certainly establish itself as a major centre in the South West.

Affordable Homes

This is a top priority of our administration and again I feel our efforts are beginning to secure real opportunities for the desperately needed social and affordable housing in the Deane. We must remember that ARK Consultants forecast an annual need of 564 affordable dwellings per annum for some years to come. This has risen from the earlier report by David Couttie of 131 houses per annum that was our previous target figure. This is a huge leap but indicative of the enormous cost of housing in this area, the ratio of average house price to earnings is in the order of 10 to 1, virtually the same as central London average, hence the huge unaffordability factor. If we are to seriously address this, it will take the cooperation of Members and residents alike. I can accept that change is always difficult but sometimes it has to be accepted for the greater good of the community. Without cooperation we will not get anywhere near addressing the identified need for affordable housing and we

will be failing our community by denying many the security, privacy and comfort of their own home.

One great success to report is that the site for affordable houses at Ham, near Wellington, is just about to commence (scheduled for March). It is a development of two and three bedroomed houses by a private developer and the houses will be for sale at £75,000 for the two bed and £99,000 for the three bed. This has been achieved without any public subsidy and the properties will remain affordable in perpetuity with nomination rights for subsequent re-sales vested in Taunton Deane Borough Council. Therefore we are truly helping our community now and in the future by ensuring the properties remain affordable relative to market prices for all time.

Finally

As part of the papers before you tonight we will be seeking your agreement for the early retirement of Malcolm Western, Pete Weaver and Tom Noall. These are all very long serving officers who I will be very sorry to see go as they have been dedicated and committed, to providing the excellent services we and our community have come to expect. They have made a tremendous contribution to the very successful operation of this Council and I am sure I speak on behalf of all Members when I say we are very sorry to see you go but wish you every success in the future. Thank you for your dedicated service to date.

Cllr John Williams,
Leader, Taunton Deane Borough Council

COUNCIL MEETING 20 FEBRUARY 2007

REPORT OF COUNCILLOR MRS JOANNA LEWIN-HARRIS COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

All local authorities have a statutory duty to work with partners to produce a Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS). This document outlines how local organisations and agencies will work together to improve the social, economic well being of their area.

Taunton Deane Local Strategic Partnership's Sustainable Community Strategy, which is now in its final drafting stage, has been developed following 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

There are also chapters which focus on North Taunton and East Taunton in recognition of the particular levels of deprivation in these areas

Each theme starts by presenting what we know through facts, figures and trends as well as what was learnt through consultation in 'Talking Tomorrow's Taunton Deane'.

The SCS will have a 10 year lifespan, with a separate action plan which will be updated more regularly.

The Community Leadership Panel considered the SCS earlier this month. The main comments from the panel were the strategy should put greater emphasis on the needs of an aging population, and that the profile of arts and culture should be raised. The LSP will consider the final draft at its meeting on 13 March.

I am delighted to report that Talking Tomorrow's Taunton Deane won a commendation in the RTPi South West Planning Awards and came second in community planning category in the national competition. Our thanks are particularly due to Mark Leeman in the forward plan unit for this achievement.

On hearing of the award, the Manager of the Quantock Hills AONB sent an email to say:

"Well done Mark. I have long rated the effort Taunton Deane puts into genuinely getting and responding to the views of others, particularly those

impacted by the actions of the council. It is good to see this being recognized.”

AREA WORKING

Taunton Deane Borough Council has long had a commitment to working at a sub-district level. As well as producing a borough wide Community Strategy, the council has developed area community plans in West Deane and the Brendons, the Wellington area, the Blackdown Hills and Taunton itself (Project Taunton). Community plans for North and East Taunton have now been drafted. The council has also supported Parish Plans. We want to build on this to deliver a more joined up approach to delivering local services and a possible model for the way forward would be through Community Partnerships, as described in the Team Somerset partnership prospectus.

Somerset County Council and the police are also moving in the same direction and we need to work closely with them as we develop these ideas.

Somerset County Council is setting up Area Working Panels in all Somerset Districts. With members of the Community Leadership Panel and several other Taunton Deane councillors, I recently attended the first meeting of the Taunton Deane Area Working Panel held in Norton Fitzwarren Village Hall. Many Parish Councils sent representatives.

Currently:

- This panel meetings are formal meetings of the County Council
- The panel members are the County Councillors for the Taunton Deane area
- Borough and Parish Councillors and other partners are welcome to attend as are members of the public
- The panel will have £180,000 a year (£15,000 for each county councillor) to spend in the local area
- Only county councillors will be able to vote on how this money is spent
- The money must be spent to deliver outcomes identified in the Local Area Agreement
- The panel elected Cllr Claire Gordon as chairman, and Cllr Stephen Martin-Scott vice chairman.
- The next meeting of the panel will be held in a couple of months' time and will concentrate on highway issues.

In the future:

- SCC intends to devolve further budgets to the Area Panel. Opinions varied as to how much of the schools budget (£228m), adult social care (£186m), highways and transport (£92m), fire brigade (£19m), waste services (£18m), or cultural services including libraries (£14m) could in practice be devolved.
- Decision-making and budgets may be devolved further into sub-district areas, but there was no consensus as to what areas these sub-districts should cover.
- The future role of borough and parish councillors in area working panels (or any future sub-district area) was unclear, with some members indicating that they might in future become full members with the right to vote.

What is clear is there is still much to do in developing area working. It is important that Taunton Deane works closely with the County Council, Parish Councils and other partners, e.g. the police, in taking ideas forward.

CORPORATE EQUALITY SCHEME

I am pleased to say the Executive approved Taunton Deane's Corporate Equality Scheme last week. This sets out how the council will meet its statutory public duties to promote equality and to eliminate direct and indirect discrimination. The scheme, which includes a well researched and robust action plan, has been developed from the results of over 40 Equality Impact Assessments carried out across the council last autumn. I thank Harry Connery and Val Dale for their work in producing this excellent document.

Audio Loop Systems

This council has recently invested in several loop systems to help the hard of hearing. These have been installed in reception in the Deane House and in the Wellington office. We now also have portable loop system for sheltered housing officers and a further one for use in public meetings in different venues.

I would like to give credit to Mr Fred Douglas of East Taunton whose persistence in pointing out the need for this equipment has now born fruit. Although it has taken rather longer to achieve than I had hoped, Mr Douglas was good enough write and say how pleased he was that this equipment is now available.

Joanna Lewin-Harris

COUNCIL MEETING 20 February 2007

Report of Councillor Bishop Planning Policy and Transportation

Regional Spatial Strategy

The Somerset County Council as the Strategic Planning Authority, under the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act was asked by the Regional Assembly to provide technical advice on the implications of the latest Office of National Statistics (ONS) Household Projections for the County area. The County Council has not been asked to conduct a public consultation on the implications of the ONS projections and the Regional Assembly has not required a formal elected member endorsement of the technical advice.

The previous projections of household growth, which were used to inform the Regional Spatial Strategy over the next twenty years, were significantly lower than the 2003 ONS figures. The revised projections are based on retaining the existing population projection but changing the assumptions around how we form households – particularly:

Increases in the likelihood of elderly people living independently – caused by increasing longevity, improved general health and financial independence amongst older people;

A reassessment of the stability of co-habiting (as opposed to married) households and identifying that co-habiting couples on average, are more likely to split up than married couples.

The technical advice prepared by Baker Associates last month considers the implications arising from a number of potential distribution scenarios for accommodating this additional housing growth. It tests the environmental, economic, social and transport implications of accommodating the additional housing growth

The study recognises that Strategically Significant Cities and Towns (SSCT's) have the greatest opportunities for employment and the greatest levels of accessibility to services but they also have a limited capacity to accommodate additional growth. Given the constraints on SSCT's and the scale of step-change required for three SSCT's to deliver the draft Regional Spatial Strategy it is anticipated that Market Towns (Category B settlements within the RSS) should have a greater role to play in accommodating the additional growth arising as a result of the ONS household projections

A copy of the final report has now been received and I have made arrangements for a copy of the report to be available in the Members Room.

The Draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) submitted to the Government in April 2006 remains the Assembly's submitted plan. Technical advice on the 2003 Projections, provided by Strategic Authorities to the Assembly, will be

taken into account by them in their evidence to the Examination in Public (EiP) which is being held in Exeter from April to June 2007.

A303/A358 South Petherton to M5 Taunton

The London to South West and South Wales Multi-Modal Study (SWARMMS) completed in 2002, provided a long term strategy to address passenger and freight transport on the main rail and road corridors between London, the South West and South Wales.

Further work was undertaken by the Highways Agency in 2004 to compare the A303/A30 between Ilminster and Honiton with an alternative improvement between Ilminster and the M5 at Taunton. This further work led to a decision by the Transport Secretary at the end of 2004 to upgrade the A358 alternative and add it to the trunk road network, thereby avoiding the environmentally sensitive AONB.

The Highways Agency have now stated that the current programme is to hold a public consultation in Spring 2007. Details of the consultation dates and deposit locations will be advertised in local newspapers and on the Highways Agency website nearer the time. The outcome of the public consultation will be a Preferred Route announcement to protect the route against development which is expected in Autumn 2007. Further work on the scheme beyond this will be dependent on decisions taken on the A303 Stonehenge scheme and subsequent rounds of the regional prioritisation process

Planning Applications Somerset County Cricket Club

38/2007/025 PHASE 2 Cricket Club

Demolition of Pavilions, Stands and Subsidiary Accommodation on south side of the ground and erection of cricket school, pavilion, seating stand and 16 flats with commercial ground floor use to St James Street/Priory Avenue, Taunton.

The second planning application for Phase 1 of the development has been received but cannot be registered until further information is provided. The application is for the erection of a five storey building comprising of 65 Category II sheltered housing apartments for older people together with communal facilities, guest suite, estate managers office over Class A3 Café/Restaurant and two Class A1 Retail Units with outside terrace and covered parking area, spectator stands and groundsman's store. This application will be registered as soon as all the necessary information has been provided.

Councillors involvement in Planning Decisions

The DCLG study published in January a report prepared by Arup Consultancy following surveys with Planning Officers and Councillors from

authorities across the country and has made a series of recommendations and the following are just a few of the recommendations :-

- The portfolio Holder for Planning should be closely involved with the work of the Planning Committee ; for example should sit on the Committee (but should not normally be the Chair)
- Authorities should consider the scope for Members of the Planning Committee to get more involved in policy making subject to their availability.
- Policy training should be offered to all Members and should be compulsory for all those on the planning committee.
- Authorities should update their codes of conduct to reflect support for early member involvement in pre-application discussions within clearly defined limits.(This recommendation appears to be causing a great deal of concern as most monitoring officers advise that members should not comment on planning applications prior to the application being considered by the planning committee and I think that further advice will be needed before any Planning Authority decides to accept this recommendation.)

Talking Tomorrows Taunton Deane

This project reached the Finals in the RTPI National Planning Awards for Community Planning and was second to The New Heart for Oxmoor project which started ten years ago and has now transformed what was in 1999 the second most deprived estate in Cambridgeshire.

The South West Branch of the RTPI has given us a Commendation for our project and I would like to congratulate everyone who has helped us to gain this award.

Cliff Bishop

COUNCIL MEETING – 20 February 2007.

REPORT OF COUNCILLOR DOROTHEA BRADLEY ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

1.0 ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH.

1.1 Smokefree Preparations

From **6am on Sunday, 1 July 2007**, virtually all workplaces and substantially enclosed public areas in England will become smokefree by law. This will include restaurants, members clubs and even work vehicles that are used by more than one person. Indoor workplace smoking rooms will disappear. The Health Act 2006 and proposed subordinate Regulations provide the means to apply and regulate the ban. The new legislation empowers Local Authorities to enforce the ban and service units within the Environmental Health function are best placed to regulate this.

Authorised Officers have powers to enter premises, investigate complaints and take action against non-compliant employers, licensees or smokers through Fixed Penalty Notices or formal enforcement action. However, it is expected that strong National and Local promotional campaigns combined with support given to businesses will achieve high levels of self-regulation. This has certainly been the experience of other countries that have gone smokefree earlier.

Taunton Deane Borough Council is a key member of the Somerset Smokefree Alliance. Both locally and as part of the Alliance we intend to promote the ban, provide support to businesses and to smokers who want to quit, and apply enforcement measures once the ban is in place. We are currently planning a series of seminars and other promotional activity throughout the County to provide information and answer queries to help businesses prepare for the restrictions.

An integral part of this is a six to nine month secondment of one Environmental Health Practitioner to co-ordinate the Somerset wide response to ensure a coherent message and consistent regulation.

1.2 Food Safety

The Food Safety team has recently been awarded a further £4000 grant from the Food Standards Agency to allow it to assist more businesses in implementing a new national food safety management system called "Safer Food Better Business". The authority has previously benefited from a much larger grant and has delivered seminars and coaching to many food businesses across the Borough. This additional amount will allow this work to be extended to more businesses.

1.3 Health and Safety

Dermatitis Seminar – "Bad Hand Day"

The Health and Safety team recently organised an event for hairdressers from across Somerset. Entitled "Dermatitis in hairdressing awareness day" and it was run in partnership with the Health and Safety Executive it was attended by over 40 Somerset hairdressing business representatives and 100 students from Somerset College's hair and beauty course. The key messages for the hair & beauty trade were to use

techniques to reduce contact with water and chemicals where possible, to protect hands by wearing gloves and using moisturiser and to check regularly for signs of dermatitis. This forms part of the HSE' s national campaign to reduce dermatitis by 10% by 2008.



1.4 Environmental Protection.

Dog Fouling

A Fixed Penalty Notice for Dog Fouling has recently been served by the Dog Warden service on a dog owner exercising a dog and failed to clear up after it in the Killams estate area.

2.0 WASTE COLLECTION AND RECYCLING

2.1 Recycling

The extent of the Christmas festivities in Taunton Deane can be measured by the amount of recyclable materials that were collected in January! The table below shows the amounts (in tonnes) of each material collected from the kerbside compared to December.

Material	December 06	January 07	Variance
Paper	404	408	+3
Glass	209	286	+77
Cans	37	49	+12
Food	406	445	+39
Other materials	10	12	+2
Totals	1066	1200	+134

In January last year 730 tonnes of waste were collected from the kerbside for recycling and so the 1200 tonnes collected this year represents a 64% increase. It is also interesting to note that since the introduction of *SORT IT!* across the Deane we are now recycling more food waste than newspaper!

2.2 Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP) Procurement

The work to evaluate the bids received to run the recycling and refuse collection services across the whole of Somerset for the next seven years is continuing. Proposals to become the preferred bidder with whom the final service package will be negotiated were received on 21 December 2006 from Biffa, ECT Recycling, Sita and Veolia (formally Cleanaway).

The joint procurement by the Somerset Waste Partnership will deliver a contract that will involve the collection of dry recycling, food waste, garden waste and refuse from all the 226,000 properties in Somerset. The bidders have also submitted proposals to collect plastic bottles and cardboard packaging from the kerbside.

In addition to the procurement of the collection services the six Somerset Councils are also working towards formalising the current Partnership into a single waste board, which would take over the responsibility for waste collection and disposal.

3. NETWORKING

- 3.1. The River Tone Partnership comprising Lucy Ball the Town Centre Manager, the Police, the Probation Service, the SCC, Dave Durdan Chair of the Somerset Waterways Development Trust, Robbie Lowe from Project Taunton met with Tony Turner of the DLO, Drew Harris of Ecology Works and myself to discuss the work programme for the river Tone. This would be geared to the forthcoming events, namely the major cricket match of 12-14th May, the Westival and Taunton in Bloom in July, and the Cycling Tour in September. Lucy Ball suggested that the long term management and promotion of issues surrounding the river Tone be tied in with Project Taunton. There may be merit in declaring the open public spaces abutting the Tone to be one contiguous Tone Riverside Park to get us thinking holistically.
- 3.2 I have also attended on behalf of TDBC the meetings of the Taunton Town Charity which run both sheltered housing and distribute funds to those in need.
- 3.3 I attended the meeting of the Policy Review Group of the LGA Rural Commission which covered both rural Post Offices and affordable housing. The point was made that we may need to accept more housing in rural areas to ensure the sustainability of some rural settlements and also reconsider our attitude to car use and the current threshold figures.
- 3.4 The South West LGA held a meeting at the Cricket Club. This included a Reputations Workshop – from which it is clear we need to be focussed about how we label ourselves to get the message across that it is Taunton Deane Borough Council which is delivering all the services directly or indirectly to its residents. The afternoon was spent considering an interim paper from the Independent Commission chaired by Lord Best (Director of Joseph Rowntree Foundation and LGA President). It is all about how best the LGA can help local authorities respond to the challenges of the Local Government White Paper, Strong and Prosperous Communities. I would recommend reading the LGA paper “Closer to People and Places”. The government talks about devolution and localisation – the question is how to ensure this happens in practice!!!

Cllr Dilly Bradley

COUNCIL MEETING 20th FEBRUARY 2007

REPORT OF COUNCILLOR CAVILL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSET MANAGEMENT AND TOURISM

Economic Development

We are working with Somerset Young Enterprise to roll out our Primary School Programme. So far, eighteen schools have joined the scheme, and a further two have expressed interest. Our target is 21 for this year. Three schools are from the five target schools whose intake is largely from areas in Taunton and Wellington that exhibit multiple deprivation. You should all have received a sheet from Young Enterprise Somerset asking for support, as there is a need for new business members to work with schools who enter the scheme. I hope many of my fellow councillors can consider offering support to this programme.

Consultants have been appointed for the Wondertree project. This is to examine the practicality and financial viability for a major tourism and education facility based on woodland in Taunton. The project has been included within the Taunton hub for Waterlinks. A report should be available in April/May.

A considerable amount of work and time has been spent by the Districts within Somerset, as well as the County Council, evaluating and then establishing the structure for a Somerset Inward Investment Company. If this company goes ahead it should be operating by September of this year.

I would like to extend my best wishes to Nick Coleman who was our Regeneration Officer and who has left to take up a career in Holland. It is hoped that his replacement will be in post by April.

Rural Economy

Our work to support agricultural development is continuing apace; seminars and information sessions for farmers are being delivered across the Borough. Attendance at these events has been strong and demonstrates that the participants are keen to explore the issues around diversification and skills enhancement.

An application in partnership with other Districts and the County Council for Rural Renaissance funding has been successful and will enable the development of a full network of ADOs across the County. As a result, we will receive half of the salary and costs of our ADO for the next year.

Wellington Food Town is continuing to attract interest and involvement from local business and community organisations. A meeting to discuss the next steps, held at the end of January, was well attended. The Economic Development Unit is supporting Wellington Economic Partnership in developing a management structure for the coming twelve months' programme, which of course will see a number of food related events in

Wellington. In addition there are plans for a 'Buy Local' campaign and work with schools on 'Healthy Eating and Living'. The successful bid to the 'Market and Coastal Towns Initiative' by the WEP, supported by the EDU, will bring a small amount of annual funding for the next two years. This will enable research and feasibility studies to be carried out on key economic projects in Wellington; and more importantly, will give the chance of access to RDA funding towards the cost of implementing such schemes after the initial two years.

Tourism

Work continues on the development of the Destination Management System and of the Somerset Destination Management Organisation. We now have consultants working with the Steering Group, to develop a business plan for a potential new partnership. This DMO would co-ordinate tourism marketing and the handling of clients in Somerset. A report is due to be completed by the end of Spring.

Twenty six thousand Taunton Deane 'Heart of Somerset' tourism brochures have been sent out so far. This shows an Interest significantly higher than for this time last year.

There have been a considerable number of applications for the creation of new self catering holiday units; in spite of the fact that occupation levels last year were significantly below those of previous years. The EDU is liaising between applicants and the Planning Department, but there must be concern over the viability of these new developments. As such, it would now be beneficial if applicants were asked to submit business plans for the new developments as this would assist in ensuring they have taken into account the current over provision of such accommodation in Taunton Deane.

Arts and Creative Services

Work to support the Creative Industries continues to be developed through the BOOST Partnership which is based in the Brewhouse Theatre. BOOST is working with a wider group of Arts Organisations across the County and with consultants in an attempt to identify how new and existing creative businesses can best be supported. The report being prepared is suggesting that there should be a closer working relationship between Economic development and Arts Support Teams throughout the County. In effect this is what we are doing, as the Arts Support function is now within the EDU, and assisting the creative industries is one of our top objectives.

Asset Management

Our asset management plan is being finished and should, by this Council meeting, be up and running on our web-site. Work continues on our maintenance backlog and by the end of this financial year the vast majority of all our priority three work will be completed. There will be some notable exceptions, for example the Leisure Trust work, but this is because the scheduling for this work will run beyond the 2009/10 financial year.

The resale of Highfields will be completed before the end of this financial year

and an option appraisal of the nursery site at Mount Street is now being undertaken.

Blackdown Business Park at Wellington now has two of the units occupied and two others being assessed by prospective companies. The proposal for business units at Frobisher Way is presently out for tender. These tenders will be with us at the end of February.

The Old Municipal Building is presently having many of its artefacts removed, as all of our tenants have now relocated. The various works for DDA, Fire regulations and other improvements, as well as those works required by the County will take most of the summer. The County have stated that they will take on the lease of the OMB from 1st September, to enable the relocation of the Registrars' Office from Flook House.

We are trialling a new solar powered light at the Crematorium car park. If this proves satisfactory, not only will it produce a saving in CO2 emissions, but will also save extensive trenching and cabling work to establish the new lighting system.

Waterlinks

The lottery has recently signed off the draft plan, and work is being undertaken to produce clear project briefs as well as financial projections for the delivery of each scheme. The time schedule to present the next stage of application on 31st May is extremely ambitious, particularly in view of the detailed requirements. This exciting project is now beginning to catch more and more people's imagination. Originally there were 130 applicants and Waterlinks is one of the 6 finalists. However we must remember that three of these final projects are within the South West. The publicity launch, of what will be a national campaign, will be in early April. The projects included in Waterlinks are not just the canals and rivers but also cycleways, educational projects, wetland and industrial heritage sites, the reconstruction of part of the original lake village just outside Glastonbury, hydro-turbines (revitalising 10 old mills) and a climate change centre, to list but a few.

Councillor Norman P Cavill

REPORT OF COUNCILLOR JOHN CLARK, LEISURE, ARTS AND CULTURE

The Christmas edition of the Deano was sent to every primary school aged child in Taunton Deane. The Easter edition is currently in hand. Carols Around The Bandstand were organised again this year by the Friends of Vivary Park, with some financial assistance from the Council. The event was well supported despite the weather. A season of Sunday bandstand concerts, in the Vivary Park bandstand, is currently being planned.

Village and Community Halls

The new Stoke St Gregory Village Hall, part grant aided by TDBC has been completed and an official opening is planned. Bishops Lydeard Village Hall, Comeytrove Community Centre, West Bagborough Village Hall and Wiveliscombe Community Centre have also received grant aid assistance and successfully completed their projects. An application for grant aid assistance towards a village hall for Langford Budville has been received. This application is currently being processed. Funding had been awarded to Norton Fitzwarren Parish Council towards a youth shelter and basketball hoop from Section 106 money.

Sports & Physical Activity Strategy

This has been completed and will be published in early 2007. This strategy will direct the future of sport and physical recreation in the Borough up to the Olympics in 2012.

The Friends of French Weir Park group has been successfully formed. This has permitted an application to Heritage Lottery Fund to be submitted for project development funding for French Weir Park.

A report has been commissioned on the scale and adequacy of freely available youth facilities across the Borough.

A residents consultation for Higher Holway Open Space has been carried out and a landscape architect commissioned to design the space to provide play facilities, youth activity area, picnic and viewing area and a wildlife woodland.

Holway Local Action Team has assisted with an application to the Lottery for Breathing Spaces funding to provide the wildlife woodland and training and promotion about the wildlife habitats and its benefits.

Tennis

Blackbrook Tennis Centre extension has been completed and opened to the public. This low cost facility improves our already top quality provision which gives us 6 indoor and 6 outdoor courts.

Tone Leisure (Taunton Deane) Ltd Facility News

Recent and forthcoming improvements to facilities include:

- **St. James Street Baths**

Installation of more customer focused Reception area, refurbishment and redecoration of entrance and lobby area.

- **Blackbrook Pavilion and Tennis Club**

Installation of new Reception in the Tennis Centre, together with automatic doors and CCTV.

Works to refurbish the toilets, to the standard of the recently refurbished changing rooms, are being carried out during the Spring.

- **Wellsprings Leisure Centre**

Redecoration of front-of-house areas was carried out over the Christmas period.

- **Wellington Sports Centre**

Redecoration of the Health Suite was carried out over the Christmas period.

- **Investors in People**

During November Tone Leisure underwent re-assessment against the Investors in People standards. The Assessor confirmed that the standards are being fully met, with a number of areas of particular strength including innovation, reward and recognition, communication and managing change.

- **Inclusive Fitness Initiative**

Wellsprings, Blackbrook and Wellington will soon start the accreditation process to gain this award. Additional Inclusive Fitness training will be available to all gym members of staff. The award looks at how we offer our fitness facilities to ensure that access is available to all people. Funding in kind to the value of £8,500 per site will support this process from the Inclusive Fitness initiative.

- **“Wiggle and Giggle with ME”** There’s a new studio class that is taking the fitness world by storm - it’s called “Wiggle and Giggle with ME”™, a pole dancing class that takes place in unique, fun and friendly surroundings. A great workout that will challenge your aerobic fitness whilst improving your flexibility and body tone. Wiggle and Giggle launched to fantastic feedback at Wellsprings in January

- **Soroptimist Swimathon** - The annual Soroptimist Swimathon, hosted by St. James Street Baths, took place over the weekend of 3rd/4th February. The designated charities this year were: St. Margaret's Somerset Hospice, Hearing Dogs for the Deaf, Open Door, ESCAPE, Home-Start Taunton Deane and SURE.

Forthcoming Events

- **Taunton Deane Aquathlon** - The third Taunton Deane Aquathlon, organised by Tone Leisure and Somerset RC Tri, takes place on Sunday, 25th February at Wellington Sports Centre. The race comprises a swim in Wellington Pool, followed by a run around the lanes and footpaths of Wellington. There are two distances, 500 m swim and 5k run, or 1,000 m swim and 10k run. We expect an entry of around 130 people ranging from the Youth category aged 15 years, up to Vintage Vet aged 60+ years.
- **“Get In and Swim”** - Taunton Pool is inviting local people to sign up for a healthy New Year challenge to support Marie Curie Cancer Care in the local area and register for Swimathon 2007 “Get In and Swim” to take on the challenge of a hearty 5k swim at the event (22nd-25th March).
- **Taunton Triathlon** - Taunton based Solicitors, Foot Anstey, are this year's sponsors of the Taunton Deane Foot Anstey Triathlon on Sunday, 20th May, which is being organised by Tone Leisure and local triathlon club Somerset RC Tri. The event, now in its tenth year, is one of the most popular sporting events in the South West calendar and is already full, with all 400 places being taken in just two weeks. The event attracts complete beginners right through to the elite - drawing from sports clubs across the South West region and beyond. We will work closely with Foot Anstey to help make this anniversary event a success. Competitors will benefit from improved support facilities whilst spectators will enjoy a great day out with plenty of side attractions at Wellington Sports Centre to keep the whole family busy.
- **Meatloaf Trilogy** - Wellsprings will be hosting Meatloaf Trilogy on 3rd March.
- **The Counterfeit Stones** - The Counterfeit Stones will be appearing at Wellsprings on 20th April.
- **Jethro** - Jethro will be back at Wellsprings for his third visit, by popular demand, on 28th April.

Sports and Health Development

- **Somerset LAA** - The Somerset Local Area Agreement (LAA) has set a target for the number of adults that are to be regularly participating in physical activity over the next 3 years. Tone Leisure are working in partnership with Taunton Deane Borough Council to encourage more people in Taunton Deane to become more physically active, in order to contribute to this target. Building upon the success of the Sport Relief Mile Event that took place at Wellsprings Leisure Centre in July last year, Tone Leisure has chosen to use mass-participation events to make a significant impact on these targets. Several events have been selected as the “key events” that Tone Leisure will use to encourage large numbers of people to participate in physical activity. Marie-Curie Cancer Care Swimathon (22nd-25th March) is the first of these events.
- **Community Cardiac Rehabilitation Programme** - The Taunton Deane Phase III Community Cardiac Rehabilitation Programme held a celebration event at Wellsprings Leisure Centre in December. The Somerset PCT programme, that is run in partnership with Tone Leisure, has been operating for just over a year and has seen more than seventy people benefiting from the service. The event was well attended by programme graduates, Health Professionals associated with the programme delivery and Dr. Tom MacConnell, Lead Consultant Cardiologist.
- **Club and Coach Development** - Club and Coach Development workshops have been organised in the new year by Sports Development at Wellsprings Leisure Centre. Twenty sports coaches from across the county attended a Sports Coach UK Workshop last week called Equity in Your Coaching, looking at ensuring they are equitable in their coaching. There will be a similar course held in February for club volunteers, run by Running Sport, called A Club For All which also addresses similar equity issues. Both of these workshops are a requirement for all sports clubs wishing to obtain clubmark status with their governing body.
- **MEND**

This programme is being funded from the Well Being programme of the Big Lottery. The success of this bid will enable Tone Leisure to provide an effective obesity prevention and treatment programme for children and their parents across Taunton and Wellington for two years. This project is being run in partnership with MEND.
- **MIND**

Tone Leisure have submitted a bid to the MIND partnership, which has successfully passed through the first round of the Well Being Fund.

Councillor John Clark

COUNCIL MEETING 20 FEBRUARY 2007

REPORT OF COUNCILLOR GARNER HOUSING SERVICES

The Council has continued to improve the energy efficiency of the privately owned housing stock in the Deane using a combination of Warmfront Grants, Warm and Well Grants and the cavity wall insulation Council Tax rebate scheme.

In the last year the Council has put £70,000 into the Warm and Well Scheme. This scheme is delivered by the Somerset and ex Avon local authorities and is designed to assist residents over the age of 70 who do not qualify for the Government's income related Warmfront Grant. Additional funding in the new financial year will allow the age threshold to be reduced to age 65.

The cavity wall scheme, funded in partnership with British Gas, has been highly successful with a total of 900 enquires and 520 installations carried out by the middle of January 2007. This is a highly cost effective scheme because the Council only provides a subsidy of £50 for each installation with British Gas providing a similar amount resulting in a £100 rebate taken off an existing discounted and highly competitive price.

The Council is now working in partnership with British Gas developing a new renewable energy Council Tax rebate initiative that will work in parallel with the existing cavity wall insulation scheme. This scheme, one of only 4 pilots in the Country, will be launched shortly using publicity leaflets included with the Council Tax bills. This scheme will give substantial Council tax rebates to residents; with no match funding from the Council and in addition successful applicants will also be able to apply for substantial government low carbon building grants. The Council has also developed an interest free renewable energy loan scheme with the Wessex Reinvestment Trust, which will be available on a strictly limited pilot basis to the first few applicants.

The Council has also been successful in securing £80,000 from British Gas for "fuel switching" in Council properties. This payment has been made because in recent years the Council has changed heating systems in some Council properties from a "dirty fuel", coal, oil or electricity to a "clean fuel", gas. This windfall funding will be used for new energy efficiency improvements in properties.

Notwithstanding the success outlined above, this Council will continue to pursue grant funding and other initiatives that will help save Taunton Deane residents money, as well as protecting both our environment and also vulnerable groups within our community.

Cllr Greg Garner

COUNCIL MEETING 20 FEBRUARY 2007

Report of Councillor Terry Hall Corporate Resources

PERSONNEL

STAFFING

Melissa Norval from Somerset County Council has taken over from Rob North as Chief Personnel Officer for TDBC. This is on a secondment basis of 3 days a week up until the start of the ISiS contract. Additional support will also be provided as required from SCC for 1 day a week. Rob North will continue on 1 day a week to manage and lead the Job Evaluation Project.

SICKNESS ABSENCE

We are experiencing a reduction in short term absence levels but need to focus on the current long term absence cases and how these can be managed. We are also looking to heighten the awareness of absence with staff via more text in the introductory handbook for all new staff etc. We are holding a meeting with Occupational Health to improve timescales and communication here.

SMOKING

The new legislation regarding non- smoking comes into effect on the 1st July 2007 and the results of the staff survey on this are have been distributed. We are planning to visit all external sites to check compliance and managers understanding. Smoking in company vehicles will no longer be permitted so this will also need to be managed and communicated. We are also looking into smoking arrangements at Deane House in terms of the smoking area. This is in line with the survey results.

PAYROLL

The payroll function moves over to SCC this month and considerable work has been undertaken in this area to allow this to happen. From February 12th all payroll enquiries should be directed to County, as we will no longer have payroll staff within the personnel team here. This will be communicated to all managers and staff. We will continue to use the Resource link system here for reporting reasons – in particular the sickness absence reports which we are now producing monthly for managers.

PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

We continue to provide professional support to ISiS, Housing Stock options and the redundancies etc in this area as well as Waste Partnership activities.

We are also dealing with other restructures as well as a number of staffing matters that have also been raised.

CORPORATE SUPPORT

Apart from being very involved in the ISiS evaluation process (from printing out of bids for all evaluators, acting as technical support and buddies, to bid and site evaluators), Corporate Support Services has undergone a significant restructure.

Facilities management has moved from Property Services to Corporate Support Services and we have taken the opportunity to look at the resources available and as a result have merged Facilities management with Corporate Administration under the operational management of Angela Eldridge. This has resulted in Gwyn Carter (and her post) being available to recreate the operational Customer Services Manager post. A number of benefits have already materialised from this restructure.

Under Angela's control, Facilities management have carried out the first fire evacuation for some years. This pulled up a number of issues and Angela is working on solutions to these issues currently.

The cleaning contract has been investigated thoroughly and, thanks to David Woodbury's timely intervention, a potential fire hazard has been overcome. We now have a formal agreement with the cleaners, which ensure quality and safety for everyone. Other areas for improvement are being discussed and will be rolled out over the coming months.

A new agreement for the provision of security in Deane House with the current security company starts Monday 12th February, which provides us with both cashable savings and more pro-active role for the security officers who will also incorporate a meet and greet role into their job.

The Customer Services team once again have a full-time manager looking after their needs and discussions are taking place on the direction we need to move in, in line with the Customer Access strategy. Simple changes have already been seen in reception (e.g., DDA accessible phones, day-light bulbs) and will continue over the next few weeks, which, we hope will have a positive effect on customers (e.g., new signage, more structure to leaflets and notice boards).

The Design and Print team have successfully been working on a number of corporate and service led projects. The Supervisor, retired at the end of December and we have taken the decision not to employ another supervisor, but are looking at employing a print room assistant to ensure we have adequate staff cover within the busy print team.

The restructure has freed up Claire's time to look at more strategic matters and she has been working with each operational manager to ensure corporate requirements are met.

“ISiS ” – (IMPROVING SERVICES IN SOMERSET)

We are moving rapidly to the final stages of the evaluation process, which consists of meetings of the Plenary Panels to consider the results of the Segments Panels. This will be followed by a recommendation of a Preferred Bidder.

Presentations to the Deliverables and Quality and Price and Affordability Panels by external assessors of the bidders ICT and Property proposals have been given recently, these very important reports will be taken into account in reaching the final decision.

After appointing a Preferred Bidder. There will be a period of negotiations to draw up a contract, with hopefully a start date in July.

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

ELECTIONS

Borough and Parish elections will be taking place on the 3rd May this year. New legislation has been passed to enable the checking of signatures on postal voting statements (forms returned with the ballot paper by postal voters). In our area we have around 10300 postal voters. Work started in the first week of January collecting Personal Identifiers from all these people. The PI is a signature and date of birth. If people don't reply after this then their postal vote will be cancelled.

They can however reapply for a postal vote at a later date. These PIs will be scanned and held on a database. At election time statements that come back will be compared with the signature and date of birth of that person held on the database.

As part of a bid to encourage more people to vote at elections Craig Morse and other officers and Councillors manned a small exhibition for two days recently in the Old Market Centre in Taunton. Passers by were asked to make sure they are included on the Register of Electors and encouraged to exercise their vote at the local elections in May. This display will be repeated at ASDA supermarket.

As part of the policy of taking our Annual Council meeting (Mayor making) out into the community, arrangements are now in hand for the meeting in May. Subject, of course, to the Mayor elect being re-elected as a councillor, the Annual Council meeting this year will be held at Norton Manor Camp. 40 Commando Royal Marines are Freemen of the Borough and are very keen to welcome the Council and the public to their premises for this occasion.

Also on the civic front, the Council's twin town of Konigslutter will be making a civic visit to Taunton Deane from 25 - 30 March this year. The Friends of

Konigslutter have arranged a varied and interesting programme for their visit, which will be led by their directly elected, executive Burgermeister, Ottomar Lippelt. The Council will be hosting a civic reception for the visitors on 28 March.

It is understood that work will shortly begin on alterations and redecoration of the Old Municipal Buildings prior to the building being occupied by the County Council Registration Service. Therefore arrangements have been made for the various pictures, paintings and civic artefacts within the building to be expertly removed, and stored by the County Museum service. The opportunity will be taken to restore some of these artefacts, particularly some of the paintings before they are returned for future display.

PROCUREMENT

Together with the County Council we have produced a Joint new Procurement Strategy that was presented to the Resources Review Panel recently. One of the principle outputs of the Strategy is to amalgamate our and SCC purchases to gain economies of scale and obtain greater value from our investments into procurement systems and expertise.

Procurement is included in the IsiS project and the joint strategy, which contains requirements for ethical and local suppliers, will be the starting point for discussions regarding procurement by the Joint Venture Company.

FINANCIAL SERVICES

Financial Services have now completed the 2007/08 budget. Full Council will consider this formally at this meeting. The budget sets out the Council Tax and Housing Rents increase for 2007/08. The proposed increase in Council Tax is 2%, this means that a Band D property will pay the Council £128.05 per annum or £2.46 per week.

Housing Rents are constrained by limits set by central Government and they will be increasing by an average of 4.99%. Following the completion of this lengthy exercise, work is now starting on preparation for the closing of the 2006/07 annual accounts.

Finally the Unit has been heavily involved in the evaluation of the ISIS bids for both stage 1 and stage 2 and also the impact of the Avon & Somerset Police Authority joining the partnership

REVENUES

Year-end is our key priority as it is our first year-end on the new IBS system. We've recently undertaken training in how to run the year-end processes. A test run will be conducted week commencing 12th February, with the live process scheduled for the week commencing 26 Feb 2007. The process will result in a certain amount of system downtime, which will impact detrimentally upon backloads. As yet we don't know how long the system will be down, but

we're trying to minimise the impact.

The NNDR system conversion took place on 4 Dec 2007 and went well. However, there are a number of minor issues, which we are sorting out.

Both Council Tax & NNDR collection rates have suffered due to the delays in the recovery process resulting from the system conversions. Recovery action has now recommenced in earnest for Council Tax & we will be issuing summonses shortly. Action will recommence for NNDR in the near future.

We currently have a backlog of approximately 4 weeks items of post. We've recently implemented new processes aimed at achieving our target of processing post within 2 weeks of receipt.

Revenues staff are currently checking and amending their job evaluation questionnaires.

BENEFITS

The Benefits Service cleared its backlog of work ahead of schedule and has now returned to its normal turn around of work (10 working days) following implementation of the IBS Open Revenues computer system.

Our processing times for new claims and changes of circumstances have reduced considerably. In January, the average time to process a new claim was 40 days (down from a high of 69 days in October) and the average time to process a change of circumstance was 15 days (down from 40 days in October). The percentage of new claims worked out within 14 days of receiving all the information we need from the claimant rose to 79% (up from 46% in August).

These times are still too high but I anticipate we will be close to re-achieving our previous top quartile results from the beginning of the new financial year.

Both our Revenues and Benefits Staffs have been through a difficult period since switching off the old system back in the summer. I wish to record my gratitude to them all for the hard work they have put in since then.

In October 2006 we successfully prosecuted 2 claimants for committing benefit fraud. In addition to this, we have issued 8 formal cautions since April 2006.

We are currently preparing for 'year end' and the mass re-calculation exercise for all our customers to take into account the increases in allowances and benefit rates from April.

In the booklet to be sent with all Council Tax bills in March, we have included a tear-off slip for residents to make a claim for Council Tax Benefit. A similar coupon was included with last year's Council Tax bills as part of a take up

campaign for Council Tax Benefit. In response to approximately 405 requests for more information, the team contacted customers to carry out initial checks. This allowed us an opportunity to prevent claims being made where it was clear there would be no entitlement and to explain to customers why they would not be eligible. In some instances we were able to provide advice and contact details for other benefits. Where there was the potential for customers to receive Council Tax Benefit, we offered either home or office based appointments to help customers complete claim forms and to ensure we had all the necessary information we needed. As a result we put 30 new claims into payment awarding extra Council Tax Benefit of £24,151 and an extra £6,818 in Housing Benefit

CORPORATE PROPERTY

The OMB.

Although building work is not due to start until April 2007, moving the existing tenants into temporary accommodation in East Reach and removing valuable artefacts into storage has already commenced. The building work, comprising a lift, archive storage and alteration to make the building comply with the Disability Discrimination Act is due to be completed by the end of August. The building will then be leased to the Somerset County Council primarily for use by the County Registrar.

Registration of Land

The preparation of plans for the registration of part of the Council's land holdings is nearing completion. This project, led by the Council's Solicitor, takes advantage of a favourable financial offer by the Land Registry. The planned completion date for the Council's input is the end of March 2007 and it is likely that this date will be met.

Lights in Bath Place, Taunton.

For many years it has been accepted that the lights in the three alleyways leading into Bath Place have needed improvement. The installation of new improved lighting has now commenced. It is anticipated that the work will be finished by the end of the month.

Solar powered lighting.

The crematorium car parks require lighting. To provide mains fed lights would have meant digging up areas of the various car park and road surfaces. Because of advances in new technology with regard to solar power the opportunity has been taken to trial a solar powered light. Should it prove successful then a contract will be placed in the spring.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Fiona Baker has now settled in to her post as web site marketing manager, and the web strategy group is now looking at ways to further develop the take up and usage of our site – which is currently averaging nearly 40,000 unique visitors per month.

Preliminary work on replacing the planning system has now commenced – the project board and project manager have been appointed from within the Planning and ICT units. Malcolm Kay will be project manager, and subject to formal approval from The Executive to proceed, the he will spend 3 days a week working full time on this project. A small re-organisation of roles within the ICT unit has taken place to accommodate this.

The additional bandwidth we installed on our home working internet connection late last year has largely resolved the performance issues we were experiencing as the number of staff using the facility grew.

Additionally, the wireless system installed at West Hatch as part of the Connecting Somerset project has vastly improved the broadband provision in that area, and one of our home workers based there is experiencing a far better service as a result.

The project to implement the new Academy system is reaching a critical phase as the data conversion work reaches the testing phase. At the same time, the project to implement the shared Choice Based Lettings system across all Somerset Districts is now starting to take significant resources from the ICT unit as important decisions are being made on the way the system will be implemented and linked to other existing council computer systems.

The ongoing project to fully implement the Customer Services system continues – we are currently in discussion with the software supplier over the best way to upgrade the system to their current software release without causing major disruption to the service during the upgrade.

All the performance indicators measuring system availability are above our targets, which are excellent news and reflect well on the skills of the ICT support teams. I congratulate them.

Terry Hall

Council Meeting 20 February 2007

Report of Councillor Gwyneth Leighton - Communications

Public Relations

We are currently working on developing a communications strategy for the ISiS programme which will take us from the announcement of the preferred bidder to contract close and through to transition. We will continue to produce the Members Briefing and monthly Newsletter.

The spring issue of Deane Dispatch has been put together and will be distributed during the last week of February and through March.

In December we handled 17 media inquiries and sent out 9 press releases and in January we had 40 inquiries and sent out 12 press releases.

We will soon be arranging a Member briefing about Waterlinks and now that a Public Engagement Officer (PEO) is in post we hope to start working with them to promote projects locally. The PEO will also look at the wider promotion both in terms of working with the partners as well as national promotion.

Web Content and Marketing

New web pages have been added to the Council website for our 'Team Somerset' bid which outlines why we believe this is the right choice for Somerset and explains the reasons why we have opposed to the County Council's bid for a single Unitary Authority.
<http://www.tauntondeane.gov.uk/tdbcsites/council/press/teamsomerset.asp>

We have worked in partnership with Sedgemoor, South Somerset, West Somerset and Mendip District Councils to develop this bid and want to make sure that as many people as possible have access to as much information as possible about the efficiencies we can achieve by working in partnership and how this would avoid the unnecessary waste of money that would be needed to set up a unitary system and the loss of local representation for the public that would result.

We have also reviewed the 'How to become a councillor' web pages. These are due to be launched shortly and will give a clearer picture to the public on how to get involved and what is involved in being a councillor. We hope too, that it these changes will make it easier for the public to find the information on our website. We are also making revisions and improvements to the Homepage and these are due to be completed by the end of February, early March.

Staff involved in developing the website attended a conference/workshop on web strategy which was extremely helpful and provided insight into what other authorities are working on with their websites. This highlighted that not many authorities have web strategies written but many are now working on them.

We had a useful discussion at the Resources Review panel about how we can harness involving Internet technologies to provide better support for our Councillors. We will be feeding back to Councillors in due course.

Communications are currently working on an internal 'Writing for the Web' training course for staff members who actually have to write, edit and add detail to the website to give them the skills and support to carry out this vital role.

Consultation

I am pleased to report that our new Consultation and Information Officer, Charissa deZeeuw, has now started. Previously she worked at the University of the West Of England and has been completing her PhD on Public Participation. She has been involved in public consultation associated with regeneration projects in London and brings with her many skills to strengthen our work in this field.

The aims of the Consultation and Information Officer are to ensure high standards in consultation and research activities across the Council. We want to make sure that all consultation follows best practice and will stand up to scrutiny. We see this role as key as key to delivering many of the aspirations in the government's White Paper "Strong and Prosperous Communities" in terms of community engagement and participation in local decision-making. We will be continuing our overview of consultation and strengthening the implementation of the feedback we receive, and will also be maintaining a strategic overview of corporate complaints.

Gwyneth Leighton
Executive Councillor Communications

TAUNTON DEANE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Joint Report of Strategic Directors, Chief Solicitor, Financial Services Manager and Corporate Property Manager to the Executive Meeting on 6 December 2006

The Wellsprings Centre

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This report is to inform the Executive that all the issues arising out of the recovery of the project to build the Wellsprings Centre have at long last effectively been resolved and to formally report the outcome of the Council's claim against its original contractor Mr R W F Warner – trading as the Warner Group.
- 1.2 The report also provides details of the overall cost of the project and recommends how the small underspend on the approved budget set aside for its completion should be dealt with.

A A Summary of the Progress of the Project

2. History of the Project

- 2.1 In the mid 1990's the need for a sports centre that would serve the community and the needs of Ladymead School were identified and the project formed part of the North Taunton package under a "Capital Challenge" scheme.
- 2.2 In early 1998 tenders were received to construct a dry sports centre on the site at Ladymead School based on a design and build scheme. At the same time an application was submitted to Sport England for grant assistance towards the cost of the scheme. Sport England gave approval to a grant of approximately £2.2 million in the Autumn of 1999.
- 2.3 In May 2000 work commenced on site, the contractor being R W F Warner. For a variety of reasons the formal written contract with Warner was not finally signed until April 2001 but Warner was nevertheless contractually bound to complete the scheme by November 2001.
- 2.4 Early in 2001 it became clear that the contract was not progressing in accordance with the agreed programme and – despite a succession of unfulfilled promises - the agreed date for completion passed with the Centre being far from complete. From October 2001 to March 2002 pressure on Warner was increased with formal discussions taking place with the aim of having Warner comply with the terms of his contract with us by resolving the unsatisfactory progress with construction.
- 2.5 Detailed advice was sought from our external lawyers as to how we could bring this to a head. As a result, in March 2002 we served Warner with the formal notice legally required to start the contract termination process. Our advisors made clear that he had still to be given some chance to fulfil his contractual duties. He did not do so and, it soon became quite clear that Warner was not going to be able to complete the construction work within an acceptable period. The Council therefore decided in June 2002 to take the final step available to it by serving further notice formally terminating the contract with him. The site was immediately re-possessed and secured.

- 2.6 The next phase was particularly demanding and complex. The Council needed to recover the project as quickly and as efficiently as possible yet with the threat of major litigation involving Warner being very real. Consequently in July 2002 the Symonds Group Limited was appointed as our project managers to complete the building of the Centre. On their appointment their initial focus was upon a “stock-take” of both the quantity and the quality of what had been constructed so as to assess the scope of the work required to complete the Centre and to support the Council’s eventual financial claims against Warner.
- 2.7 Having prepared the necessary procurement process, tenders were invited from appropriate contractors for the completion of the Centre and Bluestone Plc was appointed as the Council’s chosen contractor in 2003.
- 2.8 In view of the substantial additional costs which the Council now needed to find, an application for additional grant support of £550k was submitted to Sport England in January 2003. The normal rule is that no further work should be carried out whilst such an application is being considered by them. Given the condition of the Centre – they agreed that we could nevertheless proceed with the limited work of making sure that the Centre remained wind and water tight. This work was carried out in April 2003.
- 2.9 Sport England’s decision was delayed even further because of their policy of not making funding decisions around the time of elections. Thus it was that the unwelcome and unexpected decision by Sport England not to increase the grant aid already given to the Council was received immediately following the Borough elections in May 2003.
- 2.10 Having thus exhausted all options for additional external funding, the works by Bluestone to complete the Centre started. Practical completion was achieved just before Christmas 2003 and the Centre was opened to the public in January 2004.

3. The Council’s Claim against Mr R W F Warner

- 3.1 In October 2003 Council Officers and our external lawyers met with Warner to outline the claim which the Council intended to make against him for the cost of completing the Centre. It was estimated that our claim would be in excess of £2 million. In turn Warner was intending to seek compensation of £250,000 against the Council - claiming he had not been properly paid for the work he had carried out. When confronted with the Council’s claim Warner claimed that he was insolvent and that any such claims against him would be fruitless.
- 3.2 In December 2003 Warner initiated court action to prevent himself being made bankrupt. During this process it became apparent that there were a multitude of other creditors with claims against him including suppliers, sub-contractors and one other local authority – Derbyshire Dales DC.

- 3.3 Warner held a creditors meeting in January 2004. This was in order to get approval from his creditors for him to create an Individual Voluntary Arrangement (IVA) which would have the effect of staving off his personal bankruptcy. Warner's trustee decided to initially disallow both Councils' claims against him under their construction contracts.

This meant that legally we were not at that stage able to vote in any meaningful way against the proposed IVA. As a result in February 2004 our lawyers and those of Derbyshire Dales DC issued court proceedings to challenge the decisions taken at the creditors meeting.

Between February and April 2004 the court proceedings and discussions with Warner and the lawyers acting for the Chairman of the creditors meeting continued to see if the various competing claims could be resolved.

- 3.4 When the Council was given details of Mr Warner's assets and liabilities we decided to instruct a firm of "forensic accountants" to carry out a thorough investigation of Warner's financial affairs so that the Council could be confident that nothing was being hidden. It would also ensure that decisions about our claims against him could be soundly based.
- 3.5 The conclusion which we and our legal and financial advisors came to with considerable regret on the conclusion of these investigations was that there were no prospects whatever of recovering the kind of compensation which would otherwise have been properly claimed by us in the courts from Warner. Whilst we were successful in having our claim eventually admitted in the IVA, Warner's assets were so small that the amount awarded and paid to the Council amounted to only £59k. That amount appears in the final account set out in the next section.

4. Financial Summary

- 4.1 When the Wellsprings Centre was first commissioned by the Council (1997/98) the expected net cost, after taking into account the expected level of support from external funding partners such as the Lottery was £578k.
- 4.2 The difficulties with the Warner contract, the subsequent determination of that contract, together with the "rescue" package to finalise the construction of the Centre have required approval from Full Council for supplementary estimates totalling £2.5m. This brought the budgeted net cost to the Council to £3.095m.
- 4.3 A summary of the how the budget has increased in recent years is shown below:

Year	What for	Amount £000
1997/98	Original Net Budget	578
2001/02	To meet additional costs following changes in the BCIS inflation index and its subsequent impact on the overall contract cost	128
2002/03 (via Budget Process)	Contingency to meet expected overspend	80
2002/03	Additional costs arising from decision by Full Council in March 2002 to continue contract with Warner (including an allowance for "incentive payment" if project was completed	362

	by June 2002)	
2002/03	To meet costs arising from subsequent contract determination	99
2003/04 (via Budget Process)	To part fund expected completion costs	696
2003/04	To meet additional costs arising from the Guaranteed Maximum Sum provided by Bluestone	1,062
2003/04	Repairs to external blockwork	90
Total		3,095

- 4.4 With the construction of the Centre now complete and all legal cost recovery mechanisms having now been exhausted, Officers are now in a position to be able to report on the final cost of the project. In summary the net cost to the Council is £2.849m. The table below details its final costs when compared to the approved budget:

Cost Heading	Budget £000	Actual £000	Variance £000
External Legal Fees	200	182	-18
External Project Managers	207	257	50
Construction Costs	5,397	5,237	-160
Total Expenditure	5,804	5,676	-128
External Income	-2,709	-2,827	-118
Total	3,095	2,849	-246

- 4.5 This is £246k less than the revised budget cost of £3.095m. Below is a schedule of the main savings achieved on the project – as compared to the approved budgeted figures:-

Cost Heading	Saving £000
Guaranteed Maximum Sum - underspend	-69
Legal Fees	-18
Retention withheld from original contractor	-77
Emergency expenditure re: drainage works	36
Additional external income	
• Claimed back from original contractor	-59
• Other additional external income	-59
Total Underspend	-246

Members should note that these costs exclude the substantial time spent by a range of senior officers on the management and recovery of the project. It is estimated that these amount to in excess of £200k. In total the Council has been able to recover only around £79k of its costs from Warner. This has been in the form of both legal expenses (£21k) and the dividend accruing to the Council from the IVA (£59k).

- 4.6 With the construction of the centre complete and no other works now required, it is recommended that the underspend of £246k is now returned to unallocated general fund reserves.

B Review of the Wellsprings Project

Having set out this outline of events of this ill-fated construction contract and its financial consequences, the remaining sections of this report outline the processes which we put in place to manage an exceptional – and probably unique - set of challenges for the Council's members and officers. The report also summarises some of the significant lessons that were learnt and the far-reaching changes which have been put in place since that time.

5. Recovery Project Control

- 5.1 In order to manage the complex task of recovering the Wellsprings Centre project a new Multi Disciplinary Officer Group was established early in 2002. It took control of the closing down of the Warner contract, the recovery and completion of the project and the attempts to sue Warner for compensation. In this we were helped by external project management consultants - appointed by Sport England to protect the grant assistance they had already made to the project – and by procurement officers of the County Council.
- 5.2 At Member level an all-party Project Steering Group was also created in 2002 comprising the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group (who were then the majority party) together with the Leaders of the other political groups. When the political control of the Council changed in May 2003 the membership of this Members' Steering Group then consisted of the Leader of the Conservative Group, the Leader of the other political groups together with the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Recreation and one other Conservative councillor. During the pre-completion phase, the Steering Group also invited representatives of the County Council and of Ladymead Community School to be present at their meetings.
- 5.3 In addition to the internal arrangements detailed above, when it was clear in the Autumn of 2001 that the contract with Mr Warner was not progressing properly the Council engaged one of the country's leading firms of construction lawyers to advise it on its dealings with Warner and on the legal issues arising not only from the termination of his contract but also on the new contract to complete the Centre.

6. Reviews/Scrutiny Arrangements

- 6.1 Throughout the whole of the period since the contract was first let to Warner, the project has been examined on a number of occasions by our internal Auditors and the District Auditor and has been the subject of a number of internal and external reviews.
- 6.2 In particular, in January 2003 (after the collapse of the Warner contract and before construction re-commenced) the District Auditor issued a review report with recommended actions aimed at minimising the future risks to the Council. The recommendations were immediately accepted and implemented in full.

- 6.3 An extract from the 2003 Annual Audit letter summarises the District Auditor's comments:-

“Wellsprings Project

Work started on site in May 2000 for the Wellspring Centre but as the project progressed it became clear that the original contractor could not complete the work to agreed timescales and budget. The Council ‘determined’ the contract in June 2002, and this raised a number of issues for the Council and for us as the external auditors. We carried out a review of the project and reported our findings in January 2003.

Throughout the duration of the contract there were a number of events, which with the benefit of hindsight were warning signs that the contract may not be delivered within the agreed timescales and budget. The Council could have responded to these events more proactively by increasing their input and staff resources in the management and supervision of the project. Whilst this may have resulted in bringing matters to a head earlier, it is unlikely that the end result would have been any different.

Although there are lessons to be learnt with regard to risk assessment and project management, there is no evidence to suggest that the Council has acted imprudently or improperly.

There remain many issues with the original contractor, which need to be resolved by the Council, in order to bring the original contract to a conclusion. The Council is rigorously pursuing the recovery of the increased costs from the contractor.”

- 6.4 As mentioned earlier, the management of the recovery of the project has also been thoroughly reviewed by an independent Project Manager appointed by Sport England. As a result of his report the grant support awarded to the Council in 1999 has also been paid in full.
- 6.5 Weekly bulletins on progress were shared with the Members Steering Group throughout 2002/2003. Regular reports on the project have been submitted to the Executive since June 2000 and to the Council through to July 2004. All significant decisions as to the Warner contract termination and as to the funding needed to effect the Centre's completion have also been taken through Full Council.

7. Lessons Learned

- 7.1 The Wellsprings Centre itself – now that it has been open for use for three years – has been an undoubted success and is contributing to the local community just as was hoped when it was planned in the mid-90s. But the construction contract posed more problems for this Council than any other in its lifetime. It has cost substantially more than was originally planned and its eventual delivery was more than two years late. The recovery process demanded the input of significant amounts of the scarce time of a range of senior officers and from lead councillors from all parties. The expectations of the school and of the local community to have this Centre available by the end of 2001 were dashed.

- 7.2 Without doubt the Warner affair was a major contractual failure which caused real damage to the Council through those years. No-one who has been affected by it would wish to see a repeat. Thus significant work has gone into learning from this - hopefully - unique experience.
- 7.3 A number of formal reviews of the project were carried out – independent of the Council – notably by the District Auditor and by Sport England. Whilst none pointed to any significant event or approach on the Council’s part which led to the contract’s failure – other than the actions of Warner himself - each made recommendations as to how the risk of a recurrence should be minimised. All such recommendations were immediately acted upon.
- 7.4 In addition, the Officer Group has carried through a searching review of what other lessons needed to be learnt and what changes should be made in our approach to procurement. This review was facilitated by external project management consultants. As it progressed it was evident that a wide range of improvements or changes had already been made in response to the extreme problems which had come to light during the recovery process. The appendix to this report contains a summary of some of the main issues which we noted during that exercise

8. Present Position

- 8.1 Although one or two minor items still remain to be resolved with the Centre, it forms an important and successful element of the leisure facilities being managed by Tone Leisure.
- 8.2 The facility is a popular one and is trading well - providing a valuable resource for both the school and the community of North Taunton.

9. Conclusions and Recommendation

- 9.1 The failure of the original construction contract with Warner was extremely damaging to the authority and to the local community. Its recovery has required considerable resources, in both financial and people terms, to get the project completed.
- 9.2 A range of lessons have been learned and implemented - as detailed in this report - and those lessons have made a considerable impact on the way that our procurement management now operates.
- 9.3 The budgets approved by the Council to ensure the completion of the project have not been fully exhausted and a sum of £246k remains. It is recommended this sum should be returned to unallocated general fund reserves.

J J THORBERRY
STRATEGIC DIRECTOR

S ADAM
STRATEGIC DIRECTOR

R I TAYLOR
CHIEF SOLICITOR

P CARTER
FINANCIAL SERVICES MANAGER

S J RUTLEDGE
CORPORATE PROPERTY MANAGER

APPENDIX

	Issue	What happened?	Action taken?
1	Contract definition	There were early problems over elements of the contract where Warner took advantage of ambiguities to gain a limited financial advantage	DA Action Plan. All recommended changes adopted.
2	Pre-contract checks	Full, proper financial checks were carried out pre-contract. But in retrospect we concluded that these could have been more rigorous and could have been updated as the contract start became delayed.	Procedural changes have been made to tighten up this aspect
3	Procurement process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Warner was <u>not</u> the lowest tenderer, yet - in retrospect - this contract largely failed because he had contracted to provide the Centre for an unrealistic sum. Construction projects inevitably cost what they are truly worth – whatever the price label originally claims. Our formal contract standing orders and tendering mechanisms needed to be updated. 	<p>A rigorous approach needs to be adopted to overly-attractive contract offers.</p> <p>Our procurement procedures were reviewed and new contract standing orders adopted by the Council in 2003.</p>
4	Contract Documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimise all ambiguity of wording in documentation pre-contract Ensure written contracts completed as early as possible 	District Audit Action Plan included recommended changes. These were implemented in early 2003
5	Risk Management skills	At the time of its procurement stage in the late 90s, a full Risk Management approach had not yet been adopted by the Council. This has subsequently become an integral and important part of the Council's corporate governance arrangements and is now invariably applied to the management of all our projects	Done
6	Project Management skills	These too had not been formalised at the procurement stage of this contract. They became an important part of the approach during the recovery phase. They have now similarly been recognised as a vital skill for all staff involved in delivering a wide range of council-initiated schemes	Fully introduced and developed
7	Contract management capacity	The intensity and complexity of the work needed to enable contracts of this size and difficulty is hard to overestimate. Over the years we have been extremely fortunate to	Whilst the use of external consultants can often be far from

	Issue	What happened?	Action taken?
		have had staff with the ability and experience to be able to manage very demanding and sizeable contracts. "Punching above our weight" is a compliment often rightly paid to us. However, when things go wrong – as in this case – the demands far outweigh the capacity which we could reasonably expect to have available. .	ideal, we have now accepted the reality that - for larger and more specialist projects – the employment of such external expertise is essential.
8	Succession Planning	Similar to the previous item, the retirement of a number of staff who were key to the delivery of this project created very real problems in terms of our capacity	As above. We have now acknowledged that external skills – and the costs associated - do need to be imported more often - and at an earlier stage - than we have previously hoped was necessary.
9	Future acceptability of the Design and Build approach	The adoption of the Design and Build approach has often been quoted as a significant contributor to the failure of this project. Sport England decided during the recovery phase that it no longer supported D&B as a delivery method. D&B <u>can</u> be an effective way of delivering some types of project. It has its strengths and its risks. With the proper application of a Risk and Project Management culture there is no "in principle" reason to exclude this method for all purposes. But it does need to be treated with caution.	It is unlikely that major capital projects of this scale - directly commissioned by the Council - will now arise too often. Whilst not ruling out D&B, the experience gained here will need to be fully taken into account in any such procurement.
10	The recovery process – how well did it cope	The Council – both at member and officer level – devoted an exceptional amount of time and energy into the unattractive task of recovering this project from the brink of complete failure. It has been generally accepted that the recovery process that we put in place worked well and the individual lessons learnt as a result have been implemented – and are referred to elsewhere in this report	
11	The roles of the Officer Group and of the Member Steering Group	It was essential that a joint approach was taken to this project with full input from senior elected members and officers. That was achieved successfully. Whilst inevitably there were occasional strongly voiced disagreements, the two groups worked well together and devoted an exceptional amount of time and energy to achieving the best it could for the Council.	

	Issue	What happened?	Action taken?
12	The all-party approach to effective disaster recovery	This was the council working at its best. The recovery was managed across the May 2003 elections by an all-party working group who remained united throughout despite considerable external pressure and the unattractive nature of the task before them. Without that unity of purpose any prospect of the project's successful recovery would have been remote.	
13	Communications – internally, with our partners and with the public	This is not the sort of story that anyone enjoys either writing - or reading. Wellsprings figured significantly in the local media throughout the contract's painful collapse and recovery phases. After some initial uncertainty, the communication links were revised and a full and regular sharing of current information was put in place. Given the highly litigious atmosphere prevailing at the time and the consequent need to take extra care as to confidentiality – the extent and nature of the information released is regarded as having worked well.	This has acted as a useful reminder of the power of transparency and openness at times of rumour, suspicion and misunderstanding. This lesson subsequently helped us see how best to support local communities when afflicted by other crises - such as the Oxen Lane North Curry invasion
14	The necessity for - and the part played by - external advisors during the recovery phase	Lessons were learnt as to both the benefits and the inevitable limits of external advisors. "Getting it right" at the start can save the need for substantial remedial work further down the line. Of equal importance is the need to make sure that the nature of the task is fully understood by potential appointees and that their track record shows their experience in dealing with this demanding type of work.	There is now a greater recognition that we cannot realistically hope to meet all exceptional situations from within our own resources.
15	Understanding the legal restrictions created by the contractual relationship and the limits placed on the clients' ability to apply immediate and effective sanctions.	Contracts can be blunt instruments and – when they start to fail – are often not capable of immediate and effective remedial action. Once chosen, legally, a contractor and the client have a duty to do all they can to co-exist and to overcome obstacles.	For all involved in the recovery, the strong legal advice about this duty posed real problems for us. The natural instinct of many at the time was to terminate immediately. That was simply not deliverable.
16	Should contracts of this type be supported by a financial bond to	It has not been the Council's practice to require bonds to support contract delivery. Bonds do not come cheaply. It is doubtful whether a bondsman would have materially improved the	

	Issue	What happened?	Action taken?
	guarantee its delivery?	recovery of this project	
17	Appreciating the impact which such a contract failure has upon the approach taken by external contractors and consultants	For anyone – and this includes external consultants - being associated with a contract failure is an extremely unattractive activity. In terms of their reputations, the work carries high risks and yet the rewards for a successful recovery are small. None is obliged to take on such work and – if they do – they will inevitably take a cautious approach to putting it right.	This is an inevitable consequence of such a contract failure. Recovery from such a crisis must be accepted as being an expensive and slow business
18	The slowness of the recovery process	Linked to 17. The process was necessarily painstaking and took 18 months from Warner termination until the building's completion. There were two main contributors to this. First was the necessity to stock-take and to ensure we had a strong basis to sue Warner. Secondly was the need to pursue further grant from Sport England. As it has turned out, litigation by Warner (or against Warner) had limited scope (as described earlier in the report); and Sport England decided not to increase its grant to us	These aspects were reviewed. Although - in hindsight - a number of months delay occurred - the right decisions were made at the time
20	RWF Warner	A great deal has rightly been written about the Wellsprings contract failure and as to what we could have done to avoid it. It is right that we should do so. But the key to this crisis is the actions of Mr RWF Warner himself and the level of competence shown by him in managing this project. This is borne out by our discovery during the recovery phase of similar problems being encountered with other of his contracts in the South and Midlands. Yet it is this Council which has had to take the brunt of the financial damage he caused. He himself has substantially limited the financial consequences of his actions by entering an IVA. Every effort was made – and external specialist advice taken - to avoid this result. But rightly or wrongly that is the way which the insolvency law of the land now works	A painful lesson has been learnt
21	We should not have contracted with an individual. If the contractor had been a corporate body we would have been in a stronger position to recover our costs	This is not actually the case. If a similarly ill-fated contract had been with a limited <u>company</u> then their financial ability to cope with the substantial legal claims may not have been any greater. Insolvency – albeit of a different kind – would have surely followed.	
22	Sport England – the refusal of additional	A substantial amount of work was devoted to this new application to Sport England which	No substantive reason was given

	Issue	What happened?	Action taken?
	funding – could we have done more	was submitted in January 2003 but not decided by them until May of that year. The application was worked up with the officers of Sport England and we felt we had quite some reason to be optimistic about its chances of success. The decision announced immediately after the elections came as a considerable surprise.	for the rejection and although a strong plea for an urgent review of their decision was requested, no further comment was made by them.
23	The demands placed on staff during the recovery phase.	This recovery project across 2002 and 2003 placed exceptional pressures on a number of our senior staff who formed the recovery team – in addition to the demands of their “day jobs”. The nature of the task – along with its regular setbacks and disappointments - made it far from attractive. Taunton Deane was very fortunate to have a group of officers with the expertise to take on this task.	There are issues of capacity here. When they happen, crises soak up excessive amounts of our scarcest resources. The taking of a proper Risk Management approach will reduce the frequency and gravity of such crises but they cannot eliminate them.
24	The District Audit Report – completion of the Action Plan?	All recommendations made by the District Auditor in January/February 2003 were acted upon immediately.	