

You are requested to attend a meeting of the Council to be held in The John Meikle Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton on 8 December 2009 at 18:30.

Agenda

- 1 To receive the Minutes of the meetings of the Council held on 6 October 2009 and 23 November 2009 (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 18.
- 6 Declaration of Interests.
To receive declarations of personal or prejudicial interests, in accordance with the Code of Conduct. The usual declarations made at meetings of Full Council are set out in the attachment.
- 7 "Stand Against Violence" - To consider the attached motion proposed by Councillor Terry Murphy and seconded by Councillor John Meikle.
- 8 Economic Strategy and Action Plan for Taunton. A presentation by Professor Mark Hepworth of the Company Geo Economics. The presentation is scheduled to last no longer than 20 minutes.
- 9 Non attendance at meetings - Councillor Miss Julie Wood, Taunton Lyngford Ward. Report of the Chief Executive (attached).
- 10 Members' Allowances 2010/2011.
To receive recommendations from the independent Members' Allowances Panel (attached).
- 11 Part I - To deal with written questions to and receive the following recommendation from the Executive:-

Councillor Simon Coles - Recommendation relating to Growth Point Funding and re-profiling the Spending Plan (attached).
- 12 Part II - To receive reports from the following Members of the Executive:-

- (i) Councillor Ross Henley - Leader of the Council;
- (ii) Councillor Alan Paul - Communications;
- (iii) Councillor Simon Coles - Planning and Transportation;
- (iv) Councillor Fran Smith - Economic Development and the Arts;
- (v) Councillor Richard Lees - Sports, Parks and Leisure;
- (vi) Councillor Tim Slattery - Environmental Services (Report to follow);
- (vii) Councillor Hazel Prior-Sankey - Housing Services;
- (viii) Councillor Nicola Wilson - Resources;
- (ix) Councillor Alan Wedderkopp - Community Leadership.

Tonya Meers
Legal and Democratic Services Manager

07 December 2009

Members of the public are welcome to attend the meeting and listen to the discussions.

There is time set aside at the beginning of most meetings to allow the public to ask questions.

Speaking under “Public Question Time” is limited to 4 minutes per person in an overall period of 15 minutes. The Committee Administrator will keep a close watch on the time and the Chairman will be responsible for ensuring the time permitted does not overrun. The speaker will be allowed to address the Committee once only and will not be allowed to participate further in any debate.

If a member of the public wishes to address the Committee on any matter appearing on the agenda, the Chairman will normally permit this to occur when that item is reached and before the Councillors begin to debate the item.

This is more usual at meetings of the Council’s Planning Committee and details of the “rules” which apply at these meetings can be found in the leaflet “Having Your Say on Planning Applications”. A copy can be obtained free of charge from the Planning Reception Desk at The Deane House or by contacting the telephone number or e-mail address below.

If an item on the agenda is contentious, with a large number of people attending the meeting, a representative should be nominated to present the views of a group.

These arrangements do not apply to exempt (confidential) items on the agenda where any members of the press or public present will be asked to leave the Committee Room.

Full Council, Executive, Committees and Task and Finish Review agendas, reports and minutes are available on our website: www.tauntondeane.gov.uk



Lift access to the John Meikle Room and the other Committee Rooms on the first floor of The Deane House, is available from the main ground floor entrance. Toilet facilities, with wheelchair access, are also available off the landing directly outside the Committee Rooms.



An induction loop operates to enhance sound for anyone wearing a hearing aid or using a transmitter.

For further information about the meeting, please contact Democratic Services on 01823 356382 or email d.durham@tauntondeane.gov.uk

Council Members:-

Councillor P Watson
Councillor T Slattery
Councillor P Stone
Councillor D Wedderkopp
Councillor M Whitmarsh
Councillor J Williams
Councillor A Beaven
Councillor R Bowrah, BEM - Mayor
Councillor D Durdan
Councillor K Hayward
Councillor N Cavill
Councillor I Morrell
Councillor H Prior-Sankey
Councillor F Smith
Councillor N Stuart-Thorn
Councillor A Wedderkopp
Councillor N Wilson
Councillor J Allgrove
Councillor S Coles
Councillor C Hill
Councillor P Smith
Councillor J O'Brien
Councillor S Brooks
Councillor G Copley
Councillor J Court-Stenning
Councillor P Critchard
Councillor H Farbahi
Councillor C Herbert
Councillor J Horsley - Deputy Mayor
Councillor L James
Councillor S Lees
Councillor T McMahon
Councillor V Stock-Williams
Councillor J Thorne
Councillor M Floyd
Councillor K Durdan
Councillor B Denington
Councillor M Edwards
Councillor E Gaines
Councillor A Govier
Councillor C Guerrier
Councillor T Hall
Councillor A Paul
Councillor R Henley - Leader of the Council
Councillor M Hill
Councillor E Waymouth
Councillor D House
Councillor N Court
Councillor R Lees

Councillor J Lewin-Harris
Councillor J Meikle MBE
Councillor M Mullins
Councillor D Webber
Councillor T Murphy
Councillor C Bishop

Taunton Deane Borough Council

At a meeting of Taunton Deane Borough Council held in the John Meikle Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton on 6 October 2009 at 6.30 pm.

Present The Mayor (Councillor Bowrah)
The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Horsley)
Councillors Mrs Allgrove, Beaven, Brooks, Cavill, Coles, Mrs Copley, Mrs Court-Stenning, Critchard, Denington, Ms Durdan, Farbahi, Mrs Floyd, Govier, Guerrier, Hall, Hayward, Henley, Ms Herbert, C Hill, Mrs Hill, House, Miss James, R Lees, Mrs Lees, Mrs Lewin-Harris, McMahon, Meikle, Morrell, Mullins, Murphy, Paul, Prior-Sankey, Slattery, Mrs Smith, P Smith, Mrs Stock-Williams, Stone, Thorne, Watson, Mrs Waymouth, Ms Webber, A Wedderkopp, D Wedderkopp, Mrs Whitmarsh, Williams and Mrs Wilson.

Also present : Mrs Anne Elder, Chairman of the Standards Committee

1. Chief Superintendent Sandy Padgett

The Mayor announced the sad death of Chief Superintendent Sandy Padgett of Avon and Somerset Constabulary.

Members stood in silence in her memory.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of Taunton Deane Borough Council held on 14 July 2009 and 11 August 2009, copies having been sent to each Member, were signed by the Mayor.

3. Apologies

Councillors Bishop, D Durdan, Edwards, Gaines, O'Brien and Stuart-Thorn.

4. Communications

The Mayor made reference to the visit he had made earlier in the year to Taunton's Twin Town in France, Lisieux, where the Civic Party had been warmly welcomed by their hosts.

In his view twinning was beneficial not only on the cultural side but for the economy of Taunton Deane – with many visitors from both France and Germany making visits to our area.

He informed Members that he was President of both the Civic Twinning Link and the Friends of Lisieux. He had recently met with both organisations in an attempt to encourage a merger between the two, due to a decline in

membership of the Civic Link and a need to sort out future funding arrangements for twinning activities.

The Mayor concluded by asking Councillors to support the current twinning links in as many ways as possible. Regretfully very few of the Council's Members had been involved this year.

5. **Formal Apology by Councillor Stone**

Councillor Stone apologised to the Council for breaching the Code of Conduct last year when he decided not to withdraw from a meeting of Full Council despite declaring a prejudicial interest. He took the opportunity to explain to the Councillors present why he had decided to take the action he had.

6. **Declarations of Interest**

Councillors Brooks, Govier, Henley, McMahon, Paul, Prior-Sankey, Mrs Waymouth and D Wedderkopp declared personal interests as Members of Somerset County Council. Councillors Mullins and Slattery declared personal interests as Members of the Somerset Waste Board. Councillor Slattery also declared a personal interest as an employee of Sedgemoor District Council. Councillor Coles declared a personal interest as a Director of Southwest One. Councillor Miss James declared a personal interest as an employee of Viridor. Councillors Mrs Court-Stenning, Mrs Hill, Mrs Smith and Stone declared personal interests as employees of Somerset County Council. Councillors Henley and Mrs Wilson declared personal interests as employees of Job Centre Plus.

7. **Building a Resilient Taunton Deane**

The Mayor introduced Chrissie Godfrey and Paul Birch of Taunton Transition Town to the meeting.

Ms Godfrey and Mr Birch had facilitated the "Climate Change" workshops that had taken place over the past couple of months which had been open to both Members and officers across the Council.

A total of 375 people had attended the workshops and, as a result, a document had been published titled "Towards a Resilient Taunton Deane – 375 voices : one story" which had been circulated to all Councillors.

The document had focussed on the comments and ideas that had been expressed at the workshops and from this feedback an attempt had been made to picture Taunton Deane in the year 2026. A detailed resume of many of the issues raised was provided.

Ms Godfrey and Mr Birch reported that the workshops had proved to be very inspiring for the Transition Town movement and they had both felt very privileged to have been involved.

The Mayor thanked Ms Godfrey and Mr Birch for their very interesting presentation and they both left the meeting.

8. **Changes to the Constitution**

Submitted report which detailed a number of further proposed changes to the Constitution that were required to update the Standards Committee's terms of reference following the implementation of new regulations. In addition some minor amendments had been made to the Council's Standing Orders and these were also required to be approved.

Every local authority was required to have a Constitution which contained relevant information on how the Council operated and gave details of its political and management structures. It was required to be updated as changes to such structures were introduced.

The Standards Committee (Further Provisions) (England) Regulations 2009 came into force on the 15 June 2009 and amongst other things amended the way in which dispensations were granted. As such it was felt by the Standards Committee that some minor changes needed to be made to the way in which these dispensations were granted in order to make the process as flexible as possible.

In addition, upon further consideration of the Standing Orders it had been felt that more flexibility was required on the timing for Members to submit motions to Full Council and that more clarity was required as to what Members could do at a meeting when they had a prejudicial interest. The Council's Standing Orders had therefore been amended to reflect this.

The changes had been considered and approved by both the Constitutional Sub-Committee and the Corporate Governance Committee.

Resolved that the proposed changes to the Constitution as set out in the Appendices A and B to these minutes be approved.

9. **Community Governance Review – Cotford St. Luke**

Submitted report, previously circulated, of the outcome of the recent Community Governance Review that had been undertaken in connection with the creation of a new Parish Council for Cotford St Luke. Currently the village of Cotford St Luke fell within the Parish of Bishops Lydeard and Cothelstone.

A petition, signed by 256 electors of Cotford St Luke, had been received calling upon Taunton Deane to create a new Parish Council under statutory powers.

As part of a Boundary Review in 2005, Taunton Deane had proposed formal warding of the Parish of Bishops Lydeard and Cothelstone to create a new parish ward encompassing Cotford St Luke in order to facilitate the eventual creation of a separate Parish Council.

This had been accepted by the Boundary Commission for England who had made the appropriate Order.

Following receipt of the petition a formal Community Governance Review had been carried out in order to establish that the electors of Cotford St Luke would be best served by the creation of a new Parish Council.

Extensive consultation had taken place and, as anticipated, there was overwhelming support for the proposal and no adverse comments had been received from any interested party. In addition, the Community Scrutiny Committee had also given the proposal its support .

Resolved that the appropriate Order under statutory powers, for the creation of a new Parish Council for Cotford St Luke to coincide with elections planned for May 2011 be agreed. The boundaries of the parish to be coterminous with the existing Cotford St Luke Ward of Bishops Lydeard and Cothelstone Parish Council and to be known as Cotford St Luke Parish Council.

10. **Recommendations to Council from the Executive**

(a) **Implementation of Sort It Plus Recycling Collections**

The Executive had previously made a number of decisions relating to the extension of the recycling service in Taunton Deane to enable the kerbside collection of plastic and cardboard.

The purchase of extra recycling bins in connection with this extended service would be necessary at an estimated capital cost of £163,400.

Somerset County Council was in receipt of Waste Infrastructure Grant and had agreed, as a Member of the Somerset Waste Partnership, to assist the District Councils in the purchase of the additional bins by offering 75% of the cost.

This meant the cost to Taunton Deane would be reduced to £40,900.

On the motion of Councillor Slattery, it was

Resolved that an increase to the capital programme of £40,900 for the estimated shortfall in capital funding needed to purchase additional recycling bins be approved, to be funded from uncommitted Waste Services Reserves.

(b) **Non-Domestic Rates – Section 49 Hardship Relief Policy**

The Executive had agreed to support a proposal to introduce a procedure which would give the Council discretion to reduce or remit the payment of rates under Section 49 of The Local Government Finance Act 1988.

As a billing authority, Taunton Deane had to be satisfied that the ratepayer would suffer hardship if it did not agree to reduce the payment of rates. Additionally it had to be reasonable for the Council to do so, having regard to the interest of its Council Tax payers.

Central Government had provided guidance to help billing authorities decide whether to grant relief. From this it was clear that the reduction or remission of rates on grounds of hardship should be the exception rather than the rule.

75% of the cost of any reduction or remittance of rates could be offset against the Council's payment into the National Non-Domestic Rate pool. The other 25% would be borne locally by Council Tax payers and met from the authority's General Fund.

Historically the Council had received very few applications for hardship relief from ratepayers. However, it was expected the number of hardship applications would rise significantly as the economic downturn started to bite.

On the motion of Councillor Mrs Wilson

Resolved that the proposed policy for considering applications for Section 49 Reductions (as set out in the attached Appendix 1) be formally adopted.

(3) Full or Partial Flexible Retirement Policy

The Executive had considered proposals to introduce a new policy for full or partial retirement to meet the requirements under the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS).

Since 2006, Her Majesty's Revenues and Customs had allowed pension schemes to facilitate flexible retirement. As a result, flexible retirement provisions had been written into the LGPS.

This flexibility had been introduced to assist Local Government in managing the impacts of the ageing population which would see a greatly increased retired population being dependant on a reduced active workforce.

There were a number of discretions within the LGPS which allowed for a scheme member who had attained the age of 55 (or in certain circumstances 50) to draw all or part of their retirement benefits (both pension and lump sum) even though they had not retired providing that the employer consented and there had been a reduction in hours or a reduction in grade.

Taunton Deane was undergoing significant changes to meet both the financial and service delivery pressures that needed to be faced. In undertaking restructuring it was important that the Council had a range of options that could be used to satisfy these pressures.

The ability to provide full or partial flexible retirement would allow the Council to work with staff to provide an alternative to 'cliff edge' retirements which could see the retention of key skills at the same time as securing cost reductions.

If the payment of benefits occurred before age 65 the benefits would be reduced in accordance with guidance issued by the Government Actuary. The Council would however have the power, on compassionate grounds, to waive any actuarial reduction that the employee might incur.

On the motion of Councillor Mrs Wilson

Resolved that the proposed policy on Full or Partial Flexible Retirement (as set out in the Appendix 2) be formally adopted.

11. **Reports of the Leader of the Council and Executive Councillors**

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

(i) **Leader of the Council (Councillor Henley)**

Councillor Henley's report covered the following topics:-

- Pioneer Somerset;
- Core Council Review;
- DLO Review;
- Rent Increase/Decrease;
- Visit of Lord Coe to Taunton;
- Council Report;
- Climate Change;
- Standards.

(ii) **Planning Policy and Transportation (Councillor Coles)**

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

- Regional Spatial Strategy;
- Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy and Site Allocations;
- Extensions to the time limits for implementing existing planning permissions and minor amendments
- Amendments to Parish Delegation Scheme;
- Longrun Meadows, Bishops Hull;
- Pyrland Hall Farm, Taunton.

(iii) **Economic Development and the Arts (Councillor Mrs Smith)**

The report from Councillor Mrs Smith covered:-

- Economic Development Delivery Strategy;
- Employment and skills;
- Inward investment;
- Tourism;
- Arts and culture;
- Project Taunton;
- Employment land;
- Asset Management;
- Local Action for Rural Communities (LARC).

(iv) **Sports, Parks and Leisure (Councillor R Lees)**

The report from Councillor R Lees dealt with activities taking place in the following areas:-

- Community Leisure;
- Sport;
- Play;
- Parks;
- Tone Leisure (Taunton Deane) Limited Activities;
- Facility News.

(v) **Environmental Services (Councillor Slattery)**

The Report from Councillor Slattery drew attention to developments in the following areas:-

- Management/General;
- Food Safety/Health and Safety Team;
- Environmental Health Support Team;
- Environmental Protection Team;
- LicensingTeam;
- Waste Management Board.

(vi) **Housing Services (Councillor Prior-Sankey)**

Councillor Prior-Sankey submitted her report which drew attention to the following:-

- Housing Inspection visit;
- Councils build again;
- Housing Subsidy reform;
- What recession?
- Rents go down!

(vii) **Resources (Councillor Mrs Wilson)**

The report from Councillor Mrs Wilson provided information on the following areas within her portfolio:-

- Southwest One Human Resources Service;
- Core Council Review;
- Revenues and Benefits;
- Update on progress with Investors in People Action Plan;
- Customer Contact highlights;
- Performance and Client Team;

(viii) **Community Leadership (Councillor A Wedderkopp)**

Councillor A Wedderkopp presented the Community Leadership report which focused on the following areas within that portfolio:-

- Somerset Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP);
- Local Strategic Partnership;
- Wessex Water;
- The Civic Society and the “Living Streets” Agenda.

(ix) **Communications (Councillor Paul)**

Councillor Paul’s report covered the following topics:-

- The Weekly Bulletin;
- Green initiatives;
- Public Relations.

(Councillors Ms Herbert, Stone, Miss James, Govier and Mullins left the meeting at 7.05 pm, 8.10 pm, 8.14 pm, 8.15 pm and 8.25 pm respectively.)

(The meeting ended at 8.37 pm.)

Appendix A

Article 8 The Standards Committee

8.1 Standards Committee

The Council will establish a Standards Committee.

8.2 Constitution

(a) Membership

The Standards Committee will be composed of at least:

- (i) one member from each of the political groups who are then represented on the Council [currently there are three such Groups];
- (ii) seven people who are not councillors or officers of the Council or of any County, District or Unitary Council or of any Parish Council within Taunton Deane (these are referred to as “Independent Members”);
- (iii) (subject to the same exceptions as (ii) above) three members of a Parish Council from within Taunton Deane who shall represent the interests of all such Parish Councils (the Parish Members);
- (iv) Members of the Standards Committee will hold office from one Annual Meeting until the next - at which point their appointments shall be either renewed or terminated at Annual Council.

(b) Independent Members

Independent Members (see 8.2(a)(ii) above):-

- (i) shall be selected in accordance with the statutory rules prescribed under The Standards Committee (England) Regulations 2008 ;
- (ii) will be entitled to vote at all meetings of the Committee or on any sub-committees to which they have been appointed by the Standards Committee.

(c) Parish Members

A Parish Member must be present at any meeting of the Standards Committee when matters relating to Parish Councils or their members are being considered.

(d) **Chairing the Committee**

The Committee shall be chaired by an Independent Member.

(e) **Substitutes**

No substitute members shall be permitted to either the main Committee or to any sub-committee unless there is a conflict of interest that affects all elected members on the Committee that cannot be overcome in any other way.

(f) **Sub-committees**

The Standards Committee shall, in accordance with the Standards Committee (England) Regulations 2008, appoint sub-committees to assess complaints received against members where allegations are made that a member has failed to comply with the code of conduct; where this happens the following limits will apply:-

- (i) the quorum (that is, minimum size at which business may be transacted) shall be 3;
- (ii) All sub-committees shall be chaired by an Independent Member;
- (iii) All sub-committees shall include at least one elected member;
- (iv) where a Parish Councillor is the subject of a complaint then a Parish Member (unless s/he is the subject of that investigation) shall be appointed to that sub-committee.

(g) The Standards Committee may appoint a sub-committee to determine any application for a dispensation should time be of the essence in the application (however there must be compliance with the statutory time limits on notification of meetings).

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(h) Any sub-committee set up to determine dispensations shall adhere to the limits as set out in (f) above.

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8.3 Role and Function

The Standards Committee will have the following roles and functions in relation to the Borough Council and Parish Councils within Taunton Deane.

- (a) promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by councillors and co-opted members;
- (b) assisting the councillors and co-opted members to observe the Members' Code of Conduct;
- (c) advising the Council on the adoption or revision of the Members' Code of Conduct;
- (d) monitoring the operation of the Members' Code of Conduct;
- (e) advising, training or arranging to train councillors and any co-opted members on matters relating to the Members' Code of Conduct;
- (f) granting dispensations to councillors and any co-opted members from requirements relating to interests set out in the Members' Code of Conduct or delegating such power to a sub-committee, who will be authorised to determine such dispensations based on principles agreed by the Committee;
- (g) assessing complaints made against members of the Borough Council and Parish Councils within the Taunton Deane Borough in relation to breaches of the code of conduct;
- (h) conducting consideration hearings following receipt of reports from the Monitoring Officer into a member's alleged misconduct.
- (i) conducting hearings on reports as to alleged contraventions of the Members' Code, and deciding upon appropriate sanctions.

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Appendix B

PROCEDURE RULES FOR FULL COUNCIL (STANDING ORDERS)

STANDING ORDERS (updated 2009)

C O N T E N T S

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1	Order of Business
2 *	Variation of Order of Business
3 *	Discussion on Minutes
4	Notices of Motion
5 *	Motions during a Debate (including closure motions)
6 *	Amendments
7	Points of Order or Personal Explanations
8	Part I Reports of Executive Councillors
9	Part II Reports of Executive Councillors
10	Proposers and Seconders
11	Rights to Speak during Debates
12	Rights of Reply
13	Speeches
14	Questions from Councillors
15	Public Question Time
16*	Presentation of Petitions

17*	Deputations
18*	Voting
19*	Offensive or Disorderly Conduct
20*	Disturbance by Members of the Public
21*	Interests of Members and Officers
22*	Exclusion of Press or Public
23*	Rescindment and Variation of Resolutions
24* Ruling of the Mayor
25*	Quorum
26	Agenda & Attendance at Meetings
27	Summoning of Meetings
28*	Time Limits for all Meetings
29*	Suspension of Council Procedure Rules
30*	Application of Standing Orders

Those marked * apply to Council and to the Committees

PART I – MEETINGS OF THE COUNCIL

ORDER OF BUSINESS

1. At meetings of the Council, the order of business shall be as follows:-
 - (1) To elect a councillor to preside if the Mayor and Deputy Mayor are absent;
 - (2) To transact any business required by statute to be done before any other business;
 - (3) To receive the minutes of the preceding meeting and, if agreed, to order that they be signed as a correct record;
 - (4) To receive any communications;
 - (5) To deal with questions from Taunton Deane electors under Standing Order 15;
 - (6) To receive petitions or depositions from Taunton Deane electors under Standing Orders 16 & 17;
 - (7) To transact any business adjourned from previous meetings;
 - (8) To consider Motions received under Standing Order 4;
 - (9) To consider reports from Executive Councillors;
 - (10) To consider any reports submitted by the Overview & Scrutiny Committees, Standards Committee or from an Officer;
 - (11) To deal with questions asked under Standing Order 14(2);
 - (12) To transact any other business which the Mayor is prepared to certify as of such urgency that it must be disposed of at this meeting.

VARIATION OF ORDER OF BUSINESS *

2. The Mayor may, with the consent of the Council, vary the order of business.

MINUTES *

3. (a) At the next ordinary meeting, the Mayor shall, with the Council's assent, sign the minutes of the business transacted at the previous meeting as a correct record.

- (b) The only discussion allowed upon the Minutes shall be as to their accuracy, and any objection upon that ground shall be made by motion. A question may be put to the Mayor as to the accuracy of the Minutes.

NOTICES OF MOTION

4. (1) If a councillor wishes to move a motion at a meeting of the Council then notice in writing shall be given to the Legal and Democratic Services of its terms and the name of a Councillor who has agreed to second it. Such notices shall be dated, numbered as received and available for the inspection of councillors.
- (2) Twelve calendar days notice is needed in order to have a Notice of Motion included in the Summons. This means that written notice must be delivered to the Democratic Services Manager's office by 12 noon on the Monday week prior to the day on which the Council Meeting is to be held.
- (3) The motion shall relate to the work of the Council or the interests of people living in the Borough.
- (4) A motion shall not be taken if its proposer is not present, unless another councillor has been asked to propose it and the Council so agree.
- (5) Such motions shall be taken before the reports of the Executive Councillors have been presented
- (6) A motion or amendment to rescind a decision within 6 months of it being approved should be made in accordance with Standing Order 23 of this Constitution

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MOTIONS DURING A DEBATE *

5. (1) A Councillor may at the conclusion of a speech of another Councillor, move without comment one of the following motions: -
- (a) to amend the motion;
 - (b) to postpone consideration of the motion;
 - (c) to adjourn the meeting;
 - (d) to adjourn the debate;
 - (e) to proceed to the next item of business;
 - (f) that the question be now put;
 - (g) to request a recorded vote; see standing order 18(2)
 - (h) that Councillor _____ be not further heard;
 - (h) that Councillor _____ do leave the meeting;
 - (i) that the (identified) recommendation be referred back for further consideration;
 - (j) that the press and public be excluded;
 - (k) to suspend any one or more Standing Orders during all or part of the meeting;

- (l) to refer a petition which has been presented to a meeting of the Council to a Committee for consideration;

5(2) If the motion is seconded then (subject to the proviso set out in (c) below) the Mayor shall proceed as follows:-

- (a) the motion shall be put to the vote forthwith and without discussion;
- (b) then - subject only to the right of reply of the councillor who either presented the report or who proposed the original motion - the motion shall be immediately acted upon;
- (c) The Mayor shall have the discretion not to accept such a motion when of the opinion that the matter before the meeting has not yet been sufficiently discussed.

5(3) In the consideration of applications for development under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), where a motion to grant or refuse permission is lost, and there is no amendment, then the direct negative of that motion will be the minuted resolution of Development Control Committee. The reasons for refusal, or conditions in the case of an approval, will be those referred to at the meeting or recommended in the officer's report to the committee.

AMENDMENTS *

6. (1) An amendment shall be either –
- (a) to leave out words;
 - (b) to leave out words and insert or add others; or
 - (c) to insert or add words;
- but shall not have the effect of introducing a significantly different proposal or of negating the motion
- (2) Before moving an amendment a Councillor shall ensure that there is likely to be a seconder for that amendment.
 - (3) When an amendment has been moved and seconded no further amendments shall be moved until the first amendment has been voted upon.
 - (4) If an amendment is carried, it shall be incorporated into the motion which shall become the substantive motion upon which further amendments may be moved. If an amendment is voted down, further amendments may then be moved on the motion.

- (5) With the agreement of any seconder and with the assent of the Council, given without comment, a councillor proposing a motion or amendment may:-
- (a) Withdraw that proposal, or
 - (b) Alter its wording, or
 - (c) Accept an amendment
- (6) If there is to be an amendment to the proposed budget then it must be received by the Democratic Services Manager by 12 noon the day before the Council meeting.

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POINTS OF ORDER OR PERSONAL EXPLANATION

7. A councillor may rise on a point of order or in personal explanation and shall be allowed by the Mayor to be heard forthwith.
- (1) A point of order shall relate only to an alleged breach of a specified Standing Order or statutory provision and the councillor raising it shall immediately identify how it has been broken.
 - (2) A personal explanation shall be confined solely to a brief explanation of how a speech in the current debate by that councillor appears to have been factually misunderstood. It shall not be used to introduce new material.

PART I REPORTS OF EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS

8. (1) An Executive Councillor shall submit a report to each Full Council meeting. The report shall be in two parts.
- (2) Part I shall contain recommendations and Part II shall contain reports as to current and future business for the information of and comment from the Council.
- (3) Each recommendation shall be proposed separately by the Executive Councillor, or, in his/her absence, by the Leader of the Executive; it shall not need to be seconded before being discussed.
- (4) The normal rules of debate will apply to the recommendations contained in Part I

PART II OF EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS' REPORTS

9. (1) When Part II of an Executive Councillor's report is being considered, Councillors may, upon items referred to in that report :-
- (a) submit written questions to be received by the Democratic Services Manager by 4pm 2 working days before the Council meeting;

- (b) Responses will be given to these questions and 1 further supplementary question will be allowed related to the question arising from the answer to seek further clarification;
 - (c) Verbal questions will be allowed which may be answered verbally or in writing within 5 working days.
- (2) Part II items are for information, discussion and comment only and no motion shall be put to the meeting as to any such item - other than those closure motions described in Standing Order 5.
 - (3) A councillor may not speak on Part II of a report if a recommendation relating to that same item has already appeared in Part I of a report submitted at that meeting.
 - (4) The Executive Councillor may introduce Part II of his report and update the Council on developments that have taken place since the report was dispatched.

PROPOSERS AND SECONDEES

- 10.**
- (1) If the mover of a motion or of an amendment sits down without speaking to it, the right to speak shall be lost but the mover of a motion shall retain the right of reply.
 - (2) The seconder of a motion or of an amendment may declare that s/he is reserving the right to speak:-
 - (a) until later in the debate; or
 - (b) until it appears to the Mayor that - at that point - there are no more speakers to be called and before the mover of the motion exercises the right of reply.

RIGHTS TO SPEAK DURING DEBATES

- 11.** A Councillor who has spoken once on any motion, amendment or on an Executive Councillor's report may not speak again. The exceptions to this rule are that a councillor who has already thus spoken may also:
- (1) speak once to an amendment moved by another member;
 - (2) move a subsequent amendment; if a councillor wishes to exercise this right, then s/he shall immediately make the purpose of this second speech clear to the Mayor
 - (3) exercise a right of reply under Standing Order 12, or,
 - (4) make a point of order or personal explanation.

RIGHTS OF REPLY

- 12. (1)** (a) The mover of a motion shall have a right of reply to any debate on that motion.

(b) The member of the Executive presenting a report shall have a right of reply to any discussion upon that report.

In both cases this right shall be in addition to that councillor's speech introducing the motion or the report.

- (2) The mover of a motion shall also have a right of reply to any debate:-
- (a) on any amendment to that motion,
 - (b) on a reference back to the Executive of that recommendation, and
 - (c) immediately before the following closure motions are put to the vote:-
 - (i) to postpone consideration of the motion,
 - (ii) to adjourn the debate
 - (iii) that the question be now put.
- (3) The Executive Councillor presenting a report shall also have a right of reply to the following closure motions immediately before they are put to the vote:-
- (a) that the Council proceed to the next business;
 - (b) to adjourn the debate; or
 - (c) that the question be now put.
- (4) A Councillor who has moved a motion or introduced a report shall only have the further rights to speak which are defined in this Standing Order but shall not otherwise speak during that debate.
- (5) A Councillor exercising a right of reply shall not introduce new factual material.
- (6) The mover of an amendment or of any of the procedural motions referred to in Standing Order 5 shall not have a right of reply.

SPEECHES

13. (1) (a) A Councillor shall not speak on a motion or amendment or on an Executive Councillor's report for longer than three minutes.
- (b) The exceptions to this rule shall be that:-
- (i) the mover of a recommendation (or of a motion of which notice has been given in accordance with Standing Order No.4) may speak for not more than ten minutes when moving such recommendation or motion, and
 - (ii) a Councillor exercising a right of reply may speak for 5 minutes
- (2) A Councillor shall normally stand when speaking and shall address the Mayor. When the Mayor rises all Councillors shall be silent. No-one else shall speak until the Chair has been resumed.

QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

- 14 (1) At a Full Council meeting any Councillor, upon giving 5 working days written notice to the Democratic Services Manager, may ask the Mayor a question on a matter which concerns the Council's functions, powers, duties and which affects the borough.
- (2) Any Councillor, upon giving 2 working days written notice to the Democratic Services Manager, may ask the Leader of the Council, a portfolio holder, chairman of a committee or another member who has been appointed to an outside body, a question which concerns the Executive's or committee's functions, powers and duties or the work of the outside body and which affects the borough.
- (3) The Leader, Portfolio Holder, or Committee Chair may direct the question to be answered by the Chairman of the appointed sub-committee which has been delegated the subject matter of the question.
- (4) The member asking the question may ask a supplementary question related to the question or arising from the answer to seek further clarification.
- (5) Questions are to be asked and answered without further discussion by other members present. The Leader of the Council or a committee chairman to whom the question has been addressed may ask another member or officer to answer it if they are of the opinion that a discussion is required or they may refer it to another relevant meeting of the Executive or Committee.

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME *

15. (1) Subject to paragraph (10) of this Standing Order, questions from Taunton Deane electors shall be taken in accordance with the procedure in this Standing Order at the beginning of each meeting.
- (2) The period allowed for questions and answers shall not exceed 15 minutes except with the consent of the Mayor; each individual questioner shall be restricted to speaking for a total of four minutes.
- (3) Questions shall be directed to the Mayor, who may request the appropriate member or officer to reply.
- (4) Every question shall relate to matters over which the Council has powers or duties and which particularly affect the Borough and shall be put and answered without discussion.
- (5) However, if a question relates to a ward-based issue, the Mayor shall invite a contribution from one councillor representing that ward before calling for the formal reply.

- (6) Questions shall not be disallowed merely because advance notice in writing has not been given. Such questions may not be answered immediately but later in writing. However it is always preferred that questions are put in writing in order to assist members and officers to be able give answers at the meeting.
- (7) An answer may take the form of:-
 - (a) an immediate oral answer; or
 - (b) a written answer where the necessary information is not readily available.
- (8) Subject to the time limit in paragraph (2) above, and to the discretion of the Mayor, the questioner shall be permitted to ask one supplementary question relating to the issue raised.
- (9) Any question shall be disallowed which the Mayor believes to be scurrilous, offensive, improper, repetitious, capricious, irrelevant or otherwise objectionable.
- (10) The procedure for taking questions or statements from members of the public at meetings of the Planning Committee shall follow such pattern as agreed from time to time by that Committee to best take account of its needs for public involvement.

PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS *

- 16 (1)
 - (a) A "Formal Petition" is one which its promoters wish to appear on the agenda of the next appropriate Scrutiny Committee for discussion and for recommendation on to the Executive - or to the relevant Executive Councillor – for decision. For such petitions the formal procedure set out in this Standing Order should be followed.
 - (b) An "Informal Petition" is one where its promoters wish the feelings of a significant number of the local community to be drawn to the attention of the Council before a decision is made on a particular matter. Where such an informal petition is received:-
 - (i) The decision-maker shall be informed of the terms and level of support for such a petition when any report is submitted recommending that a course of action should be adopted.
 - (ii) The promoter of the petition shall be notified of any public meeting at which the issue is to be discussed or decided and shall subsequently be notified of the Council's decision.
 - (c) The choice of which route to follow shall be at the discretion of the petition's promoter.

(2) A Formal Petition may be presented at any meeting of the Council (or of its Executive or any Committee) by any Taunton Deane elector, if the Democratic Services Manager, at least 12 calendar days before the meeting, shall:-

- (a) have received notice in writing of the intention to submit the petition and of its content, and
- (b) have been shown the petition;

provided that the Mayor may, because of special circumstances, give approval to a lesser period of notice.

- (3) Subject to the Democratic Services Manager being satisfied that the formal petition complies with this Standing Order, its content and the number of its signatories shall be described on the agenda for the meeting.
- (4) The Mayor shall invite the promoter to present the formal petition. In so doing, the promoter may speak in its support for not more than 4 minutes – or such longer period as the Mayor shall decide.
- (5) If the formal petition is presented to a meeting of the Full Council, the Chair of the relevant Scrutiny Committee shall, with the assent of the Council (given without discussion), accept it for consideration at the next meeting of that Committee; the promoter shall be invited to attend that meeting.
- (6) Where a formal petition is presented first to a Scrutiny Committee or to the Executive (after the necessary notice has been given under paragraph 2 above), the meeting shall decide whether:-
- (a) to consider it immediately; or,
 - (b) to defer consideration to the next meeting; or,
 - (c) refer it to a Committee for its advice or for it to deal with.
- (7) An Informal Petition may be presented without notice at any meeting but shall not be acted upon unless it relates to an item of business already on the meeting's agenda for which proper notice has already been given.
- (8) For the purposes of this Standing Order, "petitions" shall mean requests consisting of a significant number of signatures of Taunton Deane electors relating to matters over which the Council (or that Committee) has powers or duties or which particularly affect the Borough or its residents.

DEPUTATIONS *

- 17. (1)** Any Taunton Deane elector may ask that a deputation should be received by a meeting which has powers or duties relating to the matter of concern to that deputation.

Such a request shall be made by written notice to the Democratic Services Manager at least 3 working days before the meeting to which it relates unless the Mayor has, because of special circumstances, given approval to a lesser period of notice.

- (2) The person making the request shall indicate in the notice:-
 - (a) the matter to which the request relates;
 - (b) the number and the names and the addresses of those making up the deputation, and
 - (c) the name of the leader who will speak for them
- (3) On being called by the Mayor the leader of the deputation may speak for not more than 4 minutes about the matter described in the notice given.
- (4) For a further period of 5 minutes, councillors may ask questions of the deputation, which questions shall be asked and answered without discussion.
- (5) Having heard from the deputation, the Mayor (or councillor chairing the meeting) may either:-
 - (a) give an immediate oral response to their request, or
 - (b) ask that an immediate oral response be given to the deputation by the Leader (or other Executive Councillor who is present) or by an officer; or,
 - (c) call for a report to be considered at the next meeting of that – or the relevant Committee unless the request relates to business which is already on the Committee's agenda.
 - (d) ask that a written answer be given to the deputation where the necessary information is not readily available.

VOTING *

- 18** (1) All motions and amendments, unless the law otherwise requires, shall be decided by affirmation or by a show of hands, as the Mayor shall choose.
- (2) If before the Mayor calls for the vote, either,
 - (a) the mover and seconder of the motion - or of the amendment, or,
 - (b) any councillor supported by the votes of at least a quarter of the councillors present,

request that a Recorded Vote be taken, then votes shall be publicly declared, and recorded in the minutes.

- (3) In addition to the option under SO 18 (2), any member may require - immediately after a vote is taken - that the manner in which that member's vote was cast (for, against or abstaining) shall be recorded in the minutes.
- (4) Where a vote is taken upon the choice of more than two candidates for an appointment and there is not an absolute majority in favour of one candidate, the candidates receiving the least number of votes shall be excluded and a further vote taken, the procedure being continued until there is an absolute majority in favour of one candidate.
- (5) (a) in the case of an equality of votes, the Mayor shall have a second or casting vote.
(b) The Mayor shall have unfettered discretion as to its use for against the proposition.

OFFENSIVE OR DISORDERLY CONDUCT *

19. (1) If at a meeting a councillor uses an expression which another councillor believes is offensive and the latter draws the attention of the Mayor to it, the Mayor may request the councillor to withdraw the expression.
- (2) If at a meeting the Mayor believes a councillor to be guilty of persistently disregarding the ruling of the Chair by behaving improperly or offensively, or by deliberately obstructing business, the Mayor or any other councillor may move "that Councillor_____ be not further heard" and the motion, if seconded, shall be put to the vote and voted on without discussion.
- (3) If a councillor continues to behave improperly after such a motion has been carried, the Mayor may either:-
 - (a) move "that Councillor_____ do leave the meeting", or
 - (b) adjourn the meeting for a specified period;if seconded the motion shall be put and voted on without discussion,
- (4) If a councillor does not leave the meeting after a resolution to that effect, the Legal and Democratic Services Manager shall arrange for the removal of the councillor and shall take such measures as may be necessary to prevent the councillor from re-entering the meeting.
- (5) In the event of any significant disturbance which makes the due and orderly dispatch of business impossible, the Mayor, in addition to the exercise of any other power, may, without the need for the Council's approval, adjourn the meeting for such period as s/he thinks necessary.

DISTURBANCE BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC *

- 20 (a) If a member of the public interrupts the proceedings at a meeting, the Mayor shall request that there be no further interruptions. If the interruptions continue the Mayor shall order the removal of the person interrupting from the room.
- (b) If there should be general disturbance in any part of the room open to the public the Mayor may order that part to be cleared.

INTERESTS OF MEMBERS AND OFFICERS *

21. (1) Where at a meeting any matter is being considered in which a councillor then present has a “*prejudicial interest*” as defined by the Council’s adopted Code of Conduct, that councillor shall be entitled to make representations, answer questions or give evidence provided that members of the public also have the same right. The Councillor must then leave the meeting immediately thereafter unless:-

(a) a dispensation has been granted by the Council’s Standards Committee in exercise of its powers under the Local Government Act; or,

(b) the item merely forms part of minutes submitted and is dealt with as “for information” only.

(2) Where a Councillor present at such a meeting has a “*personal interest*” (as defined in the adopted Code) which is not a “*prejudicial interest*” then the Councillor shall immediately draw the attention of the meeting to that personal interest.

(3) (a) Any officer of the Council present at a meeting when an item involving a disclosable interest is under consideration shall draw the attention of the meeting to that interest.

(b) A “disclosable interest” is an interest which, if the officer were a Member of the Council, would need to be declared under the Council’s adopted Code of Conduct as a *prejudicial interest*.

(c) No such duty shall arise regarding an item which merely relates to the general terms and conditions of employment of all staff employed by the Council.

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EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC *

22(1) Press representatives and public shall withdraw from a meeting if an exclusion resolution (under the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985) is passed. [see Part 4B of the Constitution]

(2) Even where an item or report has been marked either “Exempt” or “Confidential”, it is for the meeting itself to decide whether – taking the

wider public interest into account - the item (or part of it) should nevertheless be considered in the presence of the press and public.

- (3) If an issue should arise during a debate as to the appointment, promotion, dismissal, salary, conditions of service or conduct of any identifiable employee of the Council, the councillor chairing the meeting shall move the exclusion resolution (due to the likelihood that exempt information about a particular employee would be disclosed to the public).

The motion shall be immediately approved or rejected before the issue is further considered.

- (4) When an exclusion resolution is passed those permitted to remain include all those who are members of the Council, the officers or consultants serving that meeting and those specifically invited by the meeting to remain for reasons set out in the minutes.

RESCINDMENT & VARIATION OF RESOLUTIONS *

23. (1) A resolution passed within the previous six months shall not be rescinded or varied unless either:-
 - (a) there has been a significant change of circumstances (noted in the minutes of the meeting) since the previous resolution was passed and is agreed by 50% of the members, or
 - (b) by resolution of the Full Council on a motion of which notice has been given under Standing Order 4 signed by not less than 12 members.
- (2) Where it is intended that such an item should appear on the agenda for a meeting, the agenda item shall say that this "6 month rule" applies.
- (3) This Standing Order shall not apply in the case of a planning or licensing application.
- (4) Every such notice of motion shall specify the resolution to be rescinded or varied

RULING OF THE MAYOR *

24. The ruling of the Mayor on any question under these Standing Orders, on a point of order, or, on the admissibility of a personal explanation shall be final and shall not be open to discussion.

QUORUM *

- 25 No business shall be transacted at a meeting unless at least the indicated number of its members is present:-

Meeting	Quorum
Full Council	14
Planning Committee	5
The Executive	3
The Overview & Scrutiny Committees	4
Any other Member body	¼ of its members, or 2 (whichever is the greater)

AGENDA AND ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS

- 26.** (1) A councillor has the right to receive agenda and papers for all meetings of the Council, the Executive, the Overview & Scrutiny Committees and the Planning Committee and to attend and speak at all such meetings – whether the councillor is a member of the body or not.
- (2) This right to be treated as a participating member of these bodies shall not extend to their sub-groups which have been convened to act
- (a) in a quasi-judicial role on the Council's behalf in relation to such matters as staff disciplinary appeals, licensing hearings, or to deal with staff appointments or other specifically identified matters, or
- (b) as Task and Finish scrutiny panel
- (3) With those bodies listed in (2) above:-
- (a) The right to attend shall be the same as for members of the public
- (b) The right to contribute to the discussion shall be at the discretion of the councillor chairing that meeting.
- (4) In order to avoid any doubt:-
- (a) The rights under paragraph (1) shall also extend to Exempt items of business.
- (b) Councillors attending a meeting by virtue of this Standing Order shall not have a right to vote nor shall their attendance rank as an “approved duty” under the Members Allowances Scheme.

SUMMONING OF MEETINGS

- 27.** Those listed below may request the Legal and Democratic Services Manager to call a Full Council meeting in addition to ordinary meetings:-
- (a) The Council (by resolution),
- (b) The Mayor,

- (c) The "Designated Officers" [see *Constitution - Article 12*],
- (d) Any five members of the Council - if they have signed a requisition presented to the Mayor and the Mayor has either refused to, or has failed to call, such a meeting within seven days of presenting their requisition.
- (e) The notice convening such a requisitioned meeting shall state the names of those councillors requesting it and the business which they wish to have dealt with

TIME LIMITS FOR ALL MEETINGS*

- 28.** (1) A meeting of full council or other committees including Overview and Scrutiny committees shall not exceed three hours in duration except in accordance with 30 below.
- (2) If the business of the meeting has not been completed within that time the Mayor or Chairman will interrupt the debate to announce the time and call for a vote to be taken immediately on the item under discussion.
- (3) No member will be able to address the meeting after the Mayor's or Chairman's interruption on any item appearing on the agenda.
- (4) Any items remaining on the agenda, which have not been considered, will be adjourned to the next scheduled meeting or a date to be fixed before the meeting adjourns.
- (5) Any suspension of time for adjournments during the meeting shall not count towards the 3 hour time limit.

SUSPENSION OF COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES*

- 29.** (1) A motion to suspend a particular procedural rule shall state the particular purpose and require a majority of at least half the total number of members appointed to that Council Meeting or Committee.
- (2) on occasions that rule 29(1) (guillotine) is being waived, the duration of the suspension shall not exceed 30 minutes and shall, if seconded, be put to the vote without discussion.
- (3) Rule 29(1) can only be suspended once per meeting. However the Mayor, Chairman of Planning Committee or Chairman of the Licensing Committee may decide otherwise in respect of the meeting they are chairing. This will generally only occur in exceptional circumstances.
- (4) Rules 21 and 25 cannot be suspended. But section 5 still applies

APPLICATION OF STANDING ORDERS *

- 30.** These Standing Orders shall apply to meetings of the Full Council. Those Standing Orders marked "**", shall also apply to meetings of all Regulatory Committees, the Overview and Scrutiny Committees (subject to the necessary changes in wording).

Appendix 1

Non-Domestic Rates – Section 49 Hardship Relief Policy

The Recommended Procedure

- 1.1. All applications for Hardship relief must be made in writing using a prepared forms designed by Revenues and Benefits service to ensure that all the information which is considered important to the decision making process is captured.
- 1.2. All applications must be accompanied by a copy of the last two years audited accounts, a projected income and cash flow for the next 12 months and any other information in support of the application.
- 1.3. The process detailed below should ensure that proper and consistent consideration is given to all applications, the financial implications are considered and members have the final say in deciding on, and financing, any awards.
- 1.4. Applications will initially be received within the Revenues and Benefits unit where they will be examined for completeness.
- 1.5. Where the application is not complete the Revenues and Benefits unit will contact the ratepayer to seek any missing information or seek clarification where it is necessary. The application will not be considered further until it is complete.
- 1.6. The Revenues and Benefits unit will consider each complete application on its merits and the Head of Revenues and Benefits Service make a written recommendation to the Section 151 Officer whether to reject the application or whether to make an award.
- 1.7. In making either recommendation, the Head of Revenues and Benefits Service will consider the following
 - The goods or services provided by the applicant and the closeness of alternative suppliers;
 - Whether the goods or services are mostly provided to customers within the Borough;
 - Any social benefits provided by the applicant;
 - Local employment provided by the applicant;
 - The causes of the hardship;
 - The applicant's attempts to mitigate the hardship;
 - The impact of Rates as a % of overall business expenses;
 - Whether the business is viable; and

- Whether it is in the interests of the Council Tax payers within the Borough to provide the 25% cost of any hardship relief awarded.
- 1.8. Where a recommendation to reject the application is made adequate reasons should be put forward.
- 1.9. Where a recommendation to approve the application is made, the recommendation should detail
- The period to be covered by the award
 - The social benefit to the Council Tax payers in the award being made
 - The amount of the award
 - The sum to be met by the general fund and the Non-Domestic rating pool respectively.
- 1.10. The authority to **decline** applications for hardship relief should be delegated to the Section 151 Officer.
- 1.11. Where the Section 151 Officer decides there is sufficient merit in awarding hardship relief a recommendation will be made to the Executive. The Executive should have the delegated power to decline or award hardship relief following referral of an application by the Section 151 Officer. **Where it supports the recommendation, The Executive will also need to make the necessary budget arrangements to meet the commitment.**

Appendix 2

Full or Partial Flexible Retirement Policy

1. Employees aged 55 (aged 50 up to 31 March 2010) who are members of the Local Government Pension Scheme are able to request payment of early retirement benefits whilst remaining in the Council's employment on reduced hours or a lower grade.
2. This right does not apply to employees who are in receipt of a redundancy payment and early pension benefits or who have taken early retirement in the interests of the efficiency of the service.
3. As a guide, a business case for flexible retirement where any reduction is minimal (e.g. less than 20% either in terms of reduced hours or lower grade) may be difficult to objectively justify.
4. Requests for flexible working may be instigated by employees who meet the criteria set out in 1 above at anytime but will only be able to make one request in any 12 month period.
5. An employee should, in the first instance, approach their line manager with a request for reduced hours, more flexible working patterns by putting their request in writing.
6. The line manager will notify the HR Advisory Team and a meeting will be arranged within 21 days to discuss the request from the employee.
7. At this point the HR Advisory Team will request an estimate of early retirement benefits from the Pension Section of Somerset County Council which will be provided to the employee and be used to complete the Flexible Retirement Approval Request Form.
8. The meeting between the employee, line manager and a member of the HR Advisory Team will discuss the request and business case and will only be referred for approval if it is operationally viable.
9. If the request is referred for approval this will be considered by the relevant Theme Manager/Service Unit Manager and the HR Manager.
10. It should be noted that employees who are retiring in this way before their normal retirement age will suffer an actuarial reduction in their benefits to reflect early payment. In exceptional compassionate circumstances the Council has the right to waive this actuarial reduction.
11. If the request is not referred for approval this will be confirmed to the employee in writing to the employee within 14 days of the meeting. The

employee would have the right of appeal against this decision which should be made in writing to the Retained HR Manager within 10 days of receipt of the reason for refusal of the request or refusal to waive the actuarial reduction on compassionate grounds where the request is approved.

- 12.** Appeals will be heard by a Strategic Director advised by the Retained HR Manager.

Taunton Deane Borough Council

At a meeting of Taunton Deane Borough Council held in the John Meikle Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton on 23 November 2009 at 6.30 pm.

Present The Mayor (Councillor Bowrah)
The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Horsley)
Councillors Mrs Allgrove, Brooks, Coles, Mrs Copley, Ms Court, Mrs Court-Stenning, Critchard, Denington, D Durdan, Edwards, Farbahi, Mrs Floyd, Gaines, Govier, Hall, Hayward, Henley, C Hill, House, Miss James, R Lees, Mrs Lees, Mrs Lewin-Harris, McMahon, Meikle, Morrell, Mullins, Murphy, Paul, Prior-Sankey, Slattery, Mrs Smith, P Smith, Mrs Stock-Williams, Stone, Stuart-Thorn, Thorne, Watson, Mrs Waymouth, Ms Webber, A Wedderkopp, D Wedderkopp, Mrs Whitmarsh, Williams and Mrs Wilson.

1. Apologies

Councillors Beaven, Bishop, Ms Durdan and Ms Herbert.

2. Borough Council By-Election – 15 October 2009

The Democratic Services Manager, on behalf of the Returning Officer, reported that Councillor Ms Nicci Court of Buckland Road, Taunton had been elected as a Councillor for the Lyngford Ward.

3. Declarations of Interest

Councillors Brooks, Govier, Henley, McMahon, Paul, Prior-Sankey, Mrs Waymouth and D Wedderkopp declared personal interests as Members of Somerset County Council. Councillors Mullins and Slattery declared personal interests as Members of the Somerset Waste Board. Councillor Slattery also declared a personal interest as an employee of Sedgemoor District Council. Councillor Coles declared a personal interest as a Director of Southwest One. Councillor Miss James declared a personal interest as an employee of Viridor. Councillors Mrs Court-Stenning, Mrs Smith and Stone declared personal interests as employees of Somerset County Council. Councillors Henley and Mrs Wilson declared personal interests as employees of Job Centre Plus.

4. Recommendations to Council from the Executive

Core Council Review Proposals – Themes 2 and 4

The Executive had considered a number of proposals resulting from the review of the Core Council at its meeting on 11 November 2009.

The new structure for the Core Council had been approved by Full Council in February 2009 and was based on five themes:-

1. Strategy and Corporate;
2. Growth and Development;
3. Business (DLO);
4. Operations and Regulation (now Community Services); and
5. Chief Executive, Strategic Directors and support staff.

Theme 1 became operational from 1 April 2009 and Theme 3 of the Core Council Review was currently subject to an independent study by consultants.

The Review had identified the following three critical areas which had to underpin the whole organisation, its future direction and development:-

- Understanding of the drivers for change in the organisation;
- A clear overall vision for the authority; and
- New ways of working.

The Executive had given informal direction on the Review in terms of areas for investment and areas to explore reducing investment. Key projects included climate change, tackling deprivation and community development and affordable housing. Economic development priorities had also been addressed by looking at focussing resources on the delivery of the economic vision and decreasing investment in economic development.

Theme 2 - The Growth and Development Theme comprised the Council's Development Management function, Planning Enforcement, Landscape and Heritage services, Housing Enabling, Building Control and Economic Development (including Tourist Information).

The proposals for this theme had been developed following discussions with managers, elected Members and the Change Programme Member Steering Group. The proposed structure sought to maximise the available resources in areas that would deliver the future growth agenda and to facilitate more project related working across themes.

The theme would be led by a single Theme Manager who would have direct line management responsibilities for seven lead officers, covering Landscape, Heritage, Development Management, Housing Enabling, Economic Development (2 posts) and Business Support.

The formal consultation process had generated comments from the Corporate Scrutiny Committee, staff and UNISON. As a result, a number of changes to the Theme 2 proposals had been made including Planning Enforcement to be incorporated in the Growth and Development structure, Building Control to be managed as part of the Growth and Development Theme and a reduction to

the Planning Officer resource to 3.5 Full Time Equivalents (FTE) instead of 3 FTE.

Theme 4 – The Community Services (formerly Operations and Regulation) Theme encompassed the current services of the Cemeteries and Crematorium, Building Control, Environmental Health, Housing Operations and Car Parking and Civil Contingencies. The proposal also included the addition of Community Safety and Leisure Development.

Like Theme 2, the proposals sought to maximise the effectiveness of the available resources and to facilitate more project related working across themes. The diverse nature of the services in the theme meant that a range of external pressures and issues had to be taken into account.

The Community Services theme would be led by a single Theme Manager who would have direct line management responsibilities for four new lead officers for Housing Services, Community Development, Community Protection and Business Support.

The formal consultation process had again generated comments from the Corporate Scrutiny Committee, staff and UNISON. Several changes to the Theme 4 proposals had been made including Building Control and Planning Enforcement being moved to the Growth and Development Theme, the addition of posts into the Housing Services Structure towards assisting tenant empowerment and the addition of a Community Development Officer post.

The difficulty of being able to accurately assess the full impact on services and customers from these proposals was acknowledged by Members.

The proposals did include a significant reduction in management capacity and some reduction in front line resource that was likely to have a clear impact that would have to be effectively managed into the future.

Consultations had taken place with the UNISON Change Forum in respect of the proposed changes and a Staff Care and Support Plan has been developed. Staff affected by the proposals had been notified as being at risk of redundancy.

Reported that recruitment to all new posts in Themes 2 and 4 would be completed by the end of March 2010.

The continuing General Fund (GF) savings by the proposals for Themes 2 and 4 would be approximately £450,000 per annum. This entire sum would be used towards the Council's budget gap position for 2010/2011 onwards.

The net revenue cost to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was £130,000, but managers were working on savings plans to offset this cost.

The one-off costs to both the GF and the HRA associated with the Theme 2 and 4 proposals would not be known until the recruitment process was completed.

It was therefore proposed to ring-fence the maximum likely one-off costs of the proposals. Any surplus would be returned to the Reserves in late March 2010.

Further reported that Members had previously requested a review of political management arrangements alongside the Core Council Review. It was likely proposals would come before Members after Christmas with the aim of achieving implementation in the next Municipal Year.

On the motion of Councillor Henley, it was

Resolved that:-

- (a) The detailed proposals for the Themes 2 and 4 of the Core Council Review, as described in the report to the Executive, be approved;
- (b) A sum of £592,000 be ring-fenced from the General Fund (GF) Reserves to fund the one off costs of Theme 2 and 4 proposals. Any earmarked fund remaining at the end of this phase to be returned to the GF Reserve at the end of March 2010;
- (c) A sum of £127,000 be ring-fenced from Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Reserves to fund the one off costs of Theme 2 and 4 proposals. Any earmarked fund remaining at the end of this phase to be returned to the HRA Reserve at the end of March 2010;
- (d) Political management arrangements be reviewed separately with Members with the aim of achieving implementation in the new Municipal Year (2010); and
- (e) The phasing arrangements for the remaining Themes of the Core Council Review, as set out in the report to the Executive, be approved.

(The meeting ended at 7.10 pm.)

Usual Declarations of Interest by Councillors

Full Council

- **Members of Somerset County Council – Councillors Brooks, Govier, Henley, McMahon, Paul, Prior-Sankey, Mrs Waymouth, D Wedderkopp**
- **Employees of Somerset County Council – Councillors Mrs Court-Stenning, Mrs Hill, Mrs Smith and Stone**
- **Director of Southwest One – Councillor Coles**
- **Employee of Viridor – Councillor Miss James**
- **Members of Somerset Waste Board – Councillors Mullins and Slattery**
- **Employee of Sedgemoor District Council – Councillor Slattery**
- **Employees of Job Centre Plus – Councillors Henley and Mrs Wilson**

Motion to Full Council – 8 December 2009

“Stand Against Violence”

This Council commends Adam Fouracre in his endeavours to launch a campaign titled “Stand Against Violence”.

His brother Lloyd was murdered four years ago by drunken youths in an unprovoked attack bringing tragedy to Adam and his family.

We support his every attempt to make young people more aware of the consequences of violence, particularly that fuelled by alcohol. This young man’s dedication has resulted in the creation of a professionally made, thought provoking DVD charting his brother’s life and, with much support from local people and companies, a re-enactment of the murder of Lloyd Fouracre. The intention is to hopefully dissuade youngsters from being drawn into mindless violence.

He launched the DVD at the Tacchi Morris Arts Centre, in the hope that it will be viewed by schools, Youth Clubs and even a national audience.

Taunton Deane Borough Council in collaboration with the Police and other agencies are also engaged in a similar mission to end youth violence, but wish to salute Adam Fouracre in adding his forceful contribution.

Therefore this Council **resolves** that:-

The “Stand Against Violence” campaign be fully supported.

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Report of the Chief Executive to Full Council – 8 December 2009

Non attendance at meetings – Councillor Miss Julie Wood, Taunton Lyngford Ward

(This matter is the responsibility of Councillor Henley, Leader of the Council.)

1. Background

- 1.1 Councillor Miss Julie Wood has not attended any “qualifying” meetings of the Council nor any other meeting as a representative of the Council since the 13 May 2009.
- 1.2. Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 provides that if a Member fails to attend any such qualifying meeting for a period of six months the Council, must unless a reason for non-attendance has been approved by the Council before the expiry of the period, declare the seat to be vacant. The six months expired on the 14 November 2009.
- 1.3. The Chief Executive has written to Councillor Miss Wood informing her of the situation and inviting her to comment on the accuracy of the information in paragraph 1.1.
- 1.4. In the absence of any contrary information from Councillor Miss Wood, the Council is asked to declare the seat to be vacant. The by-election to fill the vacancy (the term of office for which expires in May 2011) must be held within 35 days of the declaration of the vacancy on a date fixed by the Returning Officer.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. That the seat in the Taunton Lyngford Ward be declared vacant.

Penny James
Chief Executive.

Council Meeting – 8 December 2009

Recommendations to Council from John Dewdney, Chairman, Independent Members' Allowances Panel

Members' Allowances

Recommendations from the Members' Allowances Panel

- 1.1 It has been a requirement of the Council's Constitution for several years now for Members' Allowances to be independently reviewed on an annual basis.
- 1.2 The Members' Allowances Panel, which comprises five independent members appointed following public advertisement, has recently completed its annual review and submitted its report and recommendations to Corporate Scrutiny Committee for comment on 26 November 2009.
- 1.3 The full details of the Panel's terms of reference, the methodology used and the research undertaken are contained in our report.
- 1.4 From the research we have undertaken and from the information provided to us we feel we have a good understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the modern day Councillor. We looked in detail at the new Scrutiny requirement that the Council introduced back in May 2009.
- 1.5 The comparative data received this year has allowed us to identify the trends that are continuing to develop in respect of the payment of allowances.
- 1.6 As well as the comparative data from other Local Authorities in the South West on the level of allowances paid, we also obtained information regarding payment of the Carer's Allowance, and levels of travel and subsistence allowances.
- 1.7 We have also given Councillors the opportunity to come and speak to the Members' Allowances Panel with any suggestions they might have or representations they might want to make.
- 1.8 We reached the following conclusions:-

Carers Allowance

There is little evidence that this is an issue with many of the current members of the Council. However, we are firmly of the view that every opportunity should be given to any individual who might want to stand as a candidate. We are therefore recommending that the Carer's Allowance continues to reflect the National Minimum Wage.

Affordability

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

Basic Allowances

We would like to emphasise that in our opinion the Basic Allowance is not a full and proper recompense for the duties performed by a Councillor. It does not reflect a similar level of responsibility in the private sector. The recommendations reflect the fact that a proportion of any Councillor's work continues to be voluntary.

We believe that the Basic Allowance should continue to reflect the commitment in time necessary to be an effective local Councillor. We feel that the level of increase made last year resulted in a Basic Allowance that continues to match that paid by other, similar sized Local Authorities.

We are very mindful of the requirement for Councillors to work in their communities and spend less time in formal meeting situations. However, like last year, we are also mindful of the very serious economic conditions that continue to exist within the country and how a recommended increase might be viewed by the public.

In previous years the increase recommended by the Panel has taken into account the current Retail Price Index rate of inflation towards deciding the level of the Basic Allowance.

Last year this rate was 5% - well ahead of any public sector pay increases agreed. With the full economic situation still to unfold, the Panel considered that an increase of 3% was justified for 2009/2010 which was accepted by Full Council in December 2008.

The current Retail Price Index rate of inflation stands at -1.4%. Whilst the Panel is not advocating a reduction in the Basic Allowance in line with this figure, the fact that the country's public finances are in such turmoil with very low cost of living increases being agreed during the current round and a possible freeze on public sector pay looming, the Panel is minded not to recommend any increase for the forthcoming year. This approach was also advocated by a Councillor.

Special Responsibility Allowances

This was an area we spent some time on, particularly bearing in mind that the Council had introduced two new Scrutiny Committees to replace the former Overview and Scrutiny Board and the Strategy and Performance Panel with effect from 14 May 2009.

The new Corporate Scrutiny and Community Scrutiny Committees have an equal standing. The Chairman of each Committee have equal responsibility and therefore receive an equal Responsibility Allowance.

Last year the Panel set a level of allowance to recognise this level of responsibility. However, from the comparative data available to the Panel it is apparent that the allowance payable has been set at too low a level. The Panel therefore wishes to see an increase in the Responsibility Allowance paid to the Scrutiny Chairmen.

We have a good understanding of the responsibilities of those offices that attract Special Responsibility Allowances. The “Cabinet” system has meant greater responsibility and time commitment for those given Executive roles. It is also evident from the figures of the other authorities that there is now a general recognition of the extra responsibilities that such Councillors have. However, for the same reasons outlined in the previous section of the report concerning Basic Allowances, we feel that the level of Special Responsibility Allowances, other than the Scrutiny Chairmen, should not be increased.

We also looked again at the level of allowance for the Chairmen of the Regulatory Committees and feel these too should remain the same.

Mayor and Deputy Mayor Allowance

Although it does not form part of the Members’ Allowances Scheme the Council is entitled, by virtue of Sections 3 and 5 of the Local Government Act 1972 to pay an allowance which enables the Mayor to meet the expenses of his/her office. We are satisfied that the overall level of allowance currently paid to the Borough’s First Citizen and the deputy accurately reflects the duties of those roles. No increase is therefore recommended.

Approved Duties

We have taken a detailed look at the current list of Approved Duties. We are happy that this list which is set out in Appendix A is satisfactory.

Parish Council Allowances

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

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

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

As far as the participation allowance was concerned, the general view from Parish Councils nationally was that they wished to retain the existing practice whereby Parish Councillors were ‘unpaid’. The advice we have received from the Parish Liaison Officer is that Parish Councils within Taunton Deane are currently not seeking any kind of allowance. We feel therefore, that there is no need to consider

the matter until a formal request for advice as to the level of allowance that should be paid is received.

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

We agreed with the deliberations of the Panel last year and came to the conclusion that:-

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

Travel and Subsistence Allowances

The Regulations allow Local Authorities to determine their own travel and subsistence allowances after having regard to the recommendation of their independent Members' Allowances Panels.

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

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

With regard to subsistence allowances, the Panel feel that the subsistence rates should be the same as those paid to the Council's officers. These have recently been reviewed nationally and the level of subsistence allowances payable to Councillors should be revised accordingly.

Pensions for Councillors

The Government have given Local Authorities the power to admit Councillors to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS).

The Regulations require that Council's independent Members' Allowances Panels will make binding recommendations on which Councillors may be eligible for access to the LGPS.

The independent Panel can make recommendations as to which Members (under 70 years of age) should be entitled to membership of the Scheme and whether the Basic Allowance or the Special Responsibility Allowance or both should be made pensionable.

Our view remains unchanged from that of the previous Panel. We acknowledge that the current level of Basic Allowance might not make membership of the Scheme worthwhile for many Councillors. However, we agree with the principle that all Councillors should be treated equally on this issue. Every opportunity should be taken to encourage individuals to stand as candidates and an enhancement of the overall remuneration package for Councillors will help this aim. We continue to feel, therefore, that the Scheme should be made available to all Councillors who want to take advantage of its benefits. We do not intend to make any change to our previous recommendation.

Renunciation

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

Time Limit

As previously, the Panel recommends that Councillors should submit their allowance claims regularly and we suggest a time limit of 6 months for backdated claims.

Co-optees

The Regulations also make allowance for the payment by the Council of allowances for persons co-opted onto the Council. The only category of person this would affect currently would be the Council's Standards Committee.

Last year, the Panel recommended that a Basic Allowance should be paid to the seven independent Members who serve on the Standards Committee with an additional Special Responsibility Allowance being payable to the Chairman.

During the last 12 months it has become apparent that the level of allowance recommended is far too low when the level of responsibility the independent Members now have is taken into account and, particularly, when the allowance currently paid is compared with that paid by other Local Authorities in the South-West to the independent Members of their Standards Committees.

The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council's Standards Committee took the opportunity to meet the Panel to provide detailed information as to the role of an independent Member of the Standards Committee.

Their primary roles are to promote and maintain high standards of conduct for Members of Taunton Deane, helping Members follow the Code of Conduct and dealing with complaints received against Borough or Parish Councillors.

With regard to the latter, the responsibility for operating what is known as the Local

Assessment Framework was passed to the Council by Standards for England in May 2008.

Whereas previously complaints received about Councillors within the Taunton Deane district were submitted to Standards for England for determination, the Government decided that complaints would be better handled by local Standards Committees.

Therefore, new Regulations were introduced which required complaints to be assessed, investigated (where appropriate), with the findings then considered to establish if the Code of Conduct has been breached and whether a formal hearing into the complaint should be held. The Standards Committee was also given a range of sanctions which it could impose on a Councillor who was found to have breached the Code.

The bulk of the work involved in investigating complaints does fall on the independent Members of the Committee and this was recognised by the Government who recommended that all Councils should make an appropriate allowance payable to these Members based on the level of responsibility the independent Members would have.

Last year when the Members' Allowances Panel considered this issue, it was too soon after the introduction of the Local Assessment Framework to fully understand the requirements of the scheme and a level of allowance was set which, with hindsight, clearly does not recognise the level of responsibility required to effectively operate the scheme.

Taking into account the comparative data before the Panel and the very helpful information received from the representatives of the Council's Standards Committee, the Panel is convinced that the level of allowance paid should be increased.

Recommendations

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

1. The existing Members' Allowance Scheme be discontinued and replaced with the following scheme with effect from 1 April 2010 (The current scheme for 2009/2010 is in brackets).

Basic Allowance (payable to all members (£4,301)	£4,301
Leader (£12,098)	£12,098
Executive Councillors (8) (£4,705)	£4,705
Chairman, Planning Committee (£4,705)	£4,705
Chairman, Licensing Committee (£1,344)	£1,344
Chairman, Corporate Governance Committee (£1,344)	£1,344
Chairman, Corporate Scrutiny Committee (£2,700)	£3,000
Chairman, Community Scrutiny Committee (£2,700)	£3,000

Chairmen of Task and Finish Groups	£250
Chairman, Standards Committee (£500)	£1,000
Independent Members, Standards Committee (£300)	£600
Mayor (£8,998)	£8,998
Deputy Mayor (£1,644)	£1,644

2. (i) Travelling and subsistence allowances shall be payable to Councillors when incurred by them in the necessary carrying out of those official activities as a Councillor as appear on the list of “approved duties” set out in Appendix A to this report.
- (ii) The mileage rate remains at 40p per mile. The rate for motorcycles to be 24p per mile and bicycles to be 20p per mile.
- (iii) Subsistence rates as set out below:-
- | | |
|--------------|--------|
| Breakfast | £6.72 |
| Lunch | £9.24 |
| Tea | £3.64 |
| Evening Meal | £11.44 |
3. Payment for the care of Councillors’ dependents be maintained at the rate of £5.73 per hour and to be in accordance with the following conditions:-
- (a) Councillors shall be reimbursed, up to a specified maximum limit, for costs actually incurred in providing care for any of the following who are at the time part of the claimant’s household living with him/her and who would normally be looked after by him/her, whilst the claimant is undertaking an “approved duty”.
- i. children under the age of 14;
 - ii. elderly person (aged 60 and over);
 - iii. people with disabilities;
 - iv. people with learning difficulties.
- (b) In addition to living as part of the claimant’s household the dependent must be unable to be left unsupervised by the carer.
- (c) The carer must not be someone who ordinarily lives with the claimant as part of the household.
- (d) For the purposes of (a) above:
- (i) “approved duty” would be a duty under the Council’s scheme;
 - (ii) the maximum hourly rate repayable should be consistent with the statutory minimum wage
- (e) The claimant must produce a receipt for payments he/she has made to the carer and must sign a certificate which, amongst

other things, will state that the costs were properly and necessarily incurred in the course of, or to permit, him/her undertaking his/her duties as a Councillor.

4. (a) no advice on a level of Participation Allowance for Parish Councillors be offered by the Panel until a formal request be received from a Parish Council;
 - (b) allowances for travelling and subsistence be identical to those payable to Borough Councillors and the same level of such allowances should apply for all Parishes throughout Taunton Deane;
 - (c) Parish Councillors be permitted to seek reimbursement of the actual cost of items used for Parish Council business, such as computer consumables, or a nominal sum, provided such payments were approved by the Parish Council.
5. (a) that all Members of the Council be entitled to members of the Local Government Pension Scheme;
 - (b) both the Basic and Special Responsibility Allowance be treated as amounts in respect of which such pensions are payable.

John Dewdney
Chairman
on behalf of the Members' Allowances Panel

Views of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee

At its meeting on 26 November 2009, the Corporate Scrutiny Committee was given the opportunity to consider and comment upon the annual review of Members' Allowances undertaken by the independent Members' Allowances Panel.

Although the report and recommendations of the Independent Members' Allowances Panel were noted, the Committee was of the view that **no increases at all** should be made to any of the allowances for the 2010/2011 financial year.

Councillor John Williams
Chairman, Corporate Scrutiny Committee

APPENDIX A

Recommended List of Approved Duties

Approved duties for the payment of travelling and subsistence allowances:

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

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Council Meeting – 8 December 2009

Part I

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

Councillor Coles

(a) Growth Point Funding – Re-profiling the Spending Plan

Taunton Deane is in receipt of Growth Points (GP) funding for the furtherance of the future development of Taunton in both the long and medium term.

The funding is a mix of capital and revenue funding. The allocation for 2009/2010 was £3,338,104 capital and £301,249 revenue and for 2010/2011 the provisional amounts allocated were £3,972,516 capital and £300,698 revenue.

The priorities for using this funding have previously been agreed by the Project Taunton Steering Group and the Project Taunton Advisory Board and the addition to the Capital Programme of the capital elements of this Spending Plan were approved by Full Council earlier in the year.

Due to the recession, the Minister for Housing and Planning notified the Council during the summer that the capital allocation for 2009/2010 was to be reduced by 43% to £2,248,263. The revenue funding has not been reduced.

With further reductions in public spending being likely next year and, in the absence of any firm commitment from the Government about even the reduced figure being available, the Executive has reconsidered the Spending Plan for 2010/2011.

The re-prioritised Spending Plan shows that if the Council continues to undertake the works to provide the Northern Inner Distributor Road and, if no Growth Point funding is received next year, there will be a significant overspend of £2,691,000.

In this scenario, the scheme to enhance Castle Green would be at risk as it is the least aligned to the delivery of housing and economic growth in Taunton.

It is therefore **recommended** that the changes to the Capital Programme of the capital elements of the Growth Point Funding Plan be agreed.

Council Meeting – 8 December 2009

Report of Councillor Ross Henley – Leader of the Council

1. Core Council Review

- 1.1 I believe we made the right decision at our Special Full Council recently to approve Themes 2 and 4 of the Core Council Review. Our business cannot stay as it is and in light of Local Government funding and the current economic recession the Core Review is essential. I might add, though, that this is a strategic review and has gone through many months of public consultation via Members and also with staff representatives.
- 1.2 This approach I feel has been successful with Theme 1 and I am sure that Themes 2 and 4 will be equally successful. Taking Themes 1 agreed earlier in the year and now Themes 2 and 4, the Core Council Review will have delivered a total of £792,000 towards efficiency savings for this Council.
- 1.3 It would be wrong, however, not to acknowledge that we have lost staff during this process and that of course is always a difficult time. We have to acknowledge what difficult decisions we have made and also realise that we had little choice but to take this action. However, unlike many Councils we are dealing with this based upon our priorities and using a strategic approach, we now move onto the crucial implementation stage of the Core Council Review.

2. The Budget

- 2.1 You will have seen from the Quarter 2 budget monitoring reports that the projected budget gap is around £1.3 million. The Core Council Review will bring in around £450,000. The proposed car park increases will potentially bring in £360,000. Those at the last Corporate Scrutiny Committee will have observed that further substantial funding could be gained by the outlined savings plans and fees and charges adjustments.
- 2.2 More remains to be done to close this gap but strong progress has been made to bridge the gap. The administration acknowledges the difficulty of closing the budget gap but will not walk away from our pledges to flagship policies like the full roll out of doorstep plastic and cardboard recycling.
- 2.3 There are extreme budget challenges ahead and uncertainty regarding the future funding of Local Government in particular from 2011 onwards and

that has to be a concern for all of us. It is incumbent on us all to work together to rise to manage the future financial situations that await us.

3. South West One

- 3.1 You will already read in Councillor Coles' report the news that Southwest One has made savings of £260,000 and has identified potential savings of £4 million to come. Richard Jones has decided to retire in early December and I would like to thank him for the way he has performed his role. I have met with senior Southwest One Managers this week to discuss the way forward and to hear about their plans for Richard's replacement.

4. Pioneer Somerset

- 4.1 Sadly, there is still little progress on Pioneer Somerset. We had a meeting recently at County Hall to discuss progress but yet again my perception is that the political leadership of the County Council is not involved enough in this process and until that changes then there will be, I fear, little progress between the Districts and the County.

- 4.2 I believe that the decision by the County to withdraw funding from the Project Directors Group was a great mistake and has withdrawn the driver which independent consultants said was necessary for us to step up to achieve progress. In light of the lack engagement at a one to one level from the County Council political leadership then it up for the Districts to move forward with our own savings agenda. I will say again that the time has come for us to revisit the idea of shared management roles with other districts at the senior management level.

- 4.3 Like it or not this is the way forward and is happening with some success all over the country. I know that the leading opposition party on this Council expressed strong reservations to this idea when I floated it before but I will not apologise for raising it again. To not seriously consider this option is to be frankly in denial of the future of Local Government in England.

5. Carbon Neutral

- 5.1 I recently attended an excellent workshop organised by Kevin Toller and the Transition Taunton movement at Wellsprings. I was able to announce to them that this Council has signed up to the Ten Ten Agenda and that we have signed up to becoming a carbon neutral Council.
- 5.2 A workshop is being organised by Kevin with Senior Managers to discuss carbon neutral being placed into service plans and I am meeting Kevin this week to begin the work of setting targets and agreeing exactly what work

we all need to do to make Taunton Deane Borough Council carbon neutral. I have also just signed off a decision for this Council to employ a new Climate Change Officer as well.

6. EDF

- 6.1 I attended a briefing meeting recently with Councillor Mrs Smith, Councillor Williams, Joy Wishlade and Penny James to hear of the plans that EDF have for the future of Hinkley Point. It was really astonishing to hear of the all infrastructure projects involved with this project from new park and rides to accommodation for the near 4000 workers who will be needed to build this new facility if it goes ahead.

7. Local Development Framework (LDF)

- 7.1 Thanks to Ralph Willoughby-Foster for the recent LDF briefing meetings - two very well attended meetings which have now launched the public consultation process.

8. Meetings

- 8.1 Penny and I recently attended the Somerset Chamber of Commerce AGM at the Holiday Inn. It was a great chance to catch up and network with many local business people and we are following this up with a meeting with the President of the Chamber of Commerce this week.

9. Corporate Strategy

- 9.1 Work is progressing well on the review of the Corporate Strategy. Conversations began with the three political groups during June / July 2009. The output from these conversations was used to inform a fundamental review of our priorities, which in turn has also informed the Core Council Review and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).
- 9.2 The emerging draft Corporate Strategy (2010/2013) was considered twice by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee during October 2009. The proposal was to abandon our current priorities (ETCHED - Economy, Crime, Transport, Healthy Living, Environment and Delivery) and to focus on the following:-
- Affordable housing
 - Climate Change
 - Creating a Green Knowledge Economy
 - Tackling Deprivation and Community Development.

- 9.3 One of the concerns emerging from Scrutiny is that the Corporate Strategy must articulate the ambitions of Taunton to become a Growth Point. Officers are now addressing this and a proposal will be presented to Corporate Scrutiny on 26 January 2010. This will involve the expansion of 'Green Knowledge Economy' into an aim that encapsulates the wider growth agenda (e.g. housing, green knowledge economy and infrastructure).
- 9.4 Following Scrutiny, the draft Corporate Strategy and MTFP will be considered by the Executive on 3 February 2010 and Full Council on 16 February 2010.

10. Christmas

As this is the last Full Council meeting before Christmas, I would like to wish all Councillors, staff and their families a very happy and peaceful Christmas.

Councillor Ross Henley

Council Meeting – 8 December 2009

Report of Councillor Alan Paul - Communications

1. External Communications

- 1.1 A range of press releases have been issued in recent weeks covering the Core Council review ; the Scores on the Doors food stars scheme ; Mayoral duties and engagements ; Oxen lane, North Curry ; energize discos ; and conservation areas.
- 1.2 One of the more high profile issues for the Council concerned a decision by the Adjudication Panel of Standards for England to disqualify a former Councillor from standing for election for two years. The case was referred by the Council's Standards Committee.
- 1.3 The Council occasionally has to respond to cases of individuals who wish to publicise a complaint about the Council. For legal reasons, we cannot respond to the individual case in public, but can only refer to relevant Council policies.
- 1.4 Recent issues of Deane Dispatch have featured the work of the Link Partnership in Halcon, the Economic Vision and the Green Knowledge economy. December's edition will include news about Housing, Sort-it Plus and the Core Strategy.

2. Internal Communications

- 2.1 We have worked on communicating the outcome of the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) to Members and staff – the results are due to be made public on 9 December 2009.
- 2.2 The Council's internal newsletter, Footprint, which looks at action being taken on carbon management, was issued in November 2009.
- 2.3 Contributions were provided by Tone Leisure on their actions on cutting emissions, by Facilities Management on actions implemented at The Deane House and from Kevin Toller on the series of workshops held by the Council with Transition Town, Taunton.
- 2.4 Work is underway on the next edition of Involve, the electronic newsletter covering aspects of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy. This is due to be issued early next year.

3. Scrutiny Committee Communications

- 3.1 The Communications Protocol already envisages occasions when key issues from Scrutiny Committees and Task and Finish reviews are included in press releases. The recent Scrutiny training session identified the need to improve internal communications involving the scrutiny function.
- 3.2 I already attend as many Scrutiny Committee meetings as possible and I propose that the role of Communications Portfolio Holder should include regular liaison with the Scrutiny Chairmen to improve communications between the Executive and scrutiny functions.

4. Website Changes

- 4.1 On Monday, 30 November 2009, Taunton Deane Borough Council and Somerset County Council launched their new, closely connected, websites. At the same time a new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system for use by the Customer Contact Team went live.
- 4.2 These initiatives are part of the SAP transformation program and should deliver real benefits to our citizens.
- 4.3 The new websites removes the barriers citizens experience in accessing District and County services on-line. Citizens will still access services either through the existing Taunton Deane web address (www.tauntondeane.gov.uk) or through the County web address (www.somerset.gov.uk).
- 4.4 However, regardless of whichever of these websites is chosen, the citizen, when searching for a topic or service, will be presented with results for any related services provided by either authority. To ensure accountability is maintained, the service pages within each website are clearly branded so it is clear to the citizen when they access a service on-line which of the authorities is responsible for that service.
- 4.5 Much work has taken place by both authorities to update the content of the websites to ensure information is up to date (which in the past has been an issue), is relevant and is written in an appropriate style. The content pages have also been created in a way which makes them easier to find if a customer does not know our web address, and chooses instead, to search for our services using search engines such as Google.
- 4.6 A significant advantage of our new website over our previous one is the ability of our citizens to interact **directly** with the back office systems. For example, they can report a faulty street light online and a service ticket is generated straight away in the back office system. This has advantages in terms of speed and efficiency over the present arrangement whereby a customer would report the street light online, this would generate an e-mail to the Contact Centre Team. The Contact Centre staff would then raise a job in the back office system.

- 4.7 Another improvement for the Citizen, brought about through the direct links between the new website and CRM system, is in the consistency of advice they will be given, regardless of whether they look up information on the website or whether they speak to a member of the Contact Centre.
- 4.8 This is achieved through us and the County Council using the website as our respective single points of service information. This avoids the possibility of the customer receiving one version of a form if they download it from the website and another if they call the Contact Centre and ask for one to be sent.
- 4.9 The same will apply to information about a service. Information concerning fees, services or charges will be identical whether found on the website or relayed to a citizen over the telephone. This avoids the previous situation where Customer Contact staff often had to rely on supplementary paper-based material to help them answer customer enquiries, which can often unknowingly become out of date and may occasionally unwittingly result in out of date information being given out.

Councillor Alan Paul

Council Meeting – 8 December 2009

Report of Councillor Simon Coles – Planning and Transportation

1. Southwest One

- 1.1 The contract between Taunton Deane and Southwest One is structured to enable the Council to make significant savings in two broad areas. Firstly the contract provides for a year-on-year cumulative reduction of 2.5% in the costs charged by Southwest One to the Council for running the various in-scope services. This represents a significant saving in view of the number and cost of the in-scope services.
- 1.2 Secondly, the Procurement transformation project will identify and deliver significant savings over the contract term. To date £260k of savings have actually been delivered and a further £4m of potential savings have been identified.
- 1.3 Southwest One's Chief Executive, Richard Jones, who many of you will know, is retiring from Southwest One and from IBM on 4 December 2009. Richard has been the Chief Executive of Southwest One since its inception and is well known to all founding partners. Richard has made a huge contribution to Southwest One and will be sadly missed. I am sure we all wish him well in his retirement.
- 1.4 As an interim step, and until a new Chief Executive is appointed, Simon Humberstone will stand in and take over Richard's primary responsibilities. As a member of Southwest One's Main Board, Simon is well placed to ensure continuity following Richard's departure. He will be closely supported by Halleh Missaghi, Southwest One's Director of Service Operations, along with other members of the Southwest One Management Team.
- 1.5 I am pleased to say that a potential successor to Richard has been identified. I hope to be able to confirm an appointment very soon, probably after the Board Meeting on 1 December 2009.

2. Core Strategy

- 2.1 We are in the process of producing a Consultation Document. This consultation document is not a draft plan and does not contain planning policies. It contains a wealth of material derived from engagement with communities and stakeholders as well as technical studies that provide

a baseline of information that underpins the Local Development Framework.

- 2.2 As you are already aware, the statutory Public Consultation under Regulation 25 on the Local Development Framework Core Strategy and Site Allocations is planned for January and February 2010.
- 2.3 Out of this work, a range of issues and options have been identified together with preferred directions for development policy. In parallel with the main consultation document a Sustainability Appraisal of alternative options has been prepared.
- 2.4 Taunton Deane Borough Council, the local Strategic Partnership and partners have been working closely to ensure that community priorities are understood by all service providers. Responses to this consultation are essential to enable us to prepare a Core Strategy with development policies for public consultation in September and October 2010. Members, we welcome your views.

3. New Planning regime for major infrastructure projects

- 3.1 The 2008 Planning Act introduced a new approval process for nationally important infrastructure. This includes the establishment of the Infrastructure Planning commission (IPC) and the publication of National Policy Statements across a range of infrastructure types – energy, transport, water, waste water and hazardous waste.
- 3.2 The Government states that “the aim of the new planning regime is a faster, fairer and more efficient system for the consideration of proposals for nationally significant infrastructure projects”. It remains to be seen whether the new approach successfully meets these aims, but few would disagree that the previous regime which led to protracted and hugely expensive Public Inquiries for proposals such as Sizewell B and the third runway at Heathrow needed radical surgery.
- 3.3 The IPC will be the decision-making body on applications for nationally significant infrastructure projects and will use the National Policy Statements as the primary policy documents upon which these decisions will be made. The first draft policy statements were published on 9 November 2009 and related to ports as well of a suite of documents on energy matters including Fossil Fuel Electricity Generating Infrastructure, Renewable Energy Infrastructure, Gas Supply Infrastructure and Gas and Oil Pipelines, Electricity Networks Infrastructure and Nuclear Power Generation.
- 3.4 The last of these attracted most attention both nationally and locally as it identifies potential sites for new nuclear power stations including at Hinkley Point on the north coast of Somerset. Further information can be found at:-

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/infrastructureplanningwork>

4. Recent Government Consultations

- 4.1 Two significant consultation documents have been published in the last few weeks.
- 4.2 The first proposes to extend permitted development rights to take proposals relating to small scale renewable and low carbon energy technologies and electric vehicle infrastructure out of the planning system.
- 4.3 This will cover domestic wind turbines, air, ground and water source heat pumps, flues for biomass systems and combined heat and power systems as well as electric vehicle charging points in both public and private parking areas. Whilst the Government has suggested certain exceptions relating to such matters as noise, wildlife and historic buildings, these potential changes should act as further encouragement to adopt these technologies more widely.
- 4.4 The second consultation is hot off the press and is a response to recommendations from the Matthew Taylor Report and is aimed at incentivising landowners to bring forward land in rural areas for affordable housing through referral rights (that is by allowing the landowner to retain nomination rights for one or more of the properties subject to certain criteria) and allowing the landowner to retain an interest in the land.

5. Officer reports to the Planning Committee

- 5.1 The amount of information submitted with, and in response to, planning applications is growing year on year. There is therefore an increasing dilemma for officers preparing reports in balancing the need to be comprehensive with a desire to be clear and concise.
- 5.2 It is considered that to better achieve these goals it may be worth amending our current format which can often lead to reports extending to over a hundred pages on major or controversial proposals with key issues for Members being found somewhere amongst a mass of text.
- 5.3 One idea is to start the report with the recommendation and an executive summary followed by an outline of the major determining issues with conditions and consultation responses being attached as an appendix. Members thoughts on how they wish to see information presented in future would be welcomed.

And finally.....

I should like to take this opportunity to wish a The Mayor, Members, officers and their families a very Merry Christmas and a peaceful and prosperous 2010.

Councillor Simon Coles

Council Meeting – 8 December 2009

Report of Councillor Francesca Smith - Economic Development and the Arts

1. Economic Development Strategy

- 1.1 Work on the Economic Development Strategy is progressing well with all strategic partners aligned to the concept and encouraging the development of a plan to achieve a 'Green Knowledge Economy'. Despite the difficulty of modelling with any certainty what will happen within the UK economy in the short term, a range of economic growth forecasts have been agreed with the South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA) and the Government Office for the South West (GOSW) that do not detract from the aspirational targets underpinning housing growth within the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS).
- 1.2 On the back of this work the Council has been invited to submit an application to the European Entrepreneurial Region (EER) Project Scheme with the support of Somerset County Council. The aim of the EER initiative is to create dynamic, green and entrepreneurial regions throughout Europe and all local and regional authorities across the EU with political competencies in the field of entrepreneurial policy are eligible to apply regardless of size.
- 1.3 The EER supports outstanding regions with an EU quality label for their commitment to the development of entrepreneurial and Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) policy that takes into account the development of a sustainable and low carbon economy, social inclusion, innovation and corporate social responsibility. The regions with the most forward-thinking action plan will be granted the label "Entrepreneurial region of the year".
- 1.4 A draft report, including an Action Plan that identifies 'first wave projects' for delivery between 2010 – 2012, will be circulated in January 2010 in advance of the report being submitted to Community Scrutiny in the end of January.

2. Business Matters Month

- 2.1 A successful programme of events held during October, sponsored by Exchange House and in partnership with Business Link, attracted 99 attendees from 70 businesses. The events included 'Marketing on a Shoestring', 'Selling to Councils', a 'Women in Business' networking event, and 'Make the internet work for you'.
- 2.2 The programme has received recognition from our partners as setting the benchmark for future events across Somerset.

3. Tourism

- 3.1 The 2010 annual tourism brochure for Somerset has been produced and is currently at the printers. The 200,000 print run 'Things to see and do' and the

accommodation guide will be available from the end of November, distributed to Tourist Information Centres through the UK, and will be available for request through the Somerset tourism web site www.visitsomerset.co.uk

- 3.2 The Tourism Officer is working with the Somerset Tourism Partnership (STP) to generate national media coverage. Working with Fresh PR Ltd we have been able to secure large amounts of media coverage not just in print media but also on line and on social networking sites.
- 3.3 Working with the STP training skills coordinator, Taunton Deane tourism businesses have taken part in recent courses including 'Welcome Host', 'Marketing Skills' and 'How to improve the quality of your marketing tools'. By up-skilling tourism business owners we aim to improve the quality of the tourism offer to encourage repeat visitors and attract new customers.
- 3.4 STP has been working with the Somerset Economic Regeneration Directors Group to draw up a new delivery plan and secure funding for 2010 - 2012.

4. Taunton Tourist Information Centre (TIC)

- 4.1 The Taunton Tourist Information Centre (TIC) has had another busy few months.
- 4.2 The office is currently housing for the first time the Cards for Good Causes Charity Christmas Card Shop – selling cards and goods for over 30 local and national charities. The Cards for Good Causes organisation is currently celebrating 50 years of operation, it is proving to be a great partnership and is well worth a visit!
- 4.3 The Ticket and Travel Centre are both very brisk – income is above target and amongst the events we have recently been selling for has included the Taunton Thespians first visit to the Tacchi Morris Arts Centre. Tickets on sale in the run up to Christmas include performances by Amici with Orchestra West, Collegium Singers, Phoenix Singers, Taunton Sinfonietta and the West Somerset Singers. Berry's Coaches will also be launching their new Spring day tour programme in the office during December.
- 4.4 The office continues to support numerous local artists and cottage industries selling handmade cards, jewellery, paintings and pottery. Bookings for the display units are now limited until the start of 2011.
- 4.5 The TIC Manager is currently working with the Tourism Officer and the Growth and Development Manager on a TIC Review following the Core Council Review, these proposals will be presented to Corporate Scrutiny and Executive Committee in the New Year.

5. Project Taunton

Firepool

- 5.1.1 Plans are being finalised to take forward on-site demolition (which should start before the end of this year) and the acquisition of remaining third party properties is being progressed within budget limitations.

Cricket Club

- 5.2.1 The Pegasus development and new stand is now complete. Somerset Square, including the area outside the Brewhouse, will be completed before the end of the year. There are some outstanding 'snagging' type issues and this is the subject of discussions with the contractor. Taunton's Mayor, Cllr. Bob Bowrah, will officially open Somerset Square on 14 December.
- 5.2.2. The construction of the Somerset County Cricket Club Club Hub is complete and work to convert the pavilion to a 600 seat conference facility has started with completion planned at the end of March 2010.

Brewhouse Theatre

- 5.3.1 An architectural feasibility study has been commissioned for the incremental extension and conversion of the building and this work is well progressed. The architects are giving presentations to the Brewhouse AGM and the Cultural Partnership among others.
- 5.3.2 A structural survey of the building to ensure that the costs and liabilities associated with the building are properly understood has been completed. The survey is now in the possession of the Chairman of Brewhouse Trustees and Taunton Deane's Economic Development Manager.

Coal Orchard

- 5.4.1 The Project Taunton team hope to be in a position to start preparing a brief early next year and initial discussions have already taken place. It is intended to use Savills, Bristol to assist in this work because they are already working on the High Street proposals and it will be important to have a consistent and complementary approach.

Museum

- 5.5.1 The main contractor is on site for the refurbishment of the Museum and reopening is planned for April 2011

Castle Green and Goodland Gardens:

- 5.6.1 Work is likely to start on site at Castle Green early in the New Year, although the reduction in Growth Points funding might mean a rethink of the specification.
- 5.6.2 This has proved to be an extremely complicated project because of the number of different owners affected, the different interests represented and the sheer number of design, transport, ecological, environmental and archaeological issues requiring a resolution.

Tangier

- 5.7.1 Midas have delayed the start of their scheme due to the market conditions but we understand that they have approached the Homes and Communities Agency for Kick Start funding.
- 5.7.2 Work on the Third Way Road and bridge will begin just after Christmas

Bus station

- 5.8.1 Meetings to discuss the future of the bus station have started.

Retail

- 5.9.1 EPF has completed the £3.5m refurbishment of The Old Market Centre.
- 5.9.2 An Exclusivity Agreement with Taunton Deane (as the other principal land owner) has been signed. This gives EPF 12 months to satisfy themselves that they can design a workable scheme and agree Heads of Terms with the Council. By the end of 18 months a development/land sale agreement must be exchanged.
- 5.9.3 The programme put together by EPF's project managers suggests that initial design propositions will be available to be tested and appraised as early as next January/February.

Longrun Farm

- 5.10.1 Swan Paul have been instructed to prepare plans for the landscaping of the land at Longrun Farm, part of which will fulfil planning obligations. Good progress is being made with this work and a submission to Access to Nature for funding has been made. A well attended stakeholder information meeting took place at the Genesis Centre on 27 October and a planning application has been submitted.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish all staff and Members
a very Happy Christmas and Peaceful New Year.

Councillor Fran Smith

Council Meeting – 8 December 2009

Report of Councillor Richard Lees – Sports, Parks and Leisure

1. Community Leisure

- 1.1 The Christmas edition of The Deano is being produced ready to send to every primary school aged child in Taunton Deane, plus libraries and sports centres, a copy will be published on the Council's web site.
- 1.2 At their October meeting the Joint County and District Panel for Voluntary Village Halls and Community Centres received capital grant applications from Nynehead Village Hall, Fitzhead Tithe Barn, Neroche Parish Hall and West Bagborough for inclusion in their provisional programme for 2010/2011.
- 1.3 A final decision on these applications will be made at the Committee's next meeting in March 2010. Capital grant applications to this Committee are joint funded between Somerset County Council and Taunton Deane Borough Council.

2. Play

2.1 Wheels Park

- 2.1.1 A preferred supplier has now been agreed for the contract to design and build the new Wheels Park in Hamilton Gault Park, Taunton. The project is awaiting the imminent outcome of a Lottery bid for a further £50,000 to add to the £130,000 existing budget prior to commencement in January 2010.
- 2.1.2 The contractor is working with young people to fine-tune the design of what will be a "state of the art" wheels park for skateboarders, bmx riders and in-line skaters.

2.2 Play Spaces

- 2.2.1 Tenders have been invited for the next two Playbuilder funded play spaces – Lyngford Park and Hamilton Gault Park, both in Taunton. The successful tenderer will complete both play facilities in March 2010. The third Playbuilder funded site in Oake has already been tendered and will be completed in a similar timeframe.

2.3 Strategic Documents

2.3.1 Four important strategies have been considered by Scrutiny and will have been to the Executive by the time this report comes before Full Council. All will ensure that the Council continues to manage its leisure assets to maximise community benefit and that it secures adequate new facilities for the future.

2.3.2 Strategies for Green Spaces, Playing Pitches, Allotments and Built Sports Facilities will complete the suite of leisure strategies with Play and Community Halls strategies already adopted. The strategies will be available for public consultation in the New Year and will become integrated into the Local Development Framework.

2.4 Longrun Meadows and the River Tone Corridor

2.4.1 A first stage application has been submitted to Natural England for a Lottery grant to deliver a project improving access to natural spaces along the river for the people of Taunton Deane with a special focus on the communities of North Taunton and Halcon. The outcome is expected in late December and if we are successful, the second round application will be submitted to meet the 4 May 2010 deadline.

3. Parks

3.1 Phase one of the sensory garden in Vivary Park is nearly completed. This has included the construction of all of the paths, fountain, raised timber beds and planting. Wood carvings that the school children have made, seating and signage are still to be installed.

3.2 Once this phase of the work is complete the sensory garden will be open to the public early next year. The second phase of the work involves making the artwork that the GCSE students have designed. Sponsors for each piece of artwork will need to be found in order that we can put the artwork into the garden.

4. Tone Leisure (Taunton Deane) Limited Activities

Sports and Health Development

4.1 Soul Walks - Let Your Feet Do The Talking!

4.1.1 Tone Leisure supported the Soul Walks initiative to celebrate World Mental Health Day this year on 10 October 2009, to promote the benefit of walking for positive mental health and well being. Soul Walks is an initiative co-ordinated by the Somerset Physical Activity Group and is a series of health walks that have a unique feature to promote positive mental health. Tone Leisure provided four health walks over two weeks, which saw 156 individual participations.

4.2 Health Walking in Taunton Deane

4.2.1 Tone Leisure's Walk Well in Taunton Health Walk scheme has achieved re-accreditation status from the Walking for Health Initiative. The re-accreditation badge gives recognition that the scheme is an excellent scheme, meeting safety and insurance standards, offering led health walks for beginners and providing basic monitoring information. The scheme continues to be successful, with walks being entirely volunteer-led, attracting an average of 28 participations per walk and 80 new walkers in 2009/2010 to date.

4.3 Taunton Foot Anstey Junior Aquathlon

4.3.1 101 children took part in the Aquathlon at Queen's College on Sunday, 27 September 2010. The children, who were between the ages of 8 and 16 years, competed in their age groups by swimming and running over various distances. The race has been sponsored by Foot Anstey Solicitors for the last three years and they have just confirmed their sponsorship for 2010.

4.4 FANS (Free Access for National Sportspeople)

4.4.1 The FANS scheme assists elite sportspeople to achieve their full potential by reducing the financial burden of training costs by giving them free access to Tone Leisure's fitness and swimming facilities. FANS was launched across Tone Leisure sites in February and now has 6 people on its Taunton scheme in the sports of rugby, triathlon, swimming, shooting and tennis.

4.5 Sport Unlimited

4.5.1 Sport Unlimited is a Sport England funded programme that is targeted at youngsters who may have some interest in sport, but are not particularly engaged with community or club sport. It is based around 10 week, high quality Sport Unlimited taster sessions designed to inspire youngsters to sign up for longer term participation in local clubs and in the community.

4.5.2 Tone Leisure have been delivering new teenage fitness sessions as part of the Sport Unlimited programme at Blackbrook and Wellsprings that started in September 2009, with the aim that the young people will continue to be active and take part after the 10 weeks.

5. Facility News

5.1 Wellsprings Leisure Centre

Junior Activities

5.1.1 Parkour Street Running taster sessions have been very well supported and another course may be planned for the future. The new activities

for 2010 are: Brazilian Soccer Skills for 5+ years (the next big craze in football); No More Stabilisers (learn how to ride a bike in 6 weeks).

Events

5.1.2 Wellsprings welcomed back the amazing 'Magic of Motown' event, which was yet again a sell out. The evening saw hits from an array of stars such as Diana Ross, Lionel Richie, The Four Tops and many more. Throughout December the centre will come to life again for the amazing Christmas parties. All five dates have now sold out. The New Year will see many events such as pantomimes, motown, ABBA and Jethro.

5.2 St. James Street Baths

Operational Difficulties

5.2.1 Throughout the summer of 2009 St. James Street Baths experienced extensive difficulties with pool plant failure and water quality issues in the small teaching pool. This led to the pool being closed, with much of the programme having to relocate into the main pool. Inevitably this caused public disruption and inconvenience.

Free Swimming Lessons

5.2.2. Through Tone Leisure's work with the Amateur Swimming Association's (ASA) free swimming lessons initiative it has been possible to offer 6 hours of free swimming lessons to the 50+ market. This has enabled the pool to promote the benefits of learning to swim to an age group that may never have learnt without the financial support offered by the ASA. To date, feedback from the group has been extremely positive.

5.3 Station Road Pool

Free Swimming

5.3.1 Station Road Pool had a very busy summer with free swimming proving popular with both the target groups. The closure of Sedgemoor Splash in Bridgwater at the end of August 2009 no doubt also influenced the high number of swimmers.

Free Swimming Lessons

5.3.2 The pool has been able to gain some funding from the Government's Free Swimming Initiative and is currently holding two six-week sessions of group swimming lessons to people aged 11 and over and who cannot swim. The sessions are provided free to the community in a bid to get more people into swimming.

5.3.3 Both sessions have proved popular and there is hope that the funding will continue into the New Year. Once the course is finished it is hoped to convert people onto the existing swimming lesson programme or encourage the new participants to swim on a regular basis.

Swimathon

5.3.4 Confirmation has been received from the Swimathon organisation that Station Road Pool raised a staggering £7,633 from this year's event, which took place in April. It is held annually at the pool to raise money for The Marie Curie Cancer Care and local cancer charities. Tone Leisure has signed up again for next year's event.

5.4 Wellington Sports Centre

Free Swimming

5.4.1 Free Swimming is as popular as ever with around 1,764 visits in October 2009. Tone Leisure also introduced three Free Swimming Courses to non-swimmers. Both the adult and 60+ sessions are fully booked.

Building Developments

5.4.2 A number of building improvements are currently being undertaken at Wellington Sports Centre. Progress has been made in preparing the new Bfit Studio. The old bar area has been completely removed and a new modern studio area created. These works are due for completion by the end of the year, in readiness for the Bfit project launch in the New Year. Other works include upgrading the viewing area in the upper hall and refurbishing the family changing area.

Funding Update

5.4.3 Taunton Deane Borough Council/Tone Leisure have successfully progressed to the final stage of a funding bid to the free swimming capital modernisation programme, for £350,000. The final bid is to be submitted by February. If successful, the funding will be used to modernise the pool hall, plant and changing rooms. The funding would greatly improve the overall swimming experience and help to retain swimmers from the free swimming initiative.

5.5 Blackbrook Pavilion and Taunton Tennis Centre

Programme Developments

5.5.1 Teen Gym sessions have been successfully launched at Blackbrook over the Autumn, which have proved to be very popular.

Building Developments

5.5.2 The Young People's gym activities are now being incorporated into the main studio and fitness areas, following consultation with the young people taking part in the activities. This has left an opportunity for the first floor area, which is being developed into a ladies only toning tables area. The necessary conversion works are being completed over the winter, and the new toning tables studio will be launched in January 2010. It is anticipated that this new facility will help attract less active customers into the facility.

Events

5.5.3 The Aegon British Tour took place during the last week of October 2009, with 125 entries (a record in recent years).

Funding Success

5.5.4 Funding of £15,000 has been awarded to Team Taunton Academy (the partnership between Tone Leisure's Taunton Tennis Club and the Richard Huish Tennis Academy) to develop the training of its best junior players. £10,000 will go directly to Taunton Tennis Club for players aged 11 and under and to identify and develop new talent.

Coaching and Training

5.5.5 16 parents attended a training session on 5 October 2009 to learn how to help train their children. Parents were put through their paces by Head Coach, Simon Woodhill, and Tennis Manager, Michele Hewitt, learning the fundamentals around all the basic shots and tactics in tennis.

5.5.6 16 trainee coaches attended a UKCC (United Kingdom Coaching Certificate) training course at Taunton Tennis Centre on 17 and 18 October 2009. One of the club's youngest coaches, Jon Warren, completed and passed the course.

New Activities

5.5.7 An Open Evening for new adult players was held on 12 October 2009 to welcome them into the club and to tempt them into trying a new sport. 28 players attended.

All that remains for me to say is that I would like to wish the staff who support myself as the portfolio holder and all of the Council Members a very enjoyable Christmas period.

Councillor Richard Lees.

Council Meeting – 8 December 2009

Report of Councillor Tim Slattery – Environmental Services

1. The Food and Health and Safety Team (FHST)

- 1.1 A local bakery in Wellington accepted a simple caution after they manufactured and sold a product with a moth baked inside it.
- 1.2 A prohibition notice was served on a local pool due to concerns over the safety of the water, which remained closed for several weeks over the summer. It has now reopened.
- 1.3 A local farm was served with a prohibition notice to stop them operating a child's ride unsafely. The notice has been appealed and is currently subject to an Employment Tribunal.
- 1.4 A prohibition notice was also recently served on a large local business for the dangerous use of a fork lift truck.
- 1.5 Investigations are ongoing into breaches of food hygiene legislation at an Indian restaurant in Wellington. This is likely to result in a prosecution or simple caution.
- 1.6 Investigations are ongoing into breaches of food hygiene legislation at a pizza takeaway in Wellington, which is particularly interesting as the team are engaging the services of an interpreter.
- 1.7 A total of 10 enforcement notices have been recently served on a warehouse in Taunton.
- 1.8 A Business Advice Open Day, organised by HM Revenues and Customs, was recently held at the Holiday Inn, Taunton. Members from the FHST and Licensing Teams manned a stand offering advice to local businesses.
- 1.9 A Vacuum Packing Course hosted by Taunton Deane was attended by officers from the other Local Authorities across Somerset. This is essential training following the Pennington Report which was issued after the public Inquiry into the e. coli outbreak in South Wales.
- 1.10 A local health club has been offered a simple caution for allowing an unsuitable stool to be used by its staff, resulting in injuries to several staff members.
- 1.11 **Preventative /proactive work:-**

- In 2007/08, an estimated 2.1 million individuals were suffering from ill health they believe was caused or made worse by their job.
- Up to 70% of hairdressers suffer from work-related skin damage such as dermatitis at some point during their career – most cases are absolutely preventable.

1.12 **Asbestos the Hidden Killer Campaign - Every week 20 tradesmen die from asbestos-related disease -**

- 1.13 The aim of the Hidden Killer Campaign was to raise awareness of the dangers of asbestos to general tradesmen, plumbers, electricians and joiners and inform them of the potential risk of working on buildings that might contain asbestos.
- 1.14 Taunton Deane's contributions played a huge part in realising the success of the campaign. Our Team delivered asbestos awareness training sessions at local colleges to students and lecturers of building related topics (building technicians, carpenters, plumbers, electricians, engineers and painters and decorators).

2. Environmental Protection Team

Seagull Control Programme 2009

- 2.1 Taunton Deane continues to use plastic egg substitutes as an effective control method for urban gulls. Gulls are particularly aggressive during the breeding season (defending their chicks) and cause general nuisance (localised noise/fouling). The plastic eggs work by tricking the gulls into incubating them instead of the real ones which are taken away. During this time the gulls are relatively quiet and abandon the nest at the end of the season. After using the plastic eggs for 2-3 seasons, the gulls relocate their nesting site elsewhere.
- 2.2 The aim for 2009 was to build on the success of the previous year and minimise the number of visits to premises without impacting on the success of the egg replacement programme, thus making the most effective use of officer time/resources. Based on previous experience, visits were scheduled to coincide just before the incubation limits of the eggs were reached (the first visit was 1 May 2009 – same as last year).

Facts & Figures

- 2.3 A total of 126 eggs were collected/deployed. The programme was 100% successful in that 56 nests were treated, preventing 56 pairs of gulls from successfully breeding. 55 nests or more was the target to prevent an

increase of 30% in the predicted population - based on a gull population of 182 pairs in 2005.

- 2.4 It is worth noting that since 2005, the estimated population of gulls in Taunton has doubled, with a population around 350 breeding pairs. This growth is in line with other towns/cities in the South-West Region. However, the population of breeding gulls in the treated areas of Taunton is still decreasing with the growth in breeding numbers relocating to the other areas outside the town centre (for example Priorswood Industrial Estate).
- 2.5 It is worth mentioning that our current pest control service which operates the gull control programme is being reviewed as part of the Core Council Review. One of the options proposed is the outsourcing of this service. At this stage it is unknown if this will go ahead and if the nominated contractor would provide a gull control programme. If gull control is no longer applied to the town centre, gull numbers/nuisance and subsequent complaints will inevitably increase in future years.

3. SORT IT Plus Roll out

- 3.1 As you will be aware, SORT IT Plus is the addition of weekly collections of plastic bottles and cardboard to the existing SORT IT collections.
- 3.2 New customers will be delivered a leaflet and calendar along with a second (black) recycling box for plastic bottles, food and drinks cans and cardboard, and the existing recycling box will be used for paper, glass bottles and jars, foil, clothes, shoes and car batteries.
- 3.3 Customers currently on the existing trial rounds are, with the exception of the round in Comeytrove, at present receiving fortnightly plastic bottles and cardboard collections. They will receive a leaflet and calendar explaining that plastic bottles and cardboard will be collected weekly from the first collection date, and that cans are now required to be placed in the same box as plastic bottles. A sticker will be provided to remind residents of what should be placed in which box.
- 3.4 The existing Comeytrove rounds will be delivered a leaflet and calendar informing them that the current weekly collection scheme is now permanent.
- 3.5 It has been necessary to make an adjustment to the collection day of one round – the existing West Monkton trial area. This is to ensure operational efficiency, and for this round, the recycling and food waste will temporarily change from a Monday to a Wednesday, with a view to this being changed back in a later phase when more households are introduced. Refuse and garden waste on this round will be unchanged and will remain fortnightly on Wednesdays.

3.6 As with all best laid plans, we have experienced some local problems in the Comeytrowe area which the Officers at the Partnership are resolving.

3.7 I offer my apologies to Ward Members and Residents for any inconvenience caused.

4. Bring banks

4.1 I am sure that Members are aware that in order to support the introduction of SORT IT Plus, Taunton Deane took the decision to transfer resources from the bring banks. The reduction in the bring bank budget for 2009/2010 meant that it was necessary to reduce the number of bring sites in Taunton Deane no later than the second quarter of the year to avoid an overspend that would eat into the resources that the Council had made available for SORT IT Plus.

4.2 I appreciate that this meant a reduction in bring sites with the expansion of the kerbside service but in the circumstances it was unavoidable and this point was made to both the Scrutiny Committee and the Executive at the time the decisions were made.

4.3 We have tried to ensure that the main sites with facilities for paper/card and plastic bottles have been retained and in the Wellington area these are at North Street Car Park and at Rockwell Green. In addition to these sites a full range of facilities are provided at the Poole Household Waste Recycling Centre. (The site at the sports centre was subject to repeated vandalism and it is possible we would have had to remove this site irrespective of the resources issue).

4.4 It is inevitable that there will be some transfer of materials from those sites that have been removed to those that remain and this may cause some capacity problems in the short term. However, we are working with our contractors to add capacity and increase service frequency to overcome these problems.

5. Fly Tipping

5.1 A crackdown by many Councils on people illegally dumping waste has resulted in a 7% rise in prosecutions this year and £19m of savings.

5.2 The DEFRA fly-capture database figures, show that Councils, including Taunton Deane, have prosecuted 2,000 people for fly-tipping this year, up from 1,871 last year. The amount Councils are having to spend clearing up illegal waste has fallen from £73.8 in 2007/2008 to £54.9m in 2008/2009.

5.3 These figures show Councils are getting ever tougher on the criminals who blight our landscape and pollute the countryside. A no-nonsense approach is

helping to keep public places clean and safe as well as save money, with less having to be spent clearing up after mindless criminals.

- 5.4 Fly-tipping is one of the things residents complain to Members and our Council about most. Illegally dumped waste is a big problem and our Council is actively clamping down on this illegal problem. We are striving to keep the Borough clean, safe and tidy and we need the support of the whole community to meet that objective.

6. Licensing Unit - Public Safety

- 6.1 On Tuesday, 24 November 2009 the Licensing Unit took part in a joint taxi enforcement exercise with Avon and Somerset Police and the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA).
- 6.2 In total 29% of the vehicles tested failed the test to one degree or other. 45 licensed hackney carriages were inspected, four of which were suspended and a further nine given rectification notices.
- 6.3 Six motorcycle Police Officers stopped the taxis in and around Taunton starting shortly after the school runs had ended. Each vehicle was instructed to attend VOSA's testing facility at Norton Fitzwarren. On arrival they were initially checked by VOSA Inspectors then by Licensing Officers from Taunton Deane.
- 6.4 Suspension notices were issued for two unsealed meters, faulty brake lights and a missing clutch pedal rubber. All four vehicles were re-presented for testing later in the day and notices were lifted.
- 6.5 The nine rectification notices were for lesser failures such as minor accident damage, missing no smoking signs, poor levels of cleanliness, missing first aid kit, a bent track rod end and faulty windscreen washers. These vehicles were either re-tested later in the day or given a specified period of time in order to comply.
- 6.6 In addition to the measurable shortcomings that we found, a small number of vehicles took some time to reach the testing station after being directed there by the Police. In all these cases, by the time the vehicles found their way there, they had tyres that were so new that the painted tread markings were still visible. Whereas we were unable to prove the condition of any tyres that

may have been fitted beforehand, the test ensured that they were legal within a few hours of being stopped.

Councillor Tim Slattery

Council Meeting – 8 December 2009

Report of Councillor Hazel Prior-Sankey – Housing Services

1. New Raglan Homes

- 1.1 It is pleasing to note that sixteen new Raglan Housing Association rented flats become available to applicants on Homefinder Somerset before Christmas. The development was originally open market but in the changed market conditions the Council's Enabling Team encouraged Raglan to purchase the two-bedroom flats, and provided a modest financial contribution.
- 1.2 This is one of several examples where housing associations, supported by the Enabling Team, have taken advantage of market conditions to increase the supply of social rented housing.

2. Mortgage Approvals Double, but...

- 2.1 "A doubling of mortgage approvals sounds like more evidence that the housing market mini boom will continue", reports *Inside Housing*. However, the magazine warns that the latest statistics produced by the British Bankers Association (BBA) show that most of the increase in approvals occurred in the period up to mid summer, and there has been a marked slowdown since then. The slowdown may feed through and affect house prices later in the year.

3. Tenant Services Management Board

- 3.1 Good progress is being made with the creation of the new Tenant Services Management Board by April 2010. The next planned event is to be held on the 30 November 2009 at the cricket ground, where officers and tenants will be working together to plan and agree activities to be held over the first quarter of next year.

4. Tenant Services Authority – New Regulator, New Standards

- 4.1 The Tenant Services Authority (TSA) is introducing a new system of regulation for social housing providers (such as housing associations and local authorities) in England from 1 April 2010. This will implement the powers given to the TSA in the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008. The TSA is consulting on whether their proposals best meet the objectives set for them by Parliament.
- 4.2 Taunton Deane's Housing Service will engage council tenants in the consultation process for the third and final time in late January 2010. Tenants will be given the opportunity to influence how the TSA implements its new

powers. Consultation responses are to be received at the Tenant Services Authority by 5 February 2010.

5. Recession Hits Private Tenants

- 5.1 Research by Shelter and the Money Advice Trust highlights the struggle that those in the private rented sector are facing. A new survey has shown that 90% of lower income private tenants are struggling financially, compared to just 51% in a similar survey in 2006.
- 5.2 Government and media attention has focussed on the problems of homeowners, and the plight of private tenants with low incomes but paying high rents has gone largely ignored.

6. Decent Homes for All

- 6.1 Taunton Deane will celebrate the achievement of the Decent Homes standard early in the New Year, well ahead of time. Some tenants have refused the work for their own reasons, and robust arrangements are in place to bring these homes up to the standard on re-let. Tenants are also able to change their mind and have the work carried out at a later date.
- 6.2 Taunton Deane Borough Council is one of 114 authorities managing its own stock with a traditional Housing Department, and it is interesting to see how such Councils are progressing with the target in comparison to transferred stock and those managed by Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs). Last year 20% of Local Authority managed stock was non-decent, compared with 31% of ALMO stock and 12% of transferred stock.
- 6.3 I think we can be proud that Taunton Deane will deliver this target on time for our tenants, having listened to their wishes in the stock transfer vote.

Councillor Hazel Prior-Sankey

Council Meeting – 8 December 2009

Report of Councillor Nicola Wilson – Corporate Resources

1. Southwest One Customer Contact Highlights

1.1 During October and November Southwest One Customer Contact staff have been busy preparing for the launch of the new SAP CRM system on 30 November 2009. Many staff have been involved in the development and testing of the new system and all team members have undergone detailed training in readiness for the implementation. The feedback from the trainees has been very positive and the teams are looking forward to using SAP.

1.2 Despite this huge level of activity over recent weeks, the service provided to Taunton Deane callers has continued to be excellent as shown in the table below. This has been underpinned by the temporary Customer Service Advisors that were recruited to ensure that service levels remained at a consistent level during the testing and training phase. The Qmax resource planning tool has also enabled far more accurate forecasting and scheduling of staff than would have previously been possible.

Statistical Information:

MONTH	Oct	Nov To 26th
CALLS OFFERED	13878	11986
ABANDONED % [Target less than 5%]	3.6%	1.8%
G.O.S.% [Target 80%]	87%	93%
% ANSWERED AT 1ST P.O.C.	95%	94%

1.3 A total of 5644 customers have been helped at The Deane House main and planning receptions and 1292 people visited Wellington Community Office. The team have handled 434 Web and Email enquiries during this time.

1.4 The automated customer satisfaction survey tool is being tested on the Taunton Deane lines and initial results are very positive with 93% rating the service as satisfactory, good or very good.

1.5 Future Activities

- Produce a report on the possible use of an 03 telephone number range for Taunton Deane callers which will provide improved business continuity protection in the event that it is not possible to operate from The Deane House for any reason;
- Go live with SAP CRM on Monday, 30 November 2009;

- Ensure that all staff are fully conversant with SAP CRM (post go live) and arrange additional support and training where necessary;
- Conduct a post implementation review of SAP CRM to prioritise and remedy any defects; and
- Finalise arrangements for the full implementation of the external customer satisfaction survey with the Taunton Deane Client.

2. Update on progress with Investors in People (IIP) Action Plan

2.1 A summary of the latest position is as follows:-

Completion of Performance Review and Employee Development (PREDS) reviews

2.2 Managers are scheduling in reviews for all staff. Reviews are to be completed by end of December 2009

People Management Framework

2.3 All senior managers have been trained to use the Management Competency Framework (part of the PM framework) and it is planned to use this as part of PRED review round for managers. Managers who will be involved in receiving reviews within the Competency Framework have also received familiarisation training. The People Management Framework introduces a new competency framework for managers and reinforces the need to hold regular one-to-one meetings and team meetings

Team Meetings

2.4 Managers have sent schedules of future meeting dates. A system is about to be set up to enable a central diary of all team meetings to be held by CMT. The quality and coverage of team meetings is being gradually assessed and feedback from staff sought.

IIP Working Group

2.5 Two meetings of this group have been held and a number of issues have been raised by members of the group – some positive and some which will require further action and discussion.

Related areas of activity

Management Development

2.6 The managers in the Corporate and Strategy theme are working through the assessment phase of this management development program. The next phase will be for managers to complete personal development plans to share with their managers and to undertake development activities and/or courses to help them progress.

Mentoring

- 2.7 This will complement the management development mentioned above and is about to start. People have been matched and Managers trained in mentoring skills

Training Plans and budgets

- 2.8 Training budget allocations have now been agreed and managers notified. Training plans for 2010/2011 have been requested from managers for submission by 20 December 2009. This will then form the basis for the budget allocation for next year.

Skills Audit

- 2.9 A report has been produced by SCAT which is being considered.

Theme Working

- 2.10 An initial meeting of the Managers in the Corporate and Strategy Theme has established progress so far and some thoughts and proposals have been produced in a report for CMT to consider

Support for Core Council Review

- 2.11 Training in application and interview skills for people involved in the next phase of the Core Council Review has been delivered.

3. Performance and Client Team

The Performance and Client Team covers three specific areas. An update for each is provided below:-

3.1 Corporate Performance Reporting and Improvement

- 3.1.1 The new performance monitoring processes agreed by the Executive in September 2009 are in the process of being implemented. As part of this a new service, planning process and a template has been drawn up and agreed with CMT. Workshops have been arranged with both CMT and the combined Executive and Corporate Scrutiny members to involve them in the development of a new corporate performance 'dashboard'. The aim of the dashboard is to make corporate performance reporting far more 'user friendly'

- 3.1.2 A Corporate Action Plan has been developed which pulls together into one document the improvement actions identified as a result of various inspections. Progress against this plan will be monitored by the December Corporate Governance Committee.

- 3.1.3 The Comprehensive Area Assessment result is due to be released on 9 December 2009. This will contain the results of both the Area and Organisational Assessments. Members will be aware that the Organisational Assessment, which directly relates to Taunton Deane, is now a much harder test and it would be unrealistic to expect the authority to be a 'top performer'.

3.2 Client Function

3.2.1 The Client function manages the contracts that cover the Southwest One, Somerset Waste and Tone Leisure partnerships. The majority of the focus is on the Southwest One partnership in view of its size and complexity. Monitoring of service delivery and performance indicators continues to take place on a monthly basis. However, the team is currently looking at ways of improving our contract management processes.

3.3 Managing the Southwest One transformation projects

3.3.1 The team manages delivery, from Taunton Deane's perspective, of the various transformation projects being undertaken by Southwest One.

3.3.2 SAP Back Office System - much progress has been made in resolving the issues resulting from the first release of the SAP system in April 2009. The backlog of payments to suppliers has been cleared and payments are now being made within the appropriate timescales. Posting of payments to accounts such as Council Tax, Business Rates and rents has been working smoothly for some time now. Full debt recovery processes were resumed in respect of all three back in the summer. We have also now met with staff in all services to discuss and capture their outstanding issues. However, there remain key problems with the level of sundry debt arrears and with our ability to record all budget information within SAP. Southwest One are in the process of implementing plans to resolve both.

3.3.3 SAP Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system and website – the new CRM and website are scheduled to go-live on 30 Nov 2009. This is a week later than originally anticipated, but the delay was deemed necessary in order to allow for additional development and testing.

3.3.4 Procurement project – the procurement transformation project has already delivered in the region of £250k in actual savings. However, we are behind target which is largely due to delays in recruiting key personnel both within Southwest One and the Performance and Client Team. The key posts have now been filled and work has started with Southwest One to get us back on track.

3.3.5 Additionally, we are working with Southwest One to identify and deliver a plan for undertaking work with small and medium sized enterprises (SME's). A progress report will be made to Corporate Scrutiny in February 2010.

4. Revenues and Benefits

4.1 During October, the Service successfully ran a mass recalculation of Housing Benefit following the decision to reduce rents from April 2009. November brought further challenges due to the implementation of revised disregards in child benefit and capital limits when calculating claims. As a consequence the number of enquiries in the last two months has been higher than usual but staff still managed exceptionally good response turnaround times in dealing with both visitors to The Deane House and telephone calls.

- 4.2 The second Revenues and Benefits Customer Forum was well received, with an increase in the number of attendees (despite appalling weather on the actual day!). The teams worked with colleagues to provide speakers on the Winter Warmth scheme and were able to demonstrate customer led service delivery in revising letters following feedback on how to improve understandability and tone.

As the year draws to a close, efforts to collect Council Tax and Business Rates have meant increased recovery action in attempts to meet challenging performance targets. The service is in the process of finalising work with the Audit Commission for their inspection of our £30m+ Housing and Council Tax Benefit subsidy claim for 2008/2009. Initial results appear to be very encouraging showing the checks that are undertaken are robust.

Councillor Nicola Wilson

Council Meeting – 8 December 2009

Report of Councillor Alan Wedderkopp – Community Leadership

1. Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP)

- 1.1 The CDRP discussed the possibility of merging the structures for the entire County to bring together the strategic work into a more cohesive whole. This would allow tactical and operational decisions to be made at a local level, whilst leaving the strategic decisions that affect the entire county at the appropriate level. This is still subject to discussion and in the mean time, the three western district council areas previously covered by CDRP's will continue to work together in an informal merger.
- 1.2 The Partners and Communities Together (PACT) process is being reinvigorated. The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) will consider a proposal in January 2010, which will be ratified by the Community Scrutiny Panel. The successful approach in Wellington (incorporating West Deane) is the model upon which this will be based.
- 1.3 The paintball project has endured a difficult time, but discussions to bring in a new partner to deliver this are at an advanced stage. The project will remain at Hestercombe and it is anticipated that this will be active again from spring 2010.
- 1.4 Community Justice in Taunton will also be taking new cases from a similar time. It is expected that a coordinator will be appointed by the partnership shortly and that training will take place in January 2010. An office space with the Fire Service has been explored as a possibility.
- 1.5 The very successful Energise discos are changing from December with a new age range and time being introduced to ensure youngsters enjoy a safe night out.
- 1.6 The Christmas disco at Shout, being held on Tuesday, 22 December 2009, will start at 6.30pm and run for three hours until 9.30pm and the upper age limit is being changed from 16-years-old to 15-years-old.
- 1.7 Next Spring further changes are being planned to make the discos member-only with a special Energize membership scheme being set up. Membership application forms are available now. Youngsters with a card

will not only be able to get into the discos but be eligible for discounts in Taunton Town Centre stores and freebies at Energize activity days.

2. Recession Relief Fund

- 2.1 The Council recently provided a Recession Relief Fund totalling £36,000. The money was set aside for organisations that provide activities to help local communities deal with the effects of the current economic recession.
- 2.2 £15,000 has already been released to support the work of Priorswood Resource Centre and the Halcon Link Partnership.
- 2.3 A further £5,000 is proposed for the Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) in order for it to expand its present services. £5,600 to Taunton Transition Town in order to deliver five rural projects and Ten Radio to receive £5,864 within the requirements of a service level agreement.
- 2.4 The money will be used to fund projects such as strengthening voluntary groups through closer working with local businesses; a range of pilot community projects focussing on building resilience and supporting local firms; and a series of discussions with local communities and businesses within the West Deane area to help identify rural recession impacts, resulting in broadcasts to stimulate further discussion and to provide advice.

3. Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)

- 3.1 The LSP recently appointed Penny James as Chairman. Penny will have a key role in leading the LSP as it now embarks on a review of its priorities, structures and ways of working. The South West Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (SW RIEP) will be providing guidance and assistance.
- 3.2 In addition to the review, the LSP will be focussing on the following areas in the New Year:-
 - Deprivation
 - Climate Change
 - Infrastructure Delivery (working closely with Taunton Deane and Project Taunton)
- 3.3 The LSP has recently had its Investment Plan ratified by the Somerset Strategic Partnership. This will now release funds for the following projects (all of which will assist with delivering outcomes within the Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement):-

- Priorswood Resource Centre: £8,500 contribution towards the appointment of a centre manager;
- Taunton East Link Centre: £8,500 contribution towards the appointment of a centre manager;
- Rural Projects: £8,500 towards three projects as follows: Somerset Biodiversity Partnership, Somerset Landscape Enhancement Scheme and Transition Town.

Councillor Alan Wedderkopp