

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 4 October 2016 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 report any apologies for absence.
- 2 Minutes of the meetings of the Council held on the 12 and 26 July 2016 and the 4 and 22 August 2016 (attached).
- 3 To receive any communications.
- 4 Declaration of Interests  
To receive declarations of Disposable Pecuniary Interest or personal or prejudicial interests, in accordance with the Code of Conduct. The usual declarations made at meetings of Full Council are shown on the attachment.
- 5 To receive questions from Taunton Deane Electors under Standing Order 15.
- 6 To receive any petitions or deputations under Standing Orders 16 and 17.
- 7 The Proposed Development at Firepool (the Old Cattle Market), Taunton - To consider the attached Motion proposed by Councillor Simon Coles and seconded by Councillor Jefferson Horsley (attached). An assessment of the implications for the Council should the Motion be carried is also attached.
- 8 Part I - To deal with written questions to the Executive.
- 9 Part II - To receive reports from the following Members of the Executive:-
  - (a) Councillor John Williams - Leader of the Council;
  - (b) Councillor Patrick Berry - Environmental Services and Climate Change;
  - (c) Councillor Mark Edwards - Economic Development, Asset Management, Arts and Tourism and Communications;
  - (d) Councillor Roger Habgood - Planning Policy and Transportation;
  - (e) Councillor Catherine Herbert - Sports, Parks and Leisure;
  - (f) Councillor Richard Parrish - Corporate Resources;
  - (g) Councillor Jane Warmington - Community Leadership;
  - (h) Councillor Terry Beale - Housing Services.

Bruce Lang  
Assistant Chief Executive

06 January 2017

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.

Except at meetings of Full Council, where public participation will be restricted to Public Question Time only, 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)



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 the Corporate Support Unit on 01823 356414 or email [r.bryant@tauntondeane.gov.uk](mailto:r.bryant@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 email: [enquiries@tauntondeane.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@tauntondeane.gov.uk)

## **Council Members:-**

Councillor V Stock-Williams (Chairman and Mayor of Taunton Deane)  
Councillor H Prior-Sankey (Deputy Mayor)  
Councillor J Adkins  
Councillor M Adkins  
Councillor T Aldridge  
Councillor T Beale  
Councillor P Berry  
Councillor J Blatchford  
Councillor C Booth  
Councillor R Bowrah, BEM  
Councillor W Brown  
Councillor N Cavill  
Councillor S Coles  
Councillor W Coombes  
Councillor D Cossey  
Councillor T Davies  
Councillor D Durdan  
Councillor K Durdan  
Councillor C Edwards  
Councillor M Edwards  
Councillor H Farbahi  
Councillor M Floyd  
Councillor J Gage  
Councillor E Gaines  
Councillor A Govier  
Councillor A Gunner  
Councillor R Habgood  
Councillor T Hall  
Councillor C Herbert  
Councillor C Hill  
Councillor M Hill  
Councillor J Horsley  
Councillor J Hunt  
Councillor G James  
Councillor R Lees  
Councillor S Lees  
Councillor L Lisgo, MBE  
Councillor S Martin-Scott  
Councillor I Morrell  
Councillor S Nicholls  
Councillor R Parrish  
Councillor J Reed  
Councillor S Ross  
Councillor R Ryan  
Councillor Miss F Smith  
Councillor F Smith  
Councillor P Stone  
Councillor A Sully  
Councillor N Townsend

Councillor C Tucker  
Councillor J Warmington  
Councillor P Watson  
Councillor D Webber  
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 12 July 2016 at 6.30 p.m.

Present      The Mayor (Councillor Mrs Stock-Williams)  
                  The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Prior-Sankey)  
                  Councillors Mrs Adkins, M Adkins, Aldridge, Beale, Berry,  
                  Mrs Blatchford, Brown, Cavill, Coles, Coombes, Davies, D Durdan,  
                  Miss Durdan, Edwards, Farbahi, Gaines, Govier, Mrs Gunner,  
                  Habgood, Hall, Mrs Herbert, Mrs Hill, Horsley, Hunt, James, R Lees,  
                  Ms Lisgo, Martin-Scott, Morrell, Nicholls, Parrish, Mrs Reed, Ross,  
                  Ryan, Miss Smith, Mrs Smith, Stone, Sully, Townsend, Mrs Tucker,  
                  Mrs Warmington, Watson, Ms Webber, Williams and Wren

Mrs A Elder – Chairman of the Standards Advisory Committee

### 1.      **Mayor's Cadet**

The Mayor introduced Lance Corporal Paul Bowler to the Council who had recently been appointed 'Mayor's Cadet'.

### 2.      **Minutes**

- (a) The minutes of the meeting of Taunton Deane Borough Council held on 12 April 2016, copies having been sent to each Member, were signed by the Mayor subject to the resolution of Minute No. 7 being amended to read as follows:-

**“Resolved** that it be agreed to endorse:-

- (1) The additional text clarifying the current Regulation 123 infrastructure list;
- (2) The proposed draft Payment in Kind Policy;
- (3) The proposed draft CIL Charitable Relief Policy;
- (4) The proposed draft CIL Exceptional Circumstances Relief Policy; and
- (5) That the Taunton Unparished Area Advisory Panel be consulted in respect of the allocation / spending of the CIL Meaningful Proportion Payments (derived from the Payment in Kind Policy) passed to the Unparished Area following the approval of developments within Taunton.”

- (b) The minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Council held on 12 May 2016, copies having been sent to each Member, were signed by the Mayor.

### 3.      **Apologies**

Councillors Bowrah, Mrs Edwards, C Hill and Wedderkopp.

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

Councillors M Adkins, Coles, Govier, Prior-Sankey and Wedderkopp declared personal interests as Members of Somerset County Council. Councillor Mrs Herbert declared a personal interest as an employee of the Department of Work and Pensions. Councillor Wren declared a personal interest as the Clerk to Milverton Parish Council. Councillors Stone and D Durdan declared prejudicial interests as Tone Leisure Board representatives. Councillor Ms Lisgo declared a personal interest as a Director of Tone FM. Councillor Edwards declared a personal interest as the Chairman of Governors of Queens College. Councillor Farbahi declared a personal interest as the owner of land in Taunton Deane. Councillor Hall declared a personal interest as a Director of Southwest One. Councillor Parrish declared a personal interest as the District Councils' representative on the Somerset Pensions Committee. Councillor Mrs Hill declared personal interests as a representative on the Board of Directors of Apple FM and as a Trustee of both Hestercombe House and Gardens and the Somerset Building Preservation Trust. Councillor Federica Smith declared a personal interest as Chairperson of Refugee Aid from Taunton.

#### **5. Public Question Time**

Mr Alan Debenham asked whether there was any chance of extending the opening hours of the Priorswood Household Waste Recycling Centre in Taunton beyond 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. during the summer months?

Councillor Berry responded by stating that although there was a fine balance between costs and opening hours, he would arrange for this request to be seriously considered. He would respond to Mr Debenham in due course.

Mr Debenham went on to talk about the proposed devolution arrangements referred to in the agenda. He felt that devolution was a further step towards mergers and yet more public sector savings. In particular, he felt that an Elected Mayor to run a conglomeration of Local Authorities was wrong and hoped that this would be strongly resisted.

He went on to refer to potential problems with future Council funding especially when the Rate Support Grant and New Homes Bonus was phased out By the Government. This could only be mitigated by further austerity savings or by 'real' devolution where Councils could raise their own funding, for example via Business Rate retention, then deciding themselves how such funding should be spent.

In reply, Councillor Williams reported that the Government had confirmed that an Elected Mayor was not a pre-requisite to negotiating a devolution deal. Under this arrangement, funding provided by the Government would be prioritised by the Combined Authority to meet the cost of projects in the Heart of the South West Region. There were no plan to move any powers away from Local Councils to the Combined Authority.

Councillor Williams added that it would be excellent if Councils could raise its

own funding. However, in terms of Business Rate retention there was little likelihood the Government would allow Councils to retain anywhere near 100% of Business Rates. If they did, the Councils current financial concerns would be considerably eased.

**6. Motion - Hate Crimes**

Moved by Councillor Mrs Warmington, seconded by Councillor Parrish.

“The recent open letter received from the Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable has been prepared in response to a reported increase in hate crime victimisation and racial or anti-immigrant abuse within the local area following the outcome of the European Union Referendum on 23 June 2016.

It is noted that the Police want those who are victims of hate crime to feel confident in the belief that their reports will be taken seriously and that the Police will provide protection and any support that is needed.

The Council is therefore asked to formally endorse the contents of the letter”.

The Motion was put and was carried.

**7. Bishops Lydeard and Cothelstone Neighbourhood Development Plan - Formal adoption as a Development Plan Document for Taunton Deane Borough Council**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the Bishops Lydeard and Cothelstone Neighbourhood Plan.

Through the introduction of the Localism Act, Neighbourhood Development Plans had been introduced into the Planning system. The intention was to give communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape a locally distinctive development plan which reflected growth needs and priorities.

From inception, Taunton Deane Neighbourhood Plans were community led development plan documents with the Local Planning Authority providing advice and assistance, and taking regulatory decisions at key legislative stages set out in the Acts and Regulations.

A Neighbourhood Plan was required to be predominantly land-use based. It could not be contrary to National and Local Planning Policy, nor could it conflict with European Legislation. A Neighbourhood Plan could not restrict development but it could shape development that had been allocated through local Planning Policy and allocate land for development.

The Bishops Lydeard and Cothelstone Parish Council began the process of developing a Neighbourhood Plan in 2012 and an application was subsequently received to produce a Neighbourhood Plan and the designation of the Parish as a Neighbourhood Plan Area. As required by the Regulations,



the application was published for statutory consultation.

Following this consultation exercise, Taunton Deane formally designated the entirety of the Parish of Bishops Lydeard and Cothelstone as a Neighbourhood Planning Area on 30 May 2013.

The Neighbourhood Plan was developed through an iterative process over two and a half years using quantitative and qualitative data. The Plan contained nine policies covering such areas as Housing for Older People and Families, Housing Design and Density, the Conversion of Existing Premises to Commercial Use, the Provision of Transport Infrastructure and Foot and Cycle Paths.

The Neighbourhood Plan process was also used to establish Parish Priorities for Community Infrastructure Receipts. However, as this was not purely a land-use matter, this appeared as an appendix in the draft Plan.

The Neighbourhood Plan and its supporting documents were submitted to the Council on 1 October 2015 and, in accordance with the regulations, it was subjected to regulatory consultation, also for a six week period. A total of ten representations were received during the period of consultation.

These representations were submitted to an Independent Examiner who was jointly appointed by Taunton Deane and the Parish Council, in accordance with the Regulations, to carry out an independent examination of the Neighbourhood Plan.

The Independent Examiner's report was received in January 2016 and stated that the Neighbourhood Plan was compliant and compatible, subject to a number of minor changes being incorporated.

These changes were accepted by the Portfolio Holder whose decision was reported through the Council's Weekly Bulletin on 4 February 2016.

Further reported that to comply with the Neighbourhood Planning (Referendum) Regulations and Neighbourhood Planning (Prescribed Dates) Regulations, the Neighbourhood Plan had to be subjected to a referendum. This took place on 5 May 2016. Those persons on the Electoral Register eligible to vote were asked whether they wanted Taunton Deane to use the Neighbourhood Plan for Bishops Lydeard and Cothelstone to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?

From the 2,336 electorate in the Neighbourhood Plan Area, 733 persons voted with 583 (79.54%) in favour.

Noted that the Planning Guidance stated that as soon as it was reasonably practical following a referendum, the Council - as the Local Planning Authority – was required to decide whether the Neighbourhood Plan should be adopted.

**Resolved** that the Bishops Lydeard and Cothelstone Neighbourhood Plan be formally adopted ("made") as a Taunton Deane Borough Council

Development Plan Document, and used in the planning application decision making process for the Bishops Lydeard and Cothelstone Parish area.

## 8. **Heart of the South West Formal Devolution Bid**

Considered report previously circulated, which sought approval to sign up 'in principle' to the pursuit of a Devolution Deal and the creation of a Combined Authority for the Heart of the South West (HotSW) sub-region to administer the powers and funding devolved through the Deal.

Devolution for the HotSW was being led by the Leaders of Somerset and Devon County Councils, all Somerset and Devon Districts, Torbay Council, Plymouth City Council, Dartmoor and Exmoor National Parks, the Local Enterprise Partnership and the three Clinical Commissioning Groups. The group had become an 'informal partnership' working towards a Devolution Deal to secure greater powers and control and to have a stronger voice with the Government.

A shared Devolution Statement of Intent had been submitted to the Government on 4 September 2015. Since then, the partnership had strengthened and evolved, and jointly developed the HotSW Prospectus for Prosperity which built on the three basic ambitions:-

- To raise productivity levels;
- Improve health, care and wellbeing; and
- Improve connectivity and resilience.

The Prospectus for Prosperity had been submitted to the Government at the end of February 2016 and, following the receipt of an invitation, the Leaders from the upper tier authorities had met with the Secretary of State for the Department of Communities and Local Government to seek his views on the next steps forward towards a Devolution Deal.

Following the meeting, the Secretary of State had invited the partnership to come forward with a proposal and the following points were clarified:-

- **Geography** – That the Devon and Somerset area was the appropriate scale. The proposal would need to clearly demonstrate why this was the right geography for the Devolution Agreement and all Councils and Members of Parliament would be required to support the proposal.
- **Combined Authority** – That the partnership would move forward into the negotiation process based on a Combined Authority model. The Mayoral issue might be considered again at a later stage, within the timeline agreed by the partnership. A Mayor would not be imposed or be a pre-condition of any initial deal.
- **Extent of the Deal** – That areas that had agreed to have a Mayor would receive more powers than a non-Mayoral Combined Authority. However, the negotiation process would be an opportunity to push the limits of this

initial Deal, and the process should therefore be viewed as being incremental.

- **Timeline** – That the partnership would still work towards an Autumn

Statement timeline for the announcement of an initial Deal.

- **Growth Deal 3** – That the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) would not be penalised in Growth Deal 3 negotiations just because the area had decided to pursue a Devolution Deal based on a Combined Authority without a Mayor. The decision for allocation would be based purely on the quality of the Growth Deal bid.

The Secretary of State had further advised that if the partnership, backed by each Council and Members of Parliament, signed up to the principle of creating a Combined Authority by the end of July 2016, he would arrange for HM Treasury to open up negotiations towards a Devolution Deal.

Any final Devolution Deal with the Government would be subject to further approval / ratification by all partners individually. A Heads of Terms document would be used as a negotiating tool to draw down additional powers and funding to provide a significant boost to the HotSW economy by creating new jobs, accelerating the delivery of new homes and raising skills levels.

Further reported that the following alternative options had been considered and had been rejected for the reasons given:-

1. To decline the Secretary of State's offer and continue at the current pace - As far as it was known, this might be the first two tier area to be given the opportunity to enter into negotiation with the Government for a Devolution Deal without committing to a directly elected Mayor. This was a prime opportunity to push the Government as far as possible for powers to be devolved to the HotSW; and
2. To make separate approaches to Government, rather than as a partnership - Since the submission of the Statement of Intent, the partnership had worked very effectively together to create a strong and credible Prospectus that had been acknowledged by the Secretary of State. It was considered that the partnership should remain united moving forward into negotiations to have a stronger voice and secure a better Deal.

The HotSW partnership had already committed to develop a Productivity Plan which would guide the powers and resources received in the Devolution Agreement, together with local contributions. This plan represented a refresh of the LEP's current Strategic Economic Plan (SEP).

Regardless of whether the Government agreed to open up negotiations for a Deal, the development of a Productivity Plan for the HotSW sub-region would be an imperative to describe the long term future growth of the area, in order to provide a better quality of life for our residents. Therefore, work would continue on the development of a sub-regional Productivity Plan irrespective

of whether there is an announcement in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement.

The Productivity Plan would focus on each of the six 'golden opportunities' that had been identified in the Prospectus with detailed plans setting out the ambitions for the region and how these would be achieved.

Further reported that a Governance Review was already underway. This was examining existing structures and developing options for the best governance structure for the HotSW sub-region. As part of this review, the following key issues would be considered and all partners would be involved in this process:-

- The extent of the decision making powers to be vested in the Combined Authority;
- What decision making structures or advisory committees (including place-based arrangements) would be required under the Combined Authority – including any joint committee arrangements; and
- Proposed voting arrangements.

Noted that it was possible that one or more partners might choose not to proceed with a formal bid. Although this would be unfortunate, it would still be possible for a Devolution Deal to go ahead. There was significant discussion underway between partners to produce proposals that were acceptable to all, and this would be fully explored as the bid was developed.

**Resolved** that:-

- (1) The current approach to devolution be endorsed and it be agreed to sign up to the principle of creating a Combined Authority for the Heart of the South West, as set out in the Prospectus for Productivity, as the basis for negotiation with the Government towards a Devolution Deal for the area;
- (2) It be noted that giving this endorsement did not commit the Council to entering into a Devolution Deal or becoming a member of a Heart of the South West Combined Authority. This would be subject to future debate and agreement by the Council and subject to negotiations with the Government.

## 9. **Tone Leisure Merger with Greenwich Leisure Limited**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the proposed merger of Tone Leisure (Tone) with Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL).

Since July 2014 Tone had been in discussion with the United Kingdom's largest leisure charitable social enterprise, GLL, to explore the potential for Tone's responsibility for the provision of leisure services within Taunton Deane being merged.

It had been recognised by the Tone Board Trustees that a strategy needed to

be identified, which would provide the organisation with the best chance of achieving sustainability and longevity as a service provider in the leisure sector. This had been triggered by the shifting market for Local Authority provision and the recognition that Tone was a small local trust and therefore disadvantaged in terms of competing successfully to win contracts.

The discussions with GLL had been undertaken in order to explore the potential for Tone to utilise the national expertise of GLL, their financial strength and skills whilst maintaining local networks and employees. By considering a merger rather than remaining as an owned subsidiary had enabled Tone to become the lead for the South West Region as GLL expanded on their regionalisation strategy.

If the Council chose to support the proposed merger, this could be achieved in one of two ways. The simplest approach would be for the assignment of the existing leases from Tone to GLL or the more complex approach which would involve Tone being converted into a community benefit society, which would then be formally transferred to GLL via the statutory transfer process. The recommended approach was the former.

In terms of service, GLL would continue to be required to provide the services in the same manner as Tone had to date, in full accordance with the current service agreement. Overall customers would see no change to the services which they enjoyed and they would benefit from the ability to use other GLL sites across the country if they held a membership.

Noted that GLL would only be able to continue with the provision of services on this basis until 2019, at which point the entire service would need to be subjected to a full formal procurement exercise. This would be for a different offering than was in place now.

Following the transfer to GLL, the annual grant management fee that was currently paid by the Council to Tone would be payable to GLL, but there would be no change to how this payment was administered, which was through quarterly instalments. The Council would continue to control the level of payment set at each budget.

Following transfer and absorption, it was proposed that GLL would operate via an Advisory Board, which would have the purpose of maintaining the connection of service delivery with the community through Councillor Representation.

The requirement within the current funding agreement, which stipulated that an annual Business Plan should be produced setting out the key areas of work for each forthcoming year would also remain in force, as would the requirement for a company representative to attend the Community Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis.

Tone staff would transfer via TUPE to GLL and new employees would have access to GLL's current pension provision.

Overall, the merger would lead to a situation in which Council leisure services

would be provided by a major operator with a significant position in the market, which it was argued would make leisure services within Taunton Deane more resilient to economic and financial pressures, whilst securing significant benefits in terms of access to capital, cash flow support and general risk management.

**Resolved that:-**

- (1) The proposed merger between Tone Leisure and Greenwich Leisure Limited be approved; and
- (2) In order to facilitate the transfer of leisure service provision from Tone Leisure to Greenwich Leisure Limited, that for the three years remaining of the current arrangements with Tone Leisure:-
  - The assignment of relevant property leases from Tone Leisure to Greenwich Leisure Limited be agreed; and
  - The transfer of the funding agreement from Tone Leisure to Greenwich Leisure Limited be also agreed.

#### 10. **Housing Revenue Account Business Plan Review**

Considered report previously circulated, which provided an update on the progress of the review of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan.

The Business Plan contained the aims and objectives of the HRA, and included a financial model of the next 30 years. A number of largely external changes had meant that a full refresh of the Business Plan was necessary. The report therefore identified the changes and the impact of these changes.

The new Business Plan was more robust than previously with the inclusion of better quality data, in particular around the Council's assets. However, the financial margins were now much tighter with the plan relying on the delivery of savings, which would require the imposition of continuing management vigilance in order to maintain a viable Business Plan.

The Business Plan had brought everything together and had set out the aims and objectives of the HRA. The review had updated strategic objectives for the service, which were to provide quality homes, support the most vulnerable, provide a better service and build a stronger business.

The review had also detailed the way in which the HRA would work in the future, including setting out a new operating model that would allowed tenants, where appropriate, to move into additional services such as shared ownership. This model showed the way in which the HRA would support tenants into and through the Housing service.

Following consultations with Members, the Tenant Services Management Board, the Tenants Forum and all staff members in the Housing and

Communities Directorate, the following conclusions had been established:-

- The HRA's Core Business should be social rented housing for the most vulnerable in our communities.
- The proposed new objectives for the HRA were appropriate.
- That much could be done to improve the customer experience of the Housing Service.
- Subject to continuing commitments with repairs and maintenance service standards, that it would be acceptable to prioritise new build projects over some maintenance expenditure.
- The priority for the tenants groups was not to allow standards in the Council's existing housing to fall.
- To make better use of current repairs and maintenance service in order to free up resources.
- There was an appetite for looking at housing products closer to the market in order to generate additional income on new build/regeneration schemes.
- The current revised debt repayment approach was acceptable based on treasury management advice and to achieve a viable Business Plan and protect services.

Due to a number of changes driven by both internal and external factors, which included a reduction in rent by 1% for four years, rental income by 2042 was likely to be reduced by 39%. Noted that there was likely to be a reduction in income of £185,000,000 over the next 30 years. This substantial impact on the financial position of the Business Plan had meant the Council had to consider some corrective action to mitigate these impacts within the updated Plan.

The new financial position and baseline assumptions of the HRA Business Plan included the following:-

- Right to Buy (RtB) – This had been updated to include 60 sales per annum for a three year period, followed by a reduction to 30 sales a year. This would result in a reduced number of dwellings in the Housing stock and reduced rental income.
- Pay to Stay – The introduction of this meant that tenant households of local authorities earning over £31,000 per annum must be charged a higher rent, depending on their income, up to market, or near market rents.
- Welfare Reform – This included a provision for lower income for a period of three years due to an increase in bad debt. This would cover the roll out of Universal Credit in Taunton Deane.
- Maintenance – Inclusion of a slight increase to major works spend following the recent Stock Condition Survey as well as a reduction over five years to the day to day spend on maintenance.
- New Developments – Committing a budget over the full 30 years of £77,000,000, which equated to 15 units per year at an average rate of £130,000 per unit, rising with inflation.
- Disabled Facilities Grant – A budget reduction from £435,000 per annum to £300,000 per annum over a five year period.
- Capital Improvements - This once separate budget for Sustainable

Energy had been 'mainstreamed' into the heating replacement programme and would now be included within the core capital programme. The Estate Improvements annual budget of up to £50,000 would be continued, which the Council had acknowledged was very important to tenants.

- Management Costs – This included efficiency savings of £253,000, which had been identified from management and service costs as well as a new permanent provision of £140,000 per annum was being included for schemes currently being covered with temporary funding.
- Debt – Where the Council's reserves allowed debt was being repaid, otherwise it would be refinanced. Also included were provisions for long term debt repayment to be spread over 60 years. This should result in the debt being reduced to less than £50,000,000 by year 30.

Further reported that the Business Plan faced a number of risks and uncertainties that were not currently quantifiable and so had not been included within the Business Plan finances. These included the introduction of Pay to Stay, selling off Higher Value Void Stock, the introduction of Local Housing Allowance Rates and the full roll out of Universal Credit replacing Housing Benefit.

The HRA had a well-established development programme and to ensure a continuing and deliverable programme, and the best use of the funding, a Development Strategy had been established which would allow opportunities for the development pipeline and other new challenges to be identified. A copy of the Development Strategy was attached as an appendix to the Business Plan for the information of Members.

The review had also identified some future drivers for the HRA priorities, which included dealing with the loss of housing stock through Right to Buy, the Council's investment priorities and dealing with non-traditional stock and poor performing stock as identified in the Asset Management Strategy.

Through the Asset Management Strategy, the Council had identified its objectives and principles in relation to active asset management and these included:-

- Objectives:-
  - Good quality homes and environmental standards;
  - Strengthening financial viability; and
  - Improving social sustainability.
- Principles:-
  - Using information on performance to target investment; and
  - The use of Options appraisals where performance was poor – prior to long term investment decisions.

This strategy had been developed so that decisions could be made in order to fund the contribution to Government, but also to start active asset management and stock churn. This was in order to make sure that the



housing held was right for both the HRA and tenants.

This tool had been created to take all of the data and assess the Housing stock using this information. This did not indicate what stock should be sold but showed which groups should have an options appraisal. Following an appraisal, it was the Council's intention that decisions should be made regarding the disposal of vacant dwellings or related assets through an Executive Portfolio Holder decision in conjunction with the Director of Housing and Communities.

The financial position of the HRA Business Plan had changed considerably from a forecasted reserves balance of £156,000,000 at 2042 (year 30 of the existing Business Plan) to £18,000,000 at 2046 (year 30 of the new Business Plan). This was largely due to external changes such as the national rent policy, which had greatly reduced income expectations.

These changes meant that the HRA would not be able to continue the financing of the repayment of the current self-financing loans by year 2030 (year 18 of the Business Plan 2012) without a significant reduction in service quality.

The Council's Treasury Advisors had confirmed that the HRA would have a shortfall in cash when the loans were repaid. It would not therefore be beneficial to refinance the existing loans immediately and replace them with new longer term loans. Instead, it had been recommended to refinance the loans on maturity as and when needed, over the period required.

The current balance of HRA General Reserves was £2,686,000, which was £886,000 over the minimum recommended balance of £1,800,000. These forecasted deficits would reduce the HRA general reserves balance to £1,800,000 in 2018/2019. This meant that all of the available funding in general reserves (over the minimum balance) was needed over the next two years, and no further allocations would be possible.

As a result of the review, an Action Plan had been developed based on the HRA Business Plan's key priority areas of providing quality homes, supporting

the most vulnerable, providing a better service and building a stronger business. This detailed the future action for each priority and the sponsor for that priority.

**Resolved that:-**

**Business Plan:**

- (1) The Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2016-2046 be approved;

**Finance:**

- (2) The policy for voluntary revenue provision for the repayment of capital debt in the Housing Revenue Account be changed to be over the

average life of Housing Revenue Account assets (estimated at 60 years);

**Development Strategy:**

- (3) The new Housing Revenue Account Development Strategy be adopted;
- (4) A supplementary estimate of £950,000 be added to the Housing Revenue Account Social Housing Development Fund capital programme in 2016/2017. This would bring the total development programme to £1,950,000 which represented the 15 units in the new Development Strategy to be delivered in 2017/2018. This would be funded through capital receipts and revenue funding in line with the Business Plan; and

**Asset Strategy:**

- (5) The new Housing Revenue Account Asset Strategy be adopted.

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

**(a) Delivery of Electronic Car Park Signage and Pay on Foot Systems to Key Car Parks**

The Executive had recently considered the introduction of a proposed new approach to car park signage in Taunton.

This proposal had three key components which were:-

- A comprehensive signage package for Taunton incorporating electronic parking signage (VMS – Variable Message Signage) which would improve the flow of traffic to key car parks, create an early warning system for events and enable improved traffic flow management;
- Improvements to seven key car parks by the installation of pay on foot systems which would enable customers to pay on exit from car parks; and
- Connecting the electronic signage and the pay on foot systems together for key car parks together to create a comprehensive and informative way-finding system for motorists.

A comprehensive Signing Strategy had also been commissioned to examine how effective the existing signage package would be in serving the needs of Taunton. The strategy focussed on three significant component parts of the network which were mentioned in the Council's Corporate Strategy - the park and ride provision, car park signage and tourist (brown) signage. The proposals were a defined project within the Council's growth programme which supported delivery of the Council's Growth Agenda.

The broad benefits of this investment included:-

- (1) A reduced time in finding a space. The signage would reduce unnecessary circulation to car parks and minimise queuing at car parks through influencing driver behaviour;
- (2) Improving user experience as pay on foot would remove the time limitation created by pay and display car parks. The inference was that people would spend more money into the economy whilst shopping; and
- (3) The installation of these systems had seen revenue rise in other towns generated by the car parks. This was in the order of 15-20% so would enable the Council to invest further in car park improvements.

The likely costs of implementing the electronic car park signage and pay on foot systems, were as follows:-

### Capital Costs and Funding

The estimated capital costs are:-

	£
<u>Total costing</u>	
Variable Message Signage (VMS)	486,283
Pay on Foot (POF)	555,927
Fees, Contingency	157,790
<b>Total Capital Budget Requirement</b>	<b>1,200,000</b>
<b>Funded by</b>	<b>£</b>
Approved in current 2016/2017 Capital Programme	400,000
Revenue Budget Contributions	450,000
From New Homes Bonus	350,000

Intrinsic to this Business Case were IT interface revenue costs of approximately £36,000 per annum. Approval was therefore sought to set aside these funds from the anticipated additional parking revenues generated annually to address this budget pressure.

Within the Business Case the projected replacement cost of the system had been factored in before arriving at the “Net Present Value” of the estimated cash flows over a 15 year period. In order to ensure the funds were available to fund this replacement, approval was sought to earmark sufficient funds from each year’s parking income and to hold this in an earmarked reserve. The current projected cost would be £972,000 and the projected increase in forecast income of £300,000 per annum would be more than adequate to make this affordable.

This proposal clearly represented a significant investment for Taunton and was also one which was supported widely by the business community. The aim would be to complete delivery of this investment by the end of 2017.

On the motion of Councillor Habgood, it was

**Resolved that:-**

- (i) An increase to the Major Transport Schemes Capital Budget of £800,000, from £400,000 to £1,200,000 be approved;
- (ii) The earmarking of parking income to the value of approximately £36,000 per annum to fund the annual revenue expense of the IT interface, when these costs had been formalised through the procurement process, be approved; and
- (iii) The setting aside on an annual basis an appropriate sum of approximately £70,000 from parking income to fund the replacement system in 15 years' time, which was currently estimated to be £972,000 in total, be also approved.

**(b) Corporate Debt Policy**

Consideration has been given to the Council's Corporate Debt Policy which had been adopted in 2012. In line with good practice, the policy had recently been reviewed to ensure it remained fit for purpose.

The Corporate Debt Policy covered the management of all debts owed to the Council. This included the billing/invoicing, collection, enforcement and write offs for the five income streams of Council Tax, Business Rates, Housing Rents, Housing Benefit Overpayments and all other debts (known as Sundry Debts).

It was essential that all monies owed to the Council were actively pursued. The Policy therefore reflected a range of measures to help customers pay sums due, therefore maximising the level of resources available to support service delivery.

The Policy followed the debt recovery principles of Proportionality, Consistency, Transparency, Offset and Appropriate Costs/Fees.

It had been noted that a small proportion of the Council's overall income might not be collectable due to matters outside its control. Where a debt was assessed to be irrecoverable it would be subject to a write off process that was in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations.

A range of indicators had been developed to monitor performance against agreed targets and to ensure the Corporate Debt Policy achieved its objectives. These would continue to be included in the Council's performance reporting updates.

On the motion of Councillor Parrish, it was

**Resolved** that the revised Corporate Debt Policy be adopted.

**(c) Financial Monitoring - Outturn 2015/2016**

A report relating to the Council's financial performance for the 2015/2016 financial year had recently been considered by the Executive. The outturn figures included were provisional subject to external audit review, the findings of which would be reported to the Corporate Governance Committee in September 2016.

Monitoring the budget was an important part of the Council's performance management framework. Crucially it enabled remedial action to be taken in response to significant budget variances, some of which might be unavoidable. It also provided the opportunity to assess any consequent impact on reserves and the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan.

The revenue outturn position for the financial year 2015/2016 was as follows:-

- The General Fund (GF) Revenue Outturn position for 2015/2016 was a net underspend of £280,000 (2.07%). The underspend had increased since the end of quarter 3 due to significant variances in the Street Cleansing budget and Interest Costs and Income.
- The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was a 'Self-Financing' account for the Council's Housing Landlord function, which was budgeted to 'break even' (net of approved transfers to/from HRA Reserves). The HRA Outturn for 2015/2016 was a net underspend of £476,000 (1.8% of gross income).

The year-end financial statements reported that Deane DLO had made an overall profit of £47,000 after contributing £101,000 to the GF. This surplus had been transferred to the DLO Trading Account Reserve which had increased the reserve balance to £365,000.

The Deane Helpline had reported a net deficit of £67,000 for the year, which was an underspend of £13,000 against the final budget and represented the net cost of the service to the GF.

With regard to the budget for the Unparished Area of Taunton, although £46,170 had been allocated to a variety of schemes during the 2015/2016 financial year, £55,610 was available for allocation during the current year.

The capital outturn position for 2015/2016 was as follows:-

- The General Fund profiled Capital Programme at the end of 2015/2016 was £17,345,000. The actual expenditure on the Capital Programme during 2015/2016 was £7,244,000, with £9,976,000 being carried forward to support delivery of approved schemes in 2016/2017. This would leave a net underspend of £125,000 (0.7%) against the overall programme.
- The HRA approved Capital Programme at the end of 2015/2016 was £23,759,000. This related to schemes which would be completed over the next five years. The actual expenditure on the Capital Programme during 2015/2016 was £11,391,000, with £10,214,000 for planned investment to implement approved schemes in future years. A net

underspend of £2,154,000 (9%) was reported against the overall programme.

The GF Reserves balance as at 31 March 2016 stood at £2,113,000. The balance remained above the minimum reserves expectation within the Council's Budget Strategy (£1,600,000).

The HRA Reserves balance as at 31 March 2016 stood at £2,675,000, which was above the minimum level (£1,800,000) set within the Council's Budget Strategy and the HRA Business Plan.

The total General Fund Earmarked Reserves balance as at 31 March 2016 was £16,722,000, and for HRA Earmarked Reserves the balance was £4,985,000, representing funds that had been set aside for specific purposes to be spent in 2016/2017 or later years. This had grown largely in respect of funds committed to support growth and infrastructure development, future capital programme spending, the Business Rates funding volatility, and funding set aside to support service restructuring and Transformation Projects.

On the motion of Councillor Parrish, it was

**Resolved that:-**

- (1) The Council's financial performance and end of year position for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account, including pre-approved carry forwards and transfers to earmarked reserves be noted; and
- (2)
  - (a) The reported General Fund Revenue Budget underspend of £280,000 in 2015/2016 and the General Reserves Balance of £2,113,000 as at 31 March 2016 be noted;
  - (b) The General Fund Revenue Budget Carry Forwards totalling £892,000 be approved;
  - (c) A General Fund Capital Programme Budget Carry Forward totalling £9,976,000 be approved;
  - (d) A Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme Budget Carry Forward totalling £10,214,000 be approved;
  - (e) Supplementary Budget allocations of £333,000 in 2016/2017 for the Housing Revenue Account be approved, utilising 2015/2016 underspends, for the following areas:-
    - i. £33,000 to fund an extension to the employment of the Welfare Reform Officer to March 2018;
    - ii. £38,000 to fund an extension to the additional Debt and Benefit Advisor to March 2018;

- iii. £198,000 to increase the Estate Officer capacity by one in each area until March 2018;
- iv. £21,000 to fund an extension to the Mental Health support until March 2017;
- v. £25,000 to provide funding to Pilot a dedicated part-time resource to roll-out, drive and oversee the 'Chill and Chat' peer support group to vulnerable women across all three One Team areas; and
- vi. £18,000 to increase funding available to Community Development Officers in each of the One Team Areas for 2016/2017.

## 12. Reports of the Leader of the Council and Executive Councillors

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

Councillor Williams's report covered the following topics:-

- The Referendum – Decision to Leave European Union;
- Heart of the South West Devolution;
- Shared Services and Management with West Somerset Council;
- Proposed Firepool Development;
- Junction 25 (J25) and A358 Improvements with Access to Employment;
- Merger of Bridgwater College and Somerset College;
- Blackbrook Swimming Pool; and
- Deane DLO Relocation.

### (ii) Economic Development, Asset Management, Arts and Tourism and Communications (Councillor Edwards)

The report from Councillor Edwards covered:-

- Business Development
  - Economic Development Service Plan;
  - Support for Digital Innovation;
  - The Glass Box;
  - Wiveliscombe Business Park;
  - Taunton Deane Business Awards;
  - Heart of the South West Growth Hub;
  - Wiveliscombe Business Showcase; and
  - Business Communications.
- Marketing the Area to Businesses and Visitors
  - Marketing to Visitors;
  - Somerfest;
  - Taunton Live;
  - Arts and Events Grants; and

- Social Media and Website.
- Asset Management Service General Fund Activities
- Asset Development Sites in Taunton
  - Lisieux Way (Thales Site);
  - New footbridge at Longrun Meadow; and
  - Unlocking Employment Land.

(iii) **Planning, Transportation and Communications (Councillor Habgood)**

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

- Planning Policy
  - Core Strategy Development;
  - Site Allocation and Development Plan (SADMP);
  - Neighbourhood Planning;
  - Bishops Lydeard and Cothelstone to be 'made' (adopted);
  - Two New Neighbourhood Plan Areas Designated;
  - Neighbourhood Planning Grant;
  - Timescales for Decisions on Neighbourhood Plans;
  - Sharing Information and Experience; and
  - Custom/Self Build Register.
- Development Management
  - Major Planning Applications;
  - Local Development Order; and
  - Making Saving Bringing Benefit.
- Transportation
  - 20 Year Transport Strategy;
  - Car Park Performance; and
  - Signage.

(iv) **Sport, Parks and Leisure (Councillor Mrs Herbert)**

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

- Parks – Bedding displays and hanging baskets; Green Flag Judging; Nursery Contract Work; and Tree Survey.
- Play and Leisure – Vivary Bandstand Concerts; Section 106 Agreement play areas; and The Blackbrook Pool Project.
- Tone Leisure (Taunton Deane) Limited Activities – Active Lifestyles; and Facility News.

(v) **Corporate Resources (Councillor Parrish)**

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

- Democratic Services;



- Electoral Services;
- Electoral Review;
- Law and Governance – Shape Partnership Services;
- Revenues and Benefits Service;
- Procurement;
- Finance;
- Finance Systems Replacement Project; and
- Corporate Services.

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

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

- Three Priority Area One Teams;
  - Link Power Project;
  - Raising Aspirations through Mentoring in Schools;
  - Let's Make Isolation and Loneliness History!
  - Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
  - Community Safety;
  - Businesses Against Crime;
  - Psychoactive Substances Act 2016;
- 
- Syrian Refugee Resettlement; and
  - Referendum.

(vii) **Housing Services (Councillor Beale)**

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

- Deane Housing Development – Creechbarrow Road, Taunton; Weavers Arms, Wellington; Parmin Close, Taunton; Extensions; Scooter Storage and Car Parking;
- Affordable Housing – Delivery and Affordable Housing Open Day 2016;
- Welfare Reform – Welfare Reform Visits; Discretionary Housing Payments; Universal Credit; Rent Arrears; and Right to Buy Social Mobility;
- Anti-Social Behaviour Service – Performance; Casework; Closed Cases; and High Profile/Risk Cases.

(viii) **Environmental Services and Climate Change (Councillor Berry)**

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

- Environmental Health;

- Licensing;
- Deane DLO; and
- Somerset Waste Partnership.

(Councillors Miss Durdan left the meeting at 8.19 p.m. Councillors Mrs Gunner and Hall left the meeting at 8.24 p.m. Councillors Coombes and D Durdan left the meeting at 8.39 p.m. Councillors Davies and Stone left the meeting at 8.50 p.m. Councillors Farbahi, Govier, Morrell, Mrs Reed and Wren all left the meeting at 8.52 p.m. Councillor Hunt and James left the meeting at 9.02 p.m. Councillor Mrs Lees left the meeting at 9.07 p.m. and Councillors Gaines and Ross left the meeting at 9.25 p.m.)

(The meeting ended at 9.27 p.m.)

## 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 26 July 2016 at 6.30 p.m.

Present      The Mayor (Councillor Mrs Stock-Williams)  
                  The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Prior-Sankey)  
                  Councillors M Adkins, Aldridge, Beale, Berry, Booth, Bowrah, Brown,  
                  Cavill, Coles, Coombes, Cossey, Davies, D Durdan, Miss Durdan,  
                  Mrs Edwards, Edwards, Farbahi, Mrs Floyd, Gage, Gaines,  
                  Mrs Gunner, Habgood, Hall, Mrs Herbert, C Hill, Mrs Hill, Horsley,  
                  Hunt, James, Ms Lisgo, Martin-Scott, Morrell, Nicholls, Parrish,  
                  Mrs Reed, Ross, Ryan, Miss Smith, Mrs Smith, Stone, Sully,  
                  Townsend, Mrs Tucker, Mrs Warmington, Watson, Ms Webber,  
                  Wedderkopp, Williams and Wren

Mrs A Elder – Chairman of the Standards Advisory Committee

Before formally opening the meeting, the Mayor asked those in attendance to observe a one-minute silence to remember those who had died or had been injured in recent terror attacks in France.

### 1.      **Apologies**

Councillors Mrs Adkins, Mrs Blatchford, Govier, R Lees and Mrs Lees.

### 2.      **Declaration of Interests**

Councillors M Adkins, Coles, Hunt, Prior-Sankey and Wedderkopp declared personal interests as Members of Somerset County Council. Councillor Mrs Herbert declared a personal interest as an employee of the Department of Work and Pensions. Councillor Wren declared a personal interest as Clerk to Milverton Parish Council. Councillors Gage and Stone declared prejudicial interests as Tone Leisure Board representatives. Councillor Ms Lisgo declared a personal interest as a Director of Tone FM. She also confirmed that she was no longer a member of UNISON. Councillor Beale declared personal interests as a Board Member and Director of Tone FM and as a Governor of the South West Ambulance NHS Trust. Councillor Edwards declared a personal interest as the Chairman of the Governors of Queens College. Councillor Farbahi declared a personal interest as the owner of land in Taunton Deane. Councillor Hall declared a personal interest as a Director of Southwest One. Councillor Coombes declared a personal interest as a Stoke St Mary Parish Councillor and as the owner of land at Haydon. Councillor Parrish declared a personal interest as the District Council's representative on the Somerset Pensions Committee. Councillor Mrs Hill declared personal interests as a representative on the Board of Directors of Apple FM, as a Trustee of Hestercombe House and Gardens and the Somerset Building Preservation Trust. Councillor Miss Smith declared a personal interest as a member of Refugee Aid from Taunton. Councillor Ross declared personal interests as one of the Council's representatives on the Somerset Waste Board, as a member of the Wiveliscombe Area

Partnership and as a Governor of Wiveliscombe Primary School.

### 3. Public Question Time

- (a) Mr Chris Mann stated that he was in favour of the proposed merger of Taunton Deane and West Somerset Councils. However, he did query why the merger would need such a big investment in a new IT system.

The present management structures of the Councils in Somerset were implemented 50 years ago and where most businesses had changed out of all recognition, the Local Government structure had not. These structures were now a very expensive way of providing Council services which looked very poor value indeed.

With West Somerset, Taunton Deane had already combined a shared Chief Executive, Senior Management Team and had merged Revenues and Benefits and Electoral Services. Managing the same work in a bigger area was easy and perfectly normal. Including Sedgemoor District Council in the merger would help support the financial difficulties in West Somerset as well as help convince citizens that normal business reform was being sought.

Mr Mann went on to enquire why the Council believed the huge new risky IT project with Ignite and Civica was essential? After the failures of Taunton Deane's CSL and the Southwest One projects, it was surprising that the Council was considering entering a third one.

He did not agree at all with the suggested need for a so called case management approach negating the need for a customer to know how the system would operate and who did what. Surely multiple service delivery options and providers would conflict with value for money? There was absolutely no need to spend a fortune on developing smart phone applications. Mr Mann felt that service silos could be good because people knew where it was, who was in it and how to contact it. They were not passed to false providers. The Councillors should reject this proposal for a third sticky, out-sourcing quagmire and quietly manage it to carry out the merger with minimal external support. The merger proposal should be re-costed to include a do it yourself option and perhaps include Sedgemoor. Council areas should of course still keep their ceremonial Mayors.

- (b) Sue Leving referred to the fact that Councillors were being asked to vote on a proposed merger between two Councils, yet the Council which stood to gain most had decided to delay six weeks before making up its mind. Where was the sense in stopping the dialogue between the two Councils any sooner than necessary? Why close off your options before you needed to, especially now Sedgemoor were suddenly being asked to join the party and an announcement on Hinkley C was expected later in the week? Surely common sense dictated that the two Full Council meetings should be synchronised as originally planned?

Ms Leving went on to ask why Councillors were being asked to vote on two different things as one vote. Firstly you are being asked to vote on whether a

full merger with West Somerset was a wise thing to do. Secondly, you are being asked to vote on the adoption of the High Level Business Plan. Whether you vote 'yes' or 'no' to Option 2, you will end up agreeing the Business Plan where serious concerns as to its content had been expressed through the Councils' Scrutiny Committees. Had these concerns found their way into the Leader's new report or not?

Finally, did you really want to sign up to something which was going to cost a great deal of money, tie the Council into an un-tried software contract and, most of all, tie the electorate into a merger with a financially unviable Council with whom they had little in common based on a Business Plan of which you had had no chance to vote? I hope the answer will be no.

(c) Phil Bisatt, UNISON asked Councillors to be particularly mindful of the recommendations of the Councils' Section 151 Officer regarding financial viability of the three Options. Ultimately the services delivered to the community and the welfare of staff and their terms of conditions were crucially dependent on the ability to come up with a financially sound option for the longer term. It appeared that Option 3 did not look to be financially sound and even if it was possible to do so, it would be very disruptive to employees working in the currently combined workforce of the two Councils. It was not clear that Option 1 for the two Councils was viable either based on the Section 151 Officer's recommendation. These views needed to be taken very seriously by Members when making their decision.

(d) Alan Wedderkopp stated that what was being witnessed was a gargantuan mess which was the result of no-one taking responsibility for the initial mistakes and the Government shuffling off its responsibility on to others.

The mismanagement that has followed West Somerset Council since its inception was its responsibility. Taunton Deane should have told them so, but I think the administration have been blinded by a vision of absolute power and that often leads to absolute chaos. Why were the Council Tax payers of Taunton Deane paying the shared costs of West Somerset House which includes rented space, utilities as well as officer's time and travel expenses when there is ample surplus space in The Deane House? Was it anything to do with an over-charge of £300,000 in Business Rates to Hinkley Point which subsequently had to be paid back - but which had already spent on building West Somerset House? When I asked an officer over the telephone what were the costs to Taunton Deane Council Tax Payers, I was told it was too complex to explain and that a Freedom of Information request should be submitted. Really? Was that correct?

(e) Alan Debenham referred to the biggest merger of all time in 1973/1974 when Taunton Deane Borough Council was formed following the Local Government Re-organisation. He thought that when it came to this current merger proposal one of the main factors was the identity of the new organisation. Another was democracy and he thought that this was a big argument in the recent referendum where people were saying they felt left out and not engaged any more with politics.

With the current proposals, it was likely local residents would not feel as connected to their local Council as they did now and so, on those two grounds alone, the proposed merger should be rejected.

Mr Debenham added that if change was desired, Councillors should agree to revert both Councils back to where they were. All the mergers being proposed were to do with one thing only which was cutting public services and public spending, which the Government had been hell-bent on doing ever since it got back into power. For some reason they hated public spending and, as far as Local Government was concerned, they had hacked it to pieces. The cuts in local services and Local Government was out of this world. Why you put up with this, I just do not know so please do not put up with this merger proposal.

- (f) Sam Harris referred Councillors to the report considered by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 11 July 2016. In the Executive Summary reference was made to the commercial approach but your administration's track record on behaving commercially was not one to be proud of in any way, shape or form.

Starting with £100,000's wastage on consultant fees for revenue of less than 1% on some £65,000,000 worth of property assets. In addition, you have a year on year loss of £37,000 on a plant nursery on Stoke Road which had cost Taunton Deane Tax Payers nearly £1,000,000 and now had only achieved agricultural value of one fifth of the original cost. There was a loss of revenue on the former Castle Green Car Park of a net of £135,000 per annum plus spending of £144,000 of taxpayers' money on the relocation of The Deane House to County Hall which had now been dropped.

Relocation of Deane DLO which was meant to give Taunton Deane a £300,000 net increase had instead cost taxpayers by £100,000's when some 85% of its workload was in Taunton adding paid commuter miles.

Could you please tell us why we should trust you in any way when you had proven to be pretty useless anyway?

As for projects that you had started but not finished, such as the ones at Firepool and the High Street, Taunton Improvement, should you not consider finishing those before you start off with an even larger project that was doomed to fail?

- (g) Paul Escott asked why Taunton Deane was deciding tonight on a recommendation to dissolve itself in order to merge with an insolvent neighbouring Council? Could I enquire how many Councillors here today put down in their manifestos or their leaflets during last May's campaign that by voting for them they would be wishing to do away with the very Council which they were seeking to get elected to? How was Taunton to be represented in the future without a Town Council and was there not a real danger that it would become the poor relation in the enlarged greater West Somerset Council?

In response, Councillor Williams stated that he would reply in writing to the various questions raised by those who had spoken.

With regard to the comments made by Mr Sam Harris, Councillor Williams Stated that he could 'wax lyrical' for a long time as to where Taunton Deane had succeeded in the past. As an example, it was a little known fact that car park income had gone up with a lot more people coming into Castle Green which sets off a wonderful Somerset Museum. It was long proven that what the Council had done was far better than before.

#### **4. Receipt of Petitions**

(i) On behalf of Taunton Deane Liberal Democrats, Mr Gideon Amos submitted a petition/questionnaire containing 180 signatures. The petition/questionnaire asked "Should Taunton Deane Borough Council merge with West Somerset Council?"

The document made available to members of the public asked four specific questions:-

"1a. It is proposed to advance TDBC reserves of £5.7m to facilitate this merger while WSC will advance only £1.1m. Do you think that TD Council Tax Payers should agree to this?

1b. OR Should TDBC use the £5.7m to secure jobs, promote growth, encourage investment and pay towards infrastructure requirements such as schools, health centres and transport in its own area?

2. If a merger between Councils is required to make savings, should we be allowed to decide with which Council we should merge in order to safeguard services?

3. Would you be prepared to sign a referendum from all the voters in TD on whether we should merge or not?"

(ii) A further petition containing in excess of 200 signatures organised by Councillor Steve Ross was also submitted.

The petition called upon "Taunton Deane to wait to make a decision on a merger with West Somerset Council and on other available options until September 2016. A decision should only be made on the same day as West Somerset Council to ensure that the joint process which started in March 2016 continued and was shared with West Somerset Council and any other Council that wished to become involved".

#### **5. High Level Transformation Business Case**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the High Level Business Case which tested what Transformation could deliver to both Taunton Deane

Borough Council (TDBC) and West Somerset Council (WSC).

In March 2016, TDBC and WSC had confirmed their commitment to a core, and continuing Joint Management and Shared Services (JMASS) Partnership and authorised and prioritised work to create a high level Transformation Business Case which considered the following sequential options:-

- ONE Team supporting two Councils (TDBC and WSC);
- ONE Team supporting a merged Council (TDBC and WSC); and
- Two Councils progressing their own Transformation agendas.

The full High Level Transformation Business Case had been circulated to all Members of both Councils prior to its consideration by TDBC's Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 11 July 2016 and WSC's Scrutiny Committee on 12 July 2016.

This report set out to summarise the findings of the Business Case, to share and comment on the feedback from Scrutiny and UNISON, and to present the Leader of the Council's thinking and final recommendations on the way forward for Taunton Deane Borough Council.

It was important that Members remembered why Transformation was being looked at and not lose sight of the need for our Councils to make savings. This was essential to allow Taunton Deane to continue to invest in Growth – the Council's top priority. For West Somerset, it was clear from the Affordability Project that significant financial viability challenges remained. The subsequent approach to Government had shaped the work approved in the Mandate Report of March 2016.

The High Level Transformation Business Case was the product of the Full Council meetings in March 2016 and showed what could be delivered from Transformation in various democratic scenarios. Noted that Transformation alone would not be enough to 'balance the books' and other proposals would therefore need to be considered to enable both Councils to become sustainable over the longer term.

Reported that both Councils were facing a challenging financial future, with predicted budget gaps over the coming years as shown below:-

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
TDBC Cumulative Gap	£0.527m	£1.401m	£2.128m	£2.327m	£2.532m
WSC Cumulative Gap	£0.120m	£0.618m	£0.945m	£1.104m	£1.227m

Members needed to be clear at the outset as to the scale of change that Transformation would bring. The degree of change both required and proposed far exceeded that for JMASS Phase 1, which involved delivering the ONE Team of officers to support both Councils but did little to change attitudes, behaviours, technology, processes, systems, customer access



channels nor the traditional service structures to which officers were allocated, or the governance arrangements.

Although a natural progression from JMASS Phase 1, Transformation would go far beyond this and would propose radical changes to the way in which services would be delivered in the future. It also would have direct implications for democratic representation and governance. These democratic changes would be unavoidable, even if not palatable to all Members.

The Business Case firstly looked at the implementation route to deliver the Transformation Vision, before looking at what additional savings and costs would be incurred through the alternative democratic and delivery options.

Having explored two very different implementation approaches for this vision, it was recommended to progress the “future model” approach supplemented by additional work on eliminating failure demand.

The Business Case demonstrated that the Transformation programme could deliver a major contribution to bridging the budget gap faced by both Councils. This proof of concept work had confirmed that significant annual revenue savings could be achieved through Transformation as illustrated below:-

	<b>TOTAL £m</b>	<b>WSC £m</b>	<b>TDBC £m</b>	<i>TDBC Gfd</i>	<i>TDBC HRA</i>
Ongoing Savings	<b>2.6</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>2.2</b>	1.5	0.7
Further potential savings: - Commercialism - Accommodation - Growth - Service delivery	?	?	?	?	?
One-Off Costs	<b>6.8</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>5.7</b>	3.8	1.9

Key : Gfd – General Fund; HRA – Housing Revenue Account.

Confidence in the ability to deliver the savings was such that this could be built into the Councils’ Medium Term Financial Plans (MTFP’s). Going beyond this 22% saving for our MTFPs was not “safe” at this stage as further work would need to be done on the areas that had potential to deliver further savings.

Although the Transformation savings would make a contribution towards the predicted budget gaps, they would not resolve the financial challenge and, as a result, more would need to be done to achieve financial sustainability.

Further reported that the Business Case shared concepts on the commercial approach, service delivery reviews and accommodation reviews that would bring further savings. If the approach suggested was supported, further work would be done to provide assurance on these matters and the net savings could then be captured formally in the Council’s plans.

In order to achieve the Transformation savings, there was a need for significant one-off investment. This would largely be in respect of staff

termination costs, additional technology to support the changes, additional support to help deliver the process and people change necessary and the programme costs of supporting the implementation of this change.

The indicative one-off costs required, on an “invest to save” basis, were projected to be:-

<b>Total</b>	<b>WSC</b>	<b>TDBC</b>	<b>TDBC</b>	}	3.5m	Staff termination and other staff costs
<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>GF</b>	<b>HRA</b>		1.2m	Technology
		<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>		1.6m	Transition/Programme costs
6.8m	1.1m	3.8m	1.9m		0.5m	People/OD
					<b>6.8m</b>	<b>Total</b>

The Business Case offered both Councils significant savings where the payback period was within acceptable “invest to save” parameters.

The High Level Business Case also explored the impact of creating a new merged Council. From due diligence work it was believed this would deliver a minimum net ongoing additional revenue saving of £551,000 per annum (in addition to the Transformation savings outlined above).

The document also shared the impact on each Council of progressing stand-alone “futures”. The Transformation savings outlined above would reduce to £1,886,000 for TDBC but the future was radically different for WSC and its community. The Financial Summary of Business Case Options was outlined as follows:-

<b>OPTION 1</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>WSC</b>	<b>TDBC</b>	<i>TDBC</i>	<i>TDBC</i>
<b>Joint Transformation</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<i>Gfd</i>	<i>HRA</i>
Ongoing Savings	<b>2.6</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>2.2</b>	1.5	0.7
Further potential savings:					
- Commercialism	?	?	?	?	?
- Accommodation					
- Growth					
- Service delivery					
One-Off Costs	<b>6.8</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>5.7</b>	3.8	1.9
Payback (Years)	<b>2.59</b>	<b>2.59</b>	<b>2.59</b>	2.59	2.59

<b>OPTION 2</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>Merged Council</b>	<b>£m</b>
Ongoing Savings	<b>3.1</b>
Further potential savings:	
- Commercialism	?
- Accommodation	
- Growth	
- Service delivery	
One-Off Costs	<b>7.1</b>
Payback (Years)	<b>2.29</b>

<b>OPTION 3</b>		<b>WSC</b>	<b>TDBC</b>	<i>TDBC</i>	<i>TDBC</i>
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<b>Stand Alone Futures</b>		<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<i>Gfd</i>	<i>HRA</i>
Ongoing Savings		<b>To Meet MTFP</b>	<b>1.9</b>	1.3	0.6
Further potential savings: - Commercialism - Accommodation - Growth - Service delivery		-	?	?	?
One-Off Costs		<b>Unknown</b>	<b>6.7</b>	4.5	2.2
Payback (Years)		-	<b>3.5</b>	3.5	3.5

Reported that the High Level Transformation Business Case had been subject to an external assurance review by Local Partnerships (a company that was jointly owned by HM Treasury and the Local Government Association). A copy of its findings had been circulated to all Councillors.

The review had concluded that the Business Case was at “Green Status” which broadly meant the company was confident in the approach taken, the assumptions made and its deliverability. A number of areas had been identified where more work was required and this would be picked up as part of implementation planning.

The Local Partnerships’ report posed the following two key questions for Members to reflect upon when considering the recommendations in the report:-

- Given the recommendations in the Bill Roots report, which of the options reassured Members about the medium-term financial viability of the Councils?
- Given the earlier meeting with the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) Minister, how would whatever option chosen be received by Ministers?

The Business Case clearly set out the financial implications of the three sequential variants and showed the potential savings that could be achieved. Detailed Funding Plans had now been developed by the Finance Team and these were fully set out in the report and were reflected in the recommendations.

Further reported the views of the Councils’ Section 151 (S151) Officer, Shirlene Adam. In her view, the financial opportunity offered to each Council by the options in the Business Case was clear and the funding proposals contained in the report were deliverable.

From a purely financial perspective, the optimum option in the Business Case was clearly Option 2. This would deliver minimum additional ongoing savings of over £500,000 per annum for the combined community of Taunton Deane and West Somerset. There were other issues to consider, and the resource equalisation issue would be important.

It was also important that Members did not “over focus” on resources (New Homes Bonus (NHB) and Business Rates) that were currently under policy review by the Government. The Councils’ could not assume that the existing NHB income stream, or the existing Business Rates income rules would continue to apply moving forward. However, the £500,000 ongoing savings was certain and could be built into the MTFP.

The key issues which the Section 151 Officer had recommended should be considered were:-

<b>Option 1 – Joint Transformation</b>	
<b>TDBC</b>	<b>WSC</b>
<p>This would deliver ongoing savings of £2,200,000 across the General Fund (GFd) and Housing Revenue Account (HRA). There was potential for further savings above this level to be achieved from work on driving out failure demand.</p> <p>The funding proposal would leave GFd Reserves above the minimum level and considerable NHB resources to progress ambitions.</p> <p>The remaining budget gap would require focus and strong leadership to resolve, but the S151 Officer was confident there was sufficient capacity within the Councils spending plans and income capability for this to be achieved.</p>	<p>This would deliver ongoing savings of £400,000. There was potential for further savings above this level to be achieved from work on driving out failure demand.</p> <p>The funding proposal would leave GFd Reserves at minimum level and little financial capacity to deal with risk.</p> <p>The remaining budget gap would be a significant challenge for the Council. Based on the S151 Officer’s knowledge of the financial position of the Council, and of the limited existing plans for achieving financial sustainability, there were serious concerns on the Council’s ability to deliver this over the medium term. This aligned with the concerns shared in the conclusion of the Bill Roots report.</p> <p>Members would therefore need to seriously consider the ability for the Council to meet the budget gap (post Transformation) and commit to deliver a plan to achieve sustainability over the next few months.</p> <p>The S151 Officer would need to make a further assessment of the ‘going concern’ status of the Council as next year’s budget was set, and as the Statement of Accounts for 2016/2017 was signed off.</p> <p>Should robust plans not be agreed</p>

	and in place to achieve the further savings by this point then there would be a need for formal intervention under the Local Government Finance Act 1988.
<b>Option 2 – Merged Council</b>	
<p>This would deliver ongoing savings of £3,100,000 across the communities currently served by TDBC and WSC. There would be potential for further savings above this level to be achieved from work on driving out failure demand. There was also potential for further savings (cash and efficiencies) to be driven out from the staffing structure arrangements (as less would be needed to support One Council).</p> <p>The remaining budget gap for the new merged Council (post Transformation and post-merger) would be significant, and would require focus and strong leadership to resolve. The scale and capacity of the new Council meant the S151 Officer was confident there were sufficient choices within the new Councils' budget and income generating capability for this to be achieved.</p>	
<b>Option 3 – Stand Alone Futures</b>	
<p>The Business Case was modelled on the working assumption that any exit would be triggered by a mutual decision to end the partnership. Even under this assumption there would be serious issues to consider regarding each Councils' ability to continue delivering services to the public and the financial challenge potentially created by the TUPE outcome. A mutual decision would impact – financially and operationally – for both Councils.</p> <p>Any formal contractual termination would bring additional costs on the Councils forcing the end of the partnership, as well as potentially creating a delay to progress, due to dates for termination being fixed in the agreement.</p> <p>The impact on Statutory Officers should a termination be triggered (mutual or otherwise) would be significant and arrangements would need to be put in place to ensure that each Council had access to independent advice immediately.</p>	
<b>TDBC</b>	<b>WSC</b>
<p>In addition to the termination issue flagged above, the Council would pick up additional one-off costs of around £1,000,000 as the Transformation costs would not reduce significantly under the stand-alone model. This would need to be funded from either NHB reserves or require a higher target for asset sales.</p> <p>This option would deliver ongoing</p>	<p>The outcome from Option 3 was described in terms of what it would mean for the community.</p> <p>The down-sizing required to achieve this result was considerable and strong leadership would be required.</p> <p>The Council would need to develop plans to put the changes in place over the short-term – sufficient to meet the</p>

<p>savings of £1,900,000 across the GFd and HRA. There would be potential for further savings above this level to be achieved from work on driving out failure demand.</p> <p>The funding proposal would leave GFd Reserves above the minimum level and considerable NHB resources to progress ambitions.</p> <p>The remaining budget gap would require focus and strong leadership to resolve, but the S151 Officer was confident there would be sufficient capacity within the Council's spending plans and income capability for this to be achieved.</p>	<p>budget challenge over the medium term.</p> <p>The S151 Officer would need to make a further assessment of the 'going concern' status of the Council as next year's budget was set, and as the Statement of Accounts for 2016/2017 was signed off.</p> <p>Should robust plans not be agreed and in place to achieve the further savings by this point then there would be a need for formal intervention under the Local Government Finance Act 1988.</p>
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The S151 Officer also drew attention to the questions posed at the end of the Assurance Review report (see above).

The first question was answered in the comments made in the above table. Option 2 offered the strongest financial outcome from the three options in the Business Case. Although the future financial situation had to be taken into account, sustainability and viability also needed to be borne in mind.

The second question was one for Members to consider. The DCLG Minister for Local Government, Marcus Jones, remained in post following the recent refresh of the Cabinet. He had made it quite clear at the meeting with the Council Leaders earlier in the year that merger was his preference and he was prepared to listen and assist further if the Councils proceeded in this direction. There was clearly therefore an opportunity to open up fresh dialogue with the Government should Option 2 be the Councils' preferred option.

The report also detailed the Legal implications which arose from the High Level Transformation Business Case some of which would need to be addressed (potentially in different ways) in all of the options. These implications related to:-

- Contractual/Procurement Implications;
- Governance and Standards Arrangements;
- Operating More Commercially;
- Inter Authority Agreement;
- Council Merger;
- Brexit; and
- General Matters.

Noted that there were numerous legal implications associated with each of the options outlined in the High Level Transformation Business Case. When the preferred option had been determined, the legal implications would form a key element of the Transformation Implementation Programme.

The Business Case had been considered by TDBC's Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 11 July 2016 and the key discussion points were submitted in detail.

The meeting had concluded with the majority of the Committee supporting the need to transform and a number of Members expressed a view for Option 2 – a merger. A public referendum option was tabled but did not receive a majority vote. There were no formal recommendations agreed from this meeting for Full Council to consider.

WSC's Scrutiny Committee had also considered the Business Case at its meeting on 12 July 2016. Again, details of the key discussion points were submitted for the information of Members.

The meeting concluded with only one Member expressing a view – that Option 3 should not be considered for WSC. There were no formal recommendations from this meeting for Full Council to consider.

In terms of consultation with UNISON, a copy of the Business Case had been provided to the Union in advance of publication to Members.

UNISON had attended both Scrutiny meetings and shared their initial concerns with those Committees. Consultation and engagement would continue as the Business Case implementation plans were developed.

UNISON had also been asked to consider the recommendations in the report and provide Councillors with any further comments.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Williams, reported that WSC had agreed to defer a decision on this matter until a special Full Council meeting on 7 September 2016. This was to allow the WSC Leader further time for debate with Members.

Councillor Williams stated that it was clear that Transformation was an essential part of the future and therefore implementation therefore needed to be progressed as quickly as possible. This would deliver considerable savings for the community and any delay would have an opportunity cost.

Whilst Option 1 would deliver a Transformed future, this was unlikely to leave a sustainable future for WSC. Therefore Option 1 was not an option that could be recommended as WSC's short to medium term viability and sustainability was seriously in question.

It was however clear that Option 2 offered the optimum way forward for the local community, delivering an additional minimum £500,000 savings per year (totalling £3,100,000 savings per annum for both communities) and operational efficiencies. Whilst it was recognised that Option 2 required

TDBC to give up its sovereignty, Councillor Williams believed that this was the right thing to do in the best interests of the combined communities.

Councillor Williams went on to propose the recommendation that TDBC should agree to progress Option 2. Having ruled out Option 1 due to sustainability, should WSC feel unable to support Option 2 at its meeting on 7 September 2016, then that would regrettably leave Option 3 as the only viable and reasonable option for TDBC to deliver Transformation and to ensure the Council could continue to deliver vital front-line services to the Taunton Deane community.

(i) Moved by Councillor Coles, seconded by Councillor Ross:-

“That in order to facilitate Members with sufficient time to fully consider all available options in an aligned timescale with that now being followed by West Somerset Council, consideration of the following recommendations be deferred until a special meeting of Full Council, to be convened on or as soon as possible after 7 September, 2016”.

In accordance with Standing Order 18(2)(a), the Mayor called for a formal roll call of votes to be taken and recorded in the Minutes.

The amendment was put and was lost with eighteen Councillors in favour, thirty two against and one abstaining, as follows:-

Yes	No	Abstain
Councillor Aldridge	Councillor Beale	Councillor M Adkins
Councillor Booth	Councillor Berry	
Councillor Coles	Councillor Bowrah	
Councillor Farbahi	Councillor Brown	
Councillor Mrs Floyd	Councillor Cavill	
Councillor Gaines	Councillor Coombes	
Councillor Mrs Hill	Councillor Cossey	
Councillor Horsley	Councillor Davies	
Councillor Ms Lisgo	Councillor D Durdan	
Councillor Morrell	Councillor Miss Durdan	
Councillor Nicholls	Councillor Mrs Edwards	
Councillor Prior-Sankey	Councillor Edwards	
Councillor Ross	Councillor Gage	
Councillor Miss Smith	Councillor Mrs Gunner	
Councillor Mrs Smith	Councillor Habgood	
Councillor Stone	Councillor Hall	
Councillor Wedderkopp	Councillor Mrs Herbert	
Councillor Wren	Councillor C Hill	
	Councillor Hunt	
	Councillor James	



	Councillor Martin-Scott	
	Councillor Parrish	
	Councillor Mrs Reed	
	Councillor Ryan	
	Councillor Mrs Stock-Williams	
	Councillor Sully	
	Councillor Townsend	
	Councillor Mrs Tucker	
	Councillor Mrs Warmington	
	Councillor Watson	
	Councillor Ms Webber	
	Councillor Williams	

(ii) Moved by Councillor Coles, seconded by Councillor Horsley:-

“That paragraph 2.2 of the Recommendations contained in the report be altered to read:-

“In the event of West Somerset Council not agreeing to Option 2 (Merged Council) at its meeting on 7 September 2016, that the High Level Business Plan be brought back to Full Council for further consideration”.

The amendment was put and was lost.

(iii) Moved by Councillor Coles, seconded by Councillor Miss Smith:-

“(a) That paragraph 2.1 of the Recommendations contained in the report be deleted in total and replaced with the following:-

“2.1 That Taunton Deane Borough Council agrees to progress Option 1 (Joint Transformation) described in the High Level Transformation Business Case”;

(b) That the existing paragraph 2.2 of the Recommendations contained in the report be replaced with a new paragraph 2.2 which set out the financial details required for Option 1 to be delivered; and

(c) That the existing paragraph 2.2 of the Recommendations contained in the report be re-numbered as paragraph 2.3 and amended to read as follows:-

“In the event of West Somerset Council not agreeing to Option 1 at their meeting on 7 September 2016 - then as a consequence, Option 3 will be progressed. It is recommended that the additional funding requirement of £776,000 is approved (£517,000 from the General Fund funded from “assets for sale” (underwritten by New Homes Bonus) and £259,000 from the Housing

Revenue Account – funded from reserves including unallocated capital). The updated savings would be reflected in the Medium Term Financial Plan”.

The amendment was put and was lost.

In accordance with Standing Order 18(3), Councillors Booth, Coles, Farbahi, Mrs Floyd, Gaines, Horsley, Ms Lisgo, Nicholls, Ross, Miss Smith, Mrs Smith and Wedderkopp all asked for their votes in favour of the amendment to be recorded in the Minutes of the meeting.

(iv) Moved by Councillor Coles, seconded by Councillor Miss Smith:-

“That paragraph 2.1 (a) of the Recommendations contained in the report be amended by the deletion of the words “of £3,100,000”.

The amendment was put and was lost.

(v) Moved by Councillor Coles, seconded by Councillor Horsley:

“That paragraph 2.1 (b) of the Recommendations contained in the report be amended to include the words “after 7 September 2016” to follow the words “That the Leader”.

The amendment was put and was lost.

In accordance with Standing Order 18(3), Councillors Coles and Horsley asked for their votes in favour of the amendment to be recorded in the Minutes of the meeting.

(vi) Moved by Councillor Horsley, seconded by Councillor Miss Smith:-

“That paragraph 2.1 (b) of the Recommendations contained in the report be amended to include the following words at the end of the paragraph “only after West Somerset Council had voted on the options and Sedgemoor District Council had confirmed its involvement in the process and that involvement had been considered by both the Corporate Scrutiny Committee and Full Council”.

The amendment was put and was lost.

(vii) Moved by Councillor Coles, seconded by Councillor Farbahi:-

“That paragraph 2.1 (c) of the Recommendations contained in the report be amended by the inclusion of the following sentence after the existing first paragraph:-

“All “assets for sales” in excess of £150,000 in the programme below whether for the General Fund or the Housing Revenue Account share of the

implementation costs to be scrutinised by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee and/or the Corporate Governance Committee with their recommendations being sent on to Full Council.”

The amendment was put and was lost.

(viii) Moved by Councillor Coles, seconded by Councillor Horsley:-

“That the seventh ‘bullet point’ of paragraph 2.1 (c) of the Recommendations contained in the report be amended to read as follows:-

“Using £1,218,000 of New Homes Bonus (NHB) funding only after a full risk assessment had been carried out and scrutinised by both the Corporate Governance Committee and the Corporate Scrutiny Committee to ensure the Growth Plan was secure”.

The amendment was put and was lost.

(ix) Moved by Councillor Coles, seconded by Councillor Farbahi:-

“That the eighth ‘bullet point’ of paragraph 2.1 (c) of the Recommendations contained in the report be amended to read as follows:-

“Progressing “assets for sale” to the target sum of £1,758,000 (underwritten by New Homes Bonus) only after a full review was undertaken and the method of disposal (secret tender, public auction, expression of interests etc.) was clearly understood after the Corporate Scrutiny Committee had scrutinised the process and made further recommendations to Full Council”.

The amendment was put and was lost.

(x) Moved by Councillor Coles, seconded by Councillor Farbahi:-

“That the last ‘bullet point’ of paragraph 2.1 (c) of the Recommendations contained in the report be amended to read as follows:-

“Progressing “assets for sale” to the target sum of £1,160,000 (underwritten by Housing Revenue Account Reserves) only after a full review was undertaken and the method of disposal (secret tender, public auction, expression of interests etc.) was clearly understood after the Corporate Scrutiny Committee had scrutinised the process and made further recommendations to Full Council”.

The amendment was put and was lost.

Following consideration of the above amendments, a lengthy discussion on the substantive recommendations then took place.

During the debate, Councillor Morrell proposed a Motion in accordance with Standing Order 5(1)(b) to defer consideration of the recommendations. This was seconded by Councillor Aldridge.

The Motion was put and was lost.

In accordance with Standing Order 18(2)(b), the Mayor called for a formal roll call of votes to be taken in respect of the substantive recommendations and recorded in the Minutes.

The substantive recommendations, which were detailed below, were put and were carried with thirty two Councillors in favour, sixteen Councillors voting against and two abstaining.

**Resolved that:-**

- (1) It be agreed that Taunton Deane Borough Council progressed Option 2 (Merged Council) described in the High Level Transformation Business Case and that the following be approved:-
  - (a) That, on the basis of the potential savings contained within the Joint Management and Shared Services Phase 2 - High Level Transformation Business Case, the implementation of Option 2 (Merged Council) delivering a shared Transformation Vision for both communities and ongoing annual savings of £3,100,000 for the community represented by the newly formed Council be supported.
  - (b) That the Leader of the Council (Councillor Williams) be authorised to commence discussions with the Secretary of State and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England concerning the proposed merger and that officers be authorised to implement the proposals in Option 2 in accordance with the financial targets and timeline as set out within the Joint Management and Shared Services Phase 2 - High Level Transformation Business Case, with the financial targets to be included in the Council's budgets and Medium Term Financial Plans.
  - (c) That the necessary respective financial approvals be hereby agreed to fund the Taunton Deane Borough Council share of Implementation Costs of Transformation totalling £5,966,000 as set out in the Finance/Resource Implications section of the report.

For Taunton Deane Borough Council to fund their General Fund share of the implementation costs (£3,982,000) by:-

- A supplementary estimate from General Fund Reserves of £200,000;
- Using Joint Management and Shared Services Reserves of £180,000;
- Using Southwest One Exit Funds already set aside for technology replacement of £137,000;
- Using unallocated Capital Resources of £46,000;

- Directing £153,000 of 2016/2017 in-year revenue savings towards this;
- Using “returned” Earmarked Reserves totalling £290,000;
- Using £1,218,000 of New Homes Bonus Funding – and making the necessary reprioritisation to the Growth Plan; and
- Progressing “assets for sale” to the target sum of £1,758,000. (underwritten by New Homes Bonus);

For Taunton Deane Borough Council to fund their Housing Revenue Account share of the implementation costs (£1,984,000) by:-

- Using unallocated Capital Resources of £324,000;
- Using agreed revenue resources for transformation of £500,000;
- Progressing “assets for sale” to the target sum of £1,160,000 (underwritten by Housing Revenue Account Reserves); and

(2) In the event of West Somerset Council not agreeing to Option 2 (Merged Council) at its meeting on 7 September 2016 - then as a consequence, Option 3 (Stand Alone Futures) would be progressed, with approval of the additional funding requirement of £776,000 (£517,000 from the General Fund funded from “assets for sale” (underwritten by New Homes Bonus) and £259,000 from the Housing Revenue Account – funded from Housing Reserves Account Reserves including unallocated capital). The updated savings to be reflected in the Medium Term Financial Plan.

Yes	No	Abstain
Councillor M Adkins	Councillor Aldridge	Councillor Martin-Scott
Councillor Beale	Councillor Booth	Councillor Wren
Councillor Berry	Councillor Coles	
Councillor Bowrah	Councillor Farbahi	
Councillor Brown	Councillor Gaines	
Councillor Cavill	Councillor Mrs Hill	
Councillor Coombes	Councillor Horsley	
Councillor Cossey	Councillor Ms Lisgo	
Councillor Davies	Councillor Morrell	
Councillor D Durdan	Councillor Nicholls	
Councillor Miss Durdan	Councillor Prior-Sankey	
Councillor Mrs Edwards	Councillor Ross	
Councillor Edwards	Councillor Miss Smith	
Councillor Gage	Councillor Mrs Smith	
Councillor Mrs Gunner	Councillor Stone	
Councillor Habgood	Councillor Wedderkopp	
Councillor Hall		
Councillor Mrs Herbert		

Councillor C Hill		
Councillor Hunt		
Councillor James		
Councillor Parrish		
Councillor Mrs Reed		
Councillor Ryan		
Councillor Mrs Stock-Williams		
Councillor Sully		
Councillor Townsend		
Councillor Mrs Tucker		
Councillor Mrs Warmington		
Councillor Watson		
Councillor Ms Webber		
Councillor Williams		

(The meeting ended at 11.36 p.m.)

## 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 4 August 2016 at 7.45 p.m.

Present      The Mayor (Councillor Mrs Stock-Williams)  
                  The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Prior-Sankey)  
                  Councillors M Adkins, Aldridge, Beale, Berry, Mrs Blatchford, Booth,  
                  Bowrah, Brown, Cavill, Coombes, Davies, D Durdan, Miss Durdan,  
                  Mrs Edwards, Edwards, Farbahi, Gage, Gaines, Habgood, Hall,  
                  Mrs Herbert, Mrs Hill, Hunt, James, R Lees, Morrell, Parrish,  
                  Mrs Reed, Miss Smith, Mrs Smith, Townsend, Mrs Tucker, Watson and  
                  Wren

Mrs A Elder – Chairman of the Standards Advisory Committee

### 1.      **Apologies**

Councillors Mrs Adkins, Coles, Mrs Gunner, Horsley, Mrs Lees, Ms Lisgo, Nicholls, Ross, Ryan, Sully, Mrs Warmington, Ms Webber and Williams.

### 2.      **Declaration of Interests**

Councillors M Adkins, Hunt and Prior-Sankey declared personal interests as Members of Somerset County Council. Councillor Mrs Herbert declared a personal interest as an employee of the Department of Work and Pensions. Councillor Wren declared a personal interest as Clerk to Milverton Parish Council. Councillor Gage declared a prejudicial interests as a Tone Leisure Board representative. Councillor Beale declared personal interests as a Board Member and Director of Tone FM and as a Governor of the South West Ambulance NHS Trust. Councillor Edwards declared a personal interest as the Chairman of the Governors of Queens College. Councillor Farbahi declared a personal interest as the owner of land in Taunton Deane. Councillor Hall declared a personal interest as a Director of Southwest One. Councillor Coombes declared a personal interest as a Stoke St Mary Parish Councillor and as the owner of land at Haydon. Councillor Parrish declared a personal interest as the District Council's representative on the Somerset Pensions Committee. Councillor Mrs Hill declared personal interests as a representative on the Board of Directors of Apple FM, as a Trustee of Hestercombe House and Gardens and the Somerset Building Preservation Trust. Councillor Miss Smith declared a personal interest as Chairperson of Refugee Aid from Taunton.

### 3.      **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

**Resolved** that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item because of the likelihood that exempt information would otherwise be disclosed relating to Clause 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972 and the public interest in withholding the information outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information to the public.

#### 4. **Land at Creedwell Orchard Housing Estate, Milverton**

Considered report which was circulated at the meeting, concerning a further variation of an Option Agreement with S Notaro Limited (SNL) for the purchase of land at Creedwell Orchard Housing Estate, Milverton.

An Option Agreement was entered into with SNL in February 2014 for a period of 10 years following Executive approval in respect of Council owned land at Creedwell Orchard. The land was to be used to provide access to land owned by SNL that had the benefit of an extant planning permission for residential development.

The current Option Agreement provided that the "Base Price" for the Council's land, should be determined by the "Base Sum" figure (subject to indexation up or down) that had been determined by the District Valuer. In the event of the Index falling between certain dates, the Agreement provided that the "Minimum Price" should be a particular percentage of the "Base Sum".

Since the completion of the Option Agreement, it had come to light that the formula for the sale price of the land had been based upon an incorrect valuation as a result of incorrect information on floor areas being provided to the Council.

In order to address this issue, the District Valuer had again been engaged to advise further on the value of the Council's land based upon the correct extant planning permission floor areas with a view to agreeing a revised "Base Sum" figure on behalf of the Council.

Further reported that a revised "Base Sum" had been provisionally agreed and this amount had been certified by the District Valuer as representing best consideration for the Council. The "Minimum Price" would also need revising and to ensure consistency with the terms of the existing option, remained at the particular percentage of the new "Base Sum".

The Option Agreement also contained a number of provisions for Overage Payments to be made to the Council should the developer obtain planning consent(s) for a higher value alternative development.

Reported that at the meeting of Full Council on 12 April 2016 it was resolved that the "Trigger Date" within the Option Agreement should be amended to provide that the option to purchase the Council's land must be exercised within 120 days of 12 October 2016. Once the Council and SNL had completed the deed of variation this would be contractually binding.

The amendment of the "Trigger Date" was intended to set a timetable for negotiations to be completed and a revised sale price formula based upon the correct extant planning permission floor areas to be agreed. This would, therefore, remove the link between the planning process and deriving the capital receipt and then enable SNL to exercise the option.

Noted that there was a live appeal against a planning decision made on 15 October 2015, which had been acknowledged by The Planning Inspectorate and an Inquiry if progressed would take place sometime after 12 October



2016. However, the Council would obtain a capital receipt irrespective of what the outcome of the appeal was, assuming the Option Agreement was exercised by SNL.

**Resolved** that the amendment of the “Base Sum” within the Option Agreement (detailed in the report) be approved and the “Minimum Price” (also detailed in the report) be amended by way of a Deed of Variation.

(The meeting ended at 8.26 p.m.)

## 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 22 August 2016 at 6.30 p.m.

Present      The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Prior-Sankey) (In the Chair)  
Councillors M Adkins, Aldridge, Beale, Berry, Mrs Blatchford, Cavill, Coles, Coombes, Davies, D Durdan, Miss Durdan, Mrs Edwards, Edwards, Farbahi, Mrs Floyd, Gage, Gaines, Mrs Gunner, Habgood, Hall, Mrs Herbert, Mrs Hill, Horsley, Hunt, James, R Lees, Mrs Lees, Ms Lisgo, Martin-Scott, Nicholls, Parrish, Mrs Reed, Ryan, Miss Smith, Mrs Smith, Stone, Sully, Townsend, Mrs Tucker, Mrs Warmington, Watson and Williams

Mrs A Elder – Chairman of the Standards Advisory Committee

### 1. **Apologies**

The Mayor (Councillor Mrs Stock-Williams) and Councillors Mrs Adkins, Booth, Bowrah, Brown, Cossey, Govier, C Hill, Morrell, Ross, Ms Webber and Wren.

### 2. **Declaration of Interests**

Councillors M Adkins, Coles, Hunt and Prior-Sankey declared personal interests as Members of Somerset County Council. Councillor Coles also declared a personal interest as a Member of the Devon and Somerset Fire Authority. Councillor Mrs Herbert declared a personal interest as an employee of the Department of Work and Pensions. Councillors D Durdan, Gage and Stone declared prejudicial interests as Tone Leisure Board representatives. Councillor Beale declared personal interests as a Board Member and Director of Tone FM and as a Governor of the South West Ambulance NHS Trust. Councillor Edwards declared a personal interest as the Chairman of the Governors of Queens College. Councillor Farbahi declared a personal interest as the owner of land in Taunton Deane. Councillor Hall declared a personal interest as a Director of Southwest One. Councillor Coombes declared a personal interest as a Stoke St Mary Parish Councillor and as the owner of land at Haydon. Councillor Parrish declared a personal interest as the District Council's representative on the Somerset Pensions Committee. Councillor Mrs Hill declared personal interests as a representative on the Board of Directors of Apple FM, as a Trustee of Hestercombe House and Gardens and the Somerset Building Preservation Trust. Councillor Miss Smith declared a personal interest as Chairperson of Refugee Aid from Taunton.

### 3. **Motion – Consultation with a wider audience regarding the proposed merger of Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset Council**

Moved by Councillor Miss Smith, seconded by Councillor Gaines.

“We believe that Taunton Deane Borough Council's (TDBC) overarching

message to its residents, businesses and staff should be one of reassurance that the Council can provide leadership and financial stability especially when it comes to consulting on a merger with an un-financially viable Council such as West Somerset Council (WSC).

At the Special Full Council on 26 July, 2016 we witnessed a majority decision by a TDBC administration which led to a Councillor declaring herself independent of the ruling group. There was also general unhappiness about both the procedure and processes which changed during the seven days leading up to the debate.

This means that there is the possibility of a Judicial Review on the grounds of failing to follow the Constitution of TDBC and the rule of law regarding equity for Members who did not have time to adjust their thinking to rapidly changing circumstances as well as the lack of consultation with members of the public, Parish Councils and other stakeholders.

Over 800 people had signed an online petition and questionnaires requesting to have their voices heard.

The outcome means that especially the most socially deprived wards of Rockwell Green, Pyrland and Rowbarton, Lyngford and Halcon could be seriously disadvantaged when the equalisation of resources takes place under the creation of a new greater Council. We believe it is our duty as representative of the TDBC community to reflect the needs and concerns of our residents first and last and not that of the joint Sovereign Councils.

We recognise there are challenges ahead with pressure on public services and finances, but the proposals to auction off our family silver (TDBC assets) and make a significant number of our staff redundant is not the answer. Furthermore, the Government's review of the Hinkley C project now adds a further significant risk to West Somerset's financial position and the potential cost of the TDBC cross subsidy.

We would therefore urge the administration to:-

- 1) Immediately engage in public consultation involving residents, businesses, Parish Councils and staff in a meaningful way as to their views of a merger with WSC;
- 2) Engage with the new Local Government Minister immediately requesting financial support for WSC to ensure TDBC communities are not financially or adversely affected; and
- 3) Start a dialogue with other neighbouring authorities regarding joint working arrangements to investigate if there is a more suitable arrangement to meet the Medium Term Financial Plan (balance the budget year on year), as we have recently been advised that one neighbouring authority "always remain open to a fresh approach, which includes all three councils on a level playing field from a new starting point".

The following amended motion was proposed by Councillor Williams,

seconded by Councillor Edwards:-

“We would therefore urge the administration:-

- 1) When we have an agreed proposal, to engage in consultation agreed by the Secretary of State in a meaningful way as to their views of a merger with West Somerset Council;
- 2) To engage with the new Local Government Minister immediately a proposal is agreed requesting financial support for our communities; and
- 3) To continue a dialogue with other neighbouring authorities regarding joint working arrangements”.

The amended motion was put and was carried.

The substantive motion was put and was carried.

#### 4. **Street and Public Toilet Cleaning Service**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the introduction of new arrangements for the provision of Street and Public Toilet Cleaning in Taunton Deane.

Currently, the Council had their street and toilet cleaning services delivered through their own employees - an in-house arrangement.

West Somerset Council (WSC) had its service delivered through an outsource provider with an existing contract coming to an end in November 2016.

The Joint Management and Shared Services (JMASS) Project had been successful in joining up a number of services across the two Councils and delivering a single approach to service delivery. Street and toilet cleaning had not joined up at an operational level during the process to date due to the differing methods of delivery.

However following consideration of the case for a joint tender exercise by Taunton Deane Borough Council’s (TDBC) Corporate Scrutiny Committee last year, the procurement activity was commenced and a tender for a single service to cover both WSC and TDBC was published.

The tender that was put out to market covered all of the current functions of:-

- Street sweeping;
- Litter picking;
- Mechanical road sweeping;
- Leaf clearance;
- Bin installation and emptying;
- Toilet cleaning;
- Toilet locking;
- Toilet consumables;
- All waste disposal relating to these services; and

- Provision and maintenance of all fleet associated with these services.

Aspects of asset maintenance had not been included and would continue to be delivered through Deane DLO.

Flexibility had been built into the contract. It not only allowed for changes to be negotiated but also for employees on the contract to be used for other tasks where the contract could not be delivered, for example in times of severe weather.

The tender exercise had led to five bids being received on 15 July 2016 and an evaluation process being conducted on 21 and 22 July.

With regard to the proposed new service, the tender documentation set an output specification as compliance with the Code of Practice (COP) on Litter and Detritus which would evidence the Council's compliance with The Environmental Protection Act 1990 for street cleansing functions. The tender also provided information on public toilet operations as there was no legislation that supported the provision of this.

Noted that over the past two financial years Members had supported an increase in resources within Taunton Town Centre. These had been protected in the new contract and a minimum resourcing level had been identified which took account of these recent increases.

The documentation made no requirements for service reductions in either service but did assume that those toilets already earmarked for transfer would be completed. A requirement within the tender was that Town or Parish Council's would be able to buy in services by utilising this contract.

Whilst the new contract was proposed to be for the two Council areas it would continue to make use of the Deane DLO depot. The current employees would be subject to TUPE transfer which protected their employment terms and conditions. This also provided a level of service continuity for the residents and visitors to Taunton Deane.

Further reported that the Landscape Group's submission had scored the highest against the set criteria across the Evaluation Panel's Members. This placed them first for both the financial and quality assessments.

The Landscape Group were the current contractors delivering services to Mendip District Council. Within their submission they also provided the detail of a number of other contracts they were currently delivering evidencing their experience.

The company was therefore being recommended to Members as the preferred bidder on the basis of their bid being the least cost to the authority.

Noted that the bid for the WSC element of the service would remain the same in the event that TDBC did not support outsourcing their elements of the service. This meant that there were no financial implications for WSC of TDBC not supporting an outsource of this service.

Reported that this matter had been considered by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 11 August 2016. Although generally supportive of the recommendations relating to the proposed new arrangements for the Street and Public Toilet Service, Members had asked for the views of UNISON to be submitted. These views were circulated at the meeting of Full Council.

**Resolved that:-**

- (1) The award of an eight + four year contract to The Landscape Group to provide the Street and Public Toilet Service from 1 February 2017 be approved; and
- (2) The new budget for the service be supported and that the Medium Term Financial Plan be updated to reflect the saving of £8,270 for 2016/2017 and £49,636 per annum from 2017/2018 onwards. This equated to £397,088 over the eight year life of the contract and a further £198,544 if the extension was applied.

(The meeting ended at 8.02 p.m.)

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

### **Full Council**

- **Members of Somerset County Council – Councillors M Adkins, Coles, Govier, Hunt, Prior-Sankey and Wedderkopp**
- **Employee of the Department of Work and Pensions – Councillor Mrs Herbert**
- **Clerk to Milverton Parish Council – Councillor Wren**
- **Tone Leisure Board representatives – Councillors D Durdan, Gage and Stone**
- **Director of Tone FM – Councillor Ms Lisgo**
- **Councillor Beale declared personal interests as a Board Member and Director of Tone FM and as a Governor of the South West Ambulance NHS Trust.**
- **Councillor Edwards declared a personal interest as the Chairman of Governors of Queens College.**
- **Councillor Farbahi declared a personal interest as the owner of land in Taunton Deane.**
- **Councillor Hall declared a personal interest as a Director of Southwest One.**
- **Councillor Coombes declared a personal interest as a Stoke St Mary Parish Councillor and the owner of an area of land at Haydon, Taunton.**
- **Councillor Richard Parrish declared a personal interest as the District Council’s representative on the Somerset Pensions Committee.**
- **Councillor Mrs Hill declared personal interests as a representative on the Board of Directors of Apple FM**

**and as a Trustee of Hestercombe House and Gardens and the Somerset Building Preservation Trust.**

- **Councillor Federica Smith declared a personal interest as Chairperson of Refugee Aid from Taunton.**
- **Councillor Ross declared personal interests as one of the Council's representatives on the Somerset Waste Board, as a member of the Wiveliscombe Area Partnership and as a Governor of Wiveliscombe Primary School.**
- **Councillor Coles declared a personal interest as a Devon and Somerset Fire Authority Member.**



## **Council Meeting- 4 October 2016**

### **The Proposed Development at Firepool (the Old Cattle Market), Taunton**

#### **Motion proposed by Councillor Simon Coles and seconded by Councillor Jefferson Horsley**

The Council notes that:-

- a) The Planning Committee rejected the Firepool Application submitted by the developers St Modwen on 31 August 2016 on the recommendation of the officers.
- b) It was defeated on the grounds that it did not meet the requirements of the Council's Core Strategy adopted in 2012 and on the grounds of poor design, failure to connect the station appropriately through the new Boulevard to Somerset Square and lack of activity for the waterfront onto the River Tone.
- c) It was also condemned for appearing like a "retail park" and the adverse effect it would have on the existing current town centre with Taunton Deane's consultants Savills estimating that it could take up to 20% of turnover away from the area.
- d) There was little evidence of any businesses truly interested in coming to Firepool from the hotel, entertainment, leisure and retail sectors at the meeting on 31 August 2016.
- e) The announcement on 19 September 2016 of the forthcoming closure of The County Stores in North Street, Taunton from January 2017.
- f) The announcement on 15 September 2016 made by the John Lewis Partnership that it was unlikely to open any further Waitrose Stores in the foreseeable future including Firepool.
- g) The Government's confirmation on 18 September 2016 of its decision to proceed with the contract arrangements to build Hinkley C.

Council further believes that Firepool is still the most important brownfield site available for the future development of Taunton and is anxious for new proposals to be brought forward at the earliest opportunity taking into account the latest circumstances set out above.

Council further believes that to attain our vision of becoming a forward thinking, progressive County Town and to meet its sustainable growth requirements to create prosperity and exploit our natural advantage of becoming the sub-regional capital of the South West we should:-

- A) Seek a new development partner; or
- B) Should consider undertaking the project north of the River Tone ourselves;
- C) Should rapidly reconsider the mix of buildings and businesses to reflect the changing circumstances set out in the Notes above; and
- D) Any development should enhance the current offering of the town centre;
- E) The development should be environmentally sustainable.
- F) The new proposals should reflect the strategic importance of the site as the new "Gateway to Taunton" from the Railway Station and be designed accordingly; and
- G) A fresh survey should immediately be undertaken of the businesses in the town centre and with the people of Taunton to ascertain their views on the above ideas.

## Taunton Deane Borough Council

### Motions to Council – Assessment Form

On receipt of a Motion from a Councillor, the Democratic Services Manager will carry out an assessment as to its contents to establish whether there are likely to be significant consequences to the Council should the Motion be carried at the subsequent Full Council meeting.

The first question to be addressed will be:-

“Can the Motion, if approved, be implemented without the need for any resource (financial and otherwise) to be identified outside existing budgets or staffing capacity?”

If the answer is ‘yes’, then the motion can proceed towards discussion and resolution.

An example of a Motion which would fall into the above category would be where the Council is being asked to lobby the Government, Somerset County Council or other body on a particular issue. If the motion is carried, the action required will usually involve no more than a letter being prepared and sent to the intended recipient.

However, as in the case of the recent Motion on ‘Legal Hights’, the answer to the above question would clearly be ‘no’.

In such circumstances, detailed analysis of the wording of the Motion will be required to identify what will be needed if the Motion – when it comes before Full Council – is carried.

Such analysis will include:-

- What additional resource would be required to ensure the Motion (if approved) could be implemented?
- What needs to be done to identify the level of resource necessary both in financial and staff terms?
- Are any approvals needed to provide these resources?
- Will this require reports to be submitted through Scrutiny and the Executive?  
If a Supplementary Estimate is required, Full Council approval will be required too.

If such analysis is required, the Democratic Services Manager will arrange for the attached pro-forma to be completed and this will accompany the relevant Motion onto the agenda of the Full Council meeting so all Members are aware that further investigation will be required before the Motion – even if it is carried – can be implemented.

## Motions to Council – Assessment Pro-forma

(To be used in circumstances where it appears the wording of a proposed Motion will commit the Council to providing further financial or staffing resources which cannot be met from existing budgets)

Brief Details of the Motion –

That the Council should:-

- A) Seek a new development partner; or
- B) Should consider undertaking the project north of the River Tone ourselves;
- C) Should rapidly reconsider the mix of buildings and businesses to reflect the changing circumstances set out in the Notes above; and
- D) Any development should enhance the current offering of the town centre;
- E) The development should be environmentally sustainable.
- F) The new proposals should reflect the strategic importance of the site as the new “Gateway to Taunton” from the Railway Station and be designed accordingly; and
- G) A fresh survey should immediately be undertaken of the businesses in the town centre and with the people of Taunton to ascertain their views on the above ideas.

Questions to be addressed

- |  |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>What additional resource would be required to ensure the Motion (if approved) could be implemented?</i></li></ul> |
|--|

Answer – Parts A and B of the motion would involve the termination of the Council’s contractual relationship with its development partner. This would involve resource requirements, although the main resource requirements would arise in relation to the assessment and implementation of alternative delivery arrangements. Points C-F if carried out by the Council (rather than by St Modwen under the existing development agreement) are likely to require significant resources. They will involve significant officer time and technical and professional advice. .
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- |   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>What needs to be done to identify the level of resource necessary both in financial and staff terms?</i></li></ul> |
|---|

Answer – An assessment of the cost, feasibility, and effectiveness of alternative delivery models would be necessary if the Council wished to support parts A and/or B. The level of resources required to undertake such an assessment would depend on the range of alternatives investigated but would include external advice (including legal and development advice), as there is not sufficient capacity internally. Technical advice is likely to be required in terms of infrastructure delivery. Alternative models may involve Council investment in infrastructure, and this would have to be costed and planned.

- ***Are any approvals needed to provide these resources?***

Answer – Yes. A decision to pursue an alternative approach to Firepool delivery (points A and B) would require Council approval, including an assessment of the resources required. There would also need to be consultation with/approval from the Council's funding partner, the HCA, in relation to any alternative disposal strategy. Failure to do so could lead to a requirement to repay the funding.

- ***Will this require reports to be submitted through Scrutiny and the Executive? If a Supplementary Estimate is required, Full Council approval will be required too.***

Answer – Yes. A decision to pursue an alternative approach to Firepool delivery (points A and B) would require Council approval, including a request for resources.

### **Likely timescale involved –**

The table below shows estimated timescales for implementing a new delivery strategy. These timescales are a very rough guide. They will be affected by market conditions, developer interest, and the Council/HCA decision making process.

Appraisal of alternative delivery options	4 - 6 months
Termination of the Development Agreement	2 - 4 months
Preparation of new planning application and consultation	4 - 8 months
Grant of Permission	4 - 6 months
Marketing/Procurement of new delivery partner(s)	12 - 18 months

Although a number of the timescales above could run concurrently it is estimated, again as a rough guide, that substantive development on site could start somewhere in the range of 2 – 4 years from a decision to pursue an alternative delivery strategy.

# **Council Meeting – 4 October 2016**

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

### **1. Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset Council - Creation of a New Council**

- 1.1 Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset Council have now both voted in favour of joining forces to create a new, single authority and so make significant savings to protect vital community services. Taunton Deane voted for the merger in July and now West Somerset Council has also agreed in principle to the move. This is subject to Government approval.
- 1.2 An integral part of this agreement is the implementation of a single programme to change the way services are delivered and how decisions are made – a process known as “transformation” and key to delivering the savings projected for the sustainability of the new Council.
- 1.4 The authorities entered into partnership in 2013 and is currently delivering annual savings of £1,800,000. The merger will formalise the links between the two authorities while scrapping costly duplication and reducing bureaucracy.
- 1.5 There will be consultation over the coming months with key stakeholders and we are getting mobilised on transformation. I remind all Councillors of the ‘Making a Difference’ event on 19 October 2016.

### **2. Digital Economy**

- 2.1 Members will recall the fantastic news last December that the UK Hydrographic Office (UKHO) had decided to remain in Taunton, following a detailed review including other locations in the region. Plans are now coming forward for a new headquarters building at their current site on Admiralty Way, reflecting the UKHO’s commitment not only to remain here but to invest in a modern and high quality showcase building that truly reflects their position as the world’s leading geo-spatial maritime agency.
- 2.2 UKHO is an increasingly digital business. The days of paper chart production, whilst still a requirement, are fast giving way to the digital age and IT skills such as data-mining and software engineering are an increasing requirement for the UKHO to remain competitive in a challenging global market.
- 2.3 The UKHO is not alone in needing such skills – they are increasingly needed by a variety of sectors as wide-ranging as insurance, banking and health through to more ‘obvious’ industries such as IT and web design.

- 2.4 Extending the commitment within our Taunton Growth Prospectus to support growth in high value digital and data centric businesses, Taunton Deane and Somerset County Council are working with a cluster of businesses for whom digital and data skills are the predominant factor in achieving their business success. Through this work, we will bring forward a strategy that is owned by business and local authorities alike. The strategy will outline how we can build on the strengths we already have in Taunton and grow our reputation as a 'hotspot' for digital and data-centric businesses. It will encompass actions across a number of key areas, such as skills development, property and marketing. The Strategy will also set out targets to boost job numbers and economic productivity.
- 2.5 A special feature of this work – essential to its longer term success - is the support we have already secured from key businesses such as UKHO, Claims Consortium Group and Santander. We will continue to build upon this as we finalise the Strategy and present it to members in the coming months.

### **3. Blackbrook Pool**

- 3.1 The Blackbrook Pool opened to the public on 30 July 2016. It marks a milestone as the first new public swimming facilities to be built in Taunton Deane for four decades. The complex has a 25-metre, six-lane pool plus a 13-metre learners' pool. During the first month of operation the new facility attracted 5,721 public swimming visits and 225 treatments and visits to the Spa.
- 3.2 The facilities are intended to appeal to everyone, however, families should find the new changing village especially convenient to use and Sport England funding has financed a Pool Pod which will provide easy access to the pool for customers with disabilities.
- 3.3 The Blackbrook Pavilion Swimming Programme will make the most of both pools and their different properties enabling customers to take full advantage of their time. It will consist of a variety of activities from Swim School lessons, public swimming sessions and lane swimming, to family fun sessions, adult only Swimming and specialised aqua classes for fitness, pre and post-natal. Tone Leisure's Swim School was successfully uplifted from St James Street Swimming Pool with 1,448 swimmers moved to Blackbrook and 216 moved to Taunton Pool. By the end of August there were 1,534 learning to swim at Blackbrook.
- 3.4 Tone Leisure opened the branded coffee shop 'Coffee Corner by BETTER' which has to date been well used and popular with customers.

### **4. Hinkley Point C**

- 4.1 On 15 September 2016, the Government announced the momentous decision to go ahead with the construction of Hinkley Point C. This is clearly welcome news for the local and regional economy. The desire for all parties to make the most of being the first part of the country to host a project of this type and magnitude remains as strong as ever and we continue to engage with Government, EDF Energy, their contractors, businesses, colleges and training providers via well-established networks to deliver.
- 4.2 Activity at Hinkley Point continues apace with 750 workers on site and our officer team remains in direct contact with EDF Energy on a daily basis in a range of areas. The announcement allows additional posts in the One Team structure, all funded by agreements with EDF Energy, to be filled which will add significant capacity and benefiting both Councils. Funding is available to Taunton Deane to help deliver housing Initiatives (£700,000) and our officers are already working on an updated strategy to draw down this funding from EDF Energy, building on the experience of successful projects in West Somerset spanning over the last two years.
- 4.2 We are well placed to make the most of the opportunities offered. Taunton provides the rail gateway to the Hinkley Point C site and our plans at Taunton Station will create a first class transport interchange providing fast access to the site from London, Birmingham, Bristol and beyond including the South West peninsula. The planned investment in Junction 25 will also enhance our motorway connections to two regional airports.
- 4.3 The Council has committed funds to the Somerset Chamber of Commerce and has been working with a host of partners and EDF Energy to ensure local people benefit from training and employment opportunities and local businesses can bid for contracts, adding real value to the local economy. Regionally, it is anticipated the boost to our economy will be near £4 billion comprising £1.5 billion during construction and £2.4 billion during operations all at today's values.

## **5. Deane DLO Depot**

- 5.1 I will leave my colleague Councillor Edwards to fully report but I am pleased to note that Summerfield Developments are reporting the project as being on budget and approximately five weeks ahead of schedule. This means that the anticipated practical completion of the build phase and potential hand over of the building could be as early as 1 November 2016. Let us hope they maintain progress and achieve this.
- 5.2 The new premises will introduce a new way of working for the DLO and with the introduction of new technology will mean a step change from the current procedures. Once bedded in this can only be good for the tenants we serve by delivering a much more efficient service and being able to provide early



feedback on the status of individual jobs.

- 5.3 Achieving an early completion on this site will ensure we can meet our obligations to Helston Motors by meeting the vacant possession date by the end of this year, hopefully delivering the Priory Way depot to them early. This will give them the certainty they need to start work on the major task of delivering their new premises, which is to be welcomed.

## **6. Somerset County Council**

- 6.1 Somerset County Council have recently announced they are facing a £24,000,000 overspend this financial year, unless it makes huge savings in the next few months.
- 6.2 The Council has said this year's overspend is "unprecedented" and is almost double compared to last year's.
- 6.3 The County Council has put in place a 10-point plan which includes a recruitment freeze, a review of current staffing levels and voluntary redundancies amongst other initiatives. One thing is certain they will have some very hard choices as the real problem is underfunding of essential demand led services that they have no real control over.
- 6.4 On behalf of Taunton Deane, I would like to offer my support to Somerset County Council as they grapple with a very difficult challenge ahead.

## **7. Taunton Deane Borough Council Budget Setting**

- 7.1 Having mentioned the difficulties facing Somerset County Council our own forthcoming budget process is about to commence with some very difficult decisions to be made. Let there be no illusions, there will be a need for us to show strong leadership when facing these hard choices that will have to be made.
- 7.2 We have a choice of continuing with annual financial settlements from the Government or taking a four year settlement. We will be writing to the Government to accept the four year settlement as, having considered it, we feel it is in the best interests of the community and gives stability to financial planning. This does not increase our grant awards but does give us reasonable certainty to aid our forward planning process.
- 7.3 I must also mention two major initiatives on the horizon that will be inextricably linked to the budget setting process being the major changes to Business Rates retention, National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR), (I hesitate to use the term "100% retention") and the formation of a new Council with the accepted transformation process that will take place. The latter will definitely provide

substantial savings but the revision to NNDR retention are not as certain because the Government is advising it will be “cost neutral” but our benefit will come from planned growth of businesses from which we should retain the additional income created. Neither of these will help us this year or next, as 2019 or 2020 is the earliest we are likely to see any impact.

## **8. Devolution**

- 8.1 We held a joint meeting on 5 September 2016 with West Somerset Council Members to explain the process so far and, more importantly, give Members the opportunity to ask questions. It was a very interesting and informative session very ably presented by Brendan Cleere and Alistair Higton (from the County Council).
- 8.2 Despite the meeting being well trailed to ensure all Members were fully aware of the meeting and the importance of the subject, the attendance was nothing short of abysmal, but I do thank those that did take the trouble to attend or sent apologies. Of the combined total of the two Councils of 84 Members about 8 turned up, about half were West Somerset Councillors, hence my concern at the lack of Taunton Deane Members' interest.
- 8.3 If it is thought that the Government are not pursuing devolution any longer, I get no indication this is the case. So we can be ostriches with the proverbial 'head in the sand' or actively participate to ensure we have a voice at the table when all important issues such as roads, railways, employment, skills and learning, housing and health care are discussed. Going forward this will be a very important initiative. I do hope Members will take the trouble to attend future briefing sessions when arranged.
- 8.4 As a reminder to Members, the presentation used on the night was circulated to all Members by email from Richard Bryant on the 7 September 2016.

## **9. Firepool, Taunton**

- 9.1 It was extremely disappointing that the application for major redevelopment of Firepool was refused when considered by the Planning Committee recently. However, on the other hand, it was extremely useful in crystalizing the major concerns about the proposals on this key site.
- 9.2 Although not in accord with the “Area Action Plan”, it was recognised that times had changed over the last 10 years and that it would now be highly unlikely that a scheme with the mix and quantum of uses identified originally would come forward now. Concerns expressed at the meeting centred primarily around the design and layout rather than the mix of uses. The visual appearance of the boulevard was questioned as was the layout which it was felt made it more akin to a “retail park” rather than being complimentary to the existing town centre.

- 9.2 Our partners St Modwen and their Architects have taken this on board and are taking active steps to address the issues raised. All parties are aware of the need to get this resolved soonest so this all important strategic mixed use development can be brought forward at the earliest time and we can start securing commitments from businesses wishing to locate on the development. One thing is certain, without a valid planning consent we will not be able to secure final commitment to the site from any business!
- 9.3 We now need to focus on addressing the issues and securing a planning consent which will help retain Taunton as a thriving Town Centre in the future, whilst at the same time mitigating the risk of developers securing consents for developments in less sustainable locations.

## **10. And Finally - Somerset County Cricket Club (SCCC)**

- 10.1 My heartiest congratulations to our Somerset Club for achieving runners-up in the County Championship. I appreciate they must be bitterly disappointed that they did not secure the Championship title but it is still an enormous achievement to be runner-up. Great team effort secured this with some fantastic games through the season so I reiterate my sincerest congratulations.
- 10.2 Coincidentally, I was at the Cricket Club on the day of the final match attending the unveiling of a portrait of Giles Clarke, ex-Chairman of SCCC to celebrate his outstanding contribution to the Club. In his response, following the unveiling, Giles was nothing less than fulsome in his praise for the willingness of Taunton Deane to support, assist directly and facilitate with other organisations. He was clear and emphatic that without Taunton Deane's help the superb development of the ground would not and could not have happened. He praised us for our foresight and commitment in "buying in" to the project and help seeing it through.
- 10.3 So it is thanks to the great team effort that made this happen and, in so doing, we have maintained the wonderful asset of the Cricket Ground right in our midst - "a jewel in our crown" acting as a huge driver for our economy.

Councillor John Williams

# Council Meeting – 4 October 2016

## Report of Councillor Patrick Berry – Environmental Services

### 1. Environmental Health

Officers in the Environmental Health Team have recently been involved in the following areas of work:-

- 1.1 **Somerset Rocks Concerts:** Officers were in attendance at the concerts in Vivary Park, Taunton over the August Bank Holiday weekend to carry out checks regarding health and safety, noise monitoring and inspections of mobile food traders.
- 1.2 We worked in partnership with the Licensing Team and the event organisers LCC Live. It is interesting to note that only one noise complaint was received.
- 1.3 **Environmental Health Reactive work:** The Environmental Health Team investigate service requests and complaints regarding the following issues - noise from music and barking dogs, excessive bonfires, overgrown gardens and rat sightings.
- 1.4 The team also investigate complaints regarding drainage, smoke and odour and also respond to the Planning Department regarding applications and queries relating to contaminated land and air quality as well as many FOI requests.
- 1.5 Officers working in food safety respond to issues regarding food premises and infectious diseases. Officers are continuing to work with our colleagues in Licensing regarding noise complaints including loud music associated with licensed premises.
- 1.6 **Food Hygiene Inspections:** The team is working hard to continue to maintain performance in the inspection of food premises across both Council areas.
- 1.7 As well as routine inspections, officers also inspect newly opened food businesses. We aim to complete this within 28 days of registration.
- 1.8 During Quarter 1 of 2016/2017 we carried out an additional 45 inspections of new food businesses and during Quarter 2 this figure rose to 58 in Taunton Deane. Officers also carry out revisits to check compliance with hygiene

requirements and rescore visits to assess the premises under the FSA 'Scores on the Doors' scheme.

- 1.9 **Private Water Supplies:** The Private Water Supplies (England) Regulations 2016 came into force in June 2016. Officers in the team have attended training on the new requirements of the regulations.
- 1.10 The regulations outline the sampling frequency for different types of supplies, the analysis that is undertaken and the risk assessment of the supply. The costs for any sampling and assessment will be passed on to the person responsible for the supply. The assessment of radioactive substances such as radon is now included in the assessment but only in high risk areas such as West Somerset. We have updated the information available to the public on the Council websites.
- 1.11 **Team Meetings:** The Environmental Health Team regularly holds team meetings every 6 weeks or so. Currently the work-plan for 2017 is being considered. Since shared services began two years ago, we now have joint team meetings, joint procedures for noise complaints and joint policies such as the Food Service Plan. The team works very closely together and now has a joint rota to ensure that all service requests that require investigation are shared across officers located in both local authorities.
- 1.12 **Social Media:** The team is now able to use social media such as Facebook to promote its work whether it be proactive or reactive such as responding to complaints. It is able to promote its work around public health such as that carried out at the Somerset Rocks Festival in Vivary Park. We are also able to respond to other posts that make reference to our work such as Food Hygiene Inspections or Environmental Protection. So far the team have posted information on cooking BBQ food safely and National Food Hygiene Week.
- 1.13 **Taunton Town Centre Events:** The team work closely with our colleagues in Licensing, Car Parks, Economic Development, Assets and Democratic Services to ensure that events across the area run smoothly. We are currently reviewing the systems in place to book event spaces and the system we use to communicate across the different teams.
- 1.14 **Fly-tipping :** The team are currently working in partnership with Economic Development to review how we deal with the issue of fly-tipping and fly-posting in the town centre. We have a joint meeting arranged for early November after which a further update will be available.

## 2. Licensing

## **Performance of the Service**

- 2.1 The Licensing Service is predicted to achieve its performance target for the second quarter of the 2016/2017 financial year; the first time it would have done so in over a year. The service is required to issue 95% of applications within 14 days of a decision having been reached. 95% has been achieved so far for July and August.

## **Child Sex Exploitation (CSE) guide for Taxi and Private Hire Drivers**

- 2.2 In response to high profile, national child sex abuse cases and to support the work of Somerset Local Safeguarding Children Board CSE Strategic Group and in particular its CSE 'Prevent' Sub Group, officers developed a new guide to help taxi and private hire vehicle drivers identify the signs of CSE and understand how and where to report it.
- 2.3 The pocket sized guide, which has also now been adopted by other district authorities in Somerset, is to be sent to all licensed drivers by the end of the month, whilst all new drivers will also receive copies.

## **A Taxi Driver v Taunton Deane Borough Council**

- 2.4 A former taxi and private hire vehicle driver who had his licence revoked for making a false statement on his application form and for being unable to satisfy the Council's Policy in relation to drivers living outside of the district, has appealed to Taunton Deane Magistrate's Court to have his licence reinstated.
- 2.5 The Council contacted the driver following complaints being made about him using his taxi in Bristol. When spoken to by officers, he was not able to evidence using his taxi in Taunton Deane and therefore he could not satisfy Council Policy. To compound matters, he submitted an application form, using a Taunton Deane address which, upon investigation, officers established was vacant.
- 2.6 A preliminary hearing took place at the Court in early September. The matter has been adjourned to enable a full hearing to take place in mid-October.

## **3. Deane DLO (Street Sweeping and Toilet Cleaning)**

- 3.1 **Street Sweeping and Toilet Cleaning Tender:** This Council has already approved the award of the contract for this work to the Landscape Group.
- 3.2 The proposed commencement date for the services is 1 December 2016 in West Somerset and 1 February 2017 in Taunton Deane.
- 3.3 The new Deane DLO Manager Richard Burge is now in place.

- 3.4 Preparation for the clearance of the current DLO site is well advanced and the new depot at Chelston is, it is understood, approaching completion and is expected to be ready on time.

## 4. Somerset Waste Partnership

### Recycle Centre Permits

- 4.1 On Monday, 3 October 2016, at all our Recycle Centres, the now well publicised Site Permit system based on the new free bright orange permits will come into use.
- 4.2 The new system is aimed at cutting congestion, improving services and enhancing safety at recycling sites, where visit numbers have jumped to almost 1.6m a year. Most residents, who use a car without a trailer, need no permit and can expect no change, except shorter queues.
- 4.3 A quick checklist of the new measures - from 8am on Monday 3 October, people bringing in household waste:-
- **need** a free permit to use a single-axle trailer with a car or to use a van or a pick-up (without a trailer).
  - **do not need** a permit for a car –estate, 4x4, people carrier, campervan – that is not towing a trailer.
  - **can only** apply for permits if they live at a residential address in Somerset.
  - **will not** be able to use a Luton van, box van, box trailer, horsebox, multi-axle trailer, tractor, vehicle over 3.5 tonnes gross vehicle weight, or trailer more than 3 metres floor length.
  - with a hire vehicle, **must contact** recycling site staff on arrival before unloading and show their proof of hire.
  - with a permit, **can use** recycling sites on weekdays and only 1pm to 4pm on Saturdays.

**PS:** No one outside Somerset can use the permit system to enter any recycling site.

### Vehicle Procurement

- 4.4 Delivering a service that visits every household in Somerset every week is hugely demanding on vehicles. Somerset Waste Partnership, working with collections contractor Kier, is finalising procurement of several specialist vehicles to help refresh the ageing fleet. These include a number of smaller vehicles able to access the many narrow lanes in the County that are inaccessible to full-sized trucks.
- 4.5 The fleet will include four refuse trucks with an additional “pod” or container on the side, enabling them to collect a combination of materials in a single trip. These podded vehicles will introduce greater flexibility, providing options to

improve communal and school collection services. The new vehicles should be appearing on the streets of Somerset this autumn.

## **5. Crematorium**

- 5.1 The service continues as usual. There have been a number of audits carried out within this service and all actions that suggest improvements are being implemented.
- 5.2 The Manager, Paul Rayson, has moved on to a new role for another Local Authority and I would like to acknowledge his contribution to the service over the years.
- 5.3 A recruitment exercise has been completed and a new manager has been appointed. He will be in place in early December. Interviews for a newly vacant administration post will be carried out next week. There is a part-time Interim Manager in place until the arrival of the new manager and Assistant Director, Chris Hall continues to support the service in the transition period.

Councillor Patrick Berry



# **Council Meeting – 4 October 2016**

## **Report of Councillor Mark Edwards - Economic Development, Asset Management, Arts and Tourism and Communications**

### **Section 1: Business Development**

#### **Delivery of Employment land across the Borough**

- 1.1 Significant progress has been made in recent months to progress the presentation of various employment sites to the market.
- 1.2 In Taunton, detailed conversations are being held with the developers of the Monkton Heathfield Urban Extension, to ensure the provision of the allocated employment land. The sites, totalling 18 hectares, represent one of the strategic employment allocations for the whole of Taunton Deane, and they will also generate many local employment opportunities within the Monkton Heathfield community.
- 1.3 On the other side of Taunton, it is good to see a planning application recently submitted for a new 90,000 sq.ft business park off Silk Mills Road. The owner clearly recognises the demand for commercial space amongst local businesses and inward investors and has appointed Robert Cooney Estate Agent to identify interest and market the site. The Business Development Team has met with Mr Cooney and have put him in touch with a few businesses that are searching for space.
- 1.4 Led by our Planning Officers, discussions have commenced over the preparation of a Local Development Order for the new 25 hectare employment site at Junction 25 of the M5. This site has the potential to be the most prestigious business park in the South West, given its excellent location, access on to the M5 and the high quality of the environment.
- 1.5 Westpark in Wellington has maintained a continual supply of first class accommodation over the past five years and has grown to become an attractive and thriving employment area serving Taunton Deane. New premises for the Council's own Deane DLO depot are currently under construction, due be completed at the end of this year – a full progress report and photographs is included at Section 6.
- 1.6 Finally, officers are discussing the refurbishment of the old Barnicotts Mill with the owner, Forward Space Limited. Since it acquired the building in 2009, Forward Space has held an ambition to develop the property as a business centre and work hub, offering accommodation and support to start ups and fledgling businesses. I met with the owner at the premises recently and we are seeing what we can do to assist in bringing his concept forward and as a

result officers are liaising with the owner to identify potential funding streams to fund the capital works required.

### **UK Hydrographic Office**

- 1.7 I was really pleased to see the UK Hydrographic Office submit its planning application for a new office at its site off Tone Way, Taunton. This follows close and extensive liaison by Members and officers with the agency over the past couple of years to secure its continued presence in Taunton.
- 1.8 The new HQ will enable the agency to modernise its facilities and continue to improve its position as a global leader of digital mapping. This is a fantastic vote of confidence in Taunton by one of our largest employers, providing highly skilled and well paid jobs in a globally important business.

### **Support for Digital Innovation**

- 1.9 Over the past few months the team has been building a network of business leaders to advise on a strategy to stimulate innovation amongst digital and data-centre businesses in Taunton.
- 1.10 Working alongside Santander Bank a half day business conference is currently being arranged on 9 November 2016 at the County Cricket Ground. The event will launch the bank's national Digital Ambassador Programme and will be supported by speakers and exhibitors from a range of global businesses in the banking, IT and telecoms sectors.
- 1.11 Delegates will learn about impending changes to the banking and finance sector, and can gain insights to changing digital technologies, being developed by global leaders in this field. This is an enormously prestigious event, which will also provide a platform to consult with businesses on Taunton's own Digital strategy.

### **BREXIT Research**

- 1.12 Officers within the Business Development Team have recently appointed consultants to carry out research into the likely effects of the UK's vote to leave the EU. The research will be conducted amongst a small number of larger employers and is intended to identify opportunities for Council intervention to support those businesses. The appointment has been made jointly with West Somerset Council and will cover both Districts.
- 1.13 The Council's research will complement a much larger study currently being rolled out by the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership. This research will engage a far greater number of businesses, and is intended to identify business views across sectors and types of industry in the region.

### **Appointment of Marketing Partner**

- 1.14 The Council has recently appointed Coast Communications to work with

officers over a two year period to market Taunton Deane. The company will raise the profile of the Borough as an inward investment location through a targeted, sector based communications strategy, and will support officers in communicating the progress as well as investment opportunities amongst Taunton's regeneration schemes.

- 1.15 The appointment will bring significant resource and expertise to the Growth Directorate, particularly important in the wake of the Hinkley Point C announcement and the steady roll out of the projects in the Taunton Growth Prospectus.

### **Business Support events**

- 1.16 The Business Development Team is currently sponsoring a programme of workshops for businesses to assist them to improve their use of online media. Three workshops have been arranged, in partnership with local businesses and the Connecting Devon and Somerset partnership, to be held in September, October and November. The September event provided an introduction to cloud computing and reducing information storage costs and was attended by seven local businesses. The two subsequent events will focus on improving use of social media, and how to keep one's business safe on line.
- 1.17 Officers are also teaming up with colleagues in West Somerset and Sedgemoor Councils to commission a programme of business support across the three districts. The programme will provide small businesses with enterprise and digital advice and support, including how to win contracts associated with Hinkley Point C. It will include delivering a range of workshops and one-to-one digital support activity for a twelve month period starting in January 2017.

### **Wiveliscombe Enterprise Centre**

- 1.18 The Council will recall that Somerset County Council purchased land at Sandy's Moor, Wiveliscombe, including the site of the now redundant Karro Foods facility, with the aim of developing a new enterprise centre on part of the site.
- 1.19 The capital funding has been secured and the plans are progressing, with a planning application anticipated within the next few months. Officers of both authorities are liaising with businesses in the town to try to accommodate their expansion requirements in the business park.

### **Nuclear South West Conference**

- 1.20 Officers attended the Nuclear SouthWest conference in Bristol on 20 September 2016 along with over 100 nuclear related businesses. The high profile event was intended to take stock of all that is happening in the industry in the light of the Government's recent announcement to proceed with the investment.

- 1.21 Following a key note address from Tom Greatrex, Chief Executive of the Nuclear Industry Association, delegates received updates on projects happening around the South West of England, with practical information and the chance to network with businesses and industry stakeholders.

## **Section 2: Town Centre**

### **Coal Orchard Redevelopment**

- 2.1 The planning application for a mixed use scheme on this site has now been submitted and should be registered by the time of the Council meeting. Officers intend taking a report to the next Executive to examine the Business Case, due diligence and risks, and will be seeking borrowing approvals to be put into place for funding the preferred development option.
- 2.2 If approved, this will travel on to Full Council in December 2016 for a formal commitment to be made to a preferred scheme. In parallel, once the Executive has taken its decision, officers will commence procurement and legal work to create a development agreement against the preferred option.

### **Wi-fi in Taunton, Wellington and Wiveliscombe**

- 2.3 A contractor was appointed in the summer to design a suitable scheme for the three towns and to roll out the installation over forthcoming months.

## **Section 3: Marketing the area to businesses, visitors and local residents**

### **Events**

- 3.1 Over the summer, we have seen a great number of events taking place in the area, including a very successful week for Taunton Live, Taunton Flower Show, West Somerset Steam Rally, the Somerset Rocks Concerts and Wellington Food Town.
- 3.2 The Marketing and Visitor Centre Team continue to help market and promote these and are supporting new and existing event organisers bring their ideas to life, the Marketing and Visitor Centre Manager now acting as the first point of call for enquiries. Team members are now also looking at improving the events process via the use of an online booking system.
- 3.3 The Taunton Events Group now has a membership of over 60 which is an encouraging sign of the interest and passion for putting events on in our area.

### **Marketing to visitors**

- 3.4 The Taunton Visitor Centre have had another busy summer and has just

celebrated its first year in its new home. The team have been supported this year by overseas placement students from Italy, Spain, Switzerland and our twin town Lisieux. The students have been documenting their stay through our social media channels and are helping make the destination website international friendly in addition to working in the office.

- 3.5 Work continues with local tourism attractions and businesses to promote the area in conjunction with the Destination Management Organisation Visit Somerset.
- 3.6 The centre team have recently heard they have made it through to the finals of the Somerset, Bristol and Bath Tourism Awards. I am sure Members would join me in wishing them every success at the awards evening which takes place on Wednesday, 19 October 2016.

### **Social Media and Website**

- 3.7 Over the summer the new focus the team have given to social media including the use of initiatives such as Facebook Live and the re-introduction of competitions with prizes donated by local businesses has seen an increase in followers.
- 3.8 Members will be pleased to note that @moreTaunton on Facebook has risen to 5,066; Instagram to 857 and Twitter to 5,520. The @TauntonBusiness account on Twitter now has 2,115 followers
- 3.9 In preparation for the introduction of Town Centre Wi-Fi, Facebook and Twitter accounts @moreWellington and @moreWivey have been prepared and are now live.
- 3.10 Discussions have been held with a representative of the Youth Parliament on how we can make our content more of interest to a younger audience, a @moreTaunton Snapchat account has been set up.
- 3.11 The Destination website – Visit Taunton – has had over 60,000 unique visitors during the months of July and August.

### **Town Centre Marketing**

- 3.12 The new Town Centre Marketing Assistant has now met (since he joined in July) over 140 town centre retail businesses and is gathering content and material to promote through our e-newsletters, social media, and website channels.
- 3.13 Monthly e-newsletters for events, visitors and retailers are being produced. Please contact the team if you would like to receive copies of these.
- 3.14 Work continues with the Taunton Farmers Market and other town centre trading groups.

## Section 4: Asset Management Service General Fund Activities

The past three months have continued to be extremely busy within the General Fund Asset Management work.

### Estate Management Work

- 4.1 The Estate Management Team deals with day-to-day Estate Management, Valuation and Lease Event Management work. After a trend of volumes of live projects increasing over the past two years to approximately 150 for the General Fund work alone, after much hard work we are now seeing this volume begin to reduce. This will enable the individual Surveyors to focus on a smaller number of live projects at any one time and by doing so ensuring improved turnaround times. This is being managed closely to ensure this trend does not reverse.
- 4.2 Two particularly current significant projects include the finalising of arrangements to ensure the smooth transfer of the current Deane DLO site to the purchaser with vacant possession and in accordance with the sale contract before the end of the year and the management of the vacant St James Street Swimming Pool site. The completion of both of these projects will result in the exciting redevelopment of these areas.
- 4.3 Other current and significant projects include:-
  - **Former Mike Chedzoy premises off Greenbrook Terrace, Taunton** – A number of challenges have arisen post BREXIT within the property market in general, although less than first feared and, consequently, this particular transaction has needed to be renegotiated. The outcome was positive with the deal not falling through but the long stop date for completion has had to be pushed out which, whilst frustrating, still represents the best opportunity for the Council in terms of delivering a development and a significant capital receipt.
  - **Former Park Keepers Cottage, 277 Cheddon Road, Taunton** – This property is being taken to auction in October 2016 but with the recommendation of both Asset Management and Planning Officers, without a planning consent for new dwellings within the site. It has been concluded that this approach will deliver best value for the Council.
  - **Sale of land at Frobisher Way, Taunton** – Negotiations are progressing with the existing tenant with regard to the decision of the Executive in August 2016 which if unsuccessful over the next month or two will result in the property being taken to auction. In the meantime, further due diligence is being undertaken around contamination and other matters.

### Asset Data and Compliance Work

- 4.4 Significant work is being undertaken currently in respect of surveying the General Fund stock to develop comprehensive stock condition data of a level

not had before. This will provide valuable data in respect of replacement cost of building components (roofs, windows etc) over the next 30 years together with indicative cyclical and reactive maintenance requirements to better plan future programmes and spend on assets.

- 4.5 A further benefit of having this data is that it will enable the performance of individual assets to be measured with the resulting appraisal tool being developed considering costs alongside income at individual asset level enabling the Net Present Value of assets to be known along with valuable cashflow data during that 30 year period. This is a level of sophistication not previously applied to the General Fund portfolio and will be key in enabling active asset management of these assets in the future through understanding each asset's performance, and through this greatly assisting in decision making by providing robust data to support recommendations around investment, disposal or change of use.
- 4.6 This work is really key to how assets will be managed moving forward and follows those same key principles as being applied through the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) portfolio. The data is expected to be available during October 2016 with the resulting performance appraisals within the months thereafter.
- 4.7 Importantly, it is almost all assets that are being included in this exercise, many of which currently have very little information held. We are using the inspections to also assist in respect of the landlord health and safety compliance work and to ensure that for the first time ever we have floor plans of buildings, these being essential to properly manage the portfolio.
- 4.8 As for the landlord health and safety compliance work across the General Fund portfolio, we are continuing to gather data (on asbestos, servicing, fire risk assessments, legionella testing, electrical safety etc) and where necessary commissioning further works. Whilst further work needs to be done, significant progress has been made over the past twelve months.
- 4.9 Progress is now being made on procuring a comprehensive Asset Management System to improve the availability and accessibility of data, improve and make much easier the reporting, improve efficiencies and to bring in line with the HRA portfolio. The delay over the past few years had been in respect of how to bring together alongside the HRA, something which is now advancing and subject to the necessary business approvals the system is expected to be operational during 2017.
- 4.10 It should not be underestimated the amount of work that is currently taking place in respect of asset data across the General Fund portfolio but the benefits of having this will be critical in moving forward, providing the business intelligence and making the efficiencies needed.

## **Section 5: Communications**

- 5.1 Recent weeks have been challenging for the Communications Team with high level, high profile announcements and meetings.
- 5.2 The announcement on Hinkley Point C and West Somerset Council's vote on the future of its partnership with Taunton Deane attracted considerable national and local attention. But communications were well prepared to reflect potential outcomes on both issues.
- 5.3 Taunton Deane now has a Facebook page and it is starting to build up a following. The web address is <https://www.facebook.com/tauntondeanebc/>. The Council's twitter account @TDBC continues to attract new followers with around 2,700 so far. The figure fluctuates according to the posts but it remains an extremely useful tool for us.
- 5.4 While social media provides new ways of communicating with residents and businesses, we continue to issue regular press releases and the regular Deane Dispatch page in the County Gazette.
- 5.5 The aim of communications is to be proactive but a considerable amount of time is spent on responding to media calls/enquiries from local, regional and national media.

## **Section 6: The New Deane DLO Depot**

- 6.1 The project is progressing very well and is within budget.
- 6.2 First and second fix activities are now taking place in the new building. Externally, approximately half of the yards/ parking areas/ internal roads have been concreted. The trailer park is being stoned up.
- 6.3 Summerfield Developments are reporting that the project is approximately five weeks ahead of schedule. This means that the anticipated practical completion of the build phase and potential hand over of the building could be as early as 1 November 2016. Our Clerk of Works is very happy with the quality of the build process and we have not encountered any difficulties with the developers.
- 6.4 From the 1 November we will install furniture, IT and other specialist equipment. We have procured items on the basis they must be ready, constructed and available to be called upon for installation on or after the 1 November. Indications are that these installation should be achieved without affecting any current service delivery. The preparations at the current DLO site are progressing. The new service leaders Rich Prewer and Richard Burge have made a significant impact in assisting preparations. A number of teams have visited the new site and feedback is very positive.
- 6.5 We have procured some 'back scanning' of service related documents to help move mind-sets into the new open office and paperless environment that we



seek to achieve. Separately we are shaping the longer term corporate solution for scanning under the leadership of Karen Penfold.

- 6.6 An open office environment will be a really big step change for staff. Cultural norms are being further challenged with a new structure in Property Services Team, this together with an extension of PDAs to a wider workforce and the upgrading the Open Contractor under the direction of Terry May. Staff are being kept informed and additional training and support has, and is being provided.
- 6.7 We are currently trialling the 'Thin Client' server based IT solution at the depot. The intention is to iron out any problems and implement it across the Priory Road site before we move so that staff are familiar with it.
- 6.8 A procurement exercise for new telephony has just been completed and Taunton Deane is in the process of awarding to the successful supplier who is very confident in their ability to deliver a modern cloud based solution by 1 December 2016. In respect of communications, the one risk we have is the delivery of the fibre optic telephone line to the new depot. The order has been placed but at this stage we do not have a confirmation of the installation date. A worst case scenario is a 60 day delivery which would take us to the end of December. As a consequence we are looking at contingency plans in case the line is not delivered.









Councillor Mark Edwards

# **Council Meeting – 4 October 2016**

## **Report of Councillor Roger Habgood – Planning Policy and Transportation**

### **1. Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (SADMP)**

- 1.1 The SADMP sets out policies for the allocation of land for housing, employment and other development proposals across Taunton Deane excluding the allocations in the Taunton Town Centre, up to 2028. It also contains detailed development management policies against which planning applications will be considered. The SADMP document will form part of the Council's suite of statutory plans, which comprise the basis for determining planning applications across the Deane.
- 1.2 The Council awaits the Inspectors report which we anticipate receiving during October and plan its adoption at the end of the year.

### **2. Specific Site Activity**

#### **Staplegrove**

- 2.1 Both applications have been received and are currently going through the planning process. Taunton Deane intends to hear both applications together at the end of the year. It is planned to utilise an external venue to accommodate the Planning Committee.

#### **Comeytrowe / Trull**

- 2.2 Section 106 Agreement negotiations continue in relation to this development and are now at an advanced stage.

#### **Monkton Heathfield**

- 2.3 Master Planning is now near completion. Public consultation will be commencing shortly.

#### **Firepool**

- 2.4 As Members are no doubt aware the application for the major redevelopment of Firepool was refused when considered by the Planning Committee recently. The major concerns expressed centred on the design and layout.

- 2.5 The Council's partners St Modwen and their Architects have taken this on board and are taking steps to address the issues raised.
- 2.6 As the Leader has stated all parties are aware of the need to get this resolved soonest so that this important strategic, mixed use development can be brought forward at the earliest opportunity.

### **Quantock House**

- 2.7 An application has now been received and is being processed in readiness for Planning Committee consideration.

## **3. M5 Junction 25**

- 3.1 The consultation for this much needed development is currently underway. This scheme is very important for Taunton Deane residents and for all road users.
- 3.2 This scheme is also imperative as it will provide access to and for the development of the Strategic Employment Site.

## **4. Strategic Employment site Local Development Order (LDO)**

- 4.1 The LDO for the Strategic Employment site continues to be developed. The Member Briefing on 29 September 2016 will cover all aspects of the LDO. It is anticipated that the LDO will be in place by mid-2017.

## **5. Neighbourhood Planning**

- 5.1 Trull and Staplehay – We expect to receive the independent examiner's report on the draft Neighbourhood Plan soon. The examination determines if the Neighbourhood Plan polices meet the legal requirements to be adopted as Local Planning Policy and whether the plan should go forward to a referendum of local people.
- 5.2 Bishops Lydeard - The Neighbourhood Plan from Bishops Lydeard and Cothelstone was adopted by Full Council on 12<sup>t</sup> July 2016. It will now be used in the decisions on planning applications for the Parish.

## **6. Transportation**

### **Schemes**

- 6.1 Taunton Deane continues to work with partners on a range of Transport Schemes related to the growth prospects for Taunton.

**Variable Message Signage (VMS) and Pay on Foot (POF)**

- 6.2 The VMS / POF project is making good progress and is now in the procurement phase. Completion of this project is planned for end of 2017.

**Northern Inner Distributor Road**

- 6.3 Work continues to progress towards completion with the refurbished bridge across Station Road being reinstalled.

**Car Parking Operations**

- 6.4 Car park utilisation numbers have held or increased across the Council's Car Park Portfolio year to date with a few exceptions.
- 6.5 Whilst this may seem at odds with retail anecdotal feedback, it does fit with the changing shape of retail experienced across the County and country. It is important that Taunton Deane continues to observe and react to the changing retail and leisure needs of our residents and visitors.

Councillor Roger Habgood

# **Council Meeting – 4 October 2016**

## **Report of Councillor Mrs Catherine Herbert - Sports, Parks and Leisure**

### **1. Parks**

- 1.1 The department has said goodbye to Cyril Rowe and I was pleased to have been present on his last day with us and heard the staff remembering Cyril's career and saying their best wishes for his future. We have welcomed on board Richard Burge as Open Spaces Manager. Richard will be known to many as a successful Manager of the Deane Helpline. His management and interpersonal skills will I am sure prove invaluable in this new role.
- 1.2 Grass cutting this year has been very challenging with sunshine and showers providing optimum growing conditions for both grass and weeds! Despite this, the Open Spaces Team have managed to keep the Taunton Deane and the 150 schools we maintain looking well cared for and with all sports pitches marked up ready for numerous sports days.
- 1.3 The Parks Department has been busy, along with all at Priory Depot, in sorting out and cleaning up in preparation for the Depot move to Westpark, Wellington. I would like to thank everyone for their efforts in this.
- 1.4 Five of our parks and open spaces have earned Green Flags this year and we look forward to the results of Britain in Bloom and are proud to be hosting the South West Award Ceremony at the County Cricket Ground this October.

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

- 2.1 Hamilton Gault Park has successfully been dedicated with Fields in Trust as a Centenary Field in Trust. The programme, launched in 2014 by Fields in Trust President HRH The Duke of Cambridge, in partnership with The Royal British Legion is providing a unique way to commemorate the centenary of World War 1 and remember those who lost their lives during the conflict, by protecting outdoor recreational space in perpetuity for the benefit of future generations.
- 2.2 The Centenary Fields programme also fulfils the Armed Forces Community Covenant which the Council has signed up to. Work is currently underway for the dedication of Frieze Hill Community Orchard as a Centenary Field and I very much look forward to this.

- 2.3 Applications have been received for awards under the Council's Capital Grant Scheme for Village Halls and Community Centres and Sports Clubs which are currently being assessed. We are also inviting applications to the Parish Play Area Grant Scheme.
- 2.4 A new community hall has been completed at Monkton Heathfield as part of the continuing development there. It will be known as the Brittons Ash Community Hall and is due to be opening at the end of October 2016.
- 2.5 Work is continuing with West Monkton Parish Council who will take initial responsibility for the hall on kitting out the facility. I would like to thank West Monkton Parish Council for their invaluable support, help and enthusiasm in helping with the hall project and with their input I am sure it will go on to be a successful community asset.
- 2.6 Play equipment improvements have included:-
- An over 8's climbing unit at Glamington Park;
  - a rota wheel at The Shoulders;
  - Amazon jungle climbing unit at Priorswood Park;
  - A cone climber at Greenway Recreation Ground;
  - Climbing unit at Wilton Lands;
  - A tango swing at French Weir Park;
  - Outdoor gym equipment at Dobree Park, Wellington;and
  - Outdoor gym equipment and musical play equipment at Wellington Recreation Ground.
- 2.7 Construction of the Wellington Petanque pitch have been carried out and benches, scoreboards and signs have been ordered to make it fully operational. I very much look forward to seeing this in action.

### **3. Tone Leisure**

- 3.1 As we have only just had a Tone's report through the Community Scrutiny Committee I have not asked for a further update for Full Council this time.

Councillor Catherine Herbert



# **Council Meeting – 4 October 2016**

## **Report of Councillor Richard Parrish – Corporate Resources**

### **1. Corporate Services**

#### **Corporate Strategy and Performance**

- 1.1 Quarter 2 performance data is currently being collected and will be brought to the October Corporate Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.2 Complaints process training is underway for the Housing and Communities Team which will assist in handling complaints and improve customer experience.
- 1.3 Work is also underway to refresh the online Transparency Data. Corporate Services is also supporting the implementation planning for Joint Management and Shared Services Phase 2 and the engagement exercise. This is a significant piece of work including a review of the governance arrangements.

### **2. Customer Contact Service**

- 2.1 A Service Level Agreement (SLA) has now been agreed with Somerset County Council for the provision of an ongoing shared Customer Contact Service for 12 months from 1 December 2016 to 30 November 2017. Members will be aware of the importance of obtaining this SLA to enable our ability to move forward with the Councils plan.
- 2.2 Planning and preparation for the return of the Customer Contact Service from Southwest One (SWO) is now underway. Further information will be available in due course as matters progress.

### **3. Facilities Management**

- 3.1 Preparation for the roll-out of the new and increased Pool Car Scheme is underway and due to launch on 1 October 2016.
- 3.2 Planning and preparation for the accommodation moves required to enable the return of SWO staff to The Deane House on 1 December 2016 is progressing within the anticipated time frame.

### **4. HR and Organisational Development**

- 4.1 Changes to the Essential User Allowance and Lease Car Schemes launches

from 30 September 2016.

- 4.2 'My Staff Shop' has also been launched.
- 4.3 HR is currently supporting the staffing elements of the SWO service transition on 1 December 2016. Understandably this is of significant importance for the welfare of our staff.
- 4.4 Members will be aware that a new HR and Payroll system implementation is required to replace SAP. This is a very complicated and time consuming task however, officers are dedicating time and effort to produce a system fit for purpose.

## **5. ICT and Information**

- 5.1 A preferred supplier (8 x 8) has been appointed to provide new telephony, initially for Deane DLO and then for the wider organisation. Planning for the ICT elements of the DLO move continues to progress.
- 5.2 Detailed planning and preparation for the return of the ICT service from SWO and implementation of replacements for the SAP system as reported in 4.4 above.

## **6. SWO Exit and SAP Replacement**

- 6.1 As previously reported, this is on track for service return on 1 December 2016. Service Transition Plans and Transition Managers are in place. Agreement has been reached with Somerset County Council for the joint Customer Contact Service to continue for a temporary period.
- 6.2 Briefing sessions are to be undertaken with returning and affected staff in early October 2016.
- 6.3 We are on track at this time for replacement of SAP by 1 April 2016. Members must remain aware of the significance of producing the replacement on time.
- 6.4 Suppliers have been identified for the new Finance/Procurement system, the Website and the HR/Payroll system. Project teams are in place for each system.

## **7. Electoral, Electoral Review, Democratic Services and Legal Services**

### **Electoral Services**

- 7.1 The team are now focussed on the Annual Canvass which is keeping them busy particularly after the heightened public interest in voting after the recent

Referendum. I believe it is fair to say that most Electoral Teams are in a recovery state following the very busy months of April, May and June. The Association of Electoral Administrators has recently produced a report headed 'Pushed to the Absolute Limit. 2016 – the Electoral Year never to forget'. The title says it all! A link to the document has been forwarded to all Group Leaders and makes interesting reading.

## Electoral Review

7.2 Since my last report, both Taunton Deane and West Somerset Councils have agreed to proceed towards forming a new authority covering the existing areas of the two Councils. The Boundary Commission for England have been kept informed of developments and have confirmed that they will suspend work on the existing Taunton Deane Electoral Review until it is clear what the way forward is.

## Democratic Services

7.3 There is one staff change to report in that Emma Hill has been successful in applying for and obtaining a new job at Deane DLO as a Works Planning Officer. We wish Emma well in her new role that will start later this month and are in the process of recruiting for a replacement in the Democratic Services Team.

## Legal Services

7.4 The latest figures for the use of Law and Governance SHAPE Partnership Services for Quarter 2 of 2016/17 are set out below:-

Commercial , Contract and Procurement	4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advice on New Contracts</li> </ul>	
Enforcement/Prosecutions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benefits</li> <li>• Housing</li> <li>• Statutory nuisance</li> </ul>	1 1 1
Governance	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constitution</li> <li>• Corporate/Policy Advice</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	2 1
Housing	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General Advice</li> </ul>	2
Litigation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commercial Litigation</li> <li>• Debt Recovery</li> <li>• Housing/Property repossessions</li> <li>• Statutory appeals</li> </ul>	1 1 7 1 2

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trespass</li> </ul>	
<b>Planning</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General Advice – TCPA</li> <li>• CLUED/CLOPUD</li> <li>• Compulsory Purchase</li> <li>• S106 Agreements, Enforcement Notices and Stop Notices</li> </ul>	<p>5 5 1 7</p>
<b>Property</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreements</li> <li>• Leases</li> <li>• Licences</li> <li>• Advice on Property Law</li> <li>• RTB</li> <li>• Sales</li> </ul>	<p>5 3 1 11 19 4</p>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>85</b>

## 8. SWO Customer Services

### Highlight Report

#### 8.1

- KPIs achieved – No fails for 2016-2017;
- SPIs achieved – No fails for 2016-2017;
- Client CSAT results – 75% of client responses rated our services as good or very good – Only four responses;
- 95% of external customers rated the service they received to be good or very Good;
- 98% contacts received resolved at first point of contact;
- Year 2016 to date - 10 complaints received;
- Business Controls – continued SWO compliance;
- Working with Client Team on SWO End of Contract planning;
- Staff briefings undertaken for identified staff TUPE to Taunton Deane. It is hoped all will move over to Taunton Deane Terms and Conditions
- Agreement signed for Taunton Deane to work in partnership with Somerset County Council

### Performance indicators

- 8.2 The service has continued to perform exceptionally well in line with its contractual performance indicators with no failures since the last update, and consistently exceeding targets.

### SWO Succession Planning

- 8.3 The formal arrangements are now in place; Customer Contact is assisting Taunton Deane in their SWO succession planning. Further updates to be provided as progress made during the year.

### **Customer Contact Association Accreditation**

- 8.4 The preparation work around the CCA standard version 6, accreditation has now halted due to the contract end.

### **New Telephony Technology**

- 8.5 The implementation of the Siemens Open Scape Contact Centre remains extremely positive news with no interruptions to service caused by system problems. This is specifically important because one of the primary drivers for implementing a new contact centre system was to reduce the amount of operational downtime which was regularly a problem with the old MacFarlane system.
- 8.6 Automated payments are still proving a popular channel for our customers. Over 60% of callers wanting to make a payment to Taunton Deane now choose to use the automated system. Between 1500 and 2000 payments are now made each month through the Council's automated payments line.

## **9. Revenues and Benefits Service**

- 9.1 Consultation on options for our Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme in 2017/2018 ended on 11 September 2016. Members were asked to obtain views from 10 constituents within their respective Wards meaning we would consult with 560 residents across the entirety of the Taunton Deane area.
- 9.2 Unfortunately, we only received 78 responses and while this is still valid consultation for CTS purposes, it will mean we have a more difficult job in deciding the scheme for 2017/2018. A report will be presented to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 20 October 2016. This will reflect the views we have received as well as considering the financial implications and equality impact of each of the proposed options.
- 9.3 Council Tax collection at the end of August 2015 was 53.12% - slightly under our target of 53.25%. Business Rate Collection at 51.8% is ahead of our target of 51.46%. We are performing well in speed of benefit processing for 2016/2017 with the average time to reassess benefit under eight days from when the customer tells us of a change in their circumstances. We are working out new claims on average within 22 days of the date they are submitted.
- 9.4 For people of working age that are not in employment, the benefit cap restricts the amount in certain benefits that a household can receive. We must reduce Housing Benefit for any household receiving more than the cap to bring them back within the limit. Currently, 15 households are affected by the Benefit Cap

of £26,000. From November, the Benefit Cap will be cut to £20,000 and we estimate up to 150 households will be affected. While we can assist some households with Discretionary Housing Payments to help meet their rent, it is unlikely we will be able to help everyone affected by the reduced Benefit Cap.

## **10. Finance and Procurement**

### **Procurement**

- 10.1 As at 1 June 2016, the strategic and operational aspects of the function will be delivered by the new Procurement Team within the ONE Team. This follows the return of this service area from SWO, with two people returning from SWO to the Team. For Taunton Deane, the transactional elements of the function will continue to be delivered by SWO.
- 10.2 An early priority for the Procurement Team will be to review and align strategic and operational procurement arrangements across both Taunton Deane and West Somerset, to provide the benefit of consistent specialist advice and support across the ONE Team. Although the function consists of a small team, it will focus on strategically important procurement activity, as well as corporate processes and compliance work.
- 10.3 The Assistant Director - Resources provided a briefing note to all Councillors in early June setting out the main responsibilities and activities for the Procurement Team in more detail. The return of the service means that long-standing procurement savings targets are no longer the responsibility of SWO to deliver. The new team will continue to progress existing opportunities and it is proposed to develop new procurement savings targets during 2016.

### **Finance**

- 10.4 The Finance Service has been working through the financial year end period – always a particularly busy time of year.
- 10.5 The financial outturn position against budget has been confirmed for the last financial year, with details of performance against budget reported to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 30 June 2016 and to the Executive on 7 July 2016.
- 10.6 Overall, financial performance is positive with net spending remaining within budget and adequate reserves maintained.
- 10.7 The General Fund (GF) Revenue Outturn position for 2015/2016 was a net underspend of £280,000, with the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Outturn position reporting a net underspend of £476,000.
- 10.8 In respect of the Capital Outturn positions, the GF Capital Programme reported a net underspend of £125,000 against the overall programme, with the HRA Capital Programme reporting a net underspend of £2,154,000 against the overall programme. The future HRA capital requirements are being reviewed as part of the work on the new HRA Business Plan.

- 10.9 The GF Reserves Balance as at 31 March 2016 stands at £2,113,000, therefore £513,000 above the Council's recommended minimum reserves balance.
- 10.10 The HRA Reserves Balance as at 31 March 2016 stands at £2,675,000, therefore £875,000 above the Council's recommended minimum reserves balance.
- 10.11 As well as monitoring the position against the budget the Authority has produced the Annual Statement of Accounts for 2015/2016 and these were approved by the Director of Operations by 30 June 2015 in line with the statutory deadline. These accounts are now subject to examination by the external auditor, with the audited accounts then scheduled to be presented to and approved by the Corporate Governance Committee in September 2016.
- 10.12 Going forward, the year-end process will be even more challenging with the statutory deadline for completing the unaudited accounts being brought forward to 31 May, and audited accounts approved by 31 July, from the 2017/2018 financial year onwards.
- 10.13 The Assistant Director – Resources has reviewed and updated the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). Hopefully all Councillors have kept up to date with the latest forecasts – with the five-year MTFP being reported to Corporate Scrutiny on 30 June 2016, supplemented with a briefing note to all Councillors setting out a lot of supporting information behind our projections. It is important that all Councillors appreciated the financial position when considering important decisions such as our future Transformation Business Case.

### **Finance Systems Replacement Project**

- 10.14 As part of the wider exit arrangements for SWO, the Council has approved the replacement of the SAP system. This project includes the replacement of the main accounting, purchasing and income systems that are currently part of the SAP solution. The project team have been busy preparing for this, and the procurement process is underway with bids invited on possible solutions to meet the Council's requirements. The plan is to secure the preferred solution in July/August with the replacement system planned for launch in April 2017.
- 10.15 This project will inevitably require significant support from the Finance Service. One of our team is seconded into the Project Manager role, and the change in system will mean we will need to review and update all of our main business processes affecting all parts of the service. This will also impact more widely with the new system and processes to be embedded in all services across the Council.

Councillor Richard Parrish





# Council Meeting – 4 October 2016

## Report of Councillor Mrs Jane Warmington - Community Leadership

*The strategic vision for Taunton Deane's most disadvantaged areas, is that residents lives will improve significantly and that these priority areas will look better, feel safer and in the future place a more proportionate demand on public services. These services will be delivered in urban areas through co-ordinated, frontline, problem-solving, multi-agency teams of individuals, already working in the areas, providing early help and based together. Rural parishes with more scattered communities will be helped to access services through community centres and local village agents identifying, signposting and supporting isolated residents to get the help they need. Urban priority areas need excellent education and health facilities on the doorstep which are then accessible to all, if we are to build independence, resilience and raise aspirations in individual people, families and communities, to sustain improvements and continue to reduce the need for and costs of intervention in the future.*

### 1. Summer Activities

- 1.1 There have been lots of community activities and initiatives throughout Taunton Deane over the summer many focusing on children and families, helping to bring people in local communities regularly together to help make the best of the school holidays. Increasingly these are collaborative events as different groups come together for the benefit of all.
- 1.2 There have also been many small Parish, school and church fetes with some larger one-off events in our towns of Wellington, Wiveliscombe and Taunton. We are blessed to have so much on offer locally and would like to thank all those involved in organising so many good things to go along to.

### 2. Minerva Primary School

- 2.1 We have a new primary school and nursery serving young families in East Taunton off Outer Circle in Halcon where there have been lots of changes over the summer. Minerva Primary School pupils, Head and teachers welcomed us to their official opening two weeks after term started when our local Member of Parliament, Rebecca Pow, cut the ribbon.
- 2.2 The investment in the school is hugely welcomed and their supportive, inclusive approach to education in its widest sense. The school is now one of four Redstart Academies and includes the previously separate nursery provision and has plans to welcome parents to stay with a cafe and their own classroom.
- 2.3 The grounds and classrooms have been upgraded and rearranged, pupils have been provided with a very smart new uniform and there are new teaching staff. The school is bigger because the Community Association has kindly agreed for their hall to be used as a new classroom which has made a huge difference and we are delighted that they were able to do this.

- 2.4 Many of our tenants' children living locally begin their education here and we want to help them get the best start in life. Taunton Deane has contributed to the improved school security and to the school Safeguarding Officer who regularly attends One Team and other related meetings, removing the need for teaching staff to do this.

### **3. Holway Litter Pickers**

- 3.1 Councillor Hazel Prior-Sankey and the Holway Local Action Team have set up a monthly family litter pick in the Ward which is proving increasingly popular. Families meet on the last Saturday of the month at ten o'clock at the YMCA where they are invited to have lunch afterwards. This initiative which follows the model set up in the neighbouring Halcon Ward is to be applauded.

### **4. Education Programme on 'Legal Highs'**

- 4.1 Stand Against Violence are delivering this programme with sessions already confirmed at Bishop Fox's, Castle and Heathfield Schools with others expected to follow including the Pupil Referral Unit. The response from the secondary schools has been really positive.
- 4.2 The story book for the primary school sessions is almost complete and local schools are being contacted to arrange dates to deliver these during the new school year.
- 4.3 Addressing this issue alongside other related issues in schools should be informative for pupils, parents and the school particularly in areas with a One Team in place where more holistic support is already being undertaken and is ongoing.

### **5. ManKind**

- 5.1 We are delighted that ManKind in partnership with Taunton Women's Aid has launched a drop-in service for male victims of domestic abuse in Taunton. This will be every Monday (except Bank Holidays) from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. (and no appointment is necessary) at Flook House, Belvedere Road, Taunton, TA1 1BT where their national telephone help-line is based.  
[www.mankind.org.uk/somersetdropin](http://www.mankind.org.uk/somersetdropin).

### **6. Improving Tenant and Leaseholder Satisfaction**

- 6.1 The Tenant Services Management Board (TSMB) complimented Community Development Officer, Martha Dudman, on the thoroughness and readability of her report addressing the various concerns they have. The Action Plan has been accepted and Martha appointed as a Project Manager for six months to oversee its implementation and service improvements.

## **7. Syrian Refugees Resettlement**

- 7.1 The Somerset Syrian Resettlement Group continues to cover matters at a strategic level across the County with regard to resettlement and expansion in existing and new areas. Having met every two months or thereabouts for the last year (the PfH has attended from the outset), it now expects to meet six monthly with discussions in each of the areas inbetween when properties and family profiles are available.
- 7.2 In Taunton Deane a third family is due to arrive in October 2016 and there is a further offer of a property from a church group enabling another family to resettle probably in November. Private properties, school places and volunteer support can be limiting factors but our wonderful local volunteer group Taunton Welcomes Refugees has further capacity to support more families.
- 7.3 This should enable uptake of another offer of a larger house to rent which might take two linked families. School capacity will be checked in the specific vicinity of any properties offered but there is a general lack of secondary capacity in Taunton Deane and limited special school capacity. It is hoped that between two and four additional Syrian families will be resettled locally over the next six months.
- 7.4 In addition to the six families already resettled in the County, Somerset would like to resettle a further thirty Syrian Refugee families over the next three years.

## **8. Taunton Deane and West Somerset**

- 8.1 The difficult decision of whether the two Councils covering the most westerly part of Somerset should merge to form one new Council was made when West Somerset agreed to this in early September following the same decision made by Taunton Deane in July.
- 8.2 Neither wished to lose their autonomy but faced with ever increasing budgetary pressures across a predominantly rural area, it made sense for both to do so and join forces to better serve residents across the wider area.
- 8.3 Ever the optimist, I believe that this alongside the transformation needed to move from a traditional to a really modern Council in order to deliver services we all want, will also protect our innovative support for our most vulnerable. Most of the changes will be felt in house by officers and Councillors but not by the wider public who should benefit from a simpler, more responsive service. This is the right decision to have been made both practically, and certainly financially, to fit us for the future.

Councillor Jane Warmington

# **Council Meeting – 4 October 2016**

## **Report of Councillor Terry Beale – Housing Services**

### **1. Deane Housing Service**

#### **Creechbarrow Road, Taunton**

- 1.1 This site remains a frustration with regards to the project delays. Building work is still underway on site and detailed discussions on going with contractor regarding site progression.

#### **Weavers Arms, Rockwell Green, Wellington**

- 1.2 The site is still on schedule and progressing. We are currently communicating with residents as the building work has temporally ceased. This is to allow Western Power to undertake major utility work to enable the site. We are currently waiting on road closure details from Highways to allow the work to commence.
- 1.3 We recently undertook a project with Rockwell Green Primary School funded by the Tenants Forum to produce piece of artwork. This has now been completed and displayed on site.

#### **Extensions**

- 1.4 We currently have one family decanted and we are progressing the tender to undertake the extension work

#### **Scooter storage**

- 1.5 We currently have 38 scooter stores delivered and we have further installations in the pipeline.
- 1.6 With regards to Kilkenny Court, a planning application is being prepared for the scooter store project. Resident consultation is currently underway.

#### **Car parking**

- 1.7 The planning application for the proposed additional parking at Bulford, Wellington has been approved and work is underway to procure a contractor.
- 1.8 Parking solutions for Polkesfield, Stoke St Gregory have been agreed and a work quotation is being obtained.

## **Parmin Close, Taunton**

- 1.9 Despite continued uncertainty over funding and policy we are delighted that a new project at Parmin Close being delivered by Knightstone Housing is underway.
- 1.10 Rebecca Pow MP and Councillor Williams joined the celebration event as work started on site for the 66 unit extra care and 12 unit learning difficulties scheme with an anticipated completion date of mid-2018.

## **Housing Enabling**

- 1.11 The affordable housing development pipeline is showing another successful year for delivery with in excess of 200 new homes predicted. This includes 100% affordable housing sites being brought forward by local housing association partners with the support of the housing enabling service.
- 1.12 I commend the team for their hard work and dedication!

## **2. Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Service**

### **Performance**

- 2.1 I am delighted to report that satisfaction with the work of the ASB Service remains high. At the end of Quarter 3, 97% of tenants who reported ASB in the year to date rated the help and advice they received as good or excellent as set against a target figure of 66%!
- 2.2 This represents an improvement on the last update and I congratulate the team on their success.

### **Casework**

- 2.3 The numbers of cases of recorded ASB are still high and there is a lot of work to be done but I am pleased to report that in the 12 months to the 29 September 2016, the total number of opened cases fell by 14 to 70.
- 2.4 These cases include:- 8 Alcohol, 1 Communal Areas, 1 Domestic Abuse, 8 Drugs, 5 Garden Nuisance, 17 Harassment, 2 Hate Crime, 14 Noise, 1 Other Crime, 1 Pets 8 Physical Violence, 1 Rubbish/Fly Tipping and 3 Vehicles.

### **Closed cases**

- 2.5 44 cases were closed during the period, all cases were resolved.

### **High Profile/Risk Cases**

- Noise, assault on neighbour. County Court on 26 August 2016 SPO granted.
- Injunction with power of arrest granted by Magistrates Court – Mental Health.
- Victim family now moved to alternative address as a supportive measure.
- Relationship breakdown, resulting in community tension – All One Team partners involved in particular Social Services.

- Mental Health, perpetrator now in permanent long term supported accommodation.

### **3. Homefinder**

#### **Homefinder Somerset Policy Changes October 2016**

- 3.1 Following a consultation earlier this year the five partner Local Authorities have agreed changes to the Homefinder Somerset Policy. The new policy comes into effect on Monday, 10 October 2016. Two of the key changes include the removal of banding criteria as detailed below:-

Gold Band for under-occupation: Where the applicant is a tenant of a Homefinder Somerset partner who resides within the Homefinder Somerset area and under-occupies their existing property and is looking to move to a smaller, more suitable property.

Silver Band for children in flats: Where the applicant is pregnant or has a child/children under 10 years of age and lives in a first floor flat or above and has no access to a lift.

- 3.2 Applicants affected by the changes have been contacted and their new banding has been reconsidered based on the information held on their existing application. Applicants have been urged to access their Homefinder Somerset account and check the information held is correct and up to date.

## Homefinder Register as of 26th September.

	Emerg -ency	% in Emerg -ency	Gold	% Gold	Silver	% Silver	Bronze	% Bronze	Total	% of Total
Mendip District Council	1	0.07	151	10.54	651	45.43	630	43.96	1433	16.86
Sedgemoor District Council	4	0.16	221	8.89	646	26.00	1614	64.95	2485	29.24
South Somerset District Council	2	0.10	280	13.80	708	34.89	1039	51.21	2029	23.87
Taunton Deane Borough Council	0	0.00	282	14.54	470	24.24	1187	61.22	1939	22.81
West Somerset Council	1	0.16	75	12.23	158	25.77	379	61.83	613	7.21
Total	8	0.09	1009	11.87	26.33	30.98	4849	57.05	8499	100

## 4. Welfare Reform

### Welfare Reform Visits

- 4.1 The number of tenants affected this month are 311, however as always this is subject to change on a daily basis due to tenants moving in and out of employment and any changes in their family makeup.
- 4.2 Tenants are still downsizing to more suitable accommodation however the pace of this has now slowed and people are choosing to amend their budgeting to stay in their current accommodation. We continue to work closely with families and resolve the issue.

### Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)

- 4.3 All affected tenants are being offered advice on DHP's and assistance to help them complete the application form.

4.4 The DHP budget for 2016/2017 is £150,984 and so far this year 43 tenants have had a successful award.

### **Universal Credit (UC)**

4.5 Currently only single newly unemployed people are able to make claims for UC. This accounts for the small number of affected council tenants at this time.

4.6 We have now received formal notification from the Department of Works and Pensions that the roll out of the full Universal Credit Services will start in Taunton Deane on the **26 October 2016** and in West Somerset on the **12 October 2016**.

4.7 This will mean anyone making a new claim for any of the following benefits will have to make a Universal Credit claim online and then manage their claim online:-

- Housing Benefit;
- Working Tax Credit;
- Child Tax Credit;
- Job Seekers Allowance (income based);
- Employment and Support Allowance (income related); and
- Income Support.

4.8 Also anyone currently receiving any of these benefits, who report certain changes in circumstances, will also have to re-apply for Universal Credit online.

Councillor Terry Beale