

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 21 February 2012 at 18:30.

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## **Agenda**

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

- 1 To receive the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 13 December 2011 (attached).
- 2 To report any apologies for absence.
- 3 To receive any communications.
- 4 Declaration of Interests.  
To receive declarations of personal or prejudicial interests, in accordance with Code of Conduct. The usual declarations made at meetings of Full Council are set out in the attachment.
- 5 To receive questions from Taunton Deane Electors under Standing Order 15.
- 6 To receive any petitions or deputations from Taunton Deane Electors under Standing Orders 16 and 17.
- 7 Provision of additional funding to Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations  
- To consider the attached motion proposed by Councillor Andy Govier and seconded by Councillor Mrs Jackie Govier.
- 8 Part 1 - To deal with written questions to, and receive the following recommendations from, the Executive:-
  - (i) Councillor Edwards - Recommendation relating to the Planning Obligations Interim Policy (attached);
  - (ii) Councillor Mrs Stock-Williams - Recommendations relating to:-
    - (a) Theme 5 of the Core Council Review – Legal and Democratic Services (attached);
    - (b) Localism Act 2011 – Pay Policy Statements (attached).
  - (iii) Councillor Williams - Recommendations relating to:-

- (a) General Fund Revenue Estimates 2012/2013 (attached);
  - (b) Capital Programme Budget Estimates 2012/2013 (attached);
  - (c) Council Tax Setting 2012/2013 (attached);
  - (iv) Councillor Mrs Adkins - Recommendations relating to:-
    - (a) Housing Services and Community Development – Restructure Proposals (attached);
    - (b) Housing Revenue Account Estimates 2012/2013 (attached).
- 9 The Liberal Democrat Group's Alternative Budget Proposal (attached).
- 10 Part II - To receive reports from the following Members of the Executive:-
- (a) Councillor John Williams - Leader of the Council;
  - (b) Councillor Vivienne Stock-Williams - Corporate Resources;
  - (c) Councillor Mark Edwards - Planning, Transportation and Communications;
  - (d) Councillor Jane Warmington - Community Development;
  - (e) Councillor Norman Cavill - Economic Development, Asset Management, Arts and Tourism;
  - (f) Councillor Ken Hayward - Environmental Services and Climate Change;
  - (g) Councillor Catherine Herbert - Sport, Parks and Leisure;
  - (h) Councillor Jean Adkins - Housing Services.

Tonya Meers  
Legal and Democratic Services Manager

13 April 2012

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](http://www.tauntondeane.gov.uk)

If you would like an agenda, a report or the minutes of a meeting translated into another language or into Braille, large print, audio tape or CD, please telephone us on 01823 356356 or e-mail us at: [enquiries@tauntondeane.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@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](mailto:d.durham@tauntondeane.gov.uk)**

## **Council Members:-**

Councillor S Brooks (Chairman)  
Councillor J Adkins  
Councillor J Allgrove  
Councillor J Baker  
Councillor A Beaven  
Councillor C Bishop  
Councillor R Bowrah, BEM  
Councillor N Cavill  
Councillor S Coles  
Councillor B Denington  
Councillor D Durdan  
Councillor K Durdan  
Councillor M Edwards  
Councillor H Farbahi  
Councillor M Floyd  
Councillor E Gaines  
Councillor A Govier  
Councillor J Govier  
Councillor T Hall  
Councillor K Hayward  
Councillor R Henley  
Councillor C Herbert  
Councillor C Hill  
Councillor M Hill  
Councillor J Horsley  
Councillor J Hunt  
Councillor L James  
Councillor R Lees  
Councillor S Lees  
Councillor L Lisgo, MBE  
Councillor J Meikle MBE  
Councillor N Messenger  
Councillor I Morrell  
Councillor M Mullins  
Councillor B Nottrodt  
Councillor U Palmer  
Councillor H Prior-Sankey  
Councillor D Reed  
Councillor J Reed  
Councillor S Ross  
Councillor T Slattery  
Councillor G Slattery  
Councillor F Smith  
Councillor P Smith  
Councillor V Stock-Williams  
Councillor P Stone  
Councillor B Swaine  
Councillor P Tooze  
Councillor J Warmington

Councillor P Watson  
Councillor E Waymouth  
Councillor D Webber  
Councillor A Wedderkopp  
Councillor D Wedderkopp  
Councillor J Williams - Leader of the Council  
Councillor G Wren

## 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 13 December 2011 at 6.30 pm.

**Present** The Mayor (Councillor Brooks)  
The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Hall)  
Councillors Mrs Adkins, Mrs Allgrove, Mrs Baker, Beaven, Bishop, Bowrah, Cavill, Coles, Denington, D Durdan, Ms Durdan, Edwards, Gaines, A Govier, Mrs Govier, Hayward, Henley, Mrs Herbert, C Hill, Mrs Hill, Horsley, Hunt, Miss James, R Lees, Mrs Lees, Ms Lisgo, Meikle, Mrs Messenger, Morrell, Mullins, Nottrodt, D Reed, Mrs Reed, Ross, Gill Slattery, T Slattery, Mrs Smith, P Smith, Mrs Stock-Williams, Stone, Tooze, Mrs Warmington, Watson, Ms Webber, A Wedderkopp, D Wedderkopp and Williams

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

### 1. **Prayer**

In the absence of the Mayor's Chaplain, the Reverend David Fayle, the meeting was opened with a prayer offered by the Mayor.

### 2. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of Taunton Deane Borough Council held on 4 October 2011, copies having been sent to each Member, were signed by the Mayor.

### 3. **Apologies**

Councillors Farbahi, Mrs Floyd, Ms Palmer, Prior-Sankey and Wren.

### 4. **Declaration of Interests**

Councillors Brooks, A Govier, Prior-Sankey and D Wedderkopp declared personal interests as Members of Somerset County Council. Councillor Henley declared personal interests both as a Member of the Somerset County Council and as an employee of Job Centre Plus. Councillors Mrs Hill, Mrs Smith and Stone declared personal interests as employees of Somerset County Council. Councillor Miss James declared a personal interest as an employee of Viridor. Councillor Slattery declared a personal interest as an employee of Sedgemoor District Council. Councillor Wren declared a personal interest as an employee of Natural England. Councillors Hayward and Ross declared personal interests as the Council's representatives on the Somerset Waste Board. Councillor Nottrodt declared a personal interest as a Director of Southwest One. Councillor Ross also declared a personal interest as the alternate Director of Southwest One. Councillors D Durdan and Stone declared personal interests as Tone Leisure Board representatives. Councillor Tooze declared a personal interest as an employee of the UK Hydrographic Office. Councillor Swaine, as a part-time swimming instructor at

St James Street Pool, declared a personal interest. Councillor Mullins declared a personal interest as EDF Energy at Hinkley Point was his employer. Councillor Ms Lisgo declared a personal interest as Chief Executive of Age UK Somerset Limited.

## 5. **Public Question Time**

(1) Mr Paul Partington asked the following four questions:-

(i) Permission for the development of the former cider works was granted on in August 2007. Footpath T 18/4 at Norton Fitzwarren had recently had a new footbridge fitted by developers which took into account those with mobility problems. As a result, the footbridge was some 2 m higher than the original. The footbridge was also supported on concrete piers and had a considerably longer span. This was due to the Halsewater being widened as part of the comprehensive flood scheme. Those using the new footbridge could look down on the back gardens of the adjacent properties. Was there planning permission for this new bridge?

(ii) In October 2010 the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs published a document titled "Authorising Structures (gaps, gates and stiles) on Rights of Way – Good practice guidance for local authorities on compliance with the Equalities Act 2010". One of the recommendations in the document was that authorities should have a published policy on how it would meet the requirements of the Equality Act.

Did Taunton Deane have any policies as to how it would meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 in relation to public rights of way?

(iii) The Council had recently published a public path diversion order in respect of a footpath in the Parish of Oake. This diversion included a stile and a narrow pedestrian bridge. The present route had a culvert wide enough to take a vehicle, whilst part of the diversion route was on an uneven path at the top of a bank and down a steep slope. This would be difficult for someone who had mobility problems.

Did Taunton Deane believe it was complying with the Equalities Act 2010 in respect of this diversion order?

(iv) The same order made reference to a limitation of an extant stile to remain adjacent to a field gate at the Oake to Bradford on Tone road opposite Oake Green Lane. The Open Spaces Society had examined the Definitive Map at County Hall which suggested that the path did not go through the stile but through a nearby field gate.

Would Taunton Deane acknowledge that the public right of way passed through the field gate?

In response, Councillor Edwards confirmed that he would look into these issues and would send Mr Partington a written response to his questions.

(2) Mr Aldred reported that the Halcon North Tenants and Residents' Association had been set up as the people of the Halcon North community felt that the Council had not listened to their concerns and worries about the proposed Option 1 of the regeneration project. The community would like a regeneration project for the people of Halcon North, not a project that destroyed the local community and handed the valuable land over to private developers.

The Tenants and Residents' Association had asked the people of Halcon North about Option 1 and 157 people within the area had, so far, signed a petition saying "no" to Option 1 and that they would like an option to keep 179 Council houses. This way the tenants could move back into the area without having to change landlords.

The Association wanted to work with the Council on an alternative project which would not remove tenants from their community and extended families.

With over 400 new dwellings proposed under the regeneration project, people were worried about population density leading to more problems – not less.

Mr Aldred asked the following questions:-

- (a) Under the Localism Act, was there a possibility the residents could now have a referendum on Option 1 of the regeneration project?
- (b) Could the Tenants and Residents' Association put forward an alternative regeneration project with the help of a company like Savills, rather than the Council throwing Council-Tax Payers money at a project the community did not want?
- (c) Was the Council willing to work with the Tenants and Residents' Association to find a regeneration project more suited to the community of Halcon North?
- (d) Would the Council now reconsider the regeneration project now that the Localism Act was in place to establish if there would be any benefits in keeping 179 Council houses and the money this would bring into the Housing Revenue Account?

In reply Councillor Williams stated that the Council did not wish to impose a solution which was not wanted by local people. He added that a proposal which sought to retain the level of Council houses proposed by Mr Aldred would not produce sufficient return to make a regeneration of Halcon North possible.

Councillor Williams promised a full written response to the questions raised by Mr Aldred.

## **6. Improvements to the High Street, Taunton**

Considered report previously circulated, which sought approval for the receipt of a capital grant from the Homes and Community Agency (HCA) for improvements to the High Street, Taunton.



The HCA had made an informal offer of up to £250,000 to fund further improvement works to the High Street, Taunton as long as these were completed by 31 March 2012.

A final proposal had been submitted to the HCA which included the following proposed works:-

- A new lighting scheme;
- Sorting out all the electricity supplies so that the unsightly boxes were removed and the supply was extended to the top of the High Street so that markets particularly could be extended further up the street;
- Further work to the existing planters (removal and rebuilding), some new planting;
- Street furniture including new seating; and
- Additional signage.

It was anticipated that a response from the HCA as to whether the above scheme had received final approval would be received within the next few days.

**Resolved** that:-

- (a) The receipt of an offer of funding from the Homes and Communities Agency, on the understanding that it had to be spent on improvements to the High Street, Taunton by 31 March 2012, be authorised; and
- (b) If the money was made available, a supplementary budget be approved to increase the Council's 2011/2012 Capital Programme by £250,000 for the additional expenditure funded by this Grant.

## 7. **Works to the flood wall, Goodland Gardens, Taunton**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the discovery of a large crack in the wall of the Mill Stream that flowed through Goodland Gardens, Taunton. The wall acted as part of the town's flood defence scheme.

Inspection of the crack, which had been found following the removal of three large Cypress trees opposite the former toilet block, had shown that it was not new. There had clearly been previous attempts to fill the crack with mortar.

The ownership of the wall had been checked and it had been confirmed as being part of the Council's estate. The Environment Agency required the relevant repairs to be made as soon as possible, particularly as the time of year with the highest flood risk was approaching.

The Agency had also agreed that the current contractor on site at Goodland Gardens could carry out the works, once the preferred method had been agreed by structural engineers. It was anticipated that the costs of repair should be within the budget proposed of £10,000.

**Resolved** that a supplementary budget be approved to increase the Council's

2011/2012 Capital Programme by £10,000 for the additional expenditure required for the repairs to the Mill Stream wall and that this funding be taken from the unallocated Growth Points Capital Reserve.

8. **Motion – Reduction in the Feed In Tariffs for the installation of Green Energy**

Moved by Councillor Henley, seconded by Councillor Alan Wedderkopp.

This Council called upon the Secretary of State for Energy to reverse the proposal to reduce the Feed In Tariff (FIT) for the installation of Green Energy.

This scheme had allowed a very valuable Green industry to grow whilst making an important contribution to promoting sustainable energy and to reduce the effects of Climate Change.

We call upon the Government to extend the existing deadline of 12 December 2011 until next April to allow schemes already planned to be completed and to still qualify for the full tariff. Businesses and residents had entered this scheme in good faith and had planned accordingly. They should be given the time to adapt to possible changes before the scheme was amended and not as was proposed by the Government setting an unrealistic deadline.

We also request action to enable a higher rate of FIT to be available for council buildings, social housing and projects which demonstrated a community benefit.

Furthermore, the Government should investigate the option of raising the overall budget for the FIT scheme by taxing the profits made through power generation of the big utility companies to be further invested into Green community based schemes.

The motion was put and was carried.

9. **Motion - Inappropriate use of “Blacktop” Tarmacadam to replace paving slabs in Taunton Town Centre**

Moved by Councillor Henley, seconded by Councillor Simon Coles.

Taunton Deane Borough Council had invested a huge amount of money enhancing the town centre and was therefore concerned at Somerset County Council's policy of using unsightly blacktop Tarmacadam to replace broken paving slabs. This policy would lead to a squalid look for our town centre and was not helping and supporting businesses either.

This Council called upon Somerset County Council to discontinue its policy of using blacktop Tarmacadam to replace broken paving stones in central Taunton Town Centre streets such as High Street, Fore Street, North Street and East Street. We also request that the County Council replaced blacktop already used in these areas with appropriate paving slabs.

Furthermore, to enhance Taunton High Street we request this Council to arrange for bins for chewing gum and recycling receptacles for bottles and cans to be placed at suitable locations to encourage recycling in the town centre.

The motion was put and was carried.

#### 10. **Members' Allowances 2012/2013**

Submitted report previously circulated of the Members' Allowances Panel following its annual review of Members' Allowances. A copy of the report and recommendations had been circulated to all Councillors.

Details of the Members' Allowances Scheme that had been recommended by the independent Panel were submitted. The Panel had once again recommended increases to the Special Responsibility Allowance paid to the two Scrutiny Committee Chairmen and the allowance paid to the independent Members of the Council's Standards Committee to recognise the increased responsibility they now had following the introduction of the Local Assessment Framework in May 2008.

The Panel had, for the second time, recommended that the Parish Council representatives on the Standards Committee should also receive the same allowance as the independent Members. In addition, it was recommended that the rate paid to carers of Councillor's dependents be increased from £5.93 per hour to £6.08 per hour, to reflect the current National Minimum Wage and that the car mileage rate be increased to 45p per mile which would be in line with the non-taxable rate introduced by Her Majesty's Revenues and Customs earlier in the year.

Moved by Councillor Denington and seconded by Councillor Williams, that the following be agreed:-

##### Summary of Recommendations

- No increase to the Basic Allowance;
- No increase to Special Responsibility Allowances;
- No increase in the Mayor or Deputy Mayor Allowance;
- No increase to the allowance paid to the independent Members of the Standards Committee;
- No allowance to be paid to the Parish Council representatives on the Standards Committee;
- To increase the car mileage rate to 45p per mile to reflect the non-taxable rate introduced by Her Majesty's Revenues and Customs

earlier in the year; and

- To increase the rate paid to carers of Councillor's dependents from £5.93 per hour to £6.08 per hour, to reflect the National Minimum Wage.

The motion was put and was carried.

## 11. **Written Questions to Members of the Executive**

### **From Councillor Coles to Councillor Williams**

1. At the Executive meeting on the 7 December 2011 you confirmed that it was your intention to use all of the New Homes Bonus, some £350,000 per annum, not only this year but in all subsequent years to plug the gap in the Budget! How would this help the neediest in our society to find suitable accommodation?

**Reply** - The proposal to use the Year 1 New Homes Bonus resource as part of our core funding was shared in the recent budget papers to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee and the Executive. It was a proposal – and Councillors were free to offer alternatives to this as the budget process progressed. Ideally I would like to be in a position where we could use the New Homes Bonus purely to fund one-off projects to promote growth – but at the moment that was simply unaffordable.

2. What was the staff complement before the start of the current staff review?

**Reply** - 479 Full-time Equivalents.

3. What was the total annual wage bill for those staff at that time?

**Reply** - This information would take some time to produce and a written response would therefore follow.

4. How many of the staff were subject to “market factors”?

**Reply** - 40.

5. What was the anticipated staff complement at the end of this current review?

**Reply** - 422 Full-time Equivalents.

6. What was the anticipated annual wage bill for staff at the end of this review?

**Reply** - This information would take some time to produce and a written response would therefore follow.

7. How many staff would be subject to “market factors”?

**Reply - 26.**

8. When would the “market factor” element be reviewed and what was the anticipated outcome?

9. The number of staff, on each grade, before and after the review and how many moved up a grade or more?

**Reply to both questions** - When the Job Evaluation Scheme was agreed, staff with Market Factors received protection for their market factor whilst they remained within that post and the post remained unchanged.

As part of the same Job Evaluation Agreement a new Market Factor Policy was agreed and says amongst other things:-

“Market supplements would be reviewed from time to time for those unprotected posts as appropriate and consequently might be withdrawn, should the review demonstrate that current evidence did not justify a supplementary payment continuing.”

A review would be carried out when an individual left a post that had attracted a market supplement.

Further reviews would be carried out whenever a post was re-evaluated through the job evaluation process.

Over the period of time covered and the nature of the Core Council Review this was a piece of work which would require some time to produce and identify the reasons for movement of staff.

### **From Councillor Coles to Councillor Mrs Warmington**

10. In view of the catastrophic cuts to voluntary groups, could the Portfolio Holder tell us just how many Commissioners she had put forward to be trained via the National Programme for Third Sector Commissioning (NPTSC) to work better with voluntary and community organisations to raise their awareness of the possibilities and benefits of including voluntary and community organisations working together to bid for contracts and work.....or was she content to merely preside over these unwelcome cuts without actually offering any mitigation at all? Did she not realise the enormous benefits that accrued from voluntary and community organisations?

**Reply** - This was a proposal that had been supported by all political groups through the budget process. The decision would be made as part of the budget. It was a proposal and Councillors were free to offer alternatives.

The voluntary sector delivered a huge amount of invaluable services to the communities across Taunton Deane, many of which were supported financially by the Authority through service level agreements and several small grant schemes. The Portfolio Holder was fully aware of the enormous

added value, expertise and increased outreach that was enabled by working this way.

For months now, officers and Council Members had been trying to minimise the impact of severe cuts to the Council's overall budget next year (we were expecting approximately 40% over four years). This had been really difficult and there had been extensive consultation amongst all Councillors.

The scale of the required savings meant that all budget areas needed to be considered, including those budgets for the Voluntary and Community Sector. The voluntary sector had been consulted throughout this process of review (in line with the guidelines drawn up under Somerset Compact and through new statutory guidance this year under Best Value Duty) and were generally supportive of the decision being taken by the Authority in light of the serious budget constraints it faced.

Funding was awarded to the Voluntary and Community Sector through four main service areas : Strategy, Community Development, Housing and Economic Development. About a third of this was through the Strategy Unit where the cut of £30,000 (equivalent to 4.9% of overall spend on Voluntary and Community Sector) had been proposed in order to make ends meet.

Work was ongoing to mitigate the effects of the proposed cuts to the Voluntary Sector detailed in the most recent reports to the Community Scrutiny Committee and the Executive. This included consultation and continued provision of Grantfinder/ Grantnet, work to make better use of public/Voluntary and Community Sector assets and co-ordinating bids. A review of Voluntary and Community Sector spending across the Authority covering the period 2007-2012 had taken place to enable more efficient ways of allocating resources. Voluntary and Community Sector grant funds from the Strategy Unit during this time had increased by 35%.

A Grants Panel has been proposed to introduce a single, transparent, efficient way of allocating grant aid across the Authority and had the support of the Voluntary and Community Sector. At the moment the Authority supported the Voluntary and Community Sector through grant aid rather than commissioning work from them. A change to commissioning (if that was desired) would need a strategic steer from Council through due processes.

The National Programme for Third Sector Commissioning had various funds available though and the Taunton Deane Partnership (TDP)/Promise (mentoring and advocacy for young people) recently submitted a bid to their Social Action Fund to develop mentoring capacity within the priority areas. Unfortunately the bid was unsuccessful.

Taunton Deane Partnership/Taunton Deane Borough Council/Voluntary and the Community Sector were aware of various funds (for example NPTSC/Lotto) to bid for to support Voluntary and Community Sector infrastructure in the priority areas. The action plans for North Taunton and Taunton East were near to completion and it had been decided to wait for these before submitting any further bids. The Partnership would then be in a

much stronger position to make bids in support of specific projects such as community agents, mentors, etc. All partners (within the TDP) were working together on this. For general infrastructure support, Taunton Voluntary Action had submitted bids to the Big Lotto and Vista had submitted a bid to the Transforming Local Infrastructure fund. The Strategy Unit had supported these with the provision of information and general statements of support. The Voluntary and Community Sector were greatly valued by all those at Taunton Deane and the Portfolio Holder would do her utmost to support them through this difficult financial time. Supporting the third sector should not be political and input from any Member was welcomed.

### **From Councillor Coles to Councillor Edwards**

11. Could the Portfolio Holder please advise me of the composition of the Public Art Panel?

**Reply** - The Public Art Panel was convened by the consultants currently working on public art for the Authority. The intention was to identify an officer who would then take up responsibility for supporting and managing the Panel. Members would have experience and/or expertise in the following areas of public art to ensure a broad base and a balance of skill and opinion:-

Maggie Bolt – MBA (note taker)  
Diana Hatton – public art consultant  
Caroline Corfe – Civic Society and Chair of the Panel  
Graham Ward – Civic Society  
Carol Carey – Somerset Art Works  
Tim Martin – The Brewhouse  
Robbie Lowes – Project Taunton  
Councillor Ken Hayward – TDBC and Design Champion  
Tim Burton – TDBC  
Bryn Kitching – TDBC  
Matt Parr - TDBC

12. On Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) how confident was he that the new arrangements would be in place by the target date of June 2012?

**Reply** - The County Council's project plan included inviting tenders now with a return date in January 2012 and an award of contract by the end of February. The tenderers were all currently delivering CPE in other parts of the country. The three month lead in period was considered to be sufficient for an experienced operator to set up. The Department of Transport would respond in April 2012 to the County Council's formal application for Special Parking Area status for the parts of the County outside Taunton Deane.

Given the key stages now reached with the project there was no reason at this time to query the June 2012 date. This was very pleasing as this had taken many years to bring to fruition as the Councillor should be very aware. Indeed, throughout his time as portfolio holder no real progress was made at all so I am pleased we have managed to move this forward so significantly.

13. At the Executive meeting on 7 December 2011 it was reported that some £11,500 would be “saved” by not pursuing any more new Residents’ Parking Zones (RPZ). Could Councillor Edwards please confirm which unlucky residents who had thought up until the 7 December that they would be getting an RPZ, but due to his cut would no longer be seeing an RPZ “any time soon” - and, just as importantly, when was he going to advise these lucky residents of their good fortune?

**Reply** - We have done all the work that was presently agreed so the reserve was not needed as in future Somerset County Council (SCC) would be responsible for Residents’ Parking. If there were any minor adjustments required in the coming months officers were satisfied they had sufficient budget to deal with this.

I am rather surprised that this question was being asked as he should be well aware that SCC was going to be responsible for residents parking. He should therefore be aware we had no need to fund this as a County Council function?

14. The speed of processing “Major” Planning applications continued to fall below the mark. Whilst some of the blame could be laid at the door of SCC, whose Highway Department consistently failed to respond in the required timescale which in turn meant we failed to respond in a timely manner. Just what was he doing about it?

**Reply** - The Leader and Chief Executive had raised this issue with SCC. Please find below the response recently circulated to all Councillors in response to a question from Councillor Henley.

Joy Wishlade met with the relevant Director at SCC on 16 November and expressed our concerns around major applications. He had just commenced an internal review of how SCC dealt with these based upon their existing capacity. The areas he was looking at were:-

- Raising the level of where highways get actively involved – i.e. for lesser applications they would offer standard off the shelf advice and be available for queries and then focus on the bigger applications;
- The way legal support was given to them;
- Electronic transfer of information (a problem for their data capability);
- He also brought up looking at how we validated applications and whether they should be validated when they clearly had insufficient or inadequate transport information.

This final point was an issue that I discussed with Phil Lowndes the Group Manager at SCC, but the regulations did not allow us to refuse to register on this basis. I also discussed with him ways that they could raise income to fund increased resource in the event of local planning fee setting being implemented as promised.

SCC had also recently confirmed that they would have a dedicated contact for



the Monkton Heathfield Urban Extension work.

15. How did he explain away the fact that Sedgemoor District Council appeared to have a “hot line” to the SCC Highways Department and received a priority response from Highways on all of their Major applications? Just what did he propose to do to rectify this ludicrous situation?

**Reply** - I was personally unaware of this. However, Joy Wishlade raised it with SCC last month. They had been concentrating on getting work done on some of the priority major applications there in the last couple of months – however, this was not an ongoing situation and they said they would be pulling back resources to provide a more even service across the County.

16. What steps had he taken to protect and promote the Building Control income stream?

**Reply** - We have recognised that this service is losing income (Quarter 2 report to Scrutiny refers). Steps were being taken to deal with this in-year.

The significance of some of the larger housing projects around Taunton Deane and particular commercial projects that would come on stream over the next 12-18 months would have a favorable impact on workload and income within the area, specifically around support services connected to new housing sites currently being constructed, material alteration and the large projects that will be taking place with EDF.

We were currently involved in seeking applications and providing our services for a number of other major projects; these were deemed to be exemplar projects beyond those that we would be attracting from our day to day workloads. I cannot indicate which projects these were due to the confidentiality of such works and would not want to create any issues which could ultimately lose work for Building Control.

We were also entering into negotiations with another Authority with a view to carrying out their validation and plans vetting function. This was mainly due to personnel and workload issues. This would be based on a recharge system to the other Authority for applications validated and plans vetted. This could present a significant income opportunity for Taunton Deane.

We had further increased our business partners of the past 12 months from four to ten. This allowed our unit to effectively plan work outside our boundary restrictions. We would continue to seek new partners as this allowed us to gain income from work outside of Taunton Deane. Over the next 12 months we would be actively seeking to gain larger architects to partner who predominately worked outside our area. Building Control felt that they could service Bristol from Sedgemoor and Exeter from Taunton Deane.

17. What provisions had he made to increase the amount of car parking in the lead up to the hugely important pre-Christmas Shopping period? And did he still feel that closing the Castle Green Car Park over this vital shopping period was a good idea despite the fact that no work would start on it until well

into the New Year? Just how could he justify the loss of this invaluable income, some £125,000 p.a. to Taunton Deane?

**Reply** – General car park usage was lower this year than we have seen previously. There was capacity within the existing parking stock to deal with the expected demand, taking into consideration that there were 1600 spaces available at the Park and Ride sites. There was additional pressure on the central car parks in the run up to Christmas and it might be that not everyone finds an empty space in their first choice car park and had to park further out than they would ideally like.

The closure of Castle Green Car Park had been part of the accepted Project Taunton proposals for several years. Work had started on Castle Green - they were currently doing the archaeological investigations which must be done prior to work on top due to the very sensitive nature of the site. Some other minor works had been done including sign removal and a small wall removed but the absolute key issue was the archaeological work.

The contractor was originally scheduled to have carried out more works than they currently had, due a) to a delay in the English Heritage approval process and b) the archaeological firm we were using closing down. However, they were well advanced now with the many aspects of the sensitive archaeological works that always needed to be completed before any significant works to the bridge / services could commence. The contractor had always stated that they needed to occupy the car park to accommodate their site set up and to create a safe working environment for both them and the public.

The next stage of the work was to demolish the Castle Hotel's boundary wall which would take away the hotel's car parking adjacent to the wall for the duration of this element of the works. This car parking would be relocated to an area of the former Castle Green Car Park during the works, as a contractual obligation of Taunton Deane.

A significant amount of survey and excavation works had been carried out which was not obvious to the casual observer.

The programme had always shown that no obvious physical works would start until February but the work taking place was vital.

The reduction in income involved was built into the Medium Term Financial Plan some time ago, and dealt with in overall budget proposals. The level of reduction mentioned would occur only if all those motorists who previously paid to park in Castle Green never entered a Council car park again, which was an unlikely occurrence. Therefore the £125,000 as he was fully aware was exaggerated.

I would add that he was fully supportive and enthusiastically voted for this closure of Castle Green as a member of the Traffic Regulation Orders Panel. It was only days after we actually closed the car park that he then proclaimed it was a bad decision, a fact I find most disappointing as until that point we

had always had nearly 100% support from the Members of the Council.

### **From Councillor Coles to Councillor Cavill**

18. I was extremely disappointed to note that there was no mention of "Inward Investment" nor any suggestions for "Income Generation" in his report. Is the Portfolio Holder, like so many of his colleagues, bereft of ideas?

**Reply** - As you were aware the Council officers were dealing with a number of enquires relating to inward investment at the moment. However, in the current economic conditions it was difficult to bring interest through to definite "deals" and until they were confirmed, it would not be wise to publish these in public documents.

19. What news of unpaid rents at two of Taunton Deane's sites both operated by the same company. Had a distraint order been served? If not, why not? Or was he waiting to see if the "leopard changed his spots" or possibly, some other organisation (HMRC for example) issuing a distraint order first - thus ensuring that Taunton Deane received nothing!! This could only be seen as particularly poor management control or more accurately lack of any management control at all.

**Reply** - In response to the specific questions "Had distraint been used?" and "If not, why not?"

Bailiffs had not been used.

It was not an appropriate remedy as it was specifically not permitted where the debt was in dispute. In the last meeting held at The Deane House with the tenant company's Finance Director he stated that he considered the rent to be fully paid up. The debt was therefore in dispute and distress was not a permissible remedy.

History, Current Position and Future Action -

Southwest One on behalf of Taunton Deane Borough Council had been chasing this tenant for arrears on all properties it rented from the Council since August. The tenant had claimed to be up to date and the Finance Team had consistently requested proof of payment which had not been forthcoming.

Following a period of a few weeks when Southwest One Estates Team members tried various means of contacting the Finance Director (our nominated contact) without success, instructions were issued to Legal Services not to proceed with the grant of leases on the units which were subject to Tenancies at Will until the matter of arrears was resolved. This brought a response and one of the tenant's accountants produced a spreadsheet in late October detailing payments which he had recorded. Unfortunately this person had left the tenant company immediately thereafter.

The Finance Team reconciled the payments which were substantially agreed (a minor discrepancy of £449.92 was noted and "parked"). The tenant

company's Finance Director had subsequently stated that he believed that there were more payments made which had not been picked up by his accountant. This was his position at a meeting at The Deane House on 1 December 2011.

He had once again been challenged to prove the payments. He had now verbally agreed to make a payment on the basis that should he prove his payments, due credit would be given. This was awaited.

Should nothing show in the Taunton Deane account by Wednesday enforcement of the debt would be resurrected.

The most likely remedy to be adopted would be termination of the Tenancies at Will under which the tenant company held two of the properties it occupied. One of these properties was the tenant company's Registered Office. The Council had the right to do this at any time and for any purpose. Guidance from the Council's Legal Services Team would be sought on timing and process. Following such termination any items left at the premises could be sold to offset against the debt if of sufficient value. Taunton Deane could still pursue the debt as a civil claim.

#### **From Councillor Coles to Councillor Mrs Adkins**

20. How many "affordable homes" did the Portfolio Holder expect to actually deliver in the year 2012/2013?

**Reply** - The current pipeline of schemes indicated that 200 affordable homes would be delivered in 2012/2013.

21. At the Executive meeting on 7 December 2011 it was confirmed that this administration intended to use the entire New Homes Bonus to plug the budget gap for the next 6 years! How was this a good spend of this New Homes Bonus and how would spending this on anything other than new affordable homes be a benefit to the poorest people in Taunton Deane?

**Reply** - The proposal was not to use 100% of our New Homes Bonus – we were proposing to use the Year 1 element only.

22. What was the size of the settlement figure for the Negative Subsidy buy out?

**Reply** - The settlement figure, as updated by the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) on 21 November 2011 was £85,763,000.

23. What was the risk factor from the Government's declaration that they would not preclude coming back at some time in the future and demand more money from the hard pressed people of Taunton Deane? What provision had she made to accommodate this should it happen?

**Reply** - The Localism Act 2011 stated that the CLG could only vary the amount Taunton Deane paid in settlement at a later date, i.e. after 28 March

2012, if the base information used for calculating the payment was found to be incorrect or had changed. An example would be if the number of properties was found to be inaccurate. To minimise this risk Taunton Deane had checked the accuracy of all the figures used by the CLG to ensure they were correct and did not need to be amended.

It should be noted that the legislation sought to correct any settlement payments to and from the Government. If, therefore, it was found that the amount paid to the CLG should have been less there was provision for the Council to receive a beneficial financial adjustment.

The prudent repayment of the debt had been planned to allow Taunton Deane the flexibility to minimise and manage any risks associated with the Housing Revenue Account reform.

### **From Councillor Coles to Councillor Mrs Stock-Williams**

24. We understand that an outside company had been engaged to conduct Health and Safety work on Taunton Deane's behalf. Would the Portfolio Holder agree with me that it would have been much more sensible to retain qualified staff?

**Reply** - I have not been able to ascertain to which company this question specifically relates. The general Health and Safety function for Taunton Deane was provided by Southwest One. They might choose to periodically bring in outside resource to assist in that function, which would be at no extra cost to the Council.

Alternatively, external companies were sometimes engaged in respect of external build projects where CDM accredited expertise was required.

25. What steps was she taking to compensate for the appalling £3,200,000 shortfall in savings via Southwest One or was she just going to lament this situation and sit on her hands doing nothing?

**Reply** - The savings figure, originally proposed by IBM in 2007, were projections and therefore there was no contractual penalty which could be imposed should those sums not be delivered at the rate anticipated.

To date, £2,000,000 of savings initiatives had been signed-off of which £1,200,000 had already been delivered for the Council.

Taunton Deane officers continued to work with Southwest One's Strategic Procurement Service to identify further areas of spend in which savings could be found. Further potential savings opportunities, worth several £millions, had been identified and Southwest One were actively pursuing these options. Ian Conner's procurement update, going before the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 15 December 2011 would detail the range of initiatives his team were currently working on with, and for, the Council.

It is of course very disappointing that at present it would appear that the original forecast sum would not be achieved at the end of the ten year Southwest One contract; although of course there are six years of that contract still to run.

Many outside and internal factors, not least the reduced sums we were spending, would impact on Southwest One's ability to deliver procurement savings for the Council. Equally, savings the Council was making by other means, such as a result of the Budget Savings Project, would also result in the Council spending less and consequently further savings in those areas, through procurement activity, would be harder to achieve.

If Members felt there were specific significant areas of Council spend which had not been given attention by Ian Conner's Team, please let me have the details and I will happily progress these with Southwest One.

26. What additional costs would be incurred by this Council by the anticipated two year delay in repayment of the loans taken out to fund this project and what, if anything, is she doing to alleviate these costs?

**Reply** - The delay in repayment would lead to additional interest costs being incurred. The calculation of interest costs were based on the CRI (consolidated interest rate – effectively the average of interest cost % and interest income %). On this basis it was estimated that a delay in repayment would cost £2,000,000 x 3.05% (current CRI) = £61,000 per year.

There was a standard annual calculation for the repayment of capital debt – called Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) – which provided for 4% of capital borrowing debt to be repaid each year. Therefore the Council had already started to repay the £2,100,000 capital debt in the accounts:

The MRP requirement was already factored into the Medium Term Financial Plan and failure to repay these capital borrowings would not widen the present budget gap although the interest costs and 4% capital repayment were opportunity costs to the Council, as would otherwise have been available to support the budget.

#### **From Councillor Horsley to Councillor Williams/Adkins**

27. Could you please explain to fellow Councillors what the role of the Deane DLO Steering Panel was and how often it met? Could you also let the Council know to whom it reported?

**Reply** - The role of the DLO Transformation Member Steering Group was to oversee progress with the DLO Transformation Project. The Group did not replace the routine financial and performance monitoring role carried out by Scrutiny and the Executive - and reporting on DLO performance would continue to feature on a quarterly basis at these meetings, alongside other services. The Group comprised relevant Portfolio and Shadow Portfolio Holders, as well as representation from the Labour and Independent Groups.

At the Group's last meeting (November 2011) it was agreed that the Group would meet on a quarterly basis, or by special arrangement outside this schedule should the need arise.

The Group did not report to a specified Committee. In this respect it operated in a similar way to the broader Members Change Programme Steering Group.

28. Is he/she aware that there was a great deal of uncertainty arising from the lack of information provided to the Executive on 7 December 2011 on the finances and the performance of the Deane DLO? Did he/she accept that for a commercial organisation with a turnover of £8 million in a highly competitive market there was a danger which could put the Council at significant risk if there was no effective monitoring of the organisation?

**Reply** - Improving performance and financial management was one of the five improvement priorities of the DLO internal transformation plan approved by Full Council in August 2011. We were now four months into this four year programme and recognised that improvements needed to be made in the way that this information was presented.

Recruitment to a new management team had now been completed and the team would be at full strength in January 2012. A new post of Business Support and Finance Manager, based at the DLO, would bring a greater rigour to business and financial management, monitoring and reporting.

It was important to recognise that the majority of the £8,000,000 turnover was made up of internal work. As part of the approved transformation plan, we were simplifying and streamlining the way the accountancy process was organised for this internal work, through the introduction of direct charging. A commercial mindset would increasingly be applied to all DLO services through the newly established management team.

External work carried out on a commercial basis was a risk to the authority as well as an opportunity. We would continue to bid for external works, subject to a demonstrable business case. We needed to balance delivery of external traded work against the need to continue to deliver core services to the authority as efficiently as possible. The DLO internal transformation plan represented the Council's approved direction of travel, balancing such risks and opportunities.

29. Could he/she inform the Council that he/she had seen hard evidence of the current trading position of the Deane DLO and that this was satisfactory? Or did he/she take matters simply on trust?

**Reply** - The majority of the DLO's services were carried out for the Authority, as opposed to external customers in a trading environment. Although financial information was limited at present, this was an identified area for improvement as highlighted in the previous answer.

30. Does he/she agree that Annex I of Agenda Item Number 7 on page 41 of the report that went to the Executive on 7 December 2011 was telling the

Council nothing and was totally inappropriate for such an organisation which was beholden to the tax payer? Would he/she run his/her own business on such a basis?

**Reply** - Greater rigour in financial management, monitoring and reporting was an identified area for improvement within the DLO Transformation Plan. Changes were already being made with assistance from the Southwest One Finance Advisory Team to make necessary changes in accountancy practice. A newly established DLO Management Team in January 2012 would address this issue as a priority.

### **From Councillor Horsley to Councillor Williams**

31. Could the Leader outline what steps he was taking to prepare a contingency plan for Taunton Deane in the likelihood of the contractual arrangements with our back office provider Southwest One (SW1) coming to a premature conclusion?

**Reply** – SW1 was on record as having made losses in previous years. Consequently the Board of SW1 was currently identifying actions to improve the company's financial standing whilst maintaining service delivery to the partner Authorities. The submission of the accounts for 2010 had been delayed to allow for the completion of this process.

As was the case with any major partnership or contract of this size, we had undertaken contingency planning in respect of possible scenarios. However, we also had strong contractual provisions in place, which protected the Authority both in terms of maintaining service delivery and in mitigating any costs resulting from any early termination of the contract should this occur.

32. Could he further identify for Councillors what the financial and budget implications of this breakdown would have for Taunton Deane? Could he further let us know how many staff currently employed by SW1 would have to be transferred back to Taunton Deane in the event of the demise of SW1?

**Reply** - The Taunton Deane staff within SW1 were seconded to the partnership. The intention under the secondment agreement was that when the contract came to an end (whether that be early or at the end of the 10-year term) the seconded staff would return to the Authority. Currently there were 135 secondees within SW1. SW1 had also appointed a number of staff directly. The Authority to whom these directly hired staff would transfer would have to be determined in accordance with the TUPE regulations.

33. Would he commission a report at the earliest opportunity for Councillors and the taxpayers of Taunton Deane to explore the funding implications of this unfortunate contract and its likely consequences?

**Reply** - The SW1 partnership had and remained the subject of a significant amount of scrutiny by this Authority. Regular reports were taken to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee regarding the progress of the partnership as a whole and specifically regarding the Procurement Transformation Project



(reports on both were being taken to Corporate Scrutiny this week). Periodic reports were taken to both Corporate Scrutiny and the Executive regarding the funding arrangements for the SW1 transformation projects. The SAP system implementation had been the subject of a specific Task and Finish Group review and continued to be monitored by the Members Change Programme Steering Group. Consequently I do not feel it would be a prudent use of time and money to commission yet further scrutiny investigation into SW1 at this time.

### **From Councillors Farbahi and Mrs Smith to Councillor Williams/Cavill**

34. Land (approximately 4.6 acres) at Mount Street, Taunton, the site of the former garden nursery, was sold at the beginning of the year and a conditional contract with McCarthy and Stone was exchanged in May 2011. A deposit was paid to this Council. Some seven months later there appeared to be no progress and Taunton Deane was no nearer to closing the deal on disposal of this site.

**Reply** - The officer recommendation was that this site should be sold with outline planning permission. However, both the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats were concerned with this and a small working party was set up (Councillors Cavill and Farbahi, Adrian Priest, Joy Wishlade). Full Council in December last year agreed that market testing should take place on the following terms:-

- Sale subject to planning;
- Sale with outline planning;
- Each of the above should also include the option of purchasing the area of green space adjoining the development area.

The market testing brought in a good bid from McCarthy and Stone that all parties (Group Leaders and the working party) agreed they wished to accept. This bid was “subject to planning”. The heads of terms were agreed and the deposit, again “subject to planning” was paid.

McCarthy and Stone had been drawing up their planning application and were due to submit this fairly soon. However, in the meantime, the Council had commissioned work to update the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment which was required for the Core Strategy.

Although the formal report had not been received, the indicative results were showing that some areas of the town centre had an increased flood risk, under the new assessment process. The Environment Agency had agreed that any sites with planning permission would not be required to meet the new standards but those without would. Mount Street was in this category.

However, this was very new information and a full assessment of what it meant for this particular site and the impact it would have on the McCarthy and Stone development was still to be done. The work was continuing.

Further assessment of the methodology and figures used and possible mitigation work was also underway.

35. Could the Leader/Portfolio Holder confirm that negotiations were taking place concerning the requirements of the Environment Agency and the desire of the purchaser to reduce the purchase price arising from the fact that part of the land lay within Flood Plain Zone 3? Would he care to comment on whether the purchaser was using the opportunity to provide less affordable housing on this or any other site in Taunton Deane?

**Reply** - As above.

36. Could the Leader of the Council confirm or deny whether or not the £4,000,000 pledged for a new swimming pool at Blackbrook and fulfilment of part of his manifesto was reliant on some of this capital receipt? Did this mean that the Conservative Group was about to renege on both its commitments to affordable housing and also the promise to build a new swimming pool at Blackbrook out of the reduced proceeds?

**Reply** - The Council had not committed any resources to a new swimming pool – we had simply accepted the “solution” offered by the excellent work of the Task and Finish Group. Officers were now working on how this could be delivered – including the funding – and further reports would come before Members before any decisions were made. The capital receipt from Mount Street had not been allocated in our Capital Programme.

37. Would the Leader/Portfolio Holder further agree that it would have been better to have obtained outline planning permission before the property was marketed rather than going through the current possible adjustment downwards of the consideration by a substantial amount?

**Reply** - As above.

#### **From Councillor Wedderkopp to Councillor Hayward**

38. Was the Executive serious in their desire to further the Green Aspirations of Taunton Deane Borough Council?

If so, in view of the Government suggesting as early as July that they were reviewing "Feed in Tariffs", on what date did the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services make a "request for service" from SW1 to install photovoltaic panels on Station Road Pool? When was a reply received and what did you do in the interim to move the project forward, given the short time frame that was available to you?

If Climate Change was one of our Corporate Priorities, why did we have just one full time employee assigned to reducing our Carbon footprint?

**Reply** - The review to which Councillor Wedderkopp referred would be the 'first comprehensive review' announced by the Government on 7 February 2011. From the outset of the Feed in Tariff Scheme in April 2010 it was

anticipated that there would be a regular (most likely annual) degeneration of tariffs. I am not aware of anyone outside Government anticipating that Phase 1 of the comprehensive review would produce much more than a new level of tariffs to come into effect from April 2012. Everyone in the industry was geared towards this deadline. The shock came when the result of the review, published on 31 October and now under consultation, revealed a new much earlier deadline of 12 December 2011. No-one in the industry that I had been speaking to anticipated this move.

With regard to the Council, following agreement on the Carbon Management Action Plan from the Executive on 10 August 2011 which included pursuing the PV installation on the Station Road Swimming Pool roof, (Action 5), officers had worked with SW1 to progress the scheme.

With regard to the second of Councillor Wedderkopp's questions, it was true that we only had one full time employee employed to undertake Climate Change in the Strategy Team, where this corporate priority lay.

The Council had other officers dealing with issues that overlapped with Climate Change (for example, Economic Development dealing with promoting the Green Economy), although this was not necessarily their core work.

So officers from all levels were actively involved in many ways, and to suggest that there was "just one full time Officer", was over simplifying things. It could not be measured in officer-time only.

Further, I believe that your concept of "Climate Change" was too restrictive. A point I have shared with Councillor Wedderkopp at length on several occasions.

I want to see the Climate Change Corporate Priority re-branded to embrace other environment-related matters, such as sustainability and peak oil. "Sustainability and Energy Resilience" was my preferred option at the moment, and I have asked officers to work on this.

Given the tight budgetary restraints under which our Council had to operate, we had to consider 'value for (taxpayers) money'. There had to be a tangible return on investment. At this point in time I am quite satisfied with the resources we were putting to this Corporate Priority. But of course, as with everything, it was under constant review.

## **12. Recommendations to Council from the Executive**

### **(a) Theme 5 of Core Council Review - Corporate Management Team, Project Taunton, Economic Development, Growth, and Legal and Democratic Services**

The Executive had recently given consideration to a number of proposals for Theme 5 which was the remaining part of the Core Council Review (CCR) that needed to be completed. Future proposals for Project Taunton and Economic Development and Growth had also been considered.

The Corporate Management Team (CMT) had last been reviewed in 2008 when it was reduced in size by one Director. Since then, it had been considered essential to maintain corporate capacity whilst the organisation had continued to manage its high level ambitions, good quality services and the change programme.

It had been recognised that the Council's current financial position dictated a need to further rationalise expenditure on staffing capacity to generate a saving for the 2012/2013 Budget and to provide a Direction of Travel to meet the requirements of the Budget Review Project for the next three to four years.

Both Scrutiny and the Executive had previously agreed that the current Corporate Priorities should be maintained which would require the continued resourcing of a comprehensive Growth and Regeneration delivery capacity.

The Council had also agreed to retain Deane DLO and implement a comprehensive investment and savings plan that would deliver significant savings to the Council.

Taunton Deane therefore needed to continue to have the capacity and skills/experience to continue to:-

- Plan for, deliver and secure external funding for growth – physical, social and economic;
- Focus on securing and supporting our existing businesses and encourage and support further inward investment;
- Address levels of inequality in our communities, both social and economic;
- Support the delivery of affordable housing, through new innovative ways as public funding becomes increasingly squeezed;
- Focus on the “Green Agenda”, both in terms of our own performance as a business, and in terms of the community and the promotion of Taunton Deane as a place for green business and industry to flourish;
- Have capacity to appropriately support, develop and adequately manage our external partnerships and contracts;
- Ensure the Deane DLO transformation was a success and delivers the level of savings and quality promised;
- React to the Localism and Open Public Services White Paper; and
- Manage the increased pace of service transformation in response to unprecedented reductions in funding and future central Government policy developments.

The Council also has three statutory roles that it had to maintain, which were:-

- (1) Head of Paid Service – currently the Chief Executive (CEO)/Penny James;
- (2) Section 151 Officer – currently Strategic Director/Shirlene Adam;  
and

(3) The Monitoring Officer – currently a Theme Manager/Tonya Meers.

Over the past months, the Corporate Scrutiny Committee, the Political Groups and the Executive had given consideration to the future structure of CMT and had concluded that:-

- The post of CEO should be retained;
- The number of Directors should be reduced by one. It was therefore proposed that the Council should have three Directors as set out below:-
  - (1) Strategic Director – Corporate;
  - (2) Strategic Director – Growth and Regeneration; and
  - (3) Strategic Director – Services.
- The Section 151 Officer role should continue to be held by a Director who was a qualified accountant;
- One of the Strategic Directors could reduce their hours by 2/5ths;
- If a significant change was made at Director level, then care should be taken not to destabilise the operational management of the organisation by significantly changing the current arrangements at Theme Manager level; and
- The Monitoring Officer role should be retained as an integral part of the Legal and Democratic Services Manager's post.

Various options with regard to the Project Taunton Delivery Team had also been considered by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee the Executive and informally by all of the Group Leaders.

The Project Taunton Team was currently funded by residual Project Taunton partnership money and Growth Points and therefore would not represent a direct cost to the Council until 2012/2013.

It had been agreed that for the future, Project Taunton should be brought "in house" and that historic reserves should be used to fund some of the posts required going forward for a three year period.

Together with all of the growth, regeneration and economic development functions of the Council, it was proposed that a new Growth and Regeneration Team should be created to:-

- become the Council's 'shop window' for inward investment purposes;
- act as the Council's Property Client;
- take the lead in marketing Taunton and Taunton Deane; and
- provide a function for the entire district, with the regeneration of Taunton Town Centre and the urban extension of Monkton Heathfield remaining as priority projects.

The team would be directly managed by the post of Strategic Director - Growth and Regeneration and would comprise posts of:-

(a) Commercial Manager, for a fixed two year period, who would focus

on the major regeneration projects in Taunton and lead on commercial and property negotiations;

- (b) Regeneration Manager who would focus on the delivery of wider regeneration, infrastructure and growth including schemes within Project Taunton. This latter post would replace the existing 'Project Taunton Regeneration Manager' on the establishment and would be funded for three years from historic reserves; and
- (c) Economic Development Manager (currently the Economic Development Specialist) to whom the Economic Development Team would report directly. The current vacant Lead role in the Economic Development Team would be deleted with 50% of the cost retained to allow for more restructuring and 50% being returned to the General Fund.

The current workload associated with the Project Taunton Project Co-ordinator post and Project Taunton Office Manager post had reduced in recent months to the extent that both posts could be deleted from the establishment.

The proposal also freed up some capacity for the Theme Manager - Growth and Development to focus on a number of key functions and retain the responsibility long term for:-

- Development Management;
- Conservation and Landscape; and
- Planning Enforcement.

One of the other proposals was to create an Apprentice post to support the newly formed Growth and Regeneration Team. The new post holder would have the opportunity to work across the whole Growth and Development 'Directorate'.

Another proposal related to the proposed creation of a Corporate Support Unit where all of the posts within Democratic Services, the Personal Assistants and the two administrative posts within Theme 1 would be part of a Support Team for Theme 5 and Theme 1 and the Leader of the Council.

The Legal and Democratic Manager had been tasked with the creation of the Corporate Support Unit with a budget saving of at least £50,000 to become live on 1 April 2012.

The above proposals set out a way of achieving a saving in year one of approximately £360,000. This went beyond the initial Core Council Review target of a 10% saving for CMT.

On the motion of Councillor Williams, it was

**Resolved** that the following be agreed:-

- (a) The number of Strategic Director posts be reduced from four to 2.6 with

the allocation of £103,000 from reserves (£62,000 General Fund, £21,000 Housing Revenue Account, £20,000 CCR Earmarked Reserve) in 2011/2012 to fund the associated costs;

- (b) The creation on the establishment of the post of 'Commercial Manager' for a fixed two year period funded from historic reserves;
- (c) The change of the establishment post of 'Project Taunton Regeneration Manager' to 'Regeneration Manager' funded for three years from historic reserves;
- (d) The change of the establishment post of 'Economic Development Specialist' to 'Economic Development Manager';
- (e) The deletion of 0.5 FTE vacant Economic Development Lead;
- (f) The creation of an Apprentice post for the Growth and Regeneration Team for a two year period funded from the year one General Fund saving;
- (g) Minor changes to reporting arrangements as set out in the report to the Executive;
- (h) The creation of a Corporate Business Support Unit delivering a minimum saving of £50,000 to the Council;
- (i) The deletion of the Project Taunton Officer and Project Taunton Office Manager posts from the establishment; and
- (j) The allocation of £55,000 from historic 'growth' reserves to fund the one-off costs of creating the Growth and Regeneration proposals, set out in the report to the Executive.

#### **(b) General Fund Earmarked Reserves Review**

A review had recently been undertaken of a number of earmarked reserves held by the Council to ensure that the level of each reserve was adequate and that the purpose for which the funds were set aside still applied.

The level of earmarked General Fund reserves as at 31 March 2011 was £6,858,000. This included money set aside for specific revenue purposes, but did not include the £2,937,000 in General Fund balances.

As a result of the review, there were various earmarked reserves, which totalled £159,003, that were no longer required.

On the motion of Councillor Williams, it was

**Resolved** that £159,003 of surplus earmarked reserves be transferred to the General Fund Reserves in the current financial year.

### **(c) Fees and Charges 2012/2013**

Consideration had been given to the proposed fees and charges for 2012/2013 for the following services:-

- Cemeteries and Crematorium ;
- Housing and Deane Helpline;
- Licensing;
- Planning; and
- Environmental Health.

Details of the proposed increases were submitted. No increase was proposed to Waste Services or Land Charges fees or the fees for recovering Court Costs.

The results of previous public consultation events had clearly indicated that the public preferred to see increases in fees and charges, rather than in Council Tax, as a way for the Council to raise income.

On the motion of Councillor Williams, it was

**Resolved** that the fees and charges for 2012/2013 in respect of Cemeteries and Crematorium, Housing and Deane Helpline, Licensing, Planning and Environmental Health, as submitted, be agreed.

### **(d) Proposal for Exemption to Contract Standing Order 13 for the Procurement of Development, Construction and related services from the Partner Panel set up by the Homes and Community Agency**

The Council had previously endorsed the use of the South West Regional Development Agency's (SWERDA) consultant's list by Project Taunton.

However, with SWERDA ceasing to exist in March 2012, the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) had made a similar list of contractors, who had been through the European Procurement process, available for Local Authorities to use. It was proposed to make use of the HCA's list for a period of three years ending in December 2014.

Due to the size of the contracts handled by Project Taunton, some of the commissions were in excess of the Council's Standing Orders Threshold 2 and Threshold 3.

Usually all contracts that fell under paragraphs 13(c) and (d) in the Contract Standing Orders had to comply with the process laid down. However, for contracts under 13(c), an exemption existed for such contacts under 14(e) if it was to be dealt with in a prescribed manner under agency arrangements



entered into by the Council with another authority.

Unfortunately, this exemption did not also cover 13(d), which related to contracts above Threshold 3 in the Contract Standing Orders. A further exemption for such contracts was therefore sought.

The advantages of using this exemption were submitted.

On the motion of Councillor Cavill, it was

**Resolved** that:-

- (1) The exemption to the Council's Standing Orders at paragraph 14(e) being extended to cover paragraph 13(d) be approved; and
- (2) The use of the Homes and Communities Agency Framework under exemption 14(e) to cover the three year period, 2011 – 2014 be also approved.

(The Mayor declared a prejudicial interest in the following item, as a local resident, and left the meeting during its consideration. The Deputy Mayor took the Chair.)

(Councillor Bowrah considered that he had 'fettered his discretion' with regard to the following item and also left the meeting during its consideration.)

### **(e) Halcon North, Taunton Regeneration Project**

The Executive had considered a report concerning proposals to redevelop the Halcon North area of Taunton which comprised 7.25 hectares of housing land and approximately 220 dwellings.

A Development Appraisal had explored the financial viability of the proposed scheme by considering the various elements including:-

- The number and type of new homes to be built on the site;
- The tenure mix to be provided;
- Build costs;
- Sales values; and
- Future rental income.

The appraisal had calculated a gross development value of the various different types of home, and then deducted development costs to produce a scheme surplus or deficit.

In order for the scheme to have a neutral impact on Council finances, the surplus needed to be sufficient to fund the costs of buying back properties previously sold under the Right to Buy and the decanting costs of moving tenants to enable the development to take place. It also needed to fund the cost of developing any units which the Council wished to retain.

Different scenarios had been assessed in order to determine the scheme which produced the best financial viability, while addressing as many of the project objectives as possible.

The development appraisal had shown that it was possible to produce a broadly viable scheme of approximately 400 dwellings by reducing the percentage of affordable units on the scheme to 50%. At this level the scheme produced a surplus which would be larger if fewer retained units were required.

Both the Community Scrutiny Committee and the Executive had considered a number of options relating to the proposed redevelopment and had accepted that the wider benefits of regeneration outweighed any concerns around mix and tenure.

The Executive had therefore agreed that the project should proceed to the next stage and a developer should be procured, but with a view to 50 dwellings or more being returned to the Council.

The next stage would involve the following in preparing for procurement:-

- Drafting an information brief;
- Procuring advisors;
- Consulting residents;
- Legal and procurement advice;
- Specification/employers' requirements;
- Drafting heads of terms; and
- Establishing an evaluation panel.

Making these preparations would have a cost and a Supplementary Estimate was therefore sought to provide the necessary funding.

On the motion of Councillor Mrs Adkins, it was

**Resolved** that a Supplementary Estimate of £65,000 from the Housing Revenue Account Reserves, to fund the next stage of the Halcon North Regeneration Project, be approved.

### 13. **Reports of the Leader of the Council and Executive Councillors**

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

#### (i) **Leader of the Council (Councillor Williams)**

Councillor Williams's report covered the following topics:-

- M5 Motorway Tragedy;
- Budget Setting;
- Regeneration of Taunton;

- Broadband Issues; and
- Future Initiatives.

(ii) **Planning, Transportation and Communications (Councillor Edwards)**

The report from Councillor Edwards provided information on the following areas within his portfolio:-

- Localism Act;
- Taunton Deane Core Strategy 2011-2028;
- Highway Network : Winter Services 2011/2012;
- The Public Art Panel;
- County-wide Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) Project;
- RingGO;
- Electric Charging Points; and
- Communications.

(iii) **Community Leadership (Councillor Mrs Jane Warmington)**

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

- Police Reform;
- Community Policing Awards;
- Somerset Health and Wellbeing Board;
- North Taunton and Taunton East;
- Rural Areas;
- Somerset Business Against Crime Partnership;
- Green Deal; and
- Passivhaus/Passive House.

(iv) **Economic Development, Asset Management, Arts and Tourism (Councillor Cavill)**

The report from Councillor Cavill covered:-

- Keeping Members informed;
- Stimulating Business Growth and Investment;
- Ensuring a Skilled and Entrepreneurial Workforce;
- Creating an Attractive Business Environment; and
- Taunton Tourist Information, Ticket and Travel Centre.

(iv) **Environmental Services and Climate Change (Councillor Hayward)**

The report from Councillor Hayward drew attention to developments in the following areas:-

- Waste Management;
- Environmental Health Teams;
- Climate Change / Carbon Management; and
- Crematorium.

(vi) **Sports, Parks and Leisure (Councillor Mrs Herbert)**

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

- Parks;
- Community Leisure and Play;
- Tone (Taunton Deane) Limited Activities; and
- Swimming Pool Project.

(vii) **Housing Services (Councillor Mrs Adkins)**

Councillor Mrs Adkins submitted her report which drew attention to the following:-

- Empty Homes and New Homes Bonus;
- Landlords Forum and the Landlord Accreditation Scheme;
- HRA 30 Year Business Plan and Self-financing;
- Estates Team and Anti-social Behaviour;
- Solar Panel Project;
- Annual Servicing and Maintenance Contract;
- Halcon Regeneration Project; and
- Affordable Homes.

(viii) **Corporate Resources (Councillor Mrs Stock-Williams)**

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

- Customer Contact Centre;
- Legal and Democratic Services;
- Performance and Client Team;
- Revenues and Benefits; and
- Southwest One.

(Councillors Stone and Mrs Allgrove arrived at the meeting at 6.59 pm and 7.01pm respectively. Councillors Nottrodt left the meeting at 7.03 pm. Councillor Mrs Messenger left the meeting at 8.27 pm. Councillors Mrs Adkins, Mrs Baker, D Durdan, Ms Durdan, C Hill, Morrell, D Reed, Mrs Smith, P Smith, Ms Webber and D Wedderkopp all left the meeting at 9.20 pm. Councillor Bishop and Mullins left the meeting at 9.35 pm. Councillor Edwards left the meeting at 9.40 pm. Councillor Mrs Hill left the meeting at 9.47 pm. Councillors A Govier, Mrs Govier, Horsley, Mrs Reed and Stone all left the meeting at 9.53 pm. Councillors Gill Slattery, T Slattery and Watson all left the meeting at 9.56 pm.)

(The meeting ended at 9.58 pm.)

## **Usual Declarations of Interest by Councillors**

### **Full Council**

- **Members of Somerset County Council – Councillors Brooks, A Govier, Henley, Prior-Sankey, Mrs Waymouth, D Wedderkopp**
- **Employees of Somerset County Council – Councillors Mrs Hill, Mrs Smith and Stone**
- **Employee of Viridor – Councillor Miss James**
- **Employee of Sedgemoor District Council – Councillor Slattery**
- **Employee of Job Centre Plus – Councillor Henley**
- **Employee of UK Hydrographic Office – Councillor Tooze**
- **Employee of Natural England – Councillor Wren**
- **Somerset Waste Board representatives – Councillor Hayward and Councillor Ross**
- **Director of Southwest One – Councillor Nottrodt**
- **Alternate Director of Southwest One – Councillor Ross**
- **Tone Leisure Board representatives – Councillors D Durdan and Stone**
- **Part-time Swimming Instructor at St James Street Pool – Councillor Swaine**
- **Employee of EDF Energy – Councillor Mullins**
- **Chief Executive of Age UK Somerset Limited – Councillor Ms Lisgo**

## **Motion to Full Council – 21 February 2012**

### **Provision of additional funding to Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations**

**Motion proposed by Councillor Andrew Govier and seconded by Councillor Mrs Jackie Govier**

This Council believes it is crucial, especially in these difficult economic times, to support and invest in the excellent work being done across Taunton Deane by voluntary and community sector organisations and to this end agrees to commit an additional sum of £10,300 to the Small Grants Fund which represents the salary savings accrued to the general fund as a result of the National day of Action held on 30 November 2011.

# Taunton Deane Borough Council

## Council Meeting - 21 February 2012

### Part I

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

#### (i) Councillor Edwards

##### Planning Obligations Interim Policy

At its meeting in January 2012, the Executive considered a report concerning the proposed Planning Obligations Interim Policy which was intended to operate until the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was adopted later in the year.

The Taunton Deane Core Strategy, Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) and Sustainability Appraisal were submitted to the Secretary of State on 14 November 2011.

The IDP provides details of the infrastructure that local service providers and the Council have identified as key to supporting growth in Taunton Deane. Although the CIL will provide the mechanism to collect developer contributions towards the provision of infrastructure identified in the future, until the CIL is adopted the Planning Obligations Interim Policy will provide a framework for developer contributions.

The IDP has identified that the level of infrastructure required to support development is unlikely to be funded fully from developer contributions. With this in mind, the policy has identified the following actions which will need to be taken in order that the growth outline in the Core Strategy is accompanied by sufficient infrastructure:-

- The Council should not take an overly optimistic view about public funding;
- An appropriate balance should be struck in identifying the maximum level of developer's contributions that could be achieved without making development unviable;
- Opportunities should be maximised to secure funding from other sources (such as the New Homes Bonus);
- Clear priorities should be determined for the use of funding that might become available; and
- Mechanisms such as deferred payments and sharing in value uplift should be explored.

Securing contributions from developers will be key to the delivery of infrastructure and services. The IDP viability assessment indicates that with a £15,000 per dwelling contribution package, 25% affordable housing will be possible.



Consultation on the CIL draft charging schedule is anticipated for Spring 2012, with submission in the Summer, Examination in the Autumn and adoption during Winter 2012/13. The CIL will apply to most new buildings and charges will be based on the size and type of development.

The Planning Obligations Interim Policy has been prepared to fill the gap until the CIL is adopted. As such, it will help developers understand the scope of the planning obligations for residential development which the Council will be seeking.

This Interim Policy relates to the first phase of infrastructure requirements (from 2011 – 2016) identified in the IDP. Where the level of contribution adversely affects development viability, the Council will consider a reduced level of contribution, subject to an open book viability appraisal, so as not to affect the overall pace of development.

The Interim Policy has advantages over the usual Section 106 Agreement negotiations because it will speed up the process of getting planning permission and will create a level playing field where all developments are making infrastructure contributions on the same basis.

Developers will still have the choice, if they do not wish to follow the Interim Policy, to enter into a Section 106 Agreement as at present.

It is **recommended** that the Planning Obligations Interim Policy be adopted.

## **(ii) Councillor Mrs Stock- Williams**

### **(a) Theme 5 of the Core Council Review – Legal and Democratic Services**

The Executive has recently considered proposals to create a new Corporate Support Unit for the Council which will be required to deliver:-

- a service that is resilient, flexible and responsive;
- different ways of working to ensure that stakeholders' needs are met and within resource capacity;
- a service that meets the need of the key stakeholders, namely, the Leader of the Council, the Mayoralty, the Chief Executive, Directors, Theme 1 Managers and Councillors as a whole; and
- a minimum of £50,000 savings per annum.

The proposed new structure is as shown in Appendix 1 to these recommendations.

To ensure the success of the new unit, officers will be nominated to certain areas in order to provide some consistency and responsibility. However all officers within the structure will be required to understand the different work-streams that the unit needs to support and will, in the future, have the opportunity to experience these. The new unit will also enable support to be given to areas that were not previously supported, due to the restrictions of the current structure.

The Executive recognised that a number of officers have been put at risk of redundancy due to the proposed new structure whilst others have been slotted into new posts.

It is **recommended** that:-

- (1) the proposed structure of the new Corporate Support Unit be approved; and
- (2) a Supplementary Budget allocation of up to £72,000 in 2011/2012, funded from reserves, relating to likely redundancy costs be also approved.

## (b) Localism Act 2011 – Pay Policy Statements

At its last meeting, the Executive considered a report concerning the requirement under Section 38(1) of the Localism Act 2011 for all Local Authorities to prepare a Pay Policy Statement for 2012/2013 and for each subsequent year thereafter.

The Statement has to include policies on which remuneration of its Chief Officers and its lowest paid employees (and the relationship between them) are based.

The Statement is also required to:-

- Set out arrangements for the remuneration of Chief Officers on appointment;
- Set out arrangements for payments on termination of employment for Chief Officers even if covered by other approved policies;
- Set out arrangements for the re-employment of Chief Officers; and
- Be published on the Council's website.

The draft of Taunton Deane's first Pay Policy Statement is attached to this recommendation as an Appendix . This has been prepared to meet the minimum requirements of the Localism Act but it is not the final document as the formal guidance on the preparation of such Statements is still awaited from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).

The DCLG has indicated that the production of a provisional Pay Policy Statement will be acceptable as it can be treated as a "living document" – one that can be amended in the future, once the guidance is to hand.

In the circumstances, it is **recommended** that the attached draft Pay Policy Statement for 2012/2013 be approved.

## Taunton Deane Borough Council

## Appendix

### Pay Policy Statement – 2012/13

The Pay Policy Statement for Taunton Deane Borough Council will apply to the following posts which collectively will be referred to as 'chief officers' for the purpose of this statement and for this statement only:

- Chief Executive Officer (Head of Paid Service)
- Strategic Director posts including the role of Section 151 Officer
- Theme Managers including the role of Monitoring Officer
- A person for whom the head of the authority's paid service is directly responsible.
- A deputy chief officer who, as respects all or most of the duties of his post, is required to report directly or is directly accountable to one or more of the statutory or non-statutory chief officers.

*Note: A person whose duties are solely secretarial or clerical or are otherwise in the nature of support services shall not be regarded as a non-statutory chief officer or a deputy chief officer.*

#### **1) The Level and Remuneration for each Chief Officer**

Details of the level and remuneration for the identified chief officer posts is set out in Appendix 1.

Salary information is also published on the Council's website to comply with the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2011 and the Code of Practice on Data Transparency 2011. It should be noted that there are different reporting dates and standards for this information.

#### **2) Remuneration of Chief Officers on Appointment**

- a) Chief Executive, Strategic Directors, Theme Managers, Regeneration Manager and Commercial Manager Posts

*The Leader of the Council will, after taking independent pay advice from South West Councils or similar, recommend the remuneration package on appointment to the above posts to Full Council prior to advertisement of the vacancy. The remuneration package will therefore be subject to the approval of Full Council.*

b) All other chief officer posts

The salary for all other posts covered by this Pay Policy Statement will be set within the job evaluation scheme operated by the Council. All other elements of remuneration will follow either the National Joint Committee for Local Government Services' (NJC) National Agreement on Pay and Conditions or local policy approved by the Council.

### **3) Increases and additions to remuneration for each chief officer**

a) Chief Executive and Strategic Director Posts

**The Leader of the Council may recommend to Full Council within the remuneration package prior to appointment how salary progression and any annual pay reviews will be administered or calculated. Any further changes to the remuneration package will be subject to Full Council approval.**

**Any annual pay award for the Chief Executive will follow the JNC for Chief Executives national pay award.**

**Any annual pay award for Strategic Director posts will follow the JNC for Chief Officers national pay award.**

b) Theme Managers, Regeneration Manager and Commercial Manager

**The Leader of the Council may recommend to Full Council within the remuneration package prior to appointment how salary progression and any annual pay reviews will be administered or calculated. Any further changes to the remuneration package will be subject to Full Council approval.**

**Any annual pay award for these posts will follow the NJC for Local Authority Services national pay award.**

c) All other Chief Officer posts

The salary for all other posts covered by this Pay Policy Statement will be set within the Single Status Salary Scheme previously approved by Full Council. Any annual pay award increases will follow the NJC settlement. Any other increases or additions outside the approved Single Status Salary scheme and not specifically allowed for in this Statement will be subject to approval by Full Council.

#### **4) Use of Performance Related Pay for Chief Officers**

No performance related pay scheme is currently operated for chief officers. Should any performance related pay schemes for chief officers be implemented they will be subject to approval in advance by Full Council.

#### **5) Use of Bonuses for Chief Officers**

Bonuses are not currently paid to chief officers. Bonuses to chief officers will only be paid if approved in advance by Full Council.

#### **6) Use of Honoraria**

The policy on the use of Honoraria is set out in the Council's Tartan Book (TDBC local terms and conditions of employment) and may be applied to any post.

#### **7) Use of Market Supplements**

Currently no market supplements are paid to chief officers. Approval must be obtained from Full Council before an award of a market supplement payment can be made to any chief officer post other than those covered by the approved Job Evaluation Scheme.

## **8) Payment of chief officers on their ceasing to hold office under or be employed by the authority**

Any termination payments to chief officers on ceasing office will comply with the Redundancy and Severance Pay Policy current at that time which will have been approved by Full Council. No additional termination payments will be made without the approval of the Executive, this will include any Compromise Agreement settlements, which may be subject to a confidentiality clause. The current Taunton Deane Compensation Policy is attached in Appendix 2.

## **9) Remuneration of chief officers who return to Local Authority employment**

Where the chief officer:

### **a) was a previously employed chief officer who left with a severance payment and applies to comeback as a chief officer.**

Executive approval would be required to authorise re-employment within the authority of a previously employed chief officer who had left with a severance payment and is seeking re-employment within the severance payment payback period.

### **b) was previously employed by the same authority and has comeback as a chief officer under a contract for services.**

The Executive will be required to approve any award of a 'contract for services' to a chief officer who has previously been employed by the authority.

### **c) are in receipt of a Local Government Pension Scheme Pension**

If an employee receiving a pension from the Local Government Pension scheme becomes re-employed then their pension could be affected. If their pension plus the earnings from their new job is higher than the final pay their pension was calculated on, then their pension will be affected. For every pound that their earnings plus pension exceed previous pay, then their pension will reduce by a pound. This abatement will last for as long as the person exceeds their limit (so either when the new job ends or they reduce their hours so their earnings drop down below the acceptable level).

An abatement is not applied where the member's pension is less than £3000 per annum.

## 10) Employer Pension Discretions

All posts are eligible to be in the Local Government Pension Scheme and employers contributions for 2012/13 are 17.3%. The employer pension discretions will be subject of approval by Full Council. The Pensions Discretions adopted by the authority are attached in Appendix D.

### 11) Publication of and access to information relating to remuneration of chief officers

The remuneration of employees earning over a salary of £58200 per annum (the minimum level required by the Code of Practice on Data Transparency 2011) will be published on the Taunton Deane Borough Council website.

### 12) Lowest paid staff

**The Council's lowest paid staff are defined as those on the lowest job evaluated grade within the authorities pay structure. Other than posts identified as chief officers within this Statement and recognised apprentices all posts within the Council have been subject to Job Evaluation to assess the value of job content and then, subject to that value, have been placed in the agreed Taunton Deane Borough Council pay scales (TDBC Grades A to L).**

**At present there are no posts evaluated within Grade A and therefore under the agreed pay structure the minimum starting salary for any staff member covered by the scheme will be the first incremental point of Grade B which is a full time equivalent salary of £12787.**

**Nationally the lowest pay point is National Spinal Column Point 4 (£12145).**

### 13) Relationship between lowest pay and chief officer pay

**The principle of using 'pay multiples' to track and review salary relationships has been, through the Review of Fair Pay in the Public Sector 2011 and the CLG's guidance on transparency, recommended as a way forward for local authorities.**

**The current multiplier between the lowest paid employee and highest paid chief officer is 8.66:1.**



**The current multiplier between the mean FTE salary and highest paid chief officer is 4.5:1.**

**Should either the multiplier between the annual salary paid to a full time employee on the lowest spine point and the annual salary paid to the highest paid chief officer be greater than 1:10 or the multiplier between the mean FTE salary and highest paid chief officer be greater than 1:5 then this will be reported by the Leader of the Council to Full Council for consideration.**

#### **14) Payments for Elections**

Additional payments are made by Central Government to officers carrying out additional duties at elections. These payments will only be received when elections take place and will vary on the responsibility undertaken. Chief Officers to whom these payments are made are identified above.

#### **15) Notes**

- i) All salary references are for full time equivalent salaries and pay multipliers are all calculated using FTE salaries without additional payments being included.
- ii) The statement excludes any posts seconded into Southwest One.

## The Level and Remuneration for each Chief Officer

Post	Statutory Role	Terms and Conditions and JE Status	Salary	Salary Progression	Bonus or Performance related pay	Other Benefits	Pension Enhancement in Year
Chief Executive	Head of Paid Service	JNC Chief Executives – Out of JE	£90,708 - £100,786	Annual Increment subject to satisfactory performance.	No	Lease Car  Payment of Professional Subscription  Election Payments – Returning Officer  Payments relating to LGPS Employer Contributions	No
Strategic Director	Section 151 Officer	JNC Chief Officers – Out of JE	£64,251 - £71,391	Annual Increment subject to satisfactory performance.	No	Honorarium Payment for S151 Role  Lease Car  Payment of Professional Subscription  CMT Duty Roster  Payments relating to LGPS Employer	No

						Contributions	
Strategic Director		JNC Chief Officers – Out of JE	£64,251 - £71,391	Annual Increment subject to satisfactory performance.	No	Cash Alternative to Lease Car  Payment of Professional Subscription  CMT Duty Roster  Payments relating to LGPS Employer Contributions	No
Strategic Director		JNC Chief Officers – Out of JE	£64,251 - £71,391	Annual Increment subject to satisfactory performance.	No	Lease Car  Payment of Professional Subscription  CMT Duty Roster  Payments relating to LGPS Employer Contributions	No
Legal and Democratic Manager	Monitoring Officer	NJC Local Authority Services – Out of JE	Below £58,200	Spot Salary	No	Payment of Professional Subscription  CMT Duty Roster  Payments relating to LGPS Employer Contributions	No
Strategy Manager		NJC Local Authority	Below £58,200	Annual Increment subject to	No	Payment of Professional	No

		Services – Out of JE		satisfactory performance.		Subscription CMT Duty Roster  Payments relating to LGPS Employer Contributions	
Performance and Client Manager		NJC Local Authority Services – Out of JE	Below £58,200	Annual Increment subject to satisfactory performance.	No	Lease Car  Payment of Professional Subscription  CMT Duty Roster  Payments relating to LGPS Employer Contributions	No
Growth and Development Manager		NJC Local Authority Services – Out of JE	Below £58,200	Annual Increment subject to satisfactory performance.	No	Lease Car  Payment of Professional Subscription  CMT Duty Roster  Payments relating to LGPS Employer Contributions	No
Community Services Manager		NJC Local Authority Services – Out of JE	Below £58,200	Annual Increment subject to satisfactory performance.	No	Payment of Professional Subscription  CMT Duty Roster  Payments	No

						relating to LGPS Employer Contributions	
Regeneration Manager		NJC Local Authority Services – Out of JE	Below £58,200	Annual Increment subject to satisfactory performance.	No	Lease Car  Payment of Professional Subscription  Payments relating to LGPS Employer Contributions	No
Commercial Manager		NJC Local Authority Services – Out of JE	Below £58,200	Annual Increment subject to satisfactory performance.	No	Payment of Professional Subscription  Payments relating to LGPS Employer Contributions	No
Economic Development Manager		NJC Local Authority Services - In JE	Below £58200	Annual Increment subject to satisfactory performance.	No	Payment of Professional Subscription  Payments relating to LGPS Employer Contributions	No
DLO Lead		NJC Local Authority Services - In JE	Below £58200	Annual Increment subject to satisfactory performance.	No	Payment of Professional Subscription  Essential Car User  Payments relating to LGPS	No

						Employer Contributions	
Corporate Support Lead – Theme 1		NJC Local Authority Services - In JE	Below £58200	Annual Increment subject to satisfactory performance.	No	Lease Car Payment of Professional Subscription Election Payments Payments relating to LGPS Employer Contributions	No
Electoral Services Manager		NJC Local Authority Services - In JE	Below £58200	Annual Increment subject to satisfactory performance.	No	Payment of Professional Subscription Election Payments – Deputy Returning Officer Payments relating to LGPS Employer Contributions	No
Legal Services Manager		NJC Local Authority Services - In JE	Below £58200	Annual Increment subject to satisfactory performance.	No	Payment of Professional Subscription Payments relating to LGPS Employer Contributions	No
Parish Liaison Officer		NJC Local Authority	Below £58200	Annual Increment subject to	No	Election Payments	No

		Services - In JE		satisfactory performance.		Payments relating to LGPS Employer Contributions	
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1. The following policy on Compensation Payments applies to redundancies and early retirements on the grounds of efficiency of the service, which take effect after 31<sup>st</sup> March 2007.
2. The calculation of redundancy payments is on the basis of actual salary.
3. The Council exercises discretion under the Local Government (Early Termination of Employment) (Discretionary Compensation) Regulations 2006, to make compensatory payments to employees being made redundant based on a multiplier of three times the number of weeks an employee would be entitled to under the statutory redundancy formula, inclusive of any statutory redundancy payment, up to a maximum of 90 weeks' pay.
4. **Council requires that the full cost of any redundancies is recovered within a period not exceeding five years or by the normal retirement age, whichever is sooner.**
5. **Employees who are eligible to be paid a compensation payment on being made redundant, and who are members of the Local Government Pension Scheme, are given the option of converting their compensation payment (excluding the statutory redundancy payment) into augmented pensionable service. Augmentation is not an option where the compensation payment (excluding the statutory redundancy payment) purchases more pensionable service than the maximum allowable at age 65.**
6. No compensation payments are made to employees who are allowed to retire early on the grounds of interests of efficiency of the service, following a voluntary request from the employee.



7. Where early retirements in the interests of efficiency of the service are management instigated, the Council awards a lump sum compensation payment, which is based on the enhanced compensatory element (excluding the statutory redundancy payment) awarded on redundancy.  
(For example: 2 x Stat Red = Interests of efficiency)
8. **Employees who are eligible to be paid a compensation payment on early retirement in the interests of efficiency of the service and who are members of the Local Government Pension Scheme, are given the option of converting their compensation payment into augmented pensionable service. Augmentation is not an option where the compensation payment purchases more pensionable service than the maximum allowable at age 65.**

### (iii) Councillor Williams

#### (a) General Fund Revenue Estimates 2012/2013

(These recommendations need to be read in conjunction with the UPDATED report submitted to the Executive on 9 February 2012 which includes all the details of the proposed General Fund Budget to reflect the proposed Council Tax Freeze.)

The Executive has considered its final 2012/2013 budget proposals which has been prepared in the face of unprecedented financial challenges and uncertainty. It contains details on:-

- (i) the General Fund Revenue Budget proposals for 2011/2012, including the proposed Council Tax increase and the Prudential Indicators;
- (ii) draft figures on the predicted financial position of the Council for the following four years.

The Corporate Scrutiny Committee has also considered the draft budget proposals at its meeting on 26 January 2012. The Committee made a number of comments on some of the proposed savings and new initiatives and requested the Executive to take these views into account. However, there were no formal recommendations from the Committee to change the draft Budget.

The Council Tax calculation and formal tax setting resolution is to be considered separately. The proposed budget for Taunton Deane contains a proposed Council Tax Freeze for 2012/2013 which will mean that the Band D Council Tax will remain at £135.19. The Band D taxpayer will, therefore, receive all the services provided by the Council in 2012/2013 at a cost of £2.59 per week.

It is a requirement for the Council to prepare not only budgets for the following financial year but to also provide indicative figures into future years. The Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) provides an indication of the expected budget gap going forward into 2013/2014 and beyond and a summary of this position is reflected in the following table:-

	<b>2012/13 £m</b>	<b>2013/14 £m</b>	<b>2014/15 £m</b>	<b>2015/16 £m</b>	<b>2016/17 £m</b>
Net Expenditure	11,342	12,561	14,145	15,042	15,728
<i>Financed By:</i>					
External Government Support	5,310	4,779	4,301	4,301	4,301
Council Tax Freeze Grant	277	137	137	0	0
Council Tax	5,755	5,740	5,913	6,091	6,275
<b>Predicted Budget Gap</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,905</b>	<b>3,794</b>	<b>4,650</b>	<b>5,152</b>

These figures include the following assumptions relating to funding:-

- Government Grant would be reduced by the following rates: 2012/2013 by 11.2%; 2013/2014 by 10%; and 2014/2015 by 10%. No change has been assumed for 2015/2016 onwards;
- The Council Tax Freeze Grant relating to 2011/2012 would be receivable for four years; and
- Council Tax would increase by 2.5% each year from 2013/2014.

The Proposed Budget for 2012/2013 will maintain reserves well above the acceptable minimum reserves position of £1,250,000 or £1,000,000 if funds were allocated to 'invest to save' initiatives, but the MTFP indicates that the Council will face significant financial pressures in the medium term as shown in the following table:-

### General Reserves Forecast

	2012/13 £m	2013/14 £m	2014/15 £m	2015/16 £m	2016/17 £m
Estimated Balance B/F	2,793	2,833	928	(2,866)	(7,516)
Transfers – Previous Years commitments	40	0	0	0	0
Predicted Budget Gap	0	(1,905)	(3,794)	(4,650)	(5,152)
<b>Estimated Balance C/F</b>	<b>2,833</b>	<b>928</b>	<b>(2,866)</b>	<b>(7,516)</b>	<b>(12,668)</b>

The estimated expenses chargeable to the non-parished area of Taunton in 2012/2013 amounts to £47,380, which represents a 0% increase in the special expenses per Band D equivalent of £2.92 per property per year in the Unparished Area.

As part of the Prudential Code for Capital Finance there is a requirement for Full Council to approve the indicators as set out in the report to the Executive. These were important as they detail the expected borrowing requirement for both the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account. They also set the operational boundaries for both the borrowing and investment levels and interest rate exposures for the Council.

Before the start of each financial year, the Council is required to determine the basis on which it will make provision from revenue for the repayment of borrowing undertaken for the purpose of financing capital expenditure. This annual provision, known as Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP), is designed to ensure that authorities make prudent provision to cover the ongoing costs of their borrowing.

The proposed Policy for 2012/2013 is for the calculation of MRP to be fundamentally the same as the current year.

The Council's Section 151 Officer has a duty to comment, as part of the budget setting process on the robustness of the budget and the adequacy of reserves. In

her response, Shirlene Adam has stated that she believes the Council's reserves to be adequate and the budget estimates used in preparing the 2012/2013 budget to be as robust as possible.

Equalities Impact Assessments have again been undertaken on proposed budget savings items and other key changes within the proposed budget. Members are recommended to take account of these assessments as part of the budget decision process.

It is therefore **recommended** that the budget for General Fund services for 2012/2013 as outlined in the report to the Executive be agreed and that:-

- (a) the transfer of any under/overspend in the 2011/2012 General Fund Revenue Account Outturn to/from the General Fund Reserves be approved;
- (b) the Draft General Fund Revenue Budget 2012/2013, including a Basic Council Tax Requirement budget of £5,572,040 and Special Expenses of £47,380 be approved;
- (c) the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy with MRP calculated as follows, be approved:-
  - for supported borrowing, 4% on outstanding debt; and
  - for unsupported borrowing, the debt associated with the asset divided by the estimated useful life of the asset; and
  - for capital grants and contributions to third parties, 4% (or 1/25<sup>th</sup>) per year on a straight line basis;
- (d) the Prudential Indicators for 2012/2013 as set out in the appendix to these minutes be agreed;
- (e) the projected General Fund Reserve balance of £2,800,000 in 2012/2013, which was above the recommended minimum balance within the S151 Officer's Statement of Robustness, be noted; and
- (f) the forecast budget position within the Medium Term Financial Plan, as amended to reflect the proposed Council Tax Freeze in 2012/2013, be noted.

# Appendix

## PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS

PRUDENTIAL INDICATOR	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
	<b>outturn</b>	<b>estimate</b>	<b>estimate</b>	<b>estimate</b>	<b>estimate</b>
<b>Capital Expenditure</b>					
General Fund	£4,884	£8,660	£1,847	£1,807	£2,014
HRA	£6,653	£4,300	£5,500	£7,316	£7,316
TOTAL	£11,537	£12,960	£7,347	£9,123	£9,330
<b>Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream</b>					
General Fund	0.74%	0.67%	0.86%	0.89%	1.79%
HRA	2.85%	3.33%	17.05%	17.01%	16.60%
<b>Net borrowing projection</b>					
brought forward 1 April	£7,786	£3,670	£4,990	£4,990	£6,392
Carried forward 31 March	£3,670	£4,990	£4,990	£6,392	£8,001
in year borrowing requirement	<b>-£4,116</b>	£1,320	£0	£1,402	£1,609
<b>Capital Financing Requirement as at 31 March</b>					
General Fund	£8,240	£9,369	£9,181	£10,372	£11,741
HRA	£14,451	£14,451	£100,151	£100,151	£100,151
TOTAL	£22,691	£23,820	£109,332	£110,523	£111,892
<b>Incremental impact of capital investment decisions</b>	<b>£ p</b>	<b>£ p</b>	<b>£ p</b>	<b>£ p</b>	<b>£ p</b>
Increase in council tax (band D)	-1.36	5.47	-0.05	-0.05	0.19
<b>Authorised limit for external debt -</b>					
TOTAL	£40,000,000	£139,200,000	£139,200,000	£139,200,000	£141,200,000
<b>Operational boundary for external debt -</b>					
TOTAL	£30,000,000	£103,020,000	£103,020,000	£104,422,000	£106,031,000
<b>Upper limit for fixed interest rate exposure</b>					
Upper Limit for Fixed Interest Rate Exposure on Debt	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Upper Limit for Fixed Interest Rate Exposure on Investments	-100%	-100%	-100%	-100%	-100%
<b>Upper limit for variable rate exposure</b>					
Upper Limit for Variable Interest Rate Exposure on Debt	30%	30%	30%	30%	30%
Upper Limit for Variable Interest Rate Exposure on Investments	-50%	-50%	-50%	-50%	-50%
<b>Maturity Structure of Fixed Rate Borrowing</b> (Upper and lower limits)					
under 12 months	0% to 50%	0% to 50%	0% to 50%	0% to 50%	0% to 50%
12 months and within 24 months	0% to 50%	0% to 50%	0% to 50%	0% to 50%	0% to 50%
24 months and within 5 years	0% to 50%	0% to 50%	0% to 50%	0% to 50%	0% to 50%
5 years and within 10 years	0% to 50%	0% to 50%	0% to 50%	0% to 50%	0% to 50%
10 years and above	20% to 100%	20% to 100%	20% to 100%	20% to 100%	20% to 100%
<b>Upper limit for total principal sums invested for over 364 days</b>					

(per maturity date)	£2m or 20%	£3.5m or 20%	£3.5m or 20%	£3.5m or 20%	£3.5m or 20%
<b>Gross and Net Debt</b>					
Outstanding Borrowing (at nominal value)	15,973,000	96,993,000	96,993,000	98,395,000	100,004,000
Other Long-term Liabilities (at nominal value)	45,417,000	45,417,000	45,417,000	45,417,000	45,417,000
<b>Gross Debt</b>	61,390,000	142,410,000	142,410,000	143,812,000	145,421,000
Less: Investments	12,300,000	6,000,000	6,000,000	6,000,000	6,000,000
<b>Net Debt</b>	49,090,000	136,410,000	136,410,000	137,812,000	139,421,000

### Credit Risk

Credit ratings remain an important element of assessing credit risk, but they are not a sole feature in the Council's assessment of counterparty credit risk.

The Council also considers alternative assessments of credit strength, and information on corporate developments of and market sentiment towards counterparties. The following key tools are used to assess credit risk:

- Published credit ratings of the financial institution
- Sovereign support mechanisms
- Credit default swaps (where quoted)
- Share prices (where available)
- Economic Fundamentals
- Corporate developments, news, articles, markets sentiment and momentum
- Subjective overlay

## **(b) Capital Programme Budget Estimates 2012/2013**

**(These recommendations need to be read in conjunction with the UPDATED report submitted to the Executive on 9 February 2012 which includes all the details of the proposed Capital Programme to reflect the proposed Council Tax Freeze.)**

The Executive has also considered the proposed General Fund (GF) and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programmes for the period 2012/2013 to 2016/2017.

Full Council approved a Capital Programme for 2011/2012 General Fund schemes totalling £1,421,000 in February 2011. Slippage from the previous year and supplementary budget approvals during the year, including adding details of the Project Taunton schemes, has increased the Capital Programme to £8,660,000.

The Draft General Fund Capital Programme for 2012/2013 totals £1,793,940.

One-off additional revenue funding of £164,250 has been included in the proposed budget to support emerging capital priorities. These include remodelling The Deane House and potential works at Orchard Car Park, Taunton. Final spending on this will only be agreed when more information is available.

The funding position for General Fund capital priorities continues to rely on local resources, with ongoing reductions in external funding from the Government.

The Council approved the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme for 2011/2012 totalling £4,299,000, in February 2011. There are no changes to the approved budget so far this year.

The proposed Draft HRA Capital Programme 2012/2013 totals £5,500,000. This did not include slippage from the current financial year, although currently no slippage has been forecast. Any slippage on the current year programme will be recommended for a Budget Carry Forward.

Work has been done to prepare for the move to HRA Self Financing and the 30 Year Business Plan includes capital investment requirements over the long term - £7,320,000 per year from 2013/2014 to 2016/2017.

The Corporate Scrutiny Committee has considered the draft programme and made no formal suggestions for any changes to the programme. The Tenants Services Management Board has also considered the draft Housing Capital Programme.

Equality Impact Assessments have been undertaken on the proposed cuts to the Housing Services Capital Budget. Members are asked to take these assessments into account in confirming the recommended budget proposals for 2012/2013.

It is therefore **recommended** that:-

- (a) the General Fund Capital Programme 2012/2013 Budget of £1,793,940, including a Revenue Contribution from the 2012/2013 Annual Budget of £164,250 toward a Provision for Capital Priorities be approved; and
- (b) the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme budgets for 2012/2013 of £5,500,000 be also approved.



### **(c) Council Tax Setting 2012/2013**

The Localism Act 2011 has made significant changes to the Local Government Finance Act 1992, and now requires the billing authority to calculate a Council Tax requirement for the year, not its Budget Requirement, as previously.

The Town and Parish Council Precepts for 2012/2013 total £529,689. The increase in the average Band D Council Tax for Town and Parish Councils is 3.33% and results in an average Band D Council Tax figure of £12.85 for 2012/2013.

Avon and Somerset Police Authority met on 8 February 2012 and set their precept at £6,925,542.70, adjusted by a Collection Fund contribution of £209,624. This results in a Band D Council Tax of £168.03.

At this stage, the precept figures for the Somerset County Council and the Devon and Somerset Fire Authority are shown as provisional amounts, assuming a 0% increase, pending their respective approval processes. This element of the total Council Tax determination be advised to Members at the meeting of Full Council on 21 February 2012.

The estimated balance on the Council Tax Collection Fund is forecast on 15 January each year. Any surplus or deficit is shared between the County Council, the Police Authority, the Fire Authority and Taunton Deane, in shares relative to our precept levels.

The estimated balance on the Council Tax Collection Fund is a surplus of £1,764,952. Taunton Deane's share of this amounts to £184,199, and this had been reflected in the General Fund Revenue Estimates.

It is **recommended** that:-

(a) The following formal Council Tax Resolution for 2012/2013 be approved:-

- (1) That it be noted that on 7 December 2011 the Council calculated the Council Tax Base for 2012/2013:-
  - (i) for the whole Council area as 41,216.39 [Item T in the formula in Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (the "Act")]; and,
  - (ii) for dwellings in those parts of its area to which a Parish precept related as in the attached Appendix B;
- (2) That the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2012/2013 (excluding Parish precepts) be calculated as £5,572,040;
- (3) That the following amounts be calculated for the year 2012/2013 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Act:-

- (i) £84,575,640 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act taking into account all precepts issued to it by Parish Councils. (*Gross Expenditure including amount required for working balance*)
- (ii) £78,473,910 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act. (*Gross Income including reserves to be used to meet Gross Expenditure*)
- (iii) £6,101,730 being the amount by which the aggregate at 3(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 3(b) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act as its Council Tax requirement for the year. (Item R in the formula in Section 31B of the Act). (*Total Demand on Collection Fund.*)
- (iv) £148.04 being the amount at 3(c) above (Item R), all divided by Item T (1(a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including Parish precepts). (*Council Tax at Band D for Borough Including Parish Precepts and Special Expenses*)
- (v) £529,690 being the aggregate amount of all special items (Parish precepts) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act (as per the attached Appendix B). (*Parish Precepts and Special Expenses*).
- (vi) £135.19 being the amount at 3(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 3(e) above by Item T (1(a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no Parish precept relates. (*Council Tax at Band D for Borough Excluding Parish Precepts and Special Expenses*);

(4) To note that Somerset County Council and Devon and Somerset Fire Authority have not yet issued precepts to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for each category of dwellings in the Council's area as indicated in the table in Appendix A;

(5) To note that Avon and Somerset Police Authority had issued their precept to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for each category of dwellings in the Council's area as indicated in the table in Appendix B.

(6) That the Council, in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the aggregate provisional amounts shown in the table in Appendix A as the amounts of Council Tax for 2012/2013 for each part of its area and for each categories of dwellings;

(7) Determine that the Council's basic amount of Council Tax for 2012/2013 is not excessive in accordance with principles approved under Section 52ZB Local Government Finance Act 1992; and

(b) Note that if the above formal Council Tax Resolution was approved the total Band D Council Tax would be as follows:-

	<b>2011/12</b> <b>£</b>	<b>2012/13</b> <b>£</b>	<b>Increase</b> <b>%</b>
Taunton Deane Borough Council	135.19	135.19	0.00%
Somerset County Council*	1,027.30	1,027.30	0.00%
Avon & Somerset Police Authority	168.03	168.03	0.00%
Devon & Somerset Fire Authority*	71.77	71.77	0.00%
<b>Sub-Total*</b>	<b>1,402.29</b>	<b>1,402.29</b>	0.00%
Town & Parish Council (average)	12.46	12.85	3.13%
<b>Total *</b>	<b>1,414.75</b>	<b>1,415.14</b>	0.03%

(\* provisional figures for 2012/13)

*This report was produced after the Executive Meeting on 9 February 2012 to reflect the final decisions taken at the meeting. The figures have been updated to reflect the final budget proposals of the Executive.*

Appendix A

### Valuation Bands

Council Tax Schedule 2012/13	Band A £	Band B £	Band C £	Band D £	Band E £	Band F £	Band G £	Band H £
Taunton Deane Borough Council	90.13	105.15	120.17	135.19	165.23	195.27	225.32	270.38
Somerset County Council *	684.87	799.01	913.16	1,027.30	1,255.59	1,483.88	1,712.17	2,054.60
Avon & Somerset Police Authority	112.02	130.69	149.36	168.03	205.37	242.71	280.05	336.06
Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority *	47.85	55.82	63.80	71.77	87.72	103.67	119.62	143.54
Parish / Town only (a)	8.57	9.99	11.42	12.85	15.71	18.56	21.42	25.70
Parish / Town & District (b)	98.69	115.14	131.59	148.04	180.94	213.84	246.73	296.08
<b>Total (c)</b>	<b>943.43</b>	<b>1,100.66</b>	<b>1,257.90</b>	283.23	<b>1,729.62</b>	<b>2,044.09</b>	<b>2,358.57</b>	<b>2,830.28</b>
<b><u>Parish:</u></b>								
Ash Priors	934.87	1,090.67	1,246.49	1,402.29	1,713.91	2,025.53	2,337.16	2,804.58
Ashbrittle	947.40	1,105.29	1,263.20	1,421.09	1,736.89	2,052.69	2,368.49	2,842.18
Bathealton	938.60	1,095.03	1,251.47	1,407.89	1,720.75	2,033.62	2,346.49	2,815.78
Bishops Hull	948.02	1,106.02	1,264.03	1,422.02	1,738.02	2,054.03	2,370.04	2,844.04
Bishops Lydeard/Cothelstone	949.85	1,108.15	1,266.46	1,424.76	1,741.37	2,057.99	2,374.61	2,849.52
Bradford on Tone	947.34	1,105.22	1,263.12	1,421.00	1,736.78	2,052.56	2,368.34	2,842.00
Burrowbridge	948.46	1,106.53	1,264.61	1,422.68	1,738.83	2,054.98	2,371.14	2,845.36



	946.62	1,104.38	1,262.16	1,419.92	1,735.46	2,051.00		2,839.84
North Curry	949.70	1,107.98	1,266.27	1,424.54	1,741.10	2,057.67	2,374.24	2,849.08
Norton Fitzwarren	952.80	1,111.58	1,270.39	1,429.18	1,746.78	2,064.37	2,381.98	2,858.36
Nynehead	952.13	1,110.81	1,269.50	1,428.18	1,745.55	2,062.93	2,380.31	2,856.36
Oake	944.87	1,102.34	1,259.82	1,417.29	1,732.24	2,047.20	2,362.16	2,834.58
Otterford	934.87	1,090.67	1,246.49	1,402.29	1,713.91	2,025.53	2,337.16	2,804.58
Pitminster	948.51	1,106.58	1,264.68	1,422.75	1,738.92	2,055.08	2,371.26	2,845.50
Ruishton/Thornfalcon	947.67	1,105.60	1,263.56	1,421.49	1,737.38	2,053.26	2,369.16	2,842.98
Sampfurd Arundel	958.90	1,118.71	1,278.53	1,438.34	1,757.97	2,077.60	2,397.24	2,876.68
Staplegrove	944.41	1,101.80	1,259.21	1,416.60	1,731.40	2,046.20	2,361.01	2,833.20
Stawley	947.29	1,105.16	1,263.05	1,420.92	1,736.68	2,052.44	2,368.21	2,841.84
Stoke St Gregory	947.00	1,104.83	1,262.67	1,420.49	1,736.15	2,051.82	2,367.49	2,840.98
Stoke St Mary	944.38	1,101.77	1,259.17	1,416.56	1,731.35	2,046.14	2,360.94	2,833.12
Taunton	936.82	1,092.94	1,249.09	1,405.21	1,717.48	2,029.75	2,342.03	2,810.42
Trull	943.91	1,101.22	1,258.54	1,415.85	1,730.48	2,045.12	2,359.76	2,831.70
Wellington	949.27	1,107.47	1,265.69	1,423.89	1,740.31	2,056.73	2,373.16	2,847.78
Wellington Without	946.26	1,103.95	1,261.67	1,419.37	1,734.79	2,050.20	2,365.63	2,838.74

West Bagborough	944.69	1,102.13	1,259.58	1,417.02	1,731.91	2,046.81	2,361.71	2,834.04
West Buckland	946.76	1,104.55	1,262.35	1,420.13	1,735.71	2,051.30	2,366.89	2,840.26
West Hatch	945.73	1,103.34	1,260.97	1,418.58	1,733.82	2,049.06	2,364.31	2,837.16
West Monkton	950.44	1,108.84	1,267.25	1,425.65	1,742.46	2,059.27	2,376.09	2,851.30
Wiveliscombe	948.75	1,106.86	1,265.00	1,423.11	1,739.36	2,055.60	2,371.86	2,846.22

This report was produced after the Executive Meeting on 9 February 2012 to reflect the final decisions taken at the meeting. The figures have been updated to reflect the final budget proposals of the Executive.

Appendix

B

**TOWN AND PARISH COUNCIL PRECEPTS**

Parish/Town Council	2011/12			2012/13			Council Tax Increase
	Tax Base	Precept Levied	Council Tax Band D	Tax Base	Precept Levied	Council Tax Band D	
		£	(£)		£	(£)	
Ash Priors	78.84	-	-	84.83	-	-	0.00%
Ashbrittle	97.37	1,800	18.49	95.72	1,800	18.80	1.72%
Bathealton	88.08	500	5.68	89.28	500	5.60	-1.34%
Bishops Hull	1,075.48	22,000	20.46	1,114.92	22,000	19.73	-3.54%
Bishops Lydeard/Cothelstone	1,116.85	25,185	22.55	1,120.81	25,185	22.47	-0.35%
Bradford on Tone	290.50	5,500	18.93	293.94	5,500	18.71	-1.17%
Burrowbridge	205.44	4,000	19.47	205.99	4,200	20.39	4.72%
Cheddon Fitzpaine	639.63	7,000	10.94	643.53	10,203	15.85	44.87%
Chipstable	128.01	1,850	14.45	133.31	1,950	14.63	1.22%
Churchstanton	335.61	7,250	21.60	337.87	7,299	21.60	0.00%



Combe Florey	121.40	2,000	16.48	122.05	2,250	18.44	11.90%
Comeytrowe	2,092.08	25,000	11.95	2,111.95	25,000	11.84	-0.94%
Corfe	132.48	2,500	18.87	133.48	2,500	18.73	-0.75%
Cotford St Luke	800.55	15,000	18.74	821.67	16,000	19.47	3.92%
Creech St Michael	946.10	23,135	24.45	999.23	28,275	28.30	15.72%
Durston	59.57	600	10.07	59.10	600	10.15	0.79%
Fitzhead	123.27	2,995	24.30	122.29	2,995	24.49	0.81%
Halse	141.39	1,750	12.38	142.58	1,800	12.62	2.00%
Hatch Beauchamp	260.51	4,500	17.27	268.82	4,500	16.74	-3.09%
Kingston St Mary	452.76	6,000	13.25	463.52	6,000	12.94	-2.32%
Langford Budville	236.73	4,000	16.90	238.94	5,000	20.93	23.84%
Lydeard St Lawrence/Tolland	204.07	3,500	17.15	208.84	3,582	17.15	0.00%
Milverton	598.41	11,500	19.22	624.11	12,650	20.27	5.47%
Neroche	251.93	4,000	15.88	255.27	4,500	17.63	11.03%
North Curry	748.27	16,500	22.05	741.43	16,500	22.25	0.92%
Norton Fitzwarren	820.30	25,130	30.64	931.94	25,060	26.89	-12.22%

Nynehead	157.34	4,000	25.42	164.15	4,250	25.89	1.84%
Oake	333.62	4,750	14.24	333.34	5,000	15.00	5.35%
Otterford	170.04	-	-	174.06	-	-	0.00%
Pitminster	458.91	9,279	20.22	464.42	9,500	20.46	1.17%
Ruishton/Thornfalcon	614.50	12,000	19.53	624.94	12,000	19.20	-1.67%
Sampfard Arundel	132.51	4,600	34.72	127.60	4,600	36.05	3.84%
Staplegrove	713.43	10,000	14.02	748.42	10,710	14.31	2.09%
Stawley	130.08	2,400	18.45	128.82	2,400	18.63	0.98%
Stoke St Gregory	389.61	6,500	16.68	384.63	7,000	18.20	9.09%
Stoke St Mary	204.23	3,008	14.73	210.86	3,008	14.27	-3.15%
Taunton	16,033.53	46,820	2.92	16,226.62	47,380	2.92	-0.01%
Trull	1,029.79	14,000	13.59	1,032.39	14,000	13.56	-0.25%
Wellington	4,683.53	92,734	19.80	4,852.37	104,798	21.60	9.08%
Wellington Without	302.74	5,050	16.68	304.54	5,200	17.08	2.36%
West Bagborough	168.06	2,000	11.90	169.77	2,500	14.73	23.74%
West Buckland	444.62	8,000	17.99	448.31	8,000	17.84	-0.82%

West Hatch	141.96	2,330	16.41	143.00	2,330	16.29	-0.73%
West Monkton	1,116.84	31,599	28.29	1,184.22	27,664	23.36	-17.43%
Wiveliscombe	1,119.67	21,000	18.76	1,128.51	23,500	20.82	11.03%
<b>TOTAL / AVERAGE</b>	<b>40,390.60</b>	<b>503,265</b>	<b>12.46</b>	<b>41,216.39</b>	<b>529,689</b>	<b>12.85</b>	<b>3.33%</b>

## **(iv) Councillor Mrs Adkins**

### **(a) Housing Services and Community Development – Restructure Proposals**

The Executive has considered proposals to change the staffing structure of Housing Services in preparation for issues likely to arise from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) self-financing and the associated new 30 year Business Plan. Changes to the current Community Development Team have also been considered.

Over the past few years, the Council's Housing Service has embarked on a modernisation programme to make it more outward looking, performance focussed and working to place tenants at the heart of scrutiny and decision making.

Although steady progress has been made, including the setting up and operation of the Tenants Services Management Board and the recruitment of officers with a specific focus on Anti-Social Behaviour, there is still more to be done.

Preparations for self-financing are going well with a robust project team and plan in place. Stage 1 of this process had been achieved with the completion of a new 30 year Business Plan.

The move to HRA self-financing in April 2012, will involve the Council taking on £85,198,000 of national housing debt, based on the final settlement figures.

Whilst modelling suggests self-financing will be a good deal for Taunton Deane, it places a significant responsibility on the HRA to ensure that governance, performance management and financial management arrangements are as good as they could be.

In addition, projections for the repairs and maintenance work required on our housing stock indicate the need for a significant lift in capital expenditure and changes to housing policy and potential legislation, particularly around tenure reform, will place new and different requirements on the service in future years.

Taking these three requirements into account it is proposed to alter Housing Services to position the structure in a way that supports the new Business Plan and the future investment needs of the service.

Specifically the restructuring proposals sought to achieve the following:-

- A clearer focus in the service on managing the resources available by the creation of an Income Team;
- Preparation for the need to deliver an increased capital work programme in the housing stock;
- Capacity to more effectively manage the stock condition database;
- Making permanent the successful pilot of changes to improve voids performance;
- Enhancing the HRA's support for Community Development activities and integrating this work in the service; and

- Positioning the service to respond effectively to the proposed new regulatory framework for social housing.

The full-year cost to the HRA of the new structure is likely to be £1,935,000, 11.9% of the total HRA cost of £16,242,000. The increase will be modelled into the 30-year HRA Business Plan.

The proposed re-structure would have a number of implications for existing staff, including one possible redundancy.

The proposals have also been considered by the Community Scrutiny Committee and the Tenants Services Management Board who were both supportive of the re-structure.

It is **recommended** that:-

- (1) the proposed restructuring of Housing Services and the Community Development Team, be approved; and
- (2) a Supplementary Budget allocation of up to £22,000 in 2011/2012, funded from Housing Revenue Account reserves, related to likely redundancy costs, be also approved.

## **(b) Housing Revenue Account Estimates 2012/2013**

**(These recommendations need to be read in conjunction with the UPDATED report submitted to the Executive on 9 February 2012 which includes all the details of the proposed Housing Revenue Account Budget.)**

The Executive has given consideration to the proposed Housing Revenue Account (HRA) estimates for the 2012/2013 Financial Year which shows a working balance of £1,312,070. It also includes details of the proposed increase in Average Weekly Rent for the year where a 7.45% increase has been recommended.

The 2011/2012 budget had been set using that year's data from the Government's Draft Subsidy Determination and in the expectation that HRA self financing would be introduced under the Localism Act.

With the move to a 'self-financing' model from 2012/2013 now happening, the Council's annual payment of 'negative subsidy' will end on 28 March 2012.

The final Settlement figures from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) have set the Council's debt at £85,198,000 which will be repaid in 18 years (by 2029/2030).

The proposed HRA Budget for the next financial year is therefore based on assumptions and estimates on expenditure requirements and income projections. These assumptions have been reflected in the final Business Plan for the HRA.

The negative subsidy system required Local Authorities to raise their 'average weekly rent' to meet the 'target' or 'formula' rent by the convergence date of 2015/2016, with a 'guideline rent' being the amount the DCLG assumes should be charged, but to avoid unaffordable increases in any one year must not exceed the 'limit rent'.

This Central Government rent policy has remained unchanged despite the move to self-financing and abolition of the subsidy system.

With the Retail Price Index for 2011 at 5.60%, increasing the actual average weekly rent paid by tenants by the amount set under the subsidy determination will make the rent paid higher than the guideline rent.

It is therefore proposed that the average weekly rent for dwellings for 2012/2013 should be set at the guideline rent of £73.68. This was an increase of 7.45% or £5.11 per week.

The Dwelling Rents form the major element of income for the HRA. Each ½% rent increase is equivalent to approximately £105,000. If the average rent is set lower than the current proposal, the loss of income will have to be met by reducing expenditure.

The budget for non-dwelling rents and charges for services and facilities is based on a 5.6% increase.

The Corporate Scrutiny Committee considered the 2011/2012 draft budget at its meeting on 26 January 2012 where no formal recommendations to change the HRA budget were made.

The Tenants Services Management Board has also considered the report.

An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken on the proposed rent increase. Members are asked to take this assessment into account in confirming the recommended budget proposals for 2011/2012.

It is therefore **recommended** that:-

- (1) The Average Weekly Rent increase of 7.45% be approved; and
- (2) The Housing Revenue Account budget for 2012/2013 be agreed.

# Taunton Deane Borough Council

## Full Council - 21 February 2012

### Alternative Budget Proposal

#### Introduction

This alternative budget proposal offers an alternative to the Executive's draft budget as discussed and amended at the meeting on 9 February 2012.

This proposal, put forward for consideration by all Councillors, recognises the tough times our community is facing. The current economic climate affects us all and we feel it is important to accept the Government's offer to support us in freezing the council tax for next year.

We believe that in the current financial climate that freezing the Council Tax is the right thing to do. However, we do not believe that the cost of the freeze should be an overall reduction in a range of services which impact on harming the socially deprived or cutting back on support to our arts and cultural communities.

Furthermore we should take pride in our District and maintain the quality of maintenance of our open spaces, highway verge cutting, hanging baskets and pest control. Taunton Deane needs to be seen to be attractive to external enquirers and create the ambience for inward investment. The "can do" mentality of the Council is easier to promote when the District retains its smartness and its pride. We also believe that the progress made on Climate Change should be progressed towards attaining our goal of becoming a carbon neutral Council at the earliest opportunity.

Finally, even in a difficult climate we should not be afraid to introduce new initiatives with our "Kids for a Quid" promotion which will bring young swimmers to our pools. It will be welcomed by families leaving more people fitter and healthier as a result.

We have used the Executive's Budget as the starting point. The key changes we ask Councillors to consider are:-

#### **1/ Reinstate Savings Plan – Voluntary Sector Grants**

Voluntary and Community Grants - It is important that the Panel which has been established looks carefully at both the type of organisations which Taunton Deane Borough Council supports and the consequences of the withdrawal in the long term of these grants. In the meantime, it is felt that the arbitrary salami slice approach will be harmful to organisations which provide the public and Taunton Deane Borough Council with valuable services and often are able to do it more effectively and cheaply than the



Council itself. Thus it is felt it should be reinstated for 2012/13 whilst the Panel reassesses the position.

The Executive's budget cuts this budget by £30k next year. We do not support this, and propose, therefore, not to reduce the Councils budget in supporting the voluntary sector for 2012/13. This adds £30k to the budget.

**2/ Reinstatement Savings Plan – Climate Change Budget**

Climate Change Initiatives - The work done so far by 10:10 campaign and the awareness seminars given are invaluable to the long term understanding both of sustainability and the dangers of climate change. It is vital that this work continues as we face the forthcoming problems of the recession and the need to reduce carbon emissions. It fits so well alongside our policy and delivery of such schemes as the Firepool site. It is a driver for delivering further savings to attain our goal as a carbon neutral Council.

The Executive's budget cuts this budget by £10k next year. We do not support this, and propose therefore not to reduce the Councils budget for Climate Change initiatives for 2012/13. This adds £10k to the budget.

**3/ Subsidy to SCC Highways Grass Cuts**

Subsidy of SCC Highways Maintenance Grass Cuts – We recognise the subsidy is anomalous, but the consequence of reducing the programme will mean that the number of cuts will be reduced in the main built up areas of the towns and villages in the district from 8 times a year to only 2 per annum in some cases. The likelihood of SCC returning to the DLO to top up this on their own accord is considered most improbable. Taunton Deane Borough Council should do this for 2012/13 whilst negotiating a compromise solution to the problem for the future.

The Executive's budget removes this budget completely next year (saving £17k). We do not support this, and propose not to make any savings to this budget for 2012/13. This adds £17k to the budget.

**4/ Reinstatement Savings Plan – Hanging Baskets**

Hanging Baskets – The proposals ensure that there is not a 25% reduction in hanging baskets in Taunton and Wellington. This maintains our pride in the district and keeps us competitive in the Britain in Bloom contests. It clearly signals our desire to show Taunton Deane to be a prosperous place and willing to attract growth and new business. Taunton should be in full bloom for Jubilee Celebrations this summer.

The Executive's budget cuts this budget by £2k next year. We do not support this, and propose not to make any reduction to this budget for 2012/13. This adds £2k to the budget.

**5/ Reinstatement Savings Plan – Arts Development Grants**

Arts Development Funding – The funding should be restored for 2012/13 whilst an assessment of the six organisations is made and of the respective Service Level Agreements. It is important that Taunton Deane Borough Council is seen to promote creative and cultural organisations as part of the Economic Development programme. The Arts have been hit disproportionately by Somerset County Council. Our grants enable the organisations to raise matching funding from other sources. It is vital for our long term future.

The Executive's budget cuts this budget by £8k next year. We do not support this, and propose not to make any reduction to this budget for 2012/13. This adds £8k to the budget.

**6/ Delete Fee Increase – Pest Control Fees**

This is a false economy. There is a risk that some residents will delay or not engage the rodent control services, there possible leading to an increase in rodents in the District.

The Executive's budget increases fees by £4k next year. We do not support this, and propose not to increase fees for pest control. This adds £4k to the budget.

**7/ Reinstatement Savings Plan – Maintenance of Open Space**

Maintenance of General Spaces – The reduction of the programme for all of Taunton Deane except Vivary Park and Goodland Gardens is going to spoil the look of Taunton Deane. It is going to impact hardest on the sports pitches around the District and will lead to a general deterioration in the high standards that Taunton Deane Borough Council have prided itself in. By reinstating this programme we will safeguard two further posts in the Open Space Department of the DLO.

The Executive's budget make cuts this budget by £64k next year. We do not support this, and propose not to reduce this budget for 2012/13. This adds £64k to the budget.

**8/ New Income Source - Firepool**

With a "can do" approach and a small outlay, it is felt that a net income from one-off car parking and storage for vehicles etc of this amount could be attained from this site whilst full redevelopment is not immediately likely. It will give a sense of involvement when the site looks so desolate at present.

This provides new income of £10k to the budget.

**9/ New Initiative – Kids Swimming For A Quid**

This sum is identified to promote young people to go swimming during the year and to maximise the Healthy Living nature of the sport. It is fitting to put this on the agenda in the Olympic Year. The details are to be worked in conjunction with Tone Leisure.

We believe that this is a suitable successor to the previous free swimming scheme which was embraced by hundreds of families in Taunton Deane.

We propose to set aside a sum of £40k in the 2012/13 budget to fund this new initiative. This adds £40k to the budget.

**10/ Council Tax Position**

We welcome the Executives late proposal to recommend a 0% (stand-still) tax rise for 2012/13. We recognise the one-off nature of the Government's Freeze Grant.

**Conclusion**

We present for your consideration an alternative budget to that presented by the Executive. Our budget prioritises social deprivation, pride in our community and the support for our young people. It is a comprehensive package of support for people and tax payers. Money spent on this level of services is a better option than setting aside money for a one-off possible capital project for restoration of the multi-story car park.

The total financial impact of our alternative budget is a net increase of £165k to the Executives budget. We propose that this is funded by a reduction in £165k to the RCCO (transfer to unallocated capital projects).

The financial details supporting this budget, including the impact on future years, is set out in **Appendix 1**.

The statutory statement from the Councils s151 Officer on the robustness of this proposal is set out in **Appendix 2**.

The detailed recommendations that support this alternative budget are set out in **Appendix 3**.

The determination calculations and tax setting recommendations that support this alternative budget proposal are set out in **Appendix 4**.

## **Recommendation**

Full Council is requested to consider this alternative budget proposal and, if supported, to approve the detailed recommendations on the budget and tax set as set out in Appendices 3 and 4.

**Councillor Ross Henley**  
**Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group**

**ALTERNATIVE BUDGET PROPOSAL – FINANCIAL DETAILS**

1. **Purpose**

1.1 The proposed alternative budget outlined above has an impact on certain sections of the General Fund Revenue Estimates report, the Capital Programme report and the subsequent Council Tax setting report (despite the tax freeze proposal matching that of the Executive). This appendix outlines the changes necessary and the amended recommendations are shown in Appendices 3 & 4.

1.2 Where sections of the original budget report remain unaltered then they are not repeated here.

2 **Liberal Democratic Group Proposed Alternative General Fund Budget 2012/13**

2.1 The Liberal Democratic Group wishes to present the following proposed budget for 2012/13.

**Proposed Total Council Tax Increase = 0.0%**

2.2 In the event that this alternative budget is agreed by Full Council the Council Tax calculation and formal tax setting resolution is considered in Appendix 4. The proposed budget for Taunton Deane shown above would retain a **Band D Council Tax of £135.19.**

2.3 The Band D taxpayer would continue to receive all the services provided by the Borough Council in 2012/13 at a cost of £2.59 per week.

2.4 The Alternative Budget offers the same 0% tax rise as the budget proposed by the Executive.

2.5 The table below shows how the changes to the budget still result in a balanced budget:

	£	£
		<b>Budget Gap</b>
		<b>£'000</b>
<b>Final Executive Budget Proposal (9th Feb)</b>		0

### **Alternative Proposals**

Reinstate Savings Plan – Voluntary Sector Grants	30	30
Reinstate Savings Plan – Climate Change Budget	10	40
Reinstate Savings Plan – Highways Grass Cuts	17	57
Reinstate Savings Plan – Hanging Baskets	2	59
Reinstate Savings Plan – Arts Development Grants	8	67
Reject Fee Increase – Pest Control Fees	4	71
Reinstate Savings Plan – Maintenance of Open Space	64	135
New Initiative – Income From Firepool	(10)	125
New Initiative – Kids Swimming For A Quid	40	165
Reduction in RCCO To Unallocated Capital Schemes	(165)	0

2.6 The Alternative Budget does not change the Authority Expenditure or the Expenditure to be raised by District Council Tax, or the level of the Council's General Fund Reserves.

2.8 The alternative budget proposals make no changes to the Taunton Unparished area precept, or the Prudential Indicators. The Director's statement on the robustness of the alternative budget proposals and the adequacy of reserves is shown in **Appendix 2**.

### **3 The Future Financial Position of the Council**

3.1 The changes outlined in the Alternative Budget are for one year only and therefore do not have any significant impact on the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan.

### **4 General Fund Capital Programme Implications**

4.1 The Alternative Budget put forward by the Liberal Democratic Group proposes to reduce the amount transferred to unallocated capital schemes. The reduction of £165k in the RCCO to the unallocated Capital Schemes will mean there are no unallocated capital funds.

4.2 There are no changes proposed to the Housing Revenue Account capital programme.

**ALTERNATIVE BUDGET PROPOSAL – STATEMENT BY S151 OFFICER**

**1.0 Introduction**

1.1 The purpose of this appendix is to outline and meet the statutory requirements contained in the Local Government Finance Act 2003 which requires the Council's Section 151 Officer to report to Members on:

- The robustness of budget estimates; and
- The adequacy of proposed reserves

1.2 This appendix reviews the amendments set out in the Alternative Budget proposal and reports on the robustness of that proposal and the adequacy of reserves.

**2. ROBUSTNESS OF BUDGET ESTIMATES**

2.1 The proposed alternative budget makes some changes to spending priorities for 2012/13, but maintains the 0% tax rise position set out by the Executive in their final budget position unveiled on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2012.

2.2 I am happy that the figures used in the alternative budget proposal are robust and that the level of reserves remain adequate. Below I offer comment on the financial risks associated with the new initiatives:-

**2.3 New Initiative – Income From Firepool**

The figures used are based on information provided by Councillors from the Liberal Democratic Group. Officers have reviewed and are satisfied the assumptions are reasonable.

**2.4 New Initiative – Kids Swimming For A Quid**

Initial discussions with Tone Leisure suggest that a scheme is deliverable for the budget allocated of £40k. The final details would be negotiated post budget. This is a one-off proposal and offers an opportunity for kids to swim for a £1 during the Olympic Year.

**2.5 Reinstatement of Savings Plans**

No further financial comments – policy issues only.

**3. General Comments**

3.1 All other general comments as set out in my report on the Executive's budget proposal stand.

**4. Adequacy of Reserves**

The Alternative Budget proposal does not make any changes to the level of General Fund Reserves.

**5. Conclusion**

- 5.1 Based on the above review, and the comments in my report on the Executive's proposal, I am pleased to report that I believe the Council's reserves to be adequate and the 2012/13 Alternative Budget proposal is robust.

**Shirlene Adam**  
**Strategic Director**



**ALTERNATIVE BUDGET PROPOSAL  
DETAILED BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS**

**1 Recommendation**

- 1.1 The amended recommendations are set out in full below.
- 1.2 That Full Council approve the **Alternative Budget** presented for 2012/13 and in particular:-
- a) Note the additional S151 Officer Statement of Robustness in Appendix 2 of this report, which applies to the whole budget including General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and Capital Budget proposals.
  - b) Approve the transfer of any under-/overspend in the 2011/12 General Fund Revenue Account Outturn to/from the General Fund reserves.
  - c) Consider the equalities impact assessments provided in the report and appendices as part of the budget decision process.
  - d) Approve the Draft General Fund Revenue Budget 2012/13, including a Basic Council Tax Requirement budget of £5,572,040 and Special Expenses of £47,380 (noting formal resolution of Council Tax Requirement is included in a separate appendix).
  - e) Approve the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy with MRP calculated as follows:
    - for supported borrowing, 4% on outstanding debt; and
    - for unsupported borrowing, the debt associated with the asset divided by the estimated useful life of the asset
    - for capital grants and contributions to third parties, 4% (or 1/25<sup>th</sup>) per year on a straight line basis.
  - f) Approve the Prudential Indicators for 2012/13, as set out in Appendix J of the Executive's Budget Proposals.
  - g) Note the projected General Fund Reserve balance of £2.8m in 2012/13, which is above the recommended minimum balance.
  - h) Note the forecast budget position within the Medium Term Financial Plan.

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**ALTERNATIVE BUDGET PROPOSAL – DETERMINATION & TAX SETTING  
RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Executive Summary**

To make recommendations to Full Council on the level of Council Tax for the Alternative Budget 2012/13.

**1 Purpose**

- 1.1 If the alternative budget, put forward by the Liberal Democratic Group, is approved by Full Council then the level of Council Tax will NOT change from that already circulated within the papers for Full Council. **The proposed level of Council Tax would remain at £135.19.**
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to consider, and make the necessary legal recommendations to Full Council on the alternative budget and subsequent determinations of spend. This is a technical requirement.

**2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 The format of the Council Tax setting resolution, which the Council must approve, has been amended for 2012/13 to reflect the changes in the Localism Act.
- 2.2 Should Full Council wish to accept the Alternative Budget, then the following recommendations need to be considered:-

**Formal Council Tax Resolution 2012/13 – Alternative Budget**

The Council is recommended to resolve as follows:

1. That it be noted that on 7 December 2011 the Council calculated the Council Tax Base for 2012/13:
  - a. for the whole Council area as 41,216.39 [Item T in the formula in Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (the "Act")]; and,
  - b. for dwellings in those parts of its area to which a Parish precept relates as in the attached Appendix C.
2. Calculate the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2012/13 (excluding Parish precepts) is £5,572,040.
3. That the following amounts be calculated for the year 2012/13 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Act:

- (a) £84,581,640 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act taking into account all precepts issued to it by Parish Councils. (*Gross Expenditure including amount required for working balance*)
  - (b) £78,479,910 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act. (*Gross Income including reserves to be used to meet Gross Expenditure*)
  - (c) £6,101,730 being the amount by which the aggregate at 3(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 3(b) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act as its Council Tax requirement for the year. (Item R in the formula in Section 31B of the Act). (*Total Demand on Collection Fund.*)
  - (d) £148.04 being the amount at 3(c) above (Item R), all divided by Item T (1(a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including Parish precepts). (*Council Tax at Band D for Borough Including Parish Precepts and Special Expenses*)
  - (e) £529,690 being the aggregate amount of all special items (Parish precepts) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act (as per the attached Appendix C). (*Parish Precepts and Special Expenses*).
  - (f) £135.19 being the amount at 3(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 3(e) above by Item T (1(a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no Parish precept relates. (*Council Tax at Band D for Borough Excluding Parish Precepts and Special Expenses*)
4. To note that Somerset County Council and Devon and Somerset Fire Authority have not yet issued precepts to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for each category of dwellings in the Council's area as indicated in the table in Appendix B.
  5. To note that Avon & Somerset Police Authority has issued their precept to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government

Finance Act 1992 for each category of dwellings in the Council's area as indicated in the table in Appendix B.

6. That the Council, in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the aggregate provisional amounts shown in the table in Appendix B as the amounts of Council Tax for 2012/13 for each part of its area and for each categories of dwellings.
7. Determine that the Council's basic amount of Council Tax for 2012/13 is not excessive in accordance with principles approved under Section 52ZB Local Government Finance Act 1992.

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*This report was produced after the Executive Meeting on 9 February 2012 to reflect the final decisions taken at the meeting. The figures have been updated to reflect the final budget proposals of the Executive.*

Appendix

B

### Valuation Bands

Council Tax Schedule 2012/13	Band A £	Band B £	Band C £	Band D £	Band E £	Band F £	Band G £	Band H £
Taunton Deane Borough Council	90.13	105.15	120.17	135.19	165.23	195.27	225.32	270.38
Somerset County Council *	684.87	799.01	913.16	1,027.30	1,255.59	1,483.88	1,712.17	2,054.60
Avon & Somerset Police Authority	112.02	130.69	149.36	168.03	205.37	242.71	280.05	336.06
Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority *	47.85	55.82	63.80	71.77	87.72	103.67	119.62	143.54
Parish / Town only (a)	8.57	9.99	11.42	12.85	15.71	18.56	21.42	25.70
Parish / Town & District (b)	98.69	115.14	131.59	148.04	180.94	213.84	246.73	296.08
<b>Total (c)</b>	<b>943.43</b>	<b>1,100.66</b>	<b>1,257.90</b>	<b>1,415.14</b>	<b>1,729.62</b>	<b>2,044.09</b>	<b>2,358.57</b>	<b>2,830.28</b>
<b>Parish:</b>								
Ash Priors	934.87	1,090.67	1,246.49	1,402.29	1,713.91	2,025.53	2,337.16	2,804.58
Ashbrittle	947.40	1,105.29	1,263.20	1,421.09	1,736.89	2,052.69	2,368.49	2,842.18
Bathealton	938.60	1,095.03	1,251.47	1,407.89	1,720.75	2,033.62	2,346.49	2,815.78
Bishops Hull	948.02	1,106.02	1,264.03	1,422.02	1,738.02	2,054.03	2,370.04	2,844.04
Bishops Lydeard/Cothelstone	949.85	1,108.15	1,266.46	1,424.76	1,741.37	2,057.99	2,374.61	2,849.52
Bradford on Tone	947.34	1,105.22	1,263.12	1,421.00	1,736.78	2,052.56	2,368.34	2,842.00
Burrowbridge	948.46	1,106.53	1,264.61	1,422.68	1,738.83	2,054.98	2,371.14	2,845.36
Cheddon Fitzpaine	945.44	1,103.00	1,260.58	1,418.14	1,733.28	2,048.42	2,363.58	2,836.28
Chipstable	944.62	1,102.05	1,259.49	1,416.92	1,731.79	2,046.66	2,361.54	2,833.84
Churchstanton	949.27	1,107.47	1,265.69	1,423.89	1,740.31	2,056.73	2,373.16	2,847.78
Combe Florey	947.16	1,105.01	1,262.88	1,420.73	1,736.45	2,052.17	2,367.89	2,841.46
Comeytrowe	942.76	1,099.88	1,257.01	1,414.13	1,728.38	2,042.63	2,356.89	2,828.26
Corfe	947.36	1,105.24	1,263.14	1,421.02	1,736.80	2,052.58	2,368.38	2,842.04
Cotford St Luke	947.85	1,105.81	1,263.80	1,421.76	1,737.71	2,053.65	2,369.61	2,843.52
Creech St Michael	953.74	1,112.68	1,271.65	1,430.59	1,748.50	2,066.41	2,384.33	2,861.18
Durston	941.64	1,098.56	1,255.51	1,412.44	1,726.32	2,040.19	2,354.08	2,824.88
Fitzhead	951.20	1,109.72	1,268.26	1,426.78	1,743.84	2,060.90	2,377.98	2,853.56
Halse	943.28	1,100.49	1,257.71	1,414.91	1,729.33	2,043.76	2,358.19	2,829.82
Hatch Beauchamp	946.03	1,103.69	1,261.37	1,419.03	1,734.37	2,049.71	2,365.06	2,838.06
Kingston St Mary	943.50	1,100.73	1,257.99	1,415.23	1,729.73	2,044.22	2,358.73	2,830.46
Langford Budville	948.82	1,106.95	1,265.09	1,423.22	1,739.49	2,055.76	2,372.04	2,846.44
Lydeard St Lawrence/Tolland	946.30	1,104.01	1,261.73	1,419.44	1,734.87	2,050.30	2,365.74	2,838.88
Milverton	948.38	1,106.44	1,264.51	1,422.56	1,738.68	2,054.81	2,370.94	2,845.12

*This report was produced after the Executive Meeting on 9 February 2012 to reflect the final decisions taken at the meeting. The figures have been updated to reflect the final budget proposals of the Executive.*

**Appendix**

**B**

**Valuation Bands**

<b>Council Tax Schedule 2012/13</b>	<b>Band A £</b>	<b>Band B £</b>	<b>Band C £</b>	<b>Band D £</b>	<b>Band E £</b>	<b>Band F £</b>	<b>Band G £</b>	<b>Band H £</b>
Neroche	946.62	1,104.38	1,262.16	1,419.92	1,735.46	2,051.00	2,366.54	2,839.84
North Curry	949.70	1,107.98	1,266.27	1,424.54	1,741.10	2,057.67	2,374.24	2,849.08
Norton Fitzwarren	952.80	1,111.58	1,270.39	1,429.18	1,746.78	2,064.37	2,381.98	2,858.36
Nynehead	952.13	1,110.81	1,269.50	1,428.18	1,745.55	2,062.93	2,380.31	2,856.36
Oake	944.87	1,102.34	1,259.82	1,417.29	1,732.24	2,047.20	2,362.16	2,834.58
Otterford	934.87	1,090.67	1,246.49	1,402.29	1,713.91	2,025.53	2,337.16	2,804.58
Pitminster	948.51	1,106.58	1,264.68	1,422.75	1,738.92	2,055.08	2,371.26	2,845.50
Ruishton/Thornfalcon	947.67	1,105.60	1,263.56	1,421.49	1,737.38	2,053.26	2,369.16	2,842.98
Sampford Arundel	958.90	1,118.71	1,278.53	1,438.34	1,757.97	2,077.60	2,397.24	2,876.68
Staplegrove	944.41	1,101.80	1,259.21	1,416.60	1,731.40	2,046.20	2,361.01	2,833.20
Stawley	947.29	1,105.16	1,263.05	1,420.92	1,736.68	2,052.44	2,368.21	2,841.84
Stoke St Gregory	947.00	1,104.83	1,262.67	1,420.49	1,736.15	2,051.82	2,367.49	2,840.98
Stoke St Mary	944.38	1,101.77	1,259.17	1,416.56	1,731.35	2,046.14	2,360.94	2,833.12
Taunton	936.82	1,092.94	1,249.09	1,405.21	1,717.48	2,029.75	2,342.03	2,810.42
Trull	943.91	1,101.22	1,258.54	1,415.85	1,730.48	2,045.12	2,359.76	2,831.70
Wellington	949.27	1,107.47	1,265.69	1,423.89	1,740.31	2,056.73	2,373.16	2,847.78
Wellington Without	946.26	1,103.95	1,261.67	1,419.37	1,734.79	2,050.20	2,365.63	2,838.74
West Bagborough	944.69	1,102.13	1,259.58	1,417.02	1,731.91	2,046.81	2,361.71	2,834.04
West Buckland	946.76	1,104.55	1,262.35	1,420.13	1,735.71	2,051.30	2,366.89	2,840.26
West Hatch	945.73	1,103.34	1,260.97	1,418.58	1,733.82	2,049.06	2,364.31	2,837.16
West Monkton	950.44	1,108.84	1,267.25	1,425.65	1,742.46	2,059.27	2,376.09	2,851.30
Wiveliscombe	948.75	1,106.86	1,265.00	1,423.11	1,739.36	2,055.60	2,371.86	2,846.22

(\* provisional figures)

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Appendix

C

**TOWN & PARISH COUNCIL PRECEPTS**

Parish/Town Council	2011/12			2012/13			Council Tax Increase
	Tax Base	Precept Levied	Council Tax Band D	Tax Base	Precept Levied	Council Tax Band D	
		£	(£)		£	(£)	
Ash Priors	78.84	-	-	84.83	-	-	0.00%
Ashbrittle	97.37	1,800	18.49	95.72	1,800	18.80	1.72%
Bathealton	88.08	500	5.68	89.28	500	5.60	-1.34%
Bishops Hull	1,075.48	22,000	20.46	1,114.92	22,000	19.73	-3.54%
Bishops Lydeard/Cothelstone	1,116.85	25,185	22.55	1,120.81	25,185	22.47	-0.35%
Bradford on Tone	290.50	5,500	18.93	293.94	5,500	18.71	-1.17%
Burrowbridge	205.44	4,000	19.47	205.99	4,200	20.39	4.72%
Cheddon Fitzpaine	639.63	7,000	10.94	643.53	10,203	15.85	44.87%
Chipstable	128.01	1,850	14.45	133.31	1,950	14.63	1.22%
Churchstanton	335.61	7,250	21.60	337.87	7,299	21.60	0.00%
Combe Florey	121.40	2,000	16.48	122.05	2,250	18.44	11.90%
Comeytrove	2,092.08	25,000	11.95	2,111.95	25,000	11.84	-0.94%
Corfe	132.48	2,500	18.87	133.48	2,500	18.73	-0.75%
Cotford St Luke	800.55	15,000	18.74	821.67	16,000	19.47	3.92%
Creech St Michael	946.10	23,135	24.45	999.23	28,275	28.30	15.72%
Durston	59.57	600	10.07	59.10	600	10.15	0.79%
Fitzhead	123.27	2,995	24.30	122.29	2,995	24.49	0.81%
Halse	141.39	1,750	12.38	142.58	1,800	12.62	2.00%
Hatch Beauchamp	260.51	4,500	17.27	268.82	4,500	16.74	-3.09%
Kingston St Mary	452.76	6,000	13.25	463.52	6,000	12.94	-2.32%
Langford Budville	236.73	4,000	16.90	238.94	5,000	20.93	23.84%
Lydeard St Lawrence/Tolland	204.07	3,500	17.15	208.84	3,582	17.15	0.00%
Milverton	598.41	11,500	19.22	624.11	12,650	20.27	5.47%
Neroche	251.93	4,000	15.88	255.27	4,500	17.63	11.03%

Parish/Town Council	2011/12			2012/13			Council Tax Increase
	Tax Base	Precept Levied	Council Tax Band D	Tax Base	Precept Levied	Council Tax Band D	
		£	(£)		£	(£)	
North Curry	748.27	16,500	22.05	741.43	16,500	22.25	0.92%
Norton Fitzwarren	820.30	25,130	30.64	931.94	25,060	26.89	-12.22%
Nynehead	157.34	4,000	25.42	164.15	4,250	25.89	1.84%
Oake	333.62	4,750	14.24	333.34	5,000	15.00	5.35%
Otterford	170.04	-	-	174.06	-	-	0.00%
Pitminster	458.91	9,279	20.22	464.42	9,500	20.46	1.17%
Ruishton/Thornfalcon	614.50	12,000	19.53	624.94	12,000	19.20	-1.67%
Sampford Arundel	132.51	4,600	34.72	127.60	4,600	36.05	3.84%
Staplegrove	713.43	10,000	14.02	748.42	10,710	14.31	2.09%
Stawley	130.08	2,400	18.45	128.82	2,400	18.63	0.98%
Stoke St Gregory	389.61	6,500	16.68	384.63	7,000	18.20	9.09%
Stoke St Mary	204.23	3,008	14.73	210.86	3,008	14.27	-3.15%
Taunton	16,033.53	46,820	2.92	16,226.62	47,380	2.92	-0.01%
Trull	1,029.79	14,000	13.59	1,032.39	14,000	13.56	-0.25%
Wellington	4,683.53	92,734	19.80	4,852.37	104,798	21.60	9.08%
Wellington Without	302.74	5,050	16.68	304.54	5,200	17.08	2.36%
West Bagborough	168.06	2,000	11.90	169.77	2,500	14.73	23.74%
West Buckland	444.62	8,000	17.99	448.31	8,000	17.84	-0.82%
West Hatch	141.96	2,330	16.41	143.00	2,330	16.29	-0.73%
West Monkton	1,116.84	31,599	28.29	1,184.22	27,664	23.36	-17.43%
Wiveliscombe	1,119.67	21,000	18.76	1,128.51	23,500	20.82	11.03%



# Council Meeting – 21 February 2012

## Report of Councillor John Williams – Leader of the Council

### 1. Budget Setting

- 1.1 This will have been considered earlier in this meeting but I take this opportunity to thank all Members for the constructive manner with which this was approached and to officers for their hard work and commitment in producing the mass of information thus enabling Members to make informed and reasoned decisions.
- 1.2 With a budget gap rising to £2,100,000 this has been one of the most difficult budget setting processes that I have been involved with. We have overcome the difficulties - we no doubt will have had differences of opinion on some issues - but hopefully by now a balanced budget has been agreed.

### 2. Taunton's Retail and Parking

- 2.1 I was heartened to see the report below from the Business Guardian of 7 February 2012 which, despite the acknowledged extremely difficult trading conditions shows Taunton's trading conditions to be remaining favourable compared to the national average. This must reflect well on the energy and commitment of traders and all those working so hard to promote the town centre.

*“The national vacancy rate edged down slightly from the 14.5% recorded in the first six months of 2011 to 14.3% in the second half. When broken down, the headline figure is worse for Scotland and Wales, at 15.4% and 17.3% respectively, than England, where it is 14.2%. The shopping parades of the south and west fared best with Taunton, Salisbury and St Albans enjoying a vacancy rate of less than 9%. The most vibrant centre was Cambridge with a rate of 6.4%, although that masked a near 4% deterioration in the second half. There were also "extremes" of performance, with Swansea suffering a 15% jump in vacancies whereas Slough saw a 12% decline.”*

- 2.2 We fully recognise that an absolutely essential ingredient of a successful town centre is ease of access and available parking. At busy times like Christmas we could not hope to accommodate everybody's desire to park as close to their destination as possible but what I am pleased to report is that overall we were never at capacity, with no available parking in the town. On the peak pre-Christmas Saturday the very central car parks, as would be expected, were extremely busy with considerable turnover, but a little further out, Tangier, Belvedere Road and Priory Bridge Road were nowhere near capacity, so affording plentiful parking if required.
- 2.3 If we turn to ease of access we recognise that we do need much better sign posting to identify car parks, electronic information boards to inform drivers in advance where parking is available and “pay on exit” in car parks that can accommodate this. As and when we can, we will be actively pursuing these initiatives but the major regeneration works that could change our parking

provision have to come first. However, I am pleased to say that our Parking strategy supporting park and ride does reduce the car journeys into town thus easing the excessive congestion.

- 2.4 **Priory Bridge Road car park and Firepool.** The lack of use of the Firepool site does, I know, cause Members considerable concern so I feel it worth reporting on this issue. Priory Bridge Road Car Park has a present capacity of about 250 places and excepting cricket days it is rarely more than 10 to 15% occupied. We have laid out ready as an overflow car park capacity for 300 vehicles on the Firepool site for the Cricket Club to use on match days when they feel the existing capacity is insufficient.
- 2.5 In addition to this St Modwen, our development partners for Firepool, have a contractual agreement to provide us with 200 parking spaces on the Firepool site as and when they close the remainder of Priory Bridge Road for development. They are reviewing this at present and the economics of delivering a suitable surface for this interim parking are prohibitive. Therefore, it is not something we as a Council would wish to undertake to provide extra parking that demand does not warrant at this time. The ultimate solution is that St Modwen are also contracted to provide us a 200 space car park within the final scheme which is likely to be a multi storey car park.
- 2.6 At our last meeting some Members did indicate they had received approaches from individuals who may want short term open air storage. I made the offer then, and repeat it, if any Member has such an approach please do pass to me or officers to follow up. I can assure Members if we can find a suitable short term use then we will pursue it.
- 2.7 **Northern Inner Distributor Road.** The latest word on this is that all planning and preparation is in place but a hearing has to be held over objections to the Compulsory Purchase Order. Because of difficulties in scheduling the Inspector, this is unlikely to be in time for commencement in April. This is a disappointment as this road is vital to opening up the major employment site that we have planned for the old livestock market site. Hopefully the delay will not be excessive.

### **3. Broadband Issues**

- 3.1 We had a very interesting and informative presentation from Michael Dunn from BT, recently at a Members' Briefing which confirmed that Taunton is on track for enablement with Superfast Broadband by the end of this financial year. Michael also provided information on new services to the Bishops Lydeard exchange presently planned and new initiatives such as fibre direct to the premises and Ethernet connections for more businesses requiring faster connections.
- 3.2 In respect of the Connecting Devon and Somerset Broadband programme there was a very useful briefing paper issued by that organisation earlier this Month which if any Member has not seen it please let me know and I will forward. The headline figures are:-
- Improved broadband (>2mbps) to every business and community across Somerset by 2015.

- Superfast broadband (>24mbps) to at least 85% of the area by 2015, with 100% by 2020.

Contained in this briefing is also an appeal for the community and businesses to sign up to a campaign “Keep up to Speed: Get Connected”. This is to show potential private sector investors the likely level of support so I urge everybody to sign up and circulate to all your friends and associates. Registration can be on line [www.connectingdevonandsomerset.co.uk](http://www.connectingdevonandsomerset.co.uk) or by telephone 0844 463887. This only runs until 29 February so please do not wait, register your interest now, it is non binding so only an expression of interest.

### 3.3 Key dates for the future;

- National Broadband Suppliers Framework established May 2012.
- Award of Devon and Somerset Broadband Contract September 2012.
- Work to start and schedule of works announced January/February 2013.
- Superfast Broadband to 85% of the area by 2015.

## 4. Town Centre Works

- 4.1 **Goodlands Garden/Riverside Walk** - Works are now complete and feedback is heartening. It is possible now to traverse alongside the River Tone from Firepool to Longrun Meadow without any steps impeding passage. This has been welcomed by wheelchair and buggy users as it provides a pleasant and safe route to traverse the town. The large paved area in Goodland Gardens is also a magnet to skate-boarders. It is great to see them putting it to such good use as again it is a good facility safe from other traffic.
- 4.2 **Castle Green** - This is proceeding well and for those that have not seen it the old Castle Hotel garages have now been removed and what a wonderful view of the old Castle buildings is revealed. This will be a wonderful backdrop just to view along with the other fine buildings within the square or to any event or show that is staged. As works are progressing the whole area is opening up to demonstrate its spaciousness and what a great setting it will be as a high quality open public area.
- 4.3 **High Street, Taunton** - We have successfully awarded a contract for the works and it is on schedule for completion by the end of March which was a condition of the funding gained. Early days, but great that we have managed to kick start this very important project for Taunton. A team is also established to mount a bid for the Mary Portas High Street Revival funding which, if successful, we would be one of 12 pilot bids nationally. So to succeed will be a great achievement.

## 5. Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group

- 5.1 Penny and I attended a meeting of the above with the Taunton GP Federation also present. It was a preliminary meeting to gain a better understanding of the proposed health service changes and the likely involvement of this

Council. One thing is certain, the changes are massive and far reaching with a huge ring fenced budget being held by Somerset County Council and the Clinical Commissioning Group determining priorities.

- 5.2 The opportunity we have to grasp is the recognition that areas of deprivation and poor housing directly impact on the health of our community. It is imperative therefore that we work with the Commissioning Group to include these problems as a priority to be dealt with. A long way to go to get this up and running but the prospects of all working together for the common good are both exciting and challenging.

## **6. Somerset County Council A303/A30/A358 Initiative**

- 6.1 I have for a long time been pressing the Somerset County Council to prioritise the upgrade of the A358 and Junction 25 of the M5 as the top priority for highways improvement in Somerset. I now applaud the initiative of the County Council in getting all Highways Authorities along the route together to reach an agreement that it is a top priority for the West Country. This to include the A303, A30 and A358 with improvements to Junction 25. This is a major step forward and I welcome it as the economic benefit to the Authorities combined will be huge and must certainly create the right circumstances for Government funding being made available.

- 6.2 I await further developments with interest.

Councillor John Williams

# Council Meeting - 21 February 2012

## Report of Councillor Mrs Vivienne Stock-Williams - Corporate Resources

### 1. Customer Contact Centre

#### Customer Service

- 1.1 Southwest One (SW1) Customer Contact successfully met all KPIs for Taunton Deane during November, December and January – helped in part by slightly milder weather. Customer satisfaction continues to remain high, with levels for the year to date running at 97.2%, as reported in the December service report.
- 1.2 The Service Delivery Manager for Deane House Telephony, Paul Matakitoga, left at the end of December to pursue a career in the private sector – we wish Paul every success. Carrie Minall has been appointed in his place, initially on a three month secondment whilst the management restructure programme is finalised. Carrie is an experienced Team Leader and an SCC secondee. During her time in SW1 so far, she has worked both in the Contact Centre and a short secondment into the People Development (PEM) programme.

#### Service Delivery

##### *Statistical Information:*

Service Line	Reporting Authority	KPI No	Performance Measure	Frequency of Reporting	2011/2012 Target	Nov-11	Dec-11	Jan-12
Customer Contact	TDBC	1	% of calls answered in 20 secs	Monthly	80%	81%	81%	82%
Customer Contact	TDBC	2	% of calls resolved at first point of contact	Monthly	91%	97%	96%	96%
Customer Contact	TDBC	3	% of external customers rating the Customer Contact service as Very Good/Good	Annually (monitored quarterly)	73.5%		97.2%	
Customer Contact	TDBC	4	Abandoned call rate - less than 5%	Monthly	<5%	4.91%	4.90%	4.53%

- 1.3 A total of 8,400 enquiries have been dealt with at The Deane House Main, Housing and Planning Receptions over the past three months, in addition to over 5,500 requests for signposting and visitors for meetings. 5,304 people visited Wellington Community Office – 2,924 to make enquiries including THE Tourist Information Centre and 2,380 to make a payment through the kiosk. The team has dealt with 1,218 letter and email enquiries during this time.
- 1.4 There were no complaints about the service and one formal compliment (other than comments left on the customer satisfaction survey).

- 1.5 The team continues to work with ICT to determine the service's telephony requirements for the future and understand how these will work in line with our Business Continuity Planning. The service is about to undertake a desktop business continuity exercise to ensure all its systems and processes are aligned to deliver in a civil contingencies situation.

## Christmas Opening

- 1.6 As mentioned in the last report, Customer Contact continued to provide a telephone service between Christmas and New Year. In addition, the service remained open until 6pm on Friday, 22 December and 380 calls were answered on that day – 40% after the building closed at 1pm. Call information for the three days between Christmas and New Year is provided below:-

	28-Dec	29-Dec	30-Dec
<b>CALLS OFFERED</b>	<b>426</b>	<b>411</b>	<b>416</b>
<b>CALLS ANSWERED</b>	<b>420</b>	<b>407</b>	<b>410</b>
<b>ABANDONED % [Target less than 5%]</b>	<b>1.41</b>	<b>0.97</b>	<b>1.44</b>
<b>G.O.S.% [ Target 80% within 20 Secs]</b>	<b>94.5</b>	<b>95.8</b>	<b>96.8</b>
<b>% ANSWERED AT 1ST P.O.C.[Target 91%]</b>	<b>98.10</b>	<b>93.12</b>	<b>97.80</b>
<b>AVERAGE ANS CALL TIME</b>	<b>02:43</b>	<b>02:21</b>	<b>02:54</b>

- 1.7 This was a reduced service based on the fact that back offices were closed, but it gave customers the ability to continue to receive an excellent transactional and information service over the holiday week. One customer was extremely unhappy that he was unable to apply for a temporary entertainment licence during this time, otherwise all other customers, whilst some passed comment, were accepting of the fact that the office was closed.
- 1.8 For the first time, Wellington Community Office was also open during Christmas and New Year to provide the customers of Wellington and the surrounding area with a face-to-face service. The service was busy each morning, but visitors tailed off in the afternoon and each day the office closed between 2.30pm – 3pm. The success of this exercise is currently being analysed and results will be fed back to CMT in due course.

## 2. Legal and Democratic Services

### Electoral Services

- 2.1 The Electoral Reform Services recently carried out a survey to assess customer satisfaction with the Council's Electoral Services. If there were no changes to the electoral register, electors could confirm their details either through the ERS automated registration services or return the form by post.
- 2.2 The survey was carried out between 22 August and 21 November 2011 and overall the satisfaction rate with this Council's Electoral Services was 93%.

- 2.3 In terms of those people surveyed as to whether they were confident that elections held in the area were well administered, again the service received a 93% satisfaction rate.
- 2.4 When asked whether they had a good understanding of the way local Councillors and MP's were elected in the Country, 88% of those surveyed said that they did.
- 2.5 In terms of communications and keeping the public informed about the electoral process, including registration and voting in elections, the Council's Electoral Services were given an 83% satisfaction rate.
- 2.6 There is, however, some work to be done with regard to our communications, because 51% of people surveyed said that they did not know how well the money received by the Council for administering elections was used. The team will be looking at this in more detail over the coming months.

### **Localism Act**

- 2.7 A number of sections of the Act have now come into force, although there are still a number of regulations that are awaited before some aspects can finally be implemented.
- 2.8 The Legal and Democratic Services Manager and the Strategy Manager will be providing a series of newsletters for Members to help keep them informed of the changes, because regulations are coming out at different times. If Members would like a Members' Briefing, then please let the Legal and Democratic Services Manager know. Officers have also said that they would be willing to attend Group meetings if this would help understanding of the Act.

### **Standards Regime**

- 2.9 The proposed changes are scheduled for 1 July 2012, but as yet regulations are still awaited. The Legal and Democratic Services Manager has, however, already taken a paper to the Standards Committee and the Constitutional Sub-Committee. The reports can be found on the Council's website and Members Portal.
- 2.10 Reports will also be made to the Corporate Governance Committee on 12 March 2012 and Corporate Scrutiny on 22 March 2012, to enable Members to discuss the changes in more detail. As stated, the Legal and Democratic Services Manager is happy to attend Group meetings, in addition to the newsletters, as it will be important for all Members to be familiar with the changes being proposed. Further updates will follow as soon as they are available.
- 2.11 A summary of the changes are as follows:-
- There is a statutory duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct for its elected and co-opted Members.

- Standards Committees – should the Council continue to have one and, if so, what should its composition be? What should be the role of Parish Councillors?
- All Councils will need to have a Code of Conduct, but there will be a change to the definitions of various interests.
- The Council must put in place arrangements to deal with any complaints alleging a breach of the Code of Conduct.
- There will be no Appeals Procedure, but any decision will be open to Judicial Review.
- The Council must have at least one Independent person to deal with complaints.
- A Register of Interests must be maintained and put on the Council's website. In addition, the Council will also need to hold the Register of all the Parish Councils.
- There are different sanctions for a Breach of the Code of Conduct, including criminal sanctions for failure to declare an interest.
- There are changes to the dispensation process.

### **3. Performance and Client Team**

#### **Client Team**

- 3.1 In general, the services within the SW1 partnership continue to function well. We do, however, have concerns in relation to elements of the Finance and ICT services. In both cases, the Client Team is working closely with these services to identify and implement action plans to remedy the problem areas.
- 3.2 The team is currently working closely with the ICT department to identify and implement solutions to the problems that some Members are experiencing with connecting to the Council's IT network. We intend to start trialling a new way of Members accessing the network within the next couple of months, with a view to offering this facility to all Members early in the new financial year.
- 3.3 A current priority for the team is to agree the key performance indicators (KPI's) for the coming financial year in respect of the SW1 partnership.
- 3.4 Somerset County Council's renegotiation of their contract with SW1 is likely to reach a conclusion in the near future. This is likely to see the Design and Print service, together with elements of their Finance and HR services, return to the County Council. The direct impact of this upon Taunton Deane secondees is minimal. However, the Client Team is working closely with SW1 and the



County Council to ensure that service delivery to Taunton Deane is maintained.

- 3.5 Additional assistance is now being provided to the Client Team to assist in monitoring technical elements of the Property Service (assistance being provided by Mark Green and Ian Franklin) and the ICT Service (by Keith Wiggins). In both cases, this is being provided within existing budgets and will help us to maximise value from our contract with SW1.
- 3.6 We are working closely with Tone Leisure in relation to identifying the feasibility of providing a high ropes facility in Vivary Park. Refurbishment work has now started on the lifts at Station Road Pool. The annual maintenance programme for the coming financial year has been agreed between Tone Leisure and the SW1 Property Services team.

### **Corporate Performance**

- 3.7 The team is currently working with the South West Audit Partnership (SWAP) to ensure that all audit recommendations are incorporated within the Corporate Governance Action Plan. This will improve our ability to monitor progress of all the recommended improvement actions identified.
- 3.8 Data is currently being collected in preparation for submitting the Quarter 3 Performance Report to Corporate Scrutiny on 23 February 2012 and the Executive in March 2012.
- 3.9 A project has now commenced that will provide Value for Money (VFM) analysis of Taunton Deane services. This will involve benchmarking (comparison) of cost and performance data up to 2010/2011, as well as the 'direction of travel'. The findings should be available to Members early in the new financial year.
- 3.10 A Corporate Risk Register refresh exercise has recently been undertaken in conjunction with the Corporate Management Team (CMT). An updated Corporate Risk Register will be taken to the Corporate Governance Committee in March 2012. The team is also looking at ways to improve and strengthen our risk management processes, as effective risk management is increasingly important in the current financial climate.
- 3.11 The Service Planning season is upon us. A refreshed service planning template and process has been issued to Theme Managers to assist them in their service planning. Each Theme Manager will be talking to their respective Portfolio Holders and Shadows during February and March regarding the content of their draft plans for next year.
- 3.12 A new Customer Feedback guidance and policy document has been drafted and will be initially introduced at a Core Council Leads meeting in February 2012. It is hoped that this will further raise the profile and importance of customer feedback (complaints, comments, suggestions and compliments) and introduce a more consistent approach and process. This should consequently provide more opportunity to learn from customer feedback,

deliver on our 'customer charter' and 'core values' and improve our services. A report detailing customer feedback data for 2011 will also be produced for Members by March 2012.

### **Retained Finance and Corporate Insurance**

- 3.13 The insurance function is currently being provided for us by Somerset County Council's Insurance Team, as our Insurance Officer is on maternity leave. This arrangement continues to work well.
- 3.14 The Retained Finance Officer continues to focus on maintaining the day-to-day delivery of the retained finance functions and in providing support to the S151 Officer. Additionally, the Retained Finance Officer is focussing on the Housing Revenue Account Reform (which will require the Council to borrow approximately £85,000,000) and in producing a new Debt Management Policy.

### **Retained HR**

- 3.15 The retained HR function continues to support CMT and Theme Managers with the remaining elements of the Theme 5 restructure, the restructure of the Housing Service and the 2012/2013 Budget proposals.
- 3.16 In addition to the normal workload, support is also being given to the development of a Pay Policy Statement for 2012/2013.

## **4. Revenues and Benefits**

- 4.1 Currently, both Council Tax and Business Rates Collections are ahead of target. Claims for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit continue to rise, with the live caseload now exceeding 9,500. Despite these increases, staff are still improving the speed with which they process these claims.
- 4.2 In January, the service launched an outreach surgery every Tuesday at the Wellington Community Office to assist benefit customers. So far, this has been very well received and appointment bookings are high.
- 4.3 The Revenues and Benefits Customer Forum in December was well attended. Since that event a project group of customers has been established, who are assisting the services to redesign their benefit decision letters.
- 4.4 Preparations for annual billing of Council Tax and Business Rates and uprating all benefit claims are well underway.

## **5. Southwest One (SW1)**

### **Procurement**

- 5.1 The shortfall in delivered savings by the Strategic Procurement Service in SW1 is still a significant issue for the Authority. However, the team is

monitoring the position closely and ensuring that regular reports are being made to Members by the Strategic Procurement Service.

- 5.2 The Strategic Procurement Team is currently looking at savings opportunities associated with the gas service contract, Solar PV installation and amalgamating some elements of DLO and Housing Property Service spend. At the request of Chris Hall, they have recently begun to look at the DLO Stores to see if efficiencies can be made there. (Of these, the gas servicing contract is likely to deliver the greatest amount of savings, as the contract is worth circa £1,000,000). The Procurement Team is also presently tendering for an Insurance Broker, as well as preparing for a new banking contract.

### **SAP Re-launch and Patching**

- 5.3 The key elements of the system have been launched and are working.
- 5.4 The Performance Review (PRED) functionality within SAP is currently being trialled. There are some issues with this module, but it is hoped to roll it out across the Council toward the end of this financial year / beginning of next.
- 5.5 This leaves the sickness, E-recruitment, overtime, leave and some aspects of Business Intelligence Reporting elements of the system which are not currently in use. Work is ongoing with SW1 and our partners to change the way E-recruitment and sickness functions operate and until these changes are made they will not be launched. Overtime is delayed until Taunton Deane reviews its overtime policy as part of the budget savings project, as our rules will need to be programmed into SAP. The advantages of using the leave functionality within SAP are currently under review.

Councillor Vivienne Stock-Williams

# **Full Council - 21 February 2012**

## **Report of Councillor Mark Edwards - Planning, Transportation and Communications**

### **Core Strategy Examination**

- 1.1 The Core Strategy Examination ran from Tuesday, 7 February to Friday, 10 February 2012. The independently appointed Planning Inspector identified an agenda for each of the sessions covering: economy and retail; housing; infrastructure and transport; and place-specific issues.
- 1.2 He listened to the Council's evidence and that of objectors before issuing his final report to follow later. This report will make any recommendations for changes that the Council needs to make prior to the adoption of the document.

### **Annual Monitoring Report**

- 2.1 Since the last update, the Council has published its Annual Monitoring Report, Retail Monitor and Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment. This is available in the Members Room.

### **Planning Enforcement**

- 3.1 The Planning Review highlighted that there was a need for a new statement of practice and guidance for the public and this has been produced in leaflet form. It sets out the new process of investigating complaints and gives general advice on what the Council will and will not do.
- 3.2 The new Enforcement Policy ensures that time is not wasted investigating complaints where no planning harm is caused by the breach. It focuses effort where demonstrable harm is being caused by the unauthorised development.
- 3.3 A review of all 300 plus enforcement cases has been carried out by senior officers and almost half have been closed due to them no longer being under active investigation or not causing any planning harm.
- 3.4 The remaining cases all have a defined course of action to ensure resolution. Planning officers will be carrying out assessments on the 50 cases where a breach of planning control has already been established and, where harm is identified, recommendations to take

formal action will be forthcoming.

## **Heritage – Sandhill Park**

- 4.1 Several post fire meetings have been held. The insurance adjusters's report has been submitted and the owners are waiting the insurers “go ahead” for a temporary roof. -Structural engineers have already designed a scaffold for the latter.
- 4.2 Current concerns relate to the fact there is no roof over the most important part of the building/ significant water damage to ceilings and associated important plasterwork/ significant lying water on floors/and potential frost damage to exposed wall heads.

## **Landscape Team**

- 5.1 The Biodiversity Officer, Barbara Collier, is working with the Somerset Environmental Records Centre to trial ‘Bioplan’, a system of checking planning application sites against protected species records. The existing checking systems picks up land based records such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Local Wildlife Sites but does not always pick up records of bats, barn owls or birds. After a few teething problems the weekly wildlife checks are proving to be a valuable tool in picking up the less obvious wildlife interest sites.
- 5.2 David Galley, Landscape Support Officer, is providing Tree Preservation Order support at Mid Devon District Council, one day a week for their officer who is off on maternity leave.
- 5.3 A Somerset-wide partnership of local authorities, trusts and interested groups has been successful in attracting £25,500 of grant towards establishment of a Somerset-wide Local Nature Partnership (LNP). This is a Central Government initiative promoted through the Natural Environment White Paper to set up groups for the natural environment similar to Local Enterprise Partnerships. The LNP is at an early stage of preparing stakeholder meetings but aims to have the partnership up and running by the end of 2012. The LNP is working towards:-
  - A shared vision and priorities for Somerset’s natural environment;
  - Strong environmental leadership for Somerset at the strategic level; and
  - Strong and active connections with other sectors, leading to new environmental gain.

## **Parking County-wide Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) Project**

- 6.1 Tenders for the Somerset county-wide Civil Parking Enforcement scheme were received at the end of January 2012. The County Council is now evaluating these and the preferred bidder is due to be announced at the end of February.
- 6.2 The project team has recently met with HR and Unison representatives from all districts to further discuss TUPE transfer arrangements. The County Council is finalising its client side structure. The programme is on schedule to meet the implementation date of 11 June 2012.

## **Communications**

- 7.1 A media training session was arranged for Councillors including print media (Debbie Rundle); broadcast media (Simon White, formerly of BBC Somerset); Helen Phillips (Twitter) and Carla Modley (social media and the web). Many thanks to all those who attended for their interest and questions – feedback indicated that some role play would be useful in future sessions.
- 7.2 Work on the 2012/2013 Council Tax booklet is almost complete – the first proof has been received from the production company and a new front cover produced with the help of Graphics, featuring Taunton Deane's investment in regeneration.
- 7.3 Communications on the Olympic Torch Relay are gathering pace with LOCOG – the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games – producing new branding guidelines and a communications workshop. Both will be extremely useful. Taunton will welcome the Torch on Day Three of the nationwide tour. We can expect much attention and interest.
- 7.4 Releases in the past month illustrate the wide variety of services provided by the Council from dealing with anti-social behaviour to providing new play equipment, affordable housing, organising a business fair and qualifying for the Britain in Bloom National Finals.
- 7.5 Deane Dispatch in January featured the work of agencies locally that help the frail and vulnerable while the February edition provides more detail on the High Street, Taunton refurbishment.

Councillor Mark Edwards

# **Council Meeting – 21 February 2012**

## **Report of Councillor Mrs Jane Warmington – Community Leadership**

### **1. Police and Crime Panel (PCP)**

- 1.1 There is a requirement to establish a Shadow PCP by this summer which in the first instance can only comprise ten elected Members, one from each local authority in the area. It is this group of ten that will then decide the wider co-opted membership of the PCP up to a maximum of twenty.
- 1.2 The proposal is for the Council Leaders to be invited to form a Joint Select Committee early in 2012 to agree the allocations above and enable the Shadow PCP to be established.
- 1.3 The Select Committee may also advise the Shadow PCP on co-opting further members, the term of office of Members, resignation and removal of Members, any re-appointments and support arrangements for the Panel.

### **2. Community Policing Awards**

- 2.1 Inspector Stuart Bell has announced the Somerset West Policing District winners of the Community Policing Awards. The overall Force winners will be announced next month at the evening Ceremony.
- 2.2 Out of six award categories, Taunton has won five: Neighbourhood Beat Manager PC Claire Griffiths one of the town centre PCs and PCSO Mark Leach (both from Taunton West Area); the Beat Team made up of Sgt Andy Murphy, PCs Andy Beake, Jon O'Connor and PCSOs Khris Roulston, Susanne Murray and Joanne Farrow (Taunton East Area, North Team); Outstanding Customer satisfaction went to PC Phil Bagg and Response Officer to PC David Hughes both of whom work alongside Core Response Team 2, Taunton.

### **3. Health**

- 3.1 NHS Somerset has produced a Somerset Joint Strategic Needs Assessment which provides a very detailed analysis of health and wellbeing issues that affect communities across Somerset.
- 3.2 This highlights issues for Taunton Deane such as high levels of dementia and epilepsy compared to the County and high levels of obesity and diabetes. On the positive side Taunton Deane has the

best rate for smokers giving up. Further details can be found on the SINE website: <http://www.sine.org.uk/isna-2022/>

- 3.3 The Leader of Council, Chief Executive and Strategy Manager have had meetings with the Taunton Deane GP Federation to look at ways of working more closely with GPs on the health agenda in future, especially in areas of deprivation where health issues are particularly prevalent.
- 3.4 The Strategy Manager and the NHS Trust have organised a Health and Wellbeing event which all Councillors and a range of organisations have been invited to on 1 March 2012. This event will update people on the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board, the health issues in Taunton Deane and projects that are currently in place to address these. It will also be an opportunity for people to influence the Somerset Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

## **4. Priority Areas Strategy (PAS)**

### **Taunton East and North Taunton**

- 4.1 The action plan is expected to come before the Community Scrutiny Committee on 6 March 2012. The final phase of consultation will be with the Halcon and North Taunton MAGs (Multi-Agency Groups), the North Taunton Partnership and Link Partnership, various other community groups, residents and key partners (public and voluntary sectors). Their feedback will be used to refine the Action Plan which will then be considered for approval during Spring 2012.
- 4.2 The Community Development Team clean up days have removed over 40 tonnes of scrap with a group of regular volunteers from Halcon.
- 4.3 Link and Resource Centres continue to serve the communities well. Tina Herbert of Vista (outside funding, three days a week for a year) is helping to run the job clubs, community learning and skills for life for both groups and individuals.

### **New Youth Club**

- 4.4 The new Taunton North Youth and Sports Club will be opening in March at the Community Hall in Selworthy Road, Priorswood, Taunton. It has been set up and will be run by a group of local volunteers and is open on Wednesday and Friday evenings, with a boxing club on Tuesday and Thursday evenings.
- 4.5 Other community groups will continue to use the building as well. The refurbishment has been undertaken by the group who have worked hard to make this happen. This has been supported by our Community Development Team, Somerset County Council Youth and Community



Team and the local Policing Team. There are a range of facilities including an Astroturf pitch laid on the old tennis court.

### **Asda Green**

- 4.5 This large play park is nearing completion, has been successfully put to the test by local school groups and is due to open early in March 2012. Future activities include planting, painting, nest boxes, an environmental project as well as play events and sports competitions.
- 4.6 Huge thanks to all those involved in transforming this piece of rough ground into what promises to be a wonderful community asset.

### **Rural Areas**

- 4.7 Under the chairmanship of Katherine Armstrong (Community Council) the Rural PAS Group has produced benchmarking reports and had initial consultation with Members (Community Scrutiny - August 2011) and the Parish and Town Councils. Priorities are likely to be a mix of themes such as access to services (an important issue across the rural areas of Taunton Deane) and geographic focusing on particular settlements.
- 4.8 To help identify draft priorities, Somerset County Council (SCC) and the Taunton Deane Partnership have been consulted. It is important that the various rural initiatives are integrated to provide coordinated action from the partner agencies.
- 4.9 Members will be kept informed through the Community Scrutiny Committee (6 March 2012).

### **Troubled Families**

- 4.10 This has moved on from the initial joint SCC/Taunton Deane bid (under Community Budgets) as the Government wants to roll out a programme across the whole country (40% funded, £448,000 identified). SCC as the top tier authority has been awarded a support grant of £20,000 to design the project and appoint a co-ordinator by April 2012.
- 4.11 We are better placed than most to get on with this having done the preliminary work (the initial bid based on the pilot undertaken with high contact families in Highbridge). Lead Officer Vikki Hearn.

### **Tell Us Once**

- 4.12 This service is already making a difference. In January 270 people within Taunton Deane used the service to register a death (188) and a birth (82). This led to 425 notifications being sent on to Taunton Deane

services plus many others onto SCC, HMRC, DWP, DVLA and th Passport Office representing a significant help to those registering.

- 4.13 Housing is currently being added on to the system and the housing team are getting their staff set up to do this, due to go live within the next few weeks. Customer feedback requested this so adding it is really good news.
- 4.14 As a rule of thumb, the next of kin would ordinarily need to tell seven different public sector organisations about a death. Therefore we can estimate that this reduced the number of contacts by 1316 (188x7). As an average call to local government costs £3.21, this represents a significant cost saving to the public sector.  
[www.somerset.gov.uk/tellusonce](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/tellusonce)

## **5. Grants Panel**

- 5.1 Following the Community Scrutiny Committee and the Executive (December 2011), it was agreed to establish a Grants Panel (comprising a mix of relevant Members and officers) during Spring 2012 to administer and monitor financial support to the Voluntary and Community Sector from across the Council.
- 5.2 The VCS budgets are held by the Strategy Unit, Community Development, Economic Development and Housing. This will be set up over the next few weeks.

Councillor Jane Warmington

# **Council Meeting - 21 February 2012**

## **Report of Councillor Norman Cavill - Economic Development, Asset Management, Arts and Tourism**

### **1. Keeping Members informed**

#### **1.1 Taunton Deane Economy Bulletin**

Quarterly Economic Bulletin produced in January 2012. Now circulated to all Members and business contacts and put on Taunton Deane website.

Monthly Job Seeker Allowance (JSA) Update circulated to Members, giving details of changes to claimant rates locally. Due to seasonal recruitment the number of job seekers did not rise at the end of the year to reflect the longer term trend. Numbers are up on previous years, and there is an increase in people unemployed up to six months.

Comments on the content of the Bulletin would be appreciated.

#### **1.2 Staffing Issues**

The team now comprises 3.5 staff members, plus Catrin Brown who joined the team at the start of January 2012 to work only on the Olympic Torch Relay. The team is strengthening links with Project Taunton.

Much of the team's capacity (approx 50%+) is going into the Torch Relay event which takes place on 21 May 2012, but every effort is made to keep Economic Development projects on track. We are planning to review the service in the summer, including new inward investment service, business engagement programme, and small business grants.

### **2. Theme 1 Stimulating Business Growth and Investment**

#### **2.1 Business Liaison**

The Business Team has continued to undertake a proactive programme of visits to larger local businesses with the aim of assisting businesses to realise their growth and investment plans. Whilst many businesses are met regularly, the following organisations have been met on a 1:1 basis during the past two months and currently being supported include:-

- Taunton School
- Tone Dale Workshops

- Superact
- Wasteology, Wellington
- Wim Karen, Jeweller, Wellington
- Simon Davis Wellington
- Helen Hounsell Wellington
- James Johnson Taunton
- Chloe Beehive nursery, Roughmoor
- Joan Lee, Wellington
- Daisy Cottage Tea room, Bishops Lydeard

## 2.2 Rural Post Offices

There has been a slow uptake for for the website for rural retailers but a further letter is being sent out.

The Council also supported a training event in November for rural Post Offices at Dillington House.

## 2.3 Business Events

### Wellington Business Event

Takes place on the 23 February 2012. It is being delivered in conjunction with Wellington Chamber of Commerce and sponsored by Porter Dodson. Twenty five stands have been booked and many more indicating that they will be attending.

### Taunton Deane Tourism Conference

An event is being planned at the Tacchi Morris Arts Centre for the morning of 22 February 2012. Conference, networking and information/brochure exchange.

## 2.4 Support for Rural Business Projects

A small grant fund is available from Taunton Deane for rural projects and innovative Renewable Energy projects. So far this year the Council has contributed £1,000 towards the 10 Parishes Arts Festival (brochure and web site), and £500 to Wellington Chamber towards a town centre leaflet and interactive web site.

**LARC** - Levels and Moors and Western areas LARC open for new applications for business projects; Blackdown Hills is fully committed. It is hoped that there will be a successor to the LARC programme in 2014 but no information is forthcoming at the moment.

**Making the Links** - We are also working with Somerset County Council (SCC) to see if there is a possibility of obtaining Magnox funding to assist the business mentoring scheme.

www launched for Creative Sector – [www.creativesomerset.com](http://www.creativesomerset.com)

### **Small Business Grant**

One business grant approved for £1,000 - Daisy Cottage Tea Room, Bishops Lydeard for publicity/ promotion of new enterprise.

## **2.5 Into Somerset**

The Executive agreed in January 2012 to withdraw from this partnership. Since then there have been meetings with SCC to discuss a collaborative approach to marketing of Taunton Deane.

## **3. Theme 2 Ensuring a Skilled and Entrepreneurial workforce**

### **3.1 Job Clubs for long term unemployed people**

In December I reported that the Somerset Charity, ViSTA, has been appointed by the team to enhance Taunton Deane's three Job Clubs in Halcon, Priorswood, and Wellington. ViSTA has significant expertise in providing learning and development to charities and community organizations and is experienced in delivering Community Learning and Job Clubs

It is worthy of note that the take up amongst local unemployed has increased considerably, particularly in Wellington.

### **3.2 Fredericks Somerset**

Two applications from the Taunton Deane area will be considered at the February panel. Also there have been a further two enquiries from the area.

## **4. Theme 3 Creating an Attractive Business Environment**

### **4.1 Taunton Town Centre Company and BID programme**

The Council, at Member and officer level through the Economic Development Team, is an active member of the Town Centre Company, working closely on specific events (such as the Tour of Britain and the Olympic Torch Relay) as well as coordinating the provision of town centre services.

The report to the Executive in February 2012 gave authority for Taunton Deane to hold the second BID ballot (probably 30 March 2012) following extensive consultation in the town centre.

The new BID programme (if vote is successful) will put resources into:  
A Better Promoted Taunton. A safer Taunton and a Taunton Better for Business

## **4.2 Floodlighting**

Executive resolved in October 2011 to transfer floodlighting on third party properties, mostly churches, to the property owner. Officers have written to those owners inviting them to take ownership of the installations from 1 April 2012.

At the moment ten churches have signed up for ownership of the lights, a further 8 are discussing transfer and 2 have declined. Further consideration is being given to ideas that could address the cost implications.

## **5. Taunton Tourism Information, Ticket and Travel Centre (TIC)**

The TIC Team continue to work closely with the Economic Development Unit, Project Taunton, Taunton Town Centre Company and other organisations to raise the profile of Taunton Deane.

Compared to previous months there has been a slight decrease in the numbers through the door (which in recent weeks can be explained by the cold weather), however spend by customers has remained stable and is looking encouraging for 2012.

The TIC Team have refreshed the layout of the office to create a larger retail space to increase sales this year. Preparations are also being made for the new tourist season with the hope by mid-March that all 2012 promotional material will be available for customers to collect.

The Tourist Information Lead continues to be involved with the Somerset Tourism Association and has been helping with the distribution and storage of their new brochure and updating the official tourism website [www.visitsomerset.co.uk](http://www.visitsomerset.co.uk)

The Travel Centre Manager is currently analysing the needs and booking patterns of TIC customers to help shape the future direction of the service offered. A closer working relationship with local bus operators and the West Somerset Railway have been forged to encourage the use of green transport options this summer.

The TIC has now joined the world of twitter and can be followed  
@TauntonTIC.

Councillor Norman Cavill

# Council Meeting – 21 February 2012

## Report of Councillor Ken Hayward – Environmental Services

### 1. Waste Management

- 1.1 The Somerset Waste Board met on 16 December 2011. Among its busy agenda, it resolved to approve the Draft Business Plan, the Draft Communications Plan, and the Draft Annual Budget for 2012/2013 (totalling £38,148,364).
- 1.2 The proposed fees for chargeable services the 2012/2013 year from 1 April 2012 were also formally considered as approved at our last Full Council meeting on 13 December 2011.
- 1.3 The first Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel meeting was held on 9 January 2012. During discussion, the following points were made, which I thought would be useful to share with you all:-
  - The Landfill Tax escalator will have significant implications for the partnership over the coming years – especially for the disposal authority. The position post 2014/2015 is not yet clear but it is anticipated that the level of Landfill Tax will continue to rise;
  - The implications of the recession on recycling levels included the reduced amount of newspapers collected;
  - 97% of the Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP) budget is in effect an outsourced budget paid directly to contractors;
  - All costs are apportioned using a complex cost sharing mechanism. The cost sharing mechanism has been recently reviewed and found to be equitable.
  - The Partnership's Constitution does not allow for 'cost shunting'. This means that no single partner can make a decision which adversely affects the other partners. A particular example of this was the implications of the County's decision to reduce services at Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) which has led to an increase in flytipping. Somerset County Council is required to compensate the district authorities for their increased costs.
  - It is for the Board to agree how savings are delivered. Individual partners can specify the level of savings they wish to achieve but the Board will agree how.
  - The contract re-negotiation with May Gurney will represent between 3% and 4% savings annually for partners.
  - In the future, savings can only really be achieved through service reductions.



- 1.4 Fly tipping numbers sadly continue to be unacceptably high:-
- October: 53
  - November: 59
  - December: 29
- 1.5 I strongly believe that the reason behind these higher figures goes much deeper than any changes to the HWRC's operating hours. Just today I saw a dozen or so bags dumped in Wood Street, Taunton. The person who dumped them there clearly had no intention of taking them to the HWRC. In an effort to reduce these figures, I have instigated a task force to look at ways in which we can reduce the incidents of fly tipping within Taunton Deane. I hope to have a verbal update on this for Full Council on the evening.
- 1.6 The SWP is working with Viridor to commence commissioning of a dedicated food waste Anaerobic Digester facility by 30 June 2013. The community will benefit from a share of income from sale of outputs (energy, heat and digestate) above a minimum threshold.
- 1.7 A key aim for the SWP is to seek a non-landfill option for residual waste which, through energy and heat generation offers both environmental and economic benefits in the short term. In accordance with the Waste Core Strategy Development Plan and subject to delivery of the preferred option, the aim is to move away from landfill as the primary disposal method by 2016.

## **2. Climate Change / Carbon Management**

### **Feed In Tariffs**

- 2.1 Members who have been following this saga will be aware that the Government was taken to Court in December 2011 by Friends of the Earth (FoE) and two solar companies. Mr Justice Mitting, said that it would be illegal for the Government's proposed cut to have an effective date of 12 December, two weeks before the end of the consultation on the 23 December 2011. The Government appealed to the Supreme Court.
- 2.2 However, the Supreme Court has not yet decided whether the case fits their criteria and has said that the Government's case could take months to reach the court rooms if it is taken on. We await news.
- 2.3 The good news is that on 9 February 2012 the Government announced plans to ensure the future of the Feed-in Tariffs scheme to make it more predictable. Transparency, longevity and certainty are at the heart of the new improved scheme.
- 2.4 The reforms will provide greater confidence to consumers and industry investing in exciting renewable technologies such as solar power, anaerobic digestion, micro-CHP, wind and hydro power.

### **The Deane House**

- 2.5 Cavity wall insulation has now been installed for just under £10,000, which is showing significant energy savings.

### **3. Crematorium**

- 2.6 Southwest One are currently putting together a tender package for the building works required prior to the installation. This tender should go out on the 9 March 2012 for a four week tender period.
- 2.7 Unfortunately, structural engineers have found a problem with the Crematory floor, which will now need to be re-laid and this will impact upon the timetable. I hope to have some more details on this in time for the Full Council meeting.

Councillor Ken Hayward

# **Council meeting - 21 February 2012**

## **Report of Councillor Mrs Catherine Herbert – Sport, Parks and Leisure**

### **1. Parks**

- 1.1 We all look forward to the spring flowers in the parks soon, although some have already tried to make an early appearance!
- 1.2 I had a meeting this month with David Evans and Colin Johnson of SASP to discuss an idea for bringing the Olympics alive in the parks. I am hopeful that we will be able to support a series of 'Park Games' starting on Sunday, 20 May 2012 in Victoria Park, Taunton. As soon as plans start coming together I will let you know more detail.

### **2. Community Leisure and Play**

- 2.1 Consultation with local children for the improvements to Wellington Recreation Ground play area took place in the park on 14 February 2012. I am sure that the children will have come up with a very long and inspirational list of ideas for what they would like to see! Once the consultation is complete we will be pushing on to get the work done in time for the summer half term.
- 2.2 Lyngford Park, Taunton will shortly see some very exciting adult outdoor gym equipment installed. The pieces will be ready by Easter.
- 2.3 French Weir Park, Taunton is now home to some new play equipment chosen by children at last summer's annual family fun day. If anyone has not seen a modern style roundabout then do pop down and see!
- 2.6 I am very happy to report that Viridor/Adsa Green is close to completion and plans are being made for the grand opening.
- 2.7 The mud-bumps in Wellington will shortly be improved and a plan is being drawn up for the refurbishment of Wellington Pavilion – both from Section 106 Agreement monies.

### **3. Tone Leisure (Taunton Deane) Limited Activities**

#### **Community, Sports and Health Development**

- 3.1 Tone continues to work hard to develop a number of community outreach programmes:-

## Health Development

### 3.2 Older People

3.2.1 Postural Stability classes continue to run at Lodge Close, Wellington and Abbeyfield Residential Home, Taunton, with an additional 'beginners' falls class starting in Taunton in April 2012 for three months.

3.2.2 Ten Active Living Centres are involved with a physical activity programme across Taunton Deane including seated football, seated badminton, tai chi, flexercise and seated hockey.

3.2.3 A Flexercise workshop ran in January with 15 participants and high demand for another has led to another course being arranged for April. Refresher Flexercise training for existing leaders has been booked for March 2012.

### 3.3 Weight Management

3.3.1 Tone submitted a bid for the NHS Community Pounds Project and was successful in winning funding for Priorswood Community Group. This initiative currently has over 30 registered participants in the scheme. It is running various activities including badminton at Wellsprings, swimming at St. James Street Baths, Zumba, health walks, a weight management course and healthy cooking classes.

3.3.2 During November 2011 an NHS Weight Management course was run for the staff at NHS East Reach Offices in Taunton as part of the NHS Go For It Challenge that is being run on a countywide basis.

### 3.4 NHS Health Checks

3.4.1 Tone continues to work in partnership with the GP surgeries in Taunton to deliver the NHS Health Checks on an outreach basis to provide an intervention to the number of residents contracting any form of cardiovascular disease in the future.

### 3.5 Sportivate

3.5.1 Tone Leisure have been successful in securing funds from SASP/Sportivate to deliver sports projects for 14-25 year olds that will encourage long term access to physical activity.

3.5.2 Currently Tone is running a ONE membership offer, where young people can purchase one month's membership and get a second month free, enabling young people to have access to a wide range of sports and fitness opportunities, including swimming, golf, fitness classes, gym sessions, climbing and racquet sports.

3.5.3 Starting week commencing 20 February 2012, Tone will be running Indoor Golf Sessions and PING (innovative form of table tennis) at Wellsprings Leisure Centre, all supported by Sportivate funding.

### 3.6 Inclusion

- 3.6.1 Tone have been successful in securing some Short Breaks funding to support children with individual needs and disabilities on their holiday activity programme. The funding will pay for additional support workers to ensure each child's needs are met.

## **Facility News**

### 3.7 Taunton Pool

- 3.7.1 Refurbishment work started on the passenger lift week commencing 6 February 2012. This work will see a complete overhaul on the existing lift and work should be completed by mid-March. Abbey Lifts, who are based in North Somerset, were the successful contractor. Pre-work commencement meetings have already taken place and both the Council and Tone are very happy with the bid and tender process.

- 3.7.2 Taunton Pool is also maximizing the recently purchased fun equipment by offering Sea Scooter and Water Walker birthday parties. These exclusive pool parties will take place outside of the normal pool operating hours in an attempt to minimize disruption for the general public.

### 3.8 Wellington Sports Centre

- 3.8.1 The Bfit (Z3) young person's project has now entered into its third and final year of funding with the Big Lottery project. This successful project still attracts over 300 visits per month from the young people of Wellington and surrounding communities. Plans are progressing to ensure that this project continues once the funding comes to an end and early indication is showing that this project will remain sustainable for the foreseeable future.

- 3.8.2 The group exercise programme continues to grow from strength to strength which has recently seen the addition of a new Box Fit class introduced to the programme.

- 3.8.3 The management of the centre attend regular regional badminton network meetings and have just agreed to enter into the No Strings badminton franchise. These weekly session will encourage those who have a genuine interest in badminton to turn up and play in a casual group environment.

### 3.9 Wellsprings Leisure Centre

- 3.9.1 A new functional fitness zone is soon to be installed as part of a small upgrade to the Wellsprings gym.

### 3.10 Vivary Golf Course

3.10.1 Vivary Junior Golf Club started in January 2012 and Course Pro Richard Coffin will be dedicating Saturday afternoons to getting a strong junior club going once again. So far there are 8 children between the ages of 10 and 15 that have signed up with a view to forming a team by the beginning of the 2012 golf season.

Councillor Catherine Herbert

# **Council Meeting – 21 February 2012**

## **Report of Councillor Mrs Jean Adkins – Housing Services**

### **1. Housing Property Services**

- 1.1 A good response was received to three tendering exercises recently undertaken. The Annual Servicing and Maintenance (Gas) contract was a full OJEU process, subject to a potential challenge, the period for which expires at the end of day, as I write. The contractor for this contract, and also that for the bathroom fitting, will therefore be announced shortly.
- 1.2 The Air Source Heat Pump contract was awarded to Otter South West Limited and is for installations at 37 properties in Churchinford, Stoke St Gregory and Creech St Michael where there is no mains gas available. This follows a successful pilot scheme.

### **2. Affordable Housing**

- 2.1 Affordable Housing Development Partnership - The Council is currently seeking expressions of interest from Registered Social Landlords to enter into a five year partnering agreement to enable us to meet the aims and objectives of our Housing Strategy. The closing date for submissions is 20 February 2012 and it is hoped to hold interviews towards the end of March.

### **3. Strategic Tenancy Policy**

- 3.1 It is a requirement of the Localism Act that a policy is published by all District and Unitary Authorities.
- 3.2 An interim policy has been developed with our colleagues in the Somerset Strategic Housing Partnership. The final strategy will be drawn up once the various pieces of legislation around changes to tenure come into effect.

### **4. Estates Team and Anti-social Behaviour**

- 4.1 The Anti-Social Behaviour Officers are continuing to make an impact and report regularly on their cases to the Portfolio Holder and Shadow and the Tenant Services Management Board.
- 4.2 A Lettings Policy for parts of Halcon is being drafted, following the successful policy at Leycroft Grove.
- 4.3 There has been an increase in the number of incidents reported since the team was put in place a year ago, but this is felt to be because of their high profile and confidence that issues will be tackled.

## **5. Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership**

- 5.1 An update on the SWPSHP's activities has been received and will be circulated under separate cover as there is much of interest to all Members.

## **6. Consultation**

### **Right to Buy**

- 6.1 We have responded to the Department for Communities and Local Government's consultation on proposed changes to Right to Buy.
- 6.2 The main thrust is around methods of using the receipts to build new homes and whether this would best be done at local or national level.
- 6.3 My own view and that of the Tenant Services Management Board is that the receipts should be retained locally. It was also suggested that newly built Council houses should not be sold under Right to Buy until they were at least 10 years old.

## **7. Self-Financing**

- 7.1 The final settlement figures were issued by the Government on 1 February 2012 and were an improvement on the provisional estimate.
- 7.2 On 26 March 2012 we will be required to take out loans from the Public Works Loan Board amounting to £85,198,000 in order to exit the Negative Subsidy System under which we will pay approximately £7,000,000 this current year. Our Treasury Management specialists, Arlingclose, gave a presentation to Community Scrutiny Committee and the Executive and will be working to secure the best deal for us on the day. The interest rate is currently assumed to be 3.64%.
- 7.3 Our borrowing cap has been set at £115,784,000, leaving headroom of approximately £16,000,000



## **8. Housing Revenue Account 30 Year Business Plan**

- 8.1 This has now been finalised following the settlement figures and will now include provision for a Development Fund to enable the building of new Council housing, albeit on a small scale.
- 8.2 The plan envisages debt being cleared by Year 18 of the plan to optimise interest payments on these loans but, of course, other debt may be taken on in the interim to finance future plans.
- 8.3 The Business Plan is a living document and will be reviewed annually. My thanks go to all who have worked so hard on this. We look forward to an exciting future under self-financing.

Councillor Mrs Jean Adkins