

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 11 December 2012 at 18:30.

Agenda

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

- 1 To receive the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 2 October 2012 (attached).
- 2 To report any apologies for absence.
- 3 To receive any communications.
- 4 Declaration of Interests. To receive declarations of personal or prejudicial interests, in accordance with the Code of Conduct. The usual declarations made at meetings of Full Council are shown in the attachment.
- 5 To receive questions from Taunton Deane Electors under Standing Order 15.
- 6 To receive any petitions or deputations from Taunton Deane Electors under Standing Orders 16 and 17.
- 7 Somerset Armed Forces Community Covenant. Verbal update by Councillor Bob Bowrah BEM.
- 8 Parking and Public Transport in Taunton - To consider the attached Motion proposed by Councillor Jefferson Horsley and seconded by Councillor Simon Coles.
- 9 Economic Regeneration - To consider the attached Motion proposed by Councillor Jefferson Horsley and seconded by Councillor Simon Coles.
- 10 Changes to the Standards Committee and appointment of the Independent Co-optees. Report of the Monitoring Officer (attached)
- 11 Part I -To deal with written questions to, and receive the following recommendations from, the Executive:-
 - (i) Councillor Mrs Jean Adkins - Recommendation relating to the Review of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan for 2012-2042 (attached);

- (ii) Councillor John Williams - Recommendations relating to:-
 - (a) Earmarked Reserves Review (attached); and
 - (b) Fees and Charges 2013/2014 (attached);
- (iii) Councillor Norman Cavill - Recommendations relating to:-
 - (a) Loan to Somerset County Cricket Club to enable development (attached);
 - (b) Taunton Deane Business Investment Fund (attached);
 - (c) Castle Green, Taunton Completion Works (attached);
- (iv) Councillor Mrs Vivienne Stock-Williams - Recommendations relating to:-
 - (a) Local Council Tax Support Scheme for Taunton Deane (attached);
 - (b) Council Tax Charges - Empty Properties and Second Homes (attached);
 - (c) Revenues and Benefits Service Feasibility Study (attached);
- (v) Councillor Mrs Catherine Herbert - Recommendation relating to the Refurbishment of Station Road Pool and Sport England Bid (attached);
- (vi) Councillor Edwards - Recommendation relating to the Orchard Multi-Storey Car Park, Taunton – Structural Survey and Lifts (attached).

12 Part II - To receive reports from the following Members of the Executive:-

- (a) Councillor John Williams - Leader of the Council;
- (b) Councillor Norman Cavill - Economic Development, Asset Management, Arts and Tourism;
- (c) Councillor Ken Hayward - Environmental Services and Climate Change;
- (d) Councillor Catherine Herbert - Sports, Parks and Leisure;
- (e) Councillor Jean Adkins - Housing Services;
- (f) Councillor Vivienne Stock-Williams - Corporate Resources;
- (g) Councillor Mark Edwards - Planning, Transportation and Communications;
- (h) Councillor Jane Warmington - Community Development.

Tonya Meers
Legal and Democratic Services Manager

05 March 2013

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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



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

For further information about the meeting, please contact the Corporate Support Unit on 01823 356414 or email r.bryant@tauntondeane.gov.uk

Council Members:-

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

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

Taunton Deane Borough Council

At a meeting of Taunton Deane Borough Council held in the John Meikle Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton on 2 October 2012 at 6.30 pm.

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

(Councillors Henley and Wren arrived at the meeting at 7.19 p.m. and 7.35 p.m. respectively.)

1. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of Taunton Deane Borough Council held on 17 July 2012, copies having been sent to each Member, were signed by the Mayor.

2. **Apologies**

The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Ms Lisgo) and Councillors D Durdan, Mrs Floyd, Meikle and Ms Webber.

3. **Declaration of Interests**

Councillors Brooks, A Govier, Prior-Sankey, Mrs Waymouth and D Wedderkopp declared personal interests as Members of Somerset County Council. Councillors Mrs Hill and Mrs Smith declared personal interests as employees of Somerset County Council. Councillor Wren declared personal interests as an employee of Natural England and as Clerk to Milverton Parish Council. Councillors Hayward declared a personal interest as one of the Council's representatives on the Somerset Waste Board. Councillor Nottrodt declared a personal interest as a Director of Southwest One. Councillor Tooze declared a personal interest as an employee of the UK Hydrographic Office. Councillor Swaine, declared a personal interest as a part-time swimming instructor. Councillor Mullins declared a personal interest as EDF Energy at Hinkley Point was his employer. Gill Slattery declared personal interests as a member of the Board of Governors at Somerset College. Councillor Farbahi declared a personal interest as a local owner of land in Taunton Deane.

4. **Public Question Time**

Mr Peter Venn, the Manager of the RSPCA's West Hatch Wildlife Centre at West Hatch, stated that in his view the proposed Badger Cull would not result

in a reduction in cases of Bovine Tuberculosis (TB). In fact, culling could result in the overall situation becoming worse through something called 'perturbation'.

Mr Venn explained that Badgers usually lived in stable setts in small communities. Mixing between setts was very limited. However, if the setts were disturbed by culling, any survivors were likely to escape from the immediate area which could easily increase the rate of transfer of TB between animals rather than retaining it within a particular sett.

Rather than risk the spread of TB through proposed shooting, Mr Venn recommended that the suggested programme of vaccination should be pursued by the Government. Mr David Couper agreed with Mr Venn's views and both asked for the Council's support in this matter.

Mr Paul Partington asked the following questions:-

- (1) The Swimming Provision in Taunton Deane Task and Finish Group gave careful consideration to the replacement of St James Street Pools and the refurbishment of Station Road Pool. I recognize that St James Pools are coming to the end of their lives and was pleased to see the recommendations for building a new swimming pool at the Blackbrook Pavilion Sports Centre.

What does not appear to be clear in item 9 on the agenda is the detail of refurbishment of Station Road Pool. There has been much encouragement through the recent Olympics for young people to take up sport. There is a lack of thirty three and a third metre pools and deep water in the south west. Station Road is the only pool in Taunton Deane to provide these facilities.

I hope that the refurbishment of Station Road Pool will mean that the existing length of thirty three and a third metres will remain as a single pool. Also the deep water would remain for those wanting to practice and train synchronized swimming. To give an analogy, to change the existing facility would be like replacing a cricket pitch with a football pitch at a financial cost to the tax payer.

Please could I have some clarity as to what the refurbishment works at Station Road will be?

In response, Councillor Mrs Herbert stated that a Condition Survey of the Station Road Pool was being undertaken which would enable the Council and Tone Leisure to assess what works needed to be carried out. There was the possibility of a bid being made to Sport England for funding towards any works needed to the swimming pool.

Councillor Mrs Herbert added that no changes to the size or depth of the pool were planned and that she would be happy to meet with Paul Partington to discuss the issue in greater detail.

- (2) Does the Leader of the Council agree with me that if there are no Christmas lights on the main streets of Taunton Town Centre this year, this would be a public relations disaster for the long term growth prospects of our district? Could he or the Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth explain how this is likely to come about and what steps is he taking to make good this deficiency?

Does he agree with me that this will be sending out the wrong message at the wrong time? Does he appreciate that this kind of failure will diminish the long term prospects of developing Taunton's Town Centre?

Will he immediately begin to review the role of the Town Centre Company and the annual subsidy which we provide when they are not fulfilling our Vision for the town? What Service Level Agreement exists between us and the Town Centre Company and did it include the provision of Christmas Lights – and if not, why not?

BID failed to secure a second five year term. Why did the Executive not give more support to the Town Centre Company to help it achieve its goal? Would he agree with me that we need illumination(s) not bleak darkness to both these questions and to the town centre this Christmas?

In reply, Councillor Williams stated that Taunton would not be without any form of Christmas lights. A lit tree would again be provided outside the Market House and a small number of trees would adorn both sides of North Street attached to properties. In addition, the Town Centre Company would be offering to supply further such trees to traders on application.

The Orchard Shopping Centre would also be providing a comprehensive display of Christmas decorations and lights from mid-November onwards.

Both the Council and the Town Centre Company would be working together to provide a Christmas Fair in Taunton on Sunday, 18 November 2012. This would have in the region of 100 exhibitors.

It was possible that the Council might also re-introduce the 'Free After Three' parking scheme in some of Taunton's Car Parks during the month of December in an effort to further increase footfall and trade in the town in the run up to Christmas.

Mr Dustyn Etherington of North Town Scouts explained to Councillors that he had been accompanied by a number of Scouts to the meeting as they were all aiming to obtain their Community Challenge badges. He added that several wished to ask questions, as follows:-

- Alex asked whether the Council had any plans to increase the number of cleaning patrols in Taunton? In response Councillor Hayward said that he was not aware of the need for any further litter collections. However, it was perhaps time for the Council to once again ask people not to drop litter;
- Jonathan asked what the Council would be providing to the youth of

Taunton to replace the Youth Service? Councillor Mrs Warmington replied that the Council was currently looking into this very issue;

- Joseph made reference to the fact that the Badger was the Scout's emblem. What did Councillors feel about the proposed culling. In reply, the Mayor said that this matter was going to be discussed as the next item on the agenda; and
- Dustyn Etherington asked the Council to consider providing more cycle routes throughout the town.

5. **Motion – Proposed Badger Cull**

Moved by Councillor Gaines and seconded by Councillor Ross.

“This Council notes the serious and damaging animal welfare and economic impact that Bovine Tuberculosis (TB) has on the farming community in the area. This Council also notes with concern the considerable public and scientific opposition to the Government's proposals to pilot a badger cull in areas including one that covers this Council.

The Council acknowledges scientific research that highlights the shortcomings in the Government's current proposals including a report by the Independent Scientific Group (ISG) that concluded that, ‘badger culling can make no meaningful contribution to cattle TB control in Britain’.

This Council recognises the strong public opposition to the cull and the arguments made by respected animal welfare organisations, such as the RSPCA, Badgers Trust, League Against Cruel Sports and Humane Society International that the current proposals would be ineffective and could eradicate 70% of badger populations.

Furthermore this Council believes that the Government would better serve the farming community by developing work on vaccinations for badgers to achieve the long-term eradication of the disease from livestock.

This Council resolves to write to the Secretary of State for the Department of Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs to:-

- Highlight the Council's concern about the practicalities as well as the welfare implications of the current proposed cull in the Wiveliscombe area of Taunton Deane;
- Object to the cull taking place on Council owned land; and
- Call on the Government to seek alternative methods to tackle the problem of Bovine Tuberculosis.”

The following amendment was proposed by Councillor Williams and seconded by Councillor Hunt. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that as the wording did not negate the original motion it was acceptable:-

“This Council recognises the seriousness of Bovine TB and the possible links to badgers together with the difficulties of agreeing the most effective and humane method of dealing with this very important issue.

There are conflicting views from those for and against, but this Council is not competent nor does it have the expertise to make judgements as to the merits of the Governments proposed action therefore we remain neutral observers.

One thing is certain - all life is important and we urge the Government to put maximum resources into solving this crisis, because crisis it is, that impacts so much upon the stock of our local farmers and the wildlife which we acknowledge and understand causes so much distress.

This Council resolves to write to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Farming and Rural affairs to:-

- Highlight the depth of concern amongst some in our community that the proposed trials will not be effective; and
- Urge the Government to apply maximum resources possible to finding a humane solution to the ongoing crisis of Bovine TB”.

The amendment was put and was carried.

The substantive motion was put and was carried.

(Councillor C Hill declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest during the discussion of the Motion and left the meeting until the conclusion of the item.)

6. Recruitment of an Independent Person to work with Taunton Deane Borough Council’s Standards Committee

At the meeting of Full Council in July 2012, Members agreed a series of recommendations relating to the introduction of a new Standards Regime for Taunton Deane in accordance with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011.

One of the recommendations related to the appointment of an Independent Person to work with the Council’s new Standards Committee, together with a reserve.

Following public advertisement, four candidates were interviewed by a Panel of Councillors who unanimously agreed that Mrs Louise Somerville-Williams should be appointed as the Council’s Independent Person.

Mrs Somerville-Williams was ideally suited to this role having previously served as the Vice-Chairman of Mendip District Council’s Standards Committee over the past ten years.

The Panel had also unanimously agreed that Ms Lynda Williams, who had previously worked in various roles for Wiltshire Council, should be appointed as the reserve Independent Person.

Resolved that:-

- (1) Mrs Louise Somerville-Williams be appointed as Taunton Deane Borough Council's Independent Person to work alongside the Standard Committee; and
- (2) Ms Lynda Williams be appointed as Taunton Deane Borough Council's reserve Independent Person.

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

(a) **Somerset Strategic Housing Partnership Tenancy Strategy**

The Executive had recently considered proposals to develop a new sub-regional Tenancy Strategy for Somerset in partnership with a range of agencies including the five Somerset Districts and Registered Landlord Partners.

The Localism Act had introduced the requirement for all local housing authorities to publish a Strategic Tenancy Policy consistent with their Homeless Strategy and Allocation Scheme.

As Somerset already had a county-wide Homeless Strategy and Allocation Scheme (Homefinder Somerset) it was considered expedient to produce a county-wide Strategic Tenancy Policy, a copy of which had been made available to all Councillors.

The Strategy was intended to provide guidance to social and other landlords operating in Somerset, informing their policies and practices to produce lettings for customers that meet local housing need and improved market function.

The management and monitoring of the Strategy in the future would be through a Project Team reporting to the Somerset Strategic Housing Partnership through the Somerset Strategic Housing Group.

Resolved that the Somerset Strategic Housing Partnership Tenancy Strategy be adopted.

(The Chief Executive, Strategic Director (Shirlene Adam) and Democratic Services Manager and Corporate Support Lead all declared prejudicial interests in the following recommendation as beneficiaries under the Lease Car Scheme. They all left the room during consideration of the recommendation.)

(b) **Review of Lease Car, Cash Alternative and Car Loan Schemes**

Changes to the Lease Car and Cash Alternative Schemes and the Car Loan Scheme had recently been considered by the Executive.

The terms and conditions of employment for staff at Taunton Deane Borough Council were based on the National Terms and Conditions of Service for Local Government Services, as amended locally by the Council through collective agreements with UNISON as the recognised trade union.

These local terms included a frozen Lease Car and Cash Alternative Scheme and a Car Loan Scheme.

As part of the Budget Review Project these Schemes had been identified as possible staff benefits where changes could be made.

Advice from Counsel had been used to formulate a range of options which had been subject of extensive discussions with UNISON and the staff who would be affected by changes to the schemes.

As a result of this consultation, an amended proposal had been put together which would maintain a reduced Lease Car and Cash Alternative Scheme with the option to 'buy out' the contractual benefit of the car lease or cash alternative scheme with a payment equivalent to the current allowance of the affected employee.

The buy out option would be treated as an 'invest to save' initiative and would be funded by the use of General Fund Reserves. The maximum potential cost of buy out was estimated at £103,000.

If these proposals were agreed and implemented savings would be in the region of £57,500 per annum with effect from 1 April 2013.

Resolved that a supplementary estimate from General Fund Reserves of £89,000 and from Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Reserves of £14,000 - £103,000 in total - to fund the maximum potential cost of buy-out from the existing schemes, be approved.

(c) Update on the proposal to build a swimming pool at Blackbrook Pavilion Sports Centre and the refurbishment of Station Road Pool, Taunton

Councillor Mrs Herbert informed the Council that she had withdrawn the recommendation previously circulated to Members from the meeting.

8. Reports of the Leader of the Council and Executive Councillors

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

(i) Leader of the Council (Councillor Williams)

Councillor Williams's report covered the following topics:-

- Peer Challenge;
- Project Taunton;
- A303/A30/A358 Somerset County Council Initiative;
- Core Strategy;
- Budget Setting; and
- Local Enterprise Partnership.

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

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

- Environmental Health;
- Climate Change / Carbon Management;
- Waste Management;
- Deane DLO Update; and
- Crematorium.

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

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

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

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

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

- Housing Enabling - Regeneration;
- Halcon Consultation;
- Affordable Housing Target;
- Affordable Housing Partnership;
- Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership;
- Estates Management; and
- Self-Financing and HRA Business Plan.

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

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

- Customer Contact Centre;
- Corporate and Client Services;
- Corporate Performance;

- Legal and Democratic Services; and
- Revenues and Benefits.

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

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

- Core Strategy;
- Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan;
- Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA);
- Neighbourhood Planning;
- Community Infrastructure Levy;
- Planning;
- Heritage – Sandhill Park, Tone Works and Tonedale;
- Landscape Team Report;
- Parking Service; and
- Communications.

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

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

- Police and Crime Panel;
- Safer Somerset Partnership
- Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Panel;
- Health and Wellbeing;
- Priority Areas Strategy;
- Somerset Village Agents;
- Community Clean Up Days;
- Halcon Breakfast Club;
- Community Activity Days;
- Family Futures (Troubled Families); and
- Safeguarding.

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

The report from Councillor Cavill covered:-

- Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP);
- Taunton Town Centre Company (and BID);
- The Brewhouse Theatre and Arts Centre;
- Marketing Strategy;
- Floodlighting of the Borough's Churches;
- Jobs Clubs;
- Business Support and Liaison;

- Hinkley Nuclear New Build
- Forthcoming events;
- Taunton Tourist Information, Ticket and Travel Centre; and
- Asset Management.

(Councillor Mrs Messenger left the meeting at 7.46 pm. Councillors Ms Durdan and Mrs Lees left the meeting at 8.10pm. Councillors Ms Palmer, Henley, Prior-Sankey, Bowrah, Brooks, Wren, Mrs Hill, D Wedderkopp and Mullins left the meeting at 8.15 pm, 8.45 pm, 8.47 pm, 9.05 pm, 9.13 pm, 9.24 pm, 9.26 pm, 9.28 pm and 9.29 pm respectively.)

(The meeting ended at 9.35 pm.)

Usual Declarations of Interest by Councillors

Full Council

- **Members of Somerset County Council – Councillors Brooks, A Govier, Henley, Prior-Sankey, Mrs Waymouth, D Wedderkopp**
- **Employees of Somerset County Council – Councillors Mrs Hill, Mrs Smith and Stone**
- **Employee of Sedgemoor District Council – Councillor Slattery**
- **Employee of Job Centre Plus – Councillor Henley**
- **Employee of UK Hydrographic Office – Councillor Tooze**
- **Employee of Natural England – Councillor Wren**
- **Somerset Waste Board representatives – Councillor Hayward and Councillor Ross**
- **Director of Southwest One – Councillor Nottrodt**
- **Alternate Director of Southwest One – Councillor Ross**
- **Tone Leisure Board representatives – Councillors D Durdan and Stone**
- **Part-time Swimming Instructor – Councillor Swaine**
- **Employee of EDF Energy – Councillor Mullins**
- **Member of the Board of Governors at Somerset College – Councillor Gill Slattery**
- **Patron of Supporters, Taunton Women’s Aid – Councillor Gill Slattery**
- **Owner of land in Taunton Deane – Councillor Farbahi**

Motion to Full Council – 11 December 2012

Parking and Public Transport in Taunton

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

This Council fully supports the drive to ensure the long term viability of the Taunton Town Centre Shopping Area and to resist measures to encourage out of town shopping applications in accordance with the Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan and the recently adopted Core Strategy.

The Council also notes that in the past three years it has closed Greenbrook Terrace, Castle Green, parts of Coal Orchard, Castle Street and Enfield Car Parks with the loss of 361 car parking spaces most completely or partially zoned for shopping in the town centre. In addition it has lost part of the Priory Bridge Road Car Park to office development with a further 264 spaces going.

In conjunction with Somerset County Council, it has provided two Park and Ride sites at Silk Mills to the West and at junction 25 of the M5 to the East.

This Council notes that traffic congestion in the town centre has increased significantly over the past few weeks and delays in movement are reducing footfall in the town centre. The lack of electronic signing about availability of car parking spaces for shoppers adds to the disquiet for the town centre retailers. The retailers are equally vociferous about the extra distance shoppers now have to walk to reach their destinations following the closures mentioned above damaging their businesses.

This council therefore urges Somerset County Council to:-

- (a) Open its Park and Ride on Sundays in the period up to Christmas 2013;
- (b) To permit bus pass users to travel free from the Park and Ride sites to compete with Exeter and similar venues around the region; and
- (c) Introduce as quickly as possible electronic signing of availability of parking spaces on the main arterial routes into Taunton.

Furthermore, to enhance the encouragement of shoppers to come to Taunton, it urges the Council to adopt immediately the discount equivalent to three hours free parking for those customers who spend up to £20 in selected stores in the town centre as already negotiated with Debenhams and to extend this system as widely as possible. It urges the Council to allocate an officer to devote time immediately to address these issues especially the introduction of the discount scheme for shoppers parking in the town centre.

Motion to Full Council – 11 December 2012

Economic Growth and Regeneration

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

The Council notes that the LGA Peer Group Review urges Taunton Deane to put economic growth and regeneration as its top priority in formulating its Corporate Business Plan. It notes too that the Council should adopt a policy of acquiring assets which provide an “income stream” to meet the reduction in expenditure brought about by the recession and the cuts demanded by central Government.

The Council therefore deeply regrets that the opportunity to pursue a bid to acquire the Orchard Centre from JP Morgan was not followed through as it would have:-

- (a) Secured the future of the Taunton Town Centre;
- (b) Given the Council the chance to redevelop the retail offer here;
- (c) Resisted applications for retail development out of town; and
- (d) Provided the Council with an income stream of some 6% per annum to assist in reducing the budget deficits identified in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

The Council recognises that these circumstances have shown it to be ill equipped to meet the commercial realities of our time and demands that the ruling group sets its sights higher.

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Report of the Monitoring Officer to Full Council – 11 December 2012

Changes to the Standards Committee and appointment of the Independent Co-optees.

(This is the responsibility of the Leader of the Council)

At the meeting of Full Council in July 2012, Members agreed a series of recommendations relating to the introduction of a new Standards Regime for Taunton Deane in accordance with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011.

One of those recommendations was to create the Standards Committee and decide its composition. Full Council agreed that there should be a Committee of nine made up of five elected Members, politically balanced, two parish representatives and two co-opted members.

On the 7 November 2012, three of the ex-independent members of the Standards Committee were interviewed as they had all said that they would like to be considered for the independent co-optee positions on the new Standards Committee.

The three candidates were interviewed by a panel comprising of Councillors Gaines, A Govier and A Wedderkopp and the Monitoring Officer, Tonya Meers

Following those interviews Members found it extremely difficult to choose two out of the three members as they thought that all were extremely knowledgeable and would bring a great deal of experience to the Committee. Therefore a request was made of the Monitoring Officer as to whether it would be possible to extend the number of independent co-optees on the Committee to three in order to be able to appoint all three.

The Monitoring Officer has confirmed that this is acceptable if Full Council are agreeable. Therefore it is recommended that the number of co-opted members able to sit on the Standards Committee should be increased to three.

If Full Council agree to recommendation (1) below then it needs to formally appoint those co-optees. The names of the applicants were Anne Elder, Terry Bowditch and Adrian Cox.

It is therefore **recommended** that:-

- (1) the number of Independent co-optees able to sit on the Standards Committee should be increased to three; and
- (2) Anne Elder, Terry Bowditch and Adrian Cox be appointed to those roles.

Contact Officer : Tonya Meers 01823 356391 or
t.meers@tauntondeane.gov.uk

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Council Meeting – 11 December 2012

Part I

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

(i) Councillor Mrs Jean Adkins

Review of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2012-2042

The Executive undertook its first review of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan 2012-2042 at its recent meeting.

In the first few months of the financial year it has become apparent that there were a number of issues – set out below – that required amendment or inclusion in the Business Plan, as the context in which Housing Services operated continued to change rapidly.

Asset Management

Uplift of Disabled Facilities Grant and Aids and Adaptations Budget

The HRA budgeted £500,000 capital per year to provide disabled aids and adaptations for tenants in our stock. This work is undertaken by the Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership (SWPSHP).

However, in view of the fact that need is likely to increase in future years as the population ages, SWPSHP has been commissioned to undertake a needs analysis. For business planning purposes it is thought prudent to increase this provision by 5% per year for the next 10 years and then for it to remain fixed for the remainder of the plan period.

Stock Investment Figures and Data Cleanse

Since April work has been underway to cleanse the stock data of certain inaccuracies and undertake stock condition surveys. The impact of this work has been a slight reduction in the Future Major Works requirement for our stock over 30 years of approximately £4,000,000, due to some re-profiling of the needs based on better stock information.

However, there remained a significant backlog of work created in part by tenant refusals for improvement works previously and other works not completed as part of the Decent Homes programme.

As a consequence of the inclusion of the additional items identified in this report, the overall capital expenditure over the 30 year period has risen to £191,000,000 from £187,000,000.

Extension of Properties

The review has identified that a budget should be introduced to provide Housing Services with an additional means of helping to alleviate the housing need of those who are living in overcrowded conditions. It is therefore proposed to create a new improvements budget of £160,000 per year which would be used to fund approximately 4 two storey extensions per year.

Related Assets

In the original Business Plan an additional budget allocation of £3,600,000 over 30 years and £600,000 in Years 1-5, for related assets was made. This was in respect of a programme of repairs for non dwelling assets such as garages and sewage treatment works.

Environmental Improvements

£150,000 per annum had been allocated for environmental improvements on estates such as additional car parking, waste storage facilities, mobility scooter stores and fencing. An initial list of projects is emerging and would be progressed in the new financial year.

Sustainable Energy Fund

A Sustainable Energy Fund of £6,600,000 over 30 years has been established to provide affordable warmth and improve the energy efficiency of homes. In order to utilise this fund and progress these aims, a project is emerging which has two key elements - 'Retrofit works to properties' and 'Tenant Lifestyle Awareness'.

Full project planning, commissioning and evaluation will be required and it is felt that recruitment of a Project Manager to undertake the next level of detailed planning will be required.

Social Housing Development Fund (SHDF)

Following the establishment of this fund (£2,300,000 in the first four years) in the new Business Plan work has progressed to identify sites that may be suitable for development.

Reported that approximately 26 new units were feasible, at an approximate cost of £3,430,000. If the Phase 1 sites were to be delivered, an additional £1,130,000 would need to be added to the Capital Programme.

Alongside these early wins in terms of site development, Taunton Deane also needed to create a development policy to frame the way in which this fund would be used and to identify some of the relevant variables concerning house building. An Interim Development Policy has been drafted a copy of which was included in the report to the Executive. .

Exceptional Extensive

Funding amounting to £18,300,000 over 30 years for works such as asbestos removal, subsidence and mostly in later years works to our non traditional properties has been allocated in the Business Plan. Survey work is due to take place shortly that will assist the Council in planning for the future of non traditional stock in the years to come.

Planned Maintenance

One of the changes that was made following the "No" vote to stock transfer in 2006, was to reduce the frequency of planned maintenance from a cycle of five years to

eight years. It is now possible that Taunton Deane could now afford to potentially reverse this position and re-establish a five-yearly programme.

Welfare Reform

An emerging Housing Services Welfare Reform Strategy has set out actions over the next 12 to 24 months for effectively managing the changes contained in the Government's Welfare Reform programme.

The purpose of the strategy is to mitigate the impact of the Welfare Reforms on Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Services and its tenants.

However a potential impact of welfare reform on the Business Plan is that the level of financial hardship is likely to increase in the community with greater challenges in collecting rent being experienced and debt levels likely to increase.

The amount of irrecoverable debt might also increase leading to a higher level of write offs. Consequently it is proposed to increase the bad debt allowance in the HRA Business Plan from 0.5% to 2% for a period of three years.

Right to Buy review and policy on use of additional receipts

The Council had signed an agreement with the Government under which the Council would continue to receive the income it was expecting from Right to Buy (RtB) receipts and this income would continue to support the Council's General Fund Capital Programme. However only the additional receipts the Council would receive from this change in policy were the subject of the agreement.

The additional receipts produced from the completion of a total of 18 properties in this financial year showed potential additional receipts in Year 1 of approximately £600,000.

To meet the conditions of the agreement and keep the additional income, the £600,000 would need to be matched with £1,400,000 of other resources such that total expenditure on affordable housing would reach £2,000,000 between April 2012 and March 2015. This is well within the current budgeted expenditure on new affordable housing between the GF and HRA.

Staffing

Development Team staffing

In order to deliver the projects identified above, additional resources would be required to lead on the HRA's development activities. An incremental approach is suggested as the Council's development aspirations grew.

1. Housing Enabling - The current part time post holder would increase hours by one day per week from three to four on a temporary basis. The HRA would pay for two days of this officer's time to work on site development. The remaining two days would be committed to continuing regeneration projects funded from the SHDF.

2. Housing Development Projects Lead (Sustainable Energy) - A temporary post (18 months) would be recruited to lead on the project outlined above and also progress other related projects in the HRA including Solar PV and evaluation of new

energy efficient technologies in our properties. This post would be funded from the Sustainable Energy Fund.

3. Housing Development Projects Lead - An additional post would be recruited to bring forward some of the capital projects with new allocated resource described above. This post will be funded by the Exceptional Extensive and Environmental Improvements budgets.

4. Development Manager - It is proposed to create a senior manager position to oversee all development activity, and potentially draw together the above posts to create a small Development Team. It is proposed that an additional salaries allocation of £70,000 should be made in the Business Plan for this post and the administrative support for the new team.

Repairs Line

The Repairs Line service was open to Housing tenants to report repairs required Monday to Friday. Originally the service was staffed by 3.7 FTE but due to staff changes, the service has lost the equivalent of 26 hours of staffing. This reduction has led to significant difficulty in providing sufficient cover to meet demand, and it is proposed to restore staffing levels by the 26 hours lost. The additional cost of this proposal is £15,000.

IT Improvement

Taunton Deane Housing currently uses four business critical software applications. As part of the current transformation, Deane DLO will be replacing its dated software system. This will involve certain changes having to be made to the other three applications. It is anticipated these works will require around three years to complete at an approximate total one off cost of £500,000, with continuing costs of £33,000 per annum ongoing.

Other Financial Adjustments

Inflation Adjustment

Retail Price Index (RPI) inflation, on which the annual uplift of rental income is calculated, has been falling in recent months and has reduced substantially from 5.6% in September 2011 to 2.6% in September 2012. Therefore it will be prudent to reduce the level of inflation included within the model from 3.5% to 2.5%.

Interest Rate Saving

Due to better interest rates than modelled at the point of the transaction there are additional savings in the Business Plan of £936,000 saving in Year 1. Advice received from the Council's Treasury Management Advisors, Arling Close, is that it would not be advisable to use interest savings at this time to pay off any debt capital.

The difference in interest rate on the loans has also affected the forecasted investment income on the HRA reserve balance, and a lower rate than budgeted was likely to be received in Year 1. This meant that although a saving had been achieved through the interest payable on the loans, this has been offset by the reduction in interest received and the overall net saving is £817,000.

Based on the current set of policies and business plan assumptions, and the proposals as part of this years review, the financial projections identified cash flow surpluses in the first ten years of the Plan period.

The HRA Is likely to generate significant cash surpluses over the long term. It Is proposed to establish a principle that surplus resources should be added to the Social Housing Development Fund, where prudent, to support further affordable housing provision. This Is seen as a more sensible alternative to building excessive balances in the HRA reserve.

It was **recommended** that:-

- (1) The Disabled Facilities Grant and Aids and Adaptations budget be uplifted by 5% for the next ten years pending the outcome of the needs analysis;
- (2) A new improvements budget of £160,000 per year be created which would be used to fund approximately 4 two storey extensions per year;
- (3) Extending the reach of the current Social Housing Development Fund by utilising some of the borrowing headroom towards funding for housing development be explored;
- (4) The Interim Development Policy set out in the report to the Executive be approved;
- (5) Allowance for bad debt in the HRA be increased to 2% for a period of three years from 1 April 2013;
- (6) The additional Right to Buy receipts be ring-fenced and allocated to a separate budget code. Subsequently proposals would be brought to Members to make decisions as to how they were allocated - either to traditional housing enabling projects or to development within the Housing Revenue Account, on the basis of the ongoing project need and spending the receipts within the restrictions of the agreement with the Government;
- (7) The outlined approach to additional staffing to support the Business Plan objectives and a consequent increase in revenue staffing costs of £55,000 be agreed;
- (8) That it be agreed that any surplus Social Housing Development Fund budget remaining at the end of any financial year be allocated to a new Social Housing Development Fund earmarked Housing Revenue Account reserve; and
- (9) The principle be agreed that surplus cash resources within the Housing Revenue Account be allocated to the new Social Housing Development Fund Reserve at the end of each financial year, where prudent.

(ii) Councillor John Williams

(a) Earmarked Reserves Review

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

The level of earmarked General Fund reserves as at 31 March 2012 was £7,072,000. This included money set aside for specific revenue purposes, but did not include the £3,336,000 in General Fund balances.

As a result of the review, there are various earmarked reserves, totalling £298,819.52, that are no longer required.

It is **recommended** that:-

- (i) £59,167.44 of surplus earmarked reserves be transferred to the General Fund Reserves in the current financial year; and
- (ii) £239,652.08 of surplus earmarked reserves be transferred to the Housing Revenue Account Reserve in the current financial year.

(b) Fees and Charges 2013/2014

The Executive has given consideration to the proposed fees and charges for 2013/2014 for the following services:-

- Cemeteries and Crematorium – It is intended to increase the main cremation fee by £18 to £608 and make minor increases for other charges within the service. It is estimated that this will generate additional income of £39,600;
- Waste Services – The Somerset Waste Partnership wish to harmonise the charges for garden waste, bulky waste and bin delivery across the County. To do so will require Taunton Deane to make slight increases to the charges for garden waste bins (£42.50 to £45) and bulky waste collection (£36.50 to £38.15). It is anticipated that there will be no increase in income;
- Land Charges – No increase is proposed;
- Housing – It is proposed to increase charges by 2.6% (September Retail Price Index) with two exceptions:-
 - 1) Garage rents for private tenants and owner occupiers to be increased by 5%; and
 - 2) Hire charges for the sheltered scheme meeting halls and guest rooms to be rounded up to the nearest 10p.

This is likely to generate additional income of £60,000 for the Housing Revenue Account;

- Deane Helpline – Helpline fees are proposed to increase also by 2.6% to generate additional income estimated to be £34,000;
- Licensing – Although many of the Licensing fees are set nationally, it is

intended to raise local licensing fees by inflation to generate additional income of £2,500;

- Planning – It is proposed to increase pre-application advice and charges which will generate additional income estimated at £4,000;
- Environmental Health – It is proposed to increase the charges for Pest Control from 1 April 2013;
- Recovery of Court Costs – No increase is proposed; and
- Charging for Housing Act (Improvement and Prohibition) Notices and Immigration Visits – The Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership intended to charge for these services which were likely to generate in the region of £2,000 for the Partnership.

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

Therefore, where possible, fees have been increased to take these views into account. The Corporate Scrutiny Committee also considered this matter at its meeting on 26 November 2012.

It is therefore **recommended** that the fees and charges for 2013/2014 in respect of Cemeteries and Crematorium, Waste Services, Housing, Deane Helpline, Licensing, Planning and Environmental Health and Housing Act Notices/Immigration Visits be agreed.

(iii) Councillor Norman Cavill

(a) Proposed loan to Somerset County Cricket Club to enable development

At its meeting on 14 November 2012, the Executive considered a request from the Somerset County Cricket Club (SCCC) for the Council to provide loan finance of £1,000,000 to enable the County Ground to become a venue which could stage one-day and twenty-twenty international cricket matches.

This proposed project is the final phase of ground development which would see the removal of the Old Pavilion on the south east side of the ground and replace it with a development incorporating a media centre, a retail outlet, boxes and corporate facilities, covered tiered seating and a roof top viewing area.

SCCC has made its request to the Council for the following reasons:-

- (1) The proposed terms of the loan will be much more attractive than could be achieved through bank funding;

- (2) The England and Wales Cricket Board has recently approved the move of the County Ground to international status, but this has to be achieved within a three year period or the approval will be withdrawn; and
- (3) The benefits of staging international cricket are considerable in contributing to the economic regeneration of Taunton and SCCC believes that Council loan support would enable the Club to stage international matches within a five year period.

It is within the power of the Council to offer the type of loan sought provided there is no cost to the local taxpayer. Making such a loan for capital purposes would be treated as capital expenditure and the repayment of the loan principal would be treated as capital receipts.

The type of loan recommended is the Equal Instalments of Principal (EIP) type where repayments would be the same amount of principal each year plus interest on a reducing balance.

The interest rate charged would be based on the PWLB (Public Works Loan Board) rate at which Taunton Deane could borrow, plus a 2% risk premium.

The Executive noted that the capital expenditure incurred by the Council in making the loan would be funded by "internal" borrowing. Prudent provision would therefore need to be made to repay the borrowing under the Minimum Revenue Provision regulations.

The loan would be secured by a legal charge over the property owned by the SCCC.

Recommended that the principle of a 15 year £1,000,000 loan to the Somerset County Cricket Club to enable further improvements towards the County Ground becoming a venue for international matches be approved, subject to:-

- (a) Final terms of the loan being approved on the lines detailed in the report and by the Section 151 Officer; and
- (b) Agreement from the Somerset County Cricket Club to enter into a legal agreement to be approved by the Section 151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer that safeguards the Council's financial position.

(b) Taunton Deane Business Investment Fund

The Council has an ambitious, yet realistic strategy of growth for Taunton Deane. One important element of this strategy is that by 2027 the district will sustain an additional 11,900 jobs.

The Council has a key role to play in supporting and enabling the private sector to deliver the largest part of this strategy and has put in place economic development and regeneration services to strengthen links with businesses, to promote the area as a business investment location, and to make investment as straight forward and attractive as possible.

The environment to attract mobile investment is competitive, as most Councils carry out marketing activities, sometimes enhanced by specific inward investment incentives. Taunton Deane is competing, therefore, with other areas that may be better positioned to meet the requirements of businesses.

The Council already operates a Small Business Grant for start up businesses in Taunton Deane and also assists rural Post Offices and retailers through financial support and assistance. The Council also funds loan finance to businesses through the Fredericks Foundation.

However, the Council has recently been approached by a business that is currently looking to invest in Wellington, which would result in the creation of around 200 jobs. It has asked the Council for a financial contribution towards its investment.

Furthermore, there are two existing businesses, also in Wellington, that urgently require new premises to enable them to expand and create jobs. Without financial assistance neither will be able to invest, and both may leave Taunton Deane.

To enable such assistance to be provided, the Council is requested to identify a fund to encourage and facilitate local job creation. The amount of that fund would be £300,000, which would be taken on a one off basis. The fund would support an Investment Grant scheme, payable to businesses.

The Investment Grant would be tied directly to job creation and businesses would be required to demonstrate that the jobs funded are entirely new positions. The grant would be offered at the level of £1,000 per FTE new job created, up to a ceiling of £100,000 for any one business. It is proposed also to put a minimum size on the application and to support a minimum of 10 jobs in any one submission. Applications to the Fund would be limited to one per business per year.

The Investment Grant would be open to businesses in all sectors and throughout Taunton Deane and applicants would have to demonstrate that the following conditions have been met:-

- The Council's Grant is matched in at least equal part by the business's own financial contribution;
- The Council's grant is directly related to the creation of new jobs within the company. Those jobs must be based in Taunton Deane and be offered on the basis that they are permanent positions. If jobs disappear within a two year period the Council will retain the right to reclaim the money;
- The Council's financial contribution does not breach EU State Aid Rules; and
- Projects to be supported are ready to proceed within an agreed maximum period.

The Council's grant support would lead to the direct creation of a defined number of jobs, which can be valued based on the earnings of each job created. The average annual salary for a full time employee in Taunton Deane is £22,318. If the grant leads to the creation of one job per £1,000 grant, the £300,000 fund would directly generate £6,695,400 of new earnings.

Currently insufficient financial incentives exist to support businesses to invest into or expand in Taunton Deane. An Investment Fund, with an Investment Grant, would

significantly enhance the Council's offer, and would enable it to put real money into its stated growth strategy to attract new businesses and to support growth amongst local, existing businesses.

As Members will have seen from the edition of the Weekly Bulletin issued on 6 December 2012, I am supporting this proposal and therefore **recommend** that:-

- (1) The sum of £300,000 be allocated from within the existing 2012/2013 Budget to a Business Investment Fund, which will encourage investment in Taunton Deane and will directly lead to job creation in the district; and
- (2) Authority to approve individual grant applications be delegated to the Executive Portfolio holder for Economic Development and Regeneration in conjunction with the relevant Director and Section 151 Officer.

(c) Castle Green, Taunton Completion Works

The initial works at Castle Green, Taunton are now almost finished. Only the correction of a small number of agreed defects and the installation of a ramp to the grassed area remain to be completed. These works will be undertaken by Christmas.

The scheme agreed by Members and for which planning permission and Scheduled Ancient Monument consent has been obtained also includes:-

- Closure of Castle Way to all vehicles;
- Resurfacing of Castle Way in the same materials as the rest of Castle Green;
- Relocation of the bus stops from Castle Way to Corporation Street;
- Installation of new planter beds on both sides of Castle Way;
- Installation of a turning head at the junction of Castle Green and Castle Way; and
- Reprioritisation and re-marking of the junction of Tower Street and Castle Street.

The cost of completing the agreed scheme is £340,000. This is £200,000 more than the remaining approved budget.

The reasons for this are:-

- (i) £64,000 of additional costs relating to the initial works as a result of delays in laying the stone setts due to the extreme wet weather during late spring and early summer;
- (ii) £64,000 of additional costs relating to the initial works as a result of archaeological excavations, investigation and recording (the site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument);
- (iii) £50,000 of additional costs relating to the completion works as a result of the delays in agreeing a satisfactory scheme to relocate the bus stops with the County Council; and

(iv) £22,000 of additional costs for new bus shelters as the positioning of these is now expected to be adjacent to the Old Municipal Buildings listed building and therefore must be in keeping.

£50,000 of savings have been identified which reduce the budgetary shortfall to £150,000.

There remains £275,000 of Growth Points capital reserve currently unallocated and it is recommended that £150,000 of this be used to complete the scheme.

The high level programme for completing the works is:-

- All off site works (relocation of bus stops) by 30 April, 2013; and
- All on site works by 30 June, 2013.

It is **recommended** that a further £150,000 of Growth Points capital funding be transferred to the Council's Capital Programme in respect of the completion works for Castle Green, Taunton.

(iv) Councillor Mrs Vivienne Stock-Williams

(a) Local Council Tax Support Scheme for Taunton Deane

The Executive has now considered the proposed introduction of a Local Council Tax Support Scheme for Taunton Deane to replace the current national Council Tax Benefit (CTB) scheme.

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 provides for the abolition of Council Tax Benefit, to take effect from 1 April 2013 and each Council Tax Billing Authority to have its own, locally set, Council Tax Support Scheme, effective from the same date.

Although the Council has discretion concerning the rules of the local scheme as far as they affect people of working age, the Government intended to prescribe rules for pensioners which did not permit a reduction in expenditure for people of pension age.

Taunton Deane has been working closely with the other Somerset Districts to look at how local CT schemes might be designed.

Given the short timescales set by the Government, there is no realistic possibility of designing a new local scheme entirely from scratch for Year 1.

In common with their Somerset counterparts, Taunton Deane proposes to base the local CT scheme in Year 1 for working age citizens on the broad principles of the present CTB scheme given that the existing benefit system has been developed to protect a number of disadvantaged groups and carries least risk in terms of software development.

A number of features of the current scheme have been assessed to see if the changes would deliver the reduction in expenditure necessary to match the likely

grant from the Government. Certain common scenarios have also been considered collectively to see if they would potentially be suitable to all Somerset authorities.

From those discussions, the key changes which are proposed between Taunton Deane's local scheme for working age claimants and the current CTB scheme were:-

- Maximum support would be 75-80% of Council Tax – everyone of working age would have to pay something;
- Non-dependant deductions would be increased;
- Second adult rebate to cease;
- Child maintenance to be counted as income;
- Earned income disregards to rise; and
- A hardship fund to be established for short term help. (This would be a collection fund commitment rather than be fully funded by Taunton Deane).

The draft proposals for Taunton Deane's Local Council Tax Support Scheme were subject to an extensive public consultation exercise which ran over eight weeks, commencing 6 August until 5 October 2012.

A total of 113 responses to Taunton Deane's consultation were received. Across Somerset as a whole a total of 3,508 responses were made to the consultation of whom 59% were respondents in receipt of CTB.

Details of the responses received in respect of the proposals are as follows:-

- **Proposal 1 – Increase Non-Dependant Deductions.** This could reduce total expenditure by approximately £50,000 per annum as a whole, rather than just Taunton Deane's share.

For people of working age who currently claim CTB, the new Council Tax Support Scheme proposes to increase the expected contributions to the Council Tax bill made by other adult members of the household.

The current and proposed levels of weekly deductions are shown in the table below:-

Non-dependant Deductions for Council Tax Benefit	Apr-12 (pw)	Proposed (pw)
Receiving IS, JSA(IB), or ESA(IR) or Pension Credits.	Nil	£4.80
Aged 18 or over and in remunerative work		
- <i>gross income less than £183.00</i>	£3.30	£5.80

- gross income £183.00 to £315.99	£6.55	£10.55
- gross income £316.00 to £393.99	£8.25	£13.50
- gross income more than £394.00	£9.90	£16.40
Others aged 18 or over	£3.30	£5.80

The Taunton Deane Consultation Response was 63% in favour; the Somerset Response (excluding Taunton Deane) was 72% in favour.

- **Proposal 2 – Additional Support for Exceptional Cases of Hardship –**
This measure did not reduce expenditure.

It is felt that there are likely to be cases of exceptional hardship arising from the Government's decision to move away from a national benefit scheme. To address these cases, it was proposed to create a discretionary hardship fund, financed from Council Tax receipts, to provide short-term additional support for vulnerable working-age citizens.

The Government has advised that, from 1 April 2013, Discretionary Housing Payments cannot be used to provide assistance with Council Tax. Consequently, if a discretionary Council Tax Assistance Scheme is introduced it will be necessary to have an approved policy in place for its operation. Details of this policy were set out in the report considered by the Executive.

The Taunton Deane Consultation Response was 78% in favour; the Somerset Response (excluding Taunton Deane) was 79% in favour.

- **Proposal 3 – Maximum Benefit Limit** - This could reduce total expenditure by approximately £780,000 per annum as a whole, rather than just Taunton Deane's share.

It was proposed to limit the maximum support a working age person could receive, from 100% to a lower level between 75% and 80%.

A limit of 80% would mean that everyone (even those currently receiving 100% CTB) would have to pay at least the figures shown in the tables below:-

Band	Single Claimant		
	Annual Council Tax (after sole occupier disc)	Minimum Proposed Annual Contribution	Minimum Weekly Contribution
A	£703.69	£140.74	£2.71
B	£820.96	£164.19	£3.16
C	£938.25	£187.65	£3.61

D	£1,055.52	£211.10	£4.06
E	£1,290.08	£258.02	£4.96
F	£1,524.64	£304.93	£5.86
G	£1,759.21	£351.84	£6.77
H	£2,111.04	£422.21	£8.12

Band	Claimant Couple		
	Annual Council Tax	Min Annual Contribution	Min Weekly Contribution
A	£938.25	£187.65	£3.61
B	£1,094.61	£218.92	£4.21
C	£1,251.00	£250.20	£4.81
D	£1,407.36	£281.47	£5.41
E	£1,720.11	£344.02	£6.62
F	£2,032.85	£406.57	£7.82
G	£2,345.61	£469.12	£9.02
H	£2,814.72	£562.94	£10.83

The Taunton Deane Consultation Response was 51% in favour; the Somerset Response (excluding Taunton Deane) was 62% in favour.

- **Proposal 4 – Taking Child Maintenance into account as income** – This change could reduce total expenditure by approximately £39,000 per annum as a whole, rather than just Taunton Deane’s share.

Child maintenance received would now count as income when calculating Council Tax Support for a household.

The Taunton Deane Consultation Response was 60% in favour; the Somerset Response (excluding Taunton Deane) was 62% in favour.

- **Proposal 5 – Abolish Second Adult Rebate** – This change could reduce expenditure by £10,000 per annum.

Currently a person whose own income is too high to receive Council Tax Benefit is able to receive a reduction of up to 25% if they have other adult(s) on a low income in their household. This is known as the Second Adult Rebate Scheme.

It was proposed to abolish Second Adult Rebate for working age claimants.

The Taunton Deane Consultation Response was 76% in favour; the Somerset Response (excluding Taunton Deane) was 81% in favour.

- **Proposal 6 – Increase Earned Income Disregard** – This measure did not reduce expenditure.

It is proposed to significantly increase the amount of earned income a person can earn before it reduced the level of Council Tax Support they received.

This was to provide an additional incentive for someone to move into work or to stay in work and allow them to retain more of their earnings before their Council Tax Support started to reduce. The proposed earned income disregards are as follows:-

- a. Single Person– increase from £5 to £10pw;
- b. Couple – increase from £10 to £20 pw;
- c. Lone parent – increase from £25 to £37.50pw;
- d. Disabled or long-term sick from £20 to £30pw.

The Taunton Deane Consultation Response was 86% in favour; the Somerset Response (excluding Taunton Deane) was 77% in favour.

There was nothing arising from the consultation response which demonstrated overwhelming opposition to any particular element of the proposed scheme or to the scheme itself although some respondents have highlighted that the proposals are likely to have an appreciable adverse impact on their particular household finances.

A copy of the full, proposed Council Tax Support Scheme together with a copy of the Equality Impact Assessment that had been undertaken has been circulated to all Members of the Council to increase understanding of the issues prior to a decision being taken by Full Council.

It is **recommended** that subject to the Government making the necessary regulations:-

- (a) The scheme for providing Council Tax support for working age households on low incomes from 1 April 2013, as set out in the report to the Executive be adopted; and
- (b) The Discretionary Housing Payment and Council Tax Assistance Policy to enable additional short-term assistance to be given in respect of Council Tax for those in hardship from 1 April 2013 be also adopted.

(b) Council Tax Charges – Empty Properties and Second Homes

Consideration was given by the Executive at its last meeting to the Government's proposal to allow Councils to amend (within limits) the Council Tax charges which would apply from 1 April 2013 in respect of:-

- second homes;
- homes undergoing, or requiring, structural work;
- properties empty for six months or less; and
- properties that had been empty for more than two years.

Decreasing the reductions would increase the Tax collectable for both this Council and the precepting authorities and could act as a stimulus for bringing empty properties back into occupation.

Details of the proposed changes are summarised below:-'

(i) **Class 'A' exemption** (Properties undergoing or requiring major repair works or structural alterations) – Currently properties which are unoccupied and unfurnished that require, or are undergoing, major repair works or structural alterations to render them habitable are exempt for up to 12 months, or as long as it continues to be undergoing, or in need of, major repair.

During 2011/2012 the Council awarded £106,000 in Class A exemptions in respect of 204 properties. It is proposed to abolish the Class A exemption. Instead, billing authorities would be given the discretion to award a discount of between 0% and 100% for up to 12 months.

(ii) **Long term empty properties** (Unoccupied and unfurnished properties, empty for six months or more) - The Council allows the minimum statutory discount (10%) for properties which have been continuously unoccupied and unfurnished for six months or more.

During 2011/2012, £5,400 discount was awarded in respect of 117 long term empty properties where the property was empty for between six and 24 months. 33 properties which have been empty for more than two years were awarded discount amounting to £1,600.

Under the new regulations, billing authorities would be given the discretion to charge up to 100% Council Tax once a property has been unoccupied and unfurnished for six months.

Once a property had been continuously unoccupied and unfurnished for two years or more Councils would be able to charge a premium of up to 50%, meaning that such properties would incur a charge of up to 150%.

These new flexibilities are likely to encourage the owners of properties, which had been left unoccupied for more than six months, to bring the properties back into use.

(iii) **Class 'C' exemption** (Unoccupied and unfurnished properties, empty for less than six months) – This exemption is mainly granted for the following three reasons:-

- The property is being sold and the owner has moved out;
- The property has been purchased and the owner has not yet moved in;
and
- The property is empty between tenancies.

During 2011/2012 the Council awarded £897,000 in Class C exemptions in respect of 5,377 short term empty properties.

It is proposed to abolish this exemption. Instead billing authorities will be given the discretion to award a discount between 0% and 100% for all, or part, of this six month period.

In looking at a reasonable treatment of empty domestic properties in the future, the arrangements which were currently in place for business properties were taken into account by the Executive. Generally, no charge was made for the first three months that a property is empty. Thereafter a 100% charge is made. It is considered that there is merit in treating the two types of property in the same way.

Based upon 2011/2012 figures it is estimated this change could generate around £180,000 additional income, of which Taunton Deane's share would be

approximately £18,000.

(iv) **Second Homes** (Properties which were furnished but in which no person had their sole or main residence) - The Council already allowed the minimum statutory exemption (10%) for second homes.

In 2011/2012 this affected 511 properties in Taunton Deane and cost £49,660. Under the Government proposals billing authorities would be given the discretion to charge up to 100% Council Tax on second homes.

Based upon 2011/2012 figures this change could generate £49,000 additional income, of which the Council's share would be £4,900.

In the circumstances, it is **recommended** that subject to the Government making the necessary regulations, the following changes to Council Tax charges be introduced from 1 April 2013:-

- (i) To allow a discount of 100% for a maximum of 12 months, in respect of properties which would have qualified for a Class A exemption, had that exemption continued;
- (ii) To allow a 100% discount, but limited to a maximum period of three months, in respect of properties which would otherwise have qualified for a Class C exemption, had that exemption continued;
- (iii) To remove the 10% discount on second homes; and
- (iv) To impose a premium levy of an additional 50% of Council Tax due on properties that had been empty and unfurnished for more than two years.

(c) Revenues and Benefits Service Feasibility Service

The Executive has recently considered the feasibility of bringing the Revenues and Benefits service back in-house in response to the forthcoming changes which are likely through the Government's proposals for Welfare Reform and the localisation of Business Rates.

The Government is currently implementing significant changes for Benefits and Local Taxation which include:-

- introducing a new local Council Tax Support Scheme from April 2013 (to replace Council Tax Benefit);
- no longer considering new Housing Benefit claims from working age people. Such claims would be taken on by the Department of Work and Pensions under Universal Credit;
- from early 2014 the phased migration of existing Housing Benefit claims from working age people;
- from Autumn 2014 the phased take on of housing support under Pension Credit for those of pensionable age;

- greater local flexibility for Council Tax discounts and exemptions; and
- partial localisation of Business Rates.

These changes will take place over the next four years during which it is anticipated there will be significant changes in workload for the Revenues and Benefits service coupled with an overall cut in the Government grant that is received to administer benefits.

It is clear these legislative changes will require the Council to make significant changes to the Revenues and Benefits service and consequently to the contractual arrangements that exist with Southwest One for providing these services.

Three key objectives for the Council as to how the legislative changes in the Revenues and Benefits service should be carried out have been identified. These are:-

- i) To minimise the cost to the Authority and the impact on customers of implementing the changes to the Benefits and Local Taxation Regulations;
- ii) To maximise the Council's flexibility to manage the Revenues and Benefits service resources through the period of significant change; and
- iii) Look to reduce the costs to the Council of delivering the Revenues and Benefits service.

There are two broad options for accommodating these changes within the contract with Southwest One which have been tested against these objectives. These are:-

Option 1 - Changing the pricing model within the contract to provide a pricing structure that could keep pace with a rapidly changing environment and varying workloads, while ensuring the Council maintains service delivery; or

Option 2 - Return the Revenues and Benefits service to in-house service provision through the service termination provisions built into the contract.

Both options have been discussed with Southwest One and it has been agreed that Option 2 would be the most effective solution to allow Taunton Deane to meet the objectives outlined above.

As a result, a detailed study into the feasibility of bringing the service back in-house has been undertaken which has concluded that it would be feasible to:-

- make this change from a financial perspective and to do so will not be prejudicial to the Council's overall budget position; and
- terminate the Revenues and Benefits service within the terms of the contract and to amend the contract to reflect this change.

There are currently 39 Taunton Deane staff seconded to the Revenues and Benefits service within Southwest One. If it is decided to terminate the service, these staff will

de-second in accordance with the terms of the Staffing Agreement. They will lose their right to 'assured employment' at the point that their secondments ends.

In addition Southwest One currently employs nine 'direct-hire' staff within Revenues and Benefits. The TUPE Regulations 2006 will apply to direct-hire staff in the service at the point of transfer.

Any termination of the service will be a significant change for staff and a formal consultation exercise has therefore been conducted with the potentially affected staff and the union UNISON and their views were considered by the Executive.

If the decision to proceed is taken, the next steps will be:-

- to finalise and agree the contract and financial changes with Southwest One; and
- to draft and jointly implement with Southwest One an exit plan which would include a detailed change and transition plan to support staff through the transfer process.

A provisional high level timetable for exit has been produced aimed at bringing the service back in-house from 1 April 2013.

This issue was considered by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 26 November 2012 when the findings of the feasibility study were supported.

It is **recommended** that:-

- (i) The termination of the Revenues and Benefits element of the Southwest One contract be approved in principle; and
- (ii) Authority be delegated to the Group Leaders, Chief Executive, Section 151 Officer, the Solicitor to the Council and the Corporate and Client Services Manager to decide when to issue the formal termination notice for the Revenues and Benefits service once agreement had been reached with Southwest One regarding the financial and contractual changes required to the contract.

(v) Councillor Mrs Catherine Herbert

Refurbishment of Station Road Pool and Sport England Bid

The proposal for the refurbishment of the Station Road Pool in Taunton has previously been presented to Members as part of the overall Pools Provision Project.

The findings of the Swimming Task and Finish Review along with the further feasibility work of the Pools Provision Project has identified that the required Capital investment needed to ensure that Station Road Pool continues to remain attractive to users is in the order of £1,200,000

It has also been identified that to ensure the delivery of sufficient swimming provision and preserve the existing water space already available will requires the combination of the delivery of a new pool and the refurbishment of Station Road Pool.

Proposals for funding the capital investment required for Station Road Pool could come from several sources including:-

- The ring fenced Leisure Maintenance Reserve;
- External Funding;
- Borrowing;
- The Capital Receipt from the sale of the St James Street Pool site; and
- The Community Infrastructure Levy

As well as these possible sources, an opportunity for the Council to apply to the Sport England Improvement Fund for funding of up to £500,000 specifically for improvements to swimming pool changing rooms, became available earlier in the year.

A two stage application was made to Sport England during September 2012 and at the end of October 2012 the Council was informed that it had been selected for the final application stage.

The final stage bid is driven by a short timescale set by Sport England as follows:-

- Submission of the final and third stage application By 18 January 2013;
- Results of our application 31 March 2013;
- Work required to begin November 2013;
- Works to be completed April 2014.

In order to ensure the Council does not miss out on this funding opportunity, the Station Road Pool refurbishment has been separated from the overall Pools Provision to gain Member support that will enable us to meet the above timescale.

One of the key criteria to satisfy eligibility to receive the funding is a confirmed commitment from the Council to provide funding to meet the remainder of the overall £1,200,000 refurbishment project.

If the bid is successful, Sport England has requested a charge be put on the Council's title of the Station Road Pool for a period of 21 years. A restriction could be put onto the land and will be linked to a funding agreement which will contain conditions of any disposal.

The total refurbishment and modernisation programme for the swimming pool includes the changing rooms, reception area, upgrade of pool plant and improvements to the pool hall area.

If successful, the Sport England Funding will be dedicated to improving the changing rooms, changing room plant and the reception area.

The £700,000 to be provided by the Council will fund the upgrade of pool plant equipment, refurbishment of the pool hall and pool disinfectant system.

The Section 151 Officer has recommended that the Council's funding should be derived from unallocated capital receipts.

This is considered to be a unique opportunity for the Council to obtain significant funding tailor made for the pressing maintenance issues facing Station Road Pool. It will enhance the customer facing experience by providing facilities that match modern day expectations and support the Councils desire to provide adequate swimming facilities meeting the needs of the Community and supporting increasing participation in healthy activity.

The Corporate Scrutiny Committee considered this issue at its meeting on 29 November 2012 and fully supported the provision of funding by Taunton Deane to fulfil the criteria set by Sport England.

As Members will have seen from the edition of the Weekly Bulletin issued on 6 December 2012, I am also supporting the allocation of funding and therefore **recommend** that:-

- (1) The Council's bid for Sport England Improvement funding of up to £500,000 towards the Station Road Swimming Pool Refurbishment Project be supported; and
- (2) The proposed contribution of £770,000 from Taunton Deane's unallocated capital receipts be also supported.

(vi) Councillor Mark Edwards

Orchard Multi-Storey Car Park, Taunton – Structural Survey and Lifts

The Executive has recently considered the findings and recommendations of specialist investigations into the condition of the Orchard Multi-Storey Car Park structure and its integral lifts.

Although the structure has performed well over the past 40 years and is not in danger of failing, there are repairs and protective measures which need to be carried out to prevent further deterioration and to provide a parking environment that is both safe and attractive to motorists. The works fell into three categories:-

Capital	
Structural repair work required within 12 months	£27,500
Preventative maintenance work required within five years (to give a life beyond 10 years)	£705,000
Revenue	
Minor repairs and redecorations	£25,000

The three passenger lifts within the car park were of a similar age and breakdowns were not an irregular occurrence, leading to public frustration and complaint. The lift maintenance contractor has estimated that it is likely to cost an additional £180,000 to fully refurbish them.

The Capital Estimate provision for works to the Orchard Multi-Storey Car Park is currently £245,000.

Following detailed discussion the Executive agreed that the current available Capital finance should be used on replacing all three lifts as a matter of priority.

The Executive also considered that the Capital resources amounting to £164,000 which remained unallocated after the Budget Setting Full Council meeting in February 2012 should now be allocated towards the other works needed at the Orchard Multi-Storey Car Park.

The Executive also agreed that the shortfall of funding required to complete all the works to the car park should be accumulated from Revenue Contributions to Capital Outlay over the next four years.

In the circumstances, it is **recommended** that the identified structural and preventative maintenance works to the Orchard Multi-Storey Car Park be included in the future Capital Programme – funded by the £164,000 of unallocated Capital resources and a four years Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay (RCCO) of £125,750 (to be agreed as part of the Budget Setting for the 2013/2014 Financial Year).

Council Meeting – 11 December 2012

Report of Councillor John Williams – Leader of the Council

1. Flooding

- 1.1 We have just experienced rainfall of almost unprecedented intensity and my sincerest sympathies on behalf of the Council go out to all the homes and businesses that have been affected. Some have had multiple floods this year which must be absolutely soul destroying as it is so difficult to control the force of nature once released. Let us hope that we do not see a continuation of what can only be regarded as exceptional conditions and those affected can start the difficult restoration process back to normality.
- 1.2 I must repeat my thanks to all our staff and the emergency services for the dedication and commitment they have shown, the long hours worked and the willingness to go that “extra mile” in the support of our community. Deane DLO and the administration team supporting them has to come in for special mention as they did a fantastic job ending up filling in excess of 9,000 sand bags and the majority of these were distributed to householders in desperate need.
- 1.3 Can I also extend thanks to the unsung support of officers throughout the Council that kept up a constant liaison with the emergency services, the Environment Agency and all the housing and other officers, who thankfully were not called upon, but were ready and waiting with contingency plans for emergency evacuation and establishment of rest homes should a major event have occurred. All of this in addition to their “day job” is dealt with in their stride as part of our duties to assist in the event of a major emergency occurring.
- 1.4 One thing we can all be thankful for is that Taunton’s Flood Defences held. I am pleased to report that despite uninformed comments of some and reports in the media, the River Tone did not burst its banks. Taunton’s flood defences dating from the last great flood in the 1960’s and the addition of further flood alleviation schemes since then of which some notable ones are Longrun Meadow, Norton Fitzwarren and Hillfarrance, worked as they should and very large numbers of properties were protected.
- 1.5 We must however spare a thought for the very severe problems experienced in some locations and particularly on the levels, both homes and agriculture. It does flood in normal circumstances but on this occasion it was so rapid and exceptional.

- 1.6 I again offer my sincere thanks to everybody involved but we now have to ensure that we proceed with all possible speed to agree and secure a major flood alleviation scheme that will add further protection to the River Tone corridor and hopefully will help alleviate the worst excesses downstream of Taunton. This has to be a top priority for the Council.

2. Budget Setting

- 2.1 The budget setting process has commenced and through various iterations the gap has been reduced from over £1,000,000 to around £500,000.
- 2.2 In arriving at this we are working on assumed Revenue Support Grants as the Government will not be issuing provisional figures until around the 19 December 2012. One thing is certain it is only likely to be less than anticipated given the parlous state of the country's economy!
- 2.3 We are now in the third year of substantial cuts year on year totalling nearly 30% over the four years stated. The concern is that we may be subjected to yet more cuts in funding on top of those already planned. That will really pose some hard choices if it occurs.
- 2.4 The Executive's proposals have now been presented to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee and the usual confidential budget pack will be prepared for consideration by all Councillors over the Christmas period. This will be followed by officer presentations to Groups so all Members can ask questions and provide views.
- 2.5 We have to set a balanced budget so I would ask Members if they are concerned about some of the proposed reductions and wish to reinstate the budget for particular items, can you please consider where else you would find a budget cut acceptable by the equivalent amount. The Executive is happy to listen.
- 2.6 These are hard times with all streams of funding under serious pressure. We need to take action now to ensure our base budget is reduced. Short term fixes by using reserves or other one off sources only delay the inevitable and make it harder to deal with in the future.
- 2.7 Anybody that doubts me just take a look at our Medium Term Financial Plan, 2013/2014 showing a deficit of £500,000 rising to a deficit of £2,300,000 in 2016/2017 which does mean that we must start planning for the future now.
- 2.8 The Peer Review team were quite clear about this, that we must start making the difficult decisions now as to what action we will be taking to address this. Work is presently underway to set out proposals for the way forward and will be brought to Members for consideration when ready.

3. Project Taunton

- 3.1 With the pending sale of the Orchard Centre we have to re-think our strategy for the town centre as to how we can make provision for more retail space that can be delivered. We have just commissioned a refresh of our 2010 Retail and Leisure Study in support of our statutory plan making process and it will be interesting to see what changes are forecast since the study in 2010.
- 3.2 At a meeting with our public and private sector partners it was quite clear that Taunton has reached a cross roads with the possible removal of the proposed Orchard Centre development and we have to act or see our town centre lose trade. Some difficult decisions will be brought to Members and some may involve the loss or changes of car parking which we all know is a sensitive subject.
- 3.3 The opening of Castle Green went extremely well, the Earl of Wessex was warmly received by a large crowd and the official opening of the Somerset Museum and Castle Green was truly an auspicious occasion. We have enhanced and upgraded the historic heart of Taunton and returned it to a wonderful public open space to host all manner of events for the community.
- 3.4 I am also pleased to report that the Highways Authority have now agreed a scheme to relocate the bus stops from Castle Way to Corporation Street which will, if the Traffic Regulation Order about to be advertised is accepted, allow closure of Castle Street and completion of the Castle Green works. Because of weather and archaeological survey work there has been some overrun of costs and this is before Members tonight to allocate further funds from existing budgets which I hope Members will be able to support.
- 3.5 Somerset County Council is still awaiting the decision of the Secretary of State on the Compulsory Purchase Order process but hope this will be imminent to allow commencement early in the New Year. They have been pressing for early resolution and we have now requested our MP to take the case up with The Minister as the new road is obviously critical to opening up the majority of the Firepool site.

4. A303 /A358/A30 Somerset County Council Initiative

- 4.1 The major works that are proposed to this corridor are vital to the South-West region as a whole and particularly the A358 link to Junction 25 and of course the upgrading of Junction 25 to take the increased capacity from our development plans.
- 4.2 We have been providing economic data which the County Council is now incorporating into an Economic Impact Study to demonstrate to Government and the Local Enterprise Partnership how a corridor

improvement programme of the routes studied would provide a return on investment through economic growth.

- 4.3 For Taunton Deane, Junction 25 is of critical importance and this is presently under discussion with the Highways Agency (HA) and County Council to see what improvements can be made under a "Pinch Points" funding stream the HA have. If funding can be secured it would be an eminently sensible use of the available scarce resources at present.

5. Infrastructure Costs and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

- 5.1 The whole programme of developing the CIL policy has been both informative in terms of projecting forward what is required and alarming in respect of the huge sums of money required to deliver the infrastructure necessary for growth. As Members will be aware we have already consulted widely on our proposals and as a result of responses further work has to be carried out to substantiate some of the previous conclusions reached.
- 5.2 This work will be carried out and the results will be submitted to the Examiner for Public Scrutiny in February or March next year. It is unlikely that we will achieve the intended implementation date of April 2013 but it is hoped to achieve this by July 2013 or soon after. The delay is disappointing but better we take time and get it right following the representations received than get it wrong and perhaps discourage development.

6. Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)

- 6.1 This is a key organisation for Taunton Deane because of our planned growth programme they are keen to support us and try and help remove any obstructions to growth. This is to be welcomed and we must do all possible to work with the LEP and draw in what we all know are scarce funds to support development in Taunton Deane.
- 6.2 From our discussions to date the LEP's remit is to focus on economic growth and they are looking for proposals that provide the "biggest bang for their buck". Taunton Deane already has an ambitious growth programme which does need help particularly with flood prevention and major roads and we now need to make the case to warrant assistance. I welcome their willingness to engage.

Finally I attended the Southwest One's Annual Team Awards Event (Celebration of Achievement) on 8 November 2012.

Congratulations to the various teams at Southwest One that were presented with Achievement Awards at a Celebration of Achievement 2012 during November. It was great to see the Customer Contact Centre and the Benefits

Team both receiving national recognition for outstanding service - Customer Contact by being awarded the prestigious Customer Contact Association Global Standard Certification, and the Benefits Service receiving the Bronze Award in the Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation (IRRV) 'Team of the Year' category. Well done to both of these teams. Southwest One awards were also presented to a number of other teams providing services to Taunton Deane, including the HR Payroll Team, Technology Services Teams, and the Strategic Procurement Service for supplying new fuel efficient, lower CO2 hybrid vans to Deane DLO.

Councillor John Williams
Leader of the Council

Council Meeting – 11 December 2012

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

The Economic Development Manager has recently met with several businesses who wish to relocate within and set up in Taunton Deane. As ever in these times it is challenging to match the right location and the affordable budget. However it is good to see that there are companies seeking to expand and that they are choosing Taunton Deane.

Recruitment of two new members of the Economic Development Team is reaching a conclusion, which will include the appointment of an apprentice and of a part time Lead Officer. Both interviews have been held and two people were identified who could bring our team up to full strength.

1. Launch of Taunton Means Business

- 1.1 The site was launched in November as the new inward investment web site for Taunton Deane. In the New Year we will carry out a national marketing and awareness raising campaign to encourage visitors to the site. For the moment we have circulated the new site locally amongst businesses and Councillors who have been invited to offer their views on its design and content - www.tauntonmeansbusiness.co.uk.
- 1.2 The site is accompanied by new literature '10 Reasons to Choose TD for your business relocation'. There has only been a small print run with the intention that each issue can be tailored for the specific businesses that we are dealing with at the time. There is also a new fulfillment protocol for the team to improve how the Council deals with inward investment enquiries.

2. Launch of Taunton Events website (www.tauntonevents.co.uk)

- 2.1 Designed in partnership with ADK Design on East Reach, the Taunton Events website provides details of all forthcoming events in the Taunton area. It is an excellent asset to promote Taunton's cultural offerings.
- 2.2 The Taunton Events Group is Chaired by Councillor Mark Edwards, and coordinates the planning of all proposed major cultural events in the town centre. The group is currently planning a programme of events in 2013.
- 2.3 Members views on the two new sites listed above would be appreciated.

3. Taunton Local Enterprise and Innovation Area

- 3.1 The Council has submitted a proposal to the Heart of the South-West Local Enterprise Partnership for Taunton to become a Local Enterprise and Innovation Area. The status would raise awareness of what Taunton has achieved recently, and highlights the infrastructure investment that it needs to move forward.
- 3.2 The submission aims to raise Taunton's profile and brings us closer to our goal of becoming a leading commercial and enterprise centre in the South-West. The document addresses the issues of flooding, employment land, and business support. Copies of the document are available from the Economic Development Team.

4. Business Start up Grants and Rural Retailer Grants

- 4.1 Ten new businesses and rural retailers have been supported so far this year, the most recent being Bishop's Hull Post Office and Stores which has been supported by an award of £2,000 from the Council. The shop was due to open its doors again on Sunday, 2 December 2012.

5. Job Clubs

- 5.1 Since April the three Job Clubs in Halcon, Priorswood and Wellington have supported 32 people directly into employment. Over the period to the end of October another 86 people have been assisted into work experience, voluntary work, or Job Centre Plus learning.

6. Taunton Youth and Community Centre

- 6.1 Tenders for the purchase of this site should have been received and assessed by 5 December 2012. There has been good interest in the site. I hope to be able to update Members.

7. Recent Events

- 7.1 **Project Taunton Open Day** on Tuesday 4 October 2012 at The Brewhouse Theatre was well attended by the public, local businesses and partner organisations. An interesting day was had by all.
- 7.2 **Dare to Dream**, a business support event was also held on 4 October, at Somerset College. The event was supported and sponsored by the Economic Development Team. The event targeted pre-start up businesses, offering them advice and guidance on how to get on the road of starting a business. During the event the team assisted circa 20 prospective new businesses.
- 7.3 **Royal Visit** to the Museum of Somerset and Castle Green. The visit by HRH Earl of Wessex on 15 October 2012 marked the official

opening of the Museum and was an opportunity to showcase the newly refurbished Castle Green.

- 7.4 **Christmas Fair** followed by **Make Taunton Sparkle** was held on Sunday, 18 November 2012. A very successful day attracted many thousands of visitors to the town centre. Thanks and congratulations are due to Councillor Kelly Durdan for her vision and perseverance in raising funds and the profile of the event. Thanks should also be accorded to the Taunton Town Centre Company for organizing an excellent Christmas Fair with around 120 community and local business stalls, and also for the assistance given to Councillor Durdan ensuring that Health and Safety requirements were met. The lights switch on event was a fitting end to a successful day and a lasting benefit to the Town for the Christmas period.
- 7.5 **Events on Castle Green** will take place each weekend to celebrate its opening, until Christmas. The events will include a traditional Christmas Fair, Carol Concert and Christmas Family Fun Day. This programme of events is funded by the Economic Development section, and delivered by the Taunton Town Centre Company.

8. Taunton Tourist Information, Ticket and Travel Centre (TIC) update

8.1 Visitor numbers and spend

Whilst the office has experienced a slight decline over the last couple of months, income levels have been maintained. The office has been boosted by the presence of the pop-up Cards for Good Causes multi-charity Christmas Card Shop (which remains open until 22 December) and various National Express promotions which have encouraged customer use of agents rather than booking online.

8.2 Tourism Update

The trade-led Somerset Tourism Association (STA) have just held their annual conference where the new 'Somerset Jewel of the South-West' brochure was launched (copies will be available from the TIC). The STA have exciting plans for the season ahead and the TIC team continue to work with them to investigate ways their activities can benefit our local businesses and raise the profile of our area.

A revised edition of the Welcome to Taunton leaflet is planned to be produced in early 2013.

8.3 New activities planned

Meetings have been held with the Museum of Somerset over a Tourism Literature Fair and Business Forum planned for Spring 2013, more details will follow when plans are finalised.

The TIC team also continue to work closely with the Economic Development Unit, Licensing Section, Project Taunton, Somerset Tourism Association, Taunton Town Centre Company and other organisations.

Councillor Norman Cavill

Council Meeting – 11 December 2012

Report of Councillor Ken Hayward – Environmental Services

1. Environmental Health

- 1.1 As reported in the Weekly Bulletin on 2 November 2012, the Environmental Health Team successfully prosecuted at Taunton Magistrates Court against Mr Adnan Hussain of the Bengal Lounge restaurant in Wellington. The Magistrates awarded full costs to Taunton Deane Borough Council.
- 1.2 Mr Hussain pleaded guilty to all six offences, relating to contraventions of the Food Hygiene (England) Regulations. The offences consisted of failing to keep the premises clean; failing to ensure that items which food comes in to contact with were effectively cleaned; and failing to have food safety programmes and procedures implemented and maintained at the premises.
- 1.3 A huge amount of work has gone into this and I share Scott Weetch's thanks to Jo Toogood and Maria Casey in particular for bringing a successful prosecution, which the bench commended. In awarding full costs, the bench recognised the importance of the Local Authority being able to carry out this work to safeguard the public.
- 1.4 The Magistrates made it clear from the award of costs that our work in safeguarding the public is highly valued. We work closely with businesses to provide advice and guidance but, as this case shows, we will not hesitate to take action if advice is ignored. Our duty is to protect the public.
- 1.5 Rats! We have had complaints from members of the public and businesses about rodents being spotted along the River Tone. I would like to assure Members that we do have baiting stations in some of these areas. However I ask that, should the opportunity arise, Members spread the message urging the public to play their part by not discarding unwanted food or feeding wild birds or other animals to excess – as they are likely to be feeding the rats as well!
- 1.6 I am sure Members will all join me in saying a huge "Thank You!" to the Ian Carter and the Licensing Team for the massive effort they put into helping to make the switching on of the Christmas lights on 18 November 2012 such a resounding success. WELL DONE to everyone!

2. Climate Change / Carbon Management

- 2.1 A series of one monthly articles in the Deane Dispatch section of the Somerset County Gazette was started in October 2012. The articles are short and punchy 'good news' articles covering subjects like carbon reduction, energy efficiency, renewables, food, etc. The articles come from local

community groups and the Council as an opportunity to showcase what they do. Residents get informed and learn how they can get involved in the agenda. Articles so far were contributed by Improve Your Resource Efficiency (IYRE), Transition Wellington and Taunton; and Deane Energy Savers. The January edition will be covered by Brendon Energy.

- 2.2 A data screen has been installed in the staircase of Taunton Pool for giving real-time information on how much energy is generated by the solar PV array on the roof and how much carbon is saved as a result of this to the public. The screen will be accompanied by a display board with additional information about the project. A press article will be released about the screen shortly. The costs of the cable run for transferring the generation data from the inverters to the screen were shared by Taunton Deane and Tone.
- 2.3 The solar PV array on Taunton Pool has performed well so far. It has generated 14,600 kWh of electricity in the 154 days since its commission. This equates to 95kWh per day and a total income to TDBC of £3,200 so far.
- 2.4 Latest data published by the Department of Energy and Climate Change in August 2012 showed a 9% reduction in carbon emissions per head of population in Taunton Deane from 2005 to 2010. At 5.9 tonnes per head, I am pleased to report that Taunton Deane is 8% better than the South-West average and 11% better than the UK average.
- 2.5 Production progress of Carbon Management and Energy Resilience Strategy:-
 - Directory completed;
 - Creation of Website in progress;
 - Strategy document in advanced draft stage
- 2.6 Forthcoming activities:-
 - Monitoring Report on Changes in Taunton Deane / Tone Leisure's CO₂ emissions for Q1+2 to be published in January / February 2013.
 - Next Carbon Management Steering Group meeting, 10 January 2013.
 - Stakeholder workshop to present nearly finished Carbon Management and Energy Resilience Strategy planned for Mid February 2013.

3. Waste Management

- 3.1 The Somerset Waste Partnership held an informal meeting on 20 November 2012 to discuss budget options for the coming year in respect of both collection and disposal. The County Council has set a challenging savings target, but I am assured that we should be able to meet that target from savings without affecting service delivery.
- 3.2 I am pleased to report that, despite extremely challenging conditions, only 36 properties in Taunton Deane were missed on the waste collection rounds through the recent flooding. A credit to everyone – particularly the May

Gurney crews on the road. Members of the Partnership, including myself, worked to produce severe weather procedures after the heavy snows we experienced a couple of winters ago. Those procedures were extensively tested.

4. Deane DLO

- 4.1 Continuing with the recent floods. Deane DLO experienced an unprecedented number of requests for sandbags, with over 10,000 being deployed, using approximately 90,000kg of sand. In addition to sandbags, silicone bags were also delivered to many properties, including my own and my neighbours.
- 4.2 The service was well supported by the DLO managers, supervisors, and employees most of which provided their support from the beginning.
- 4.3 Response to calls for help was swift, and teams are to be credited for this, and their cheery disposition in the persistent rain, as they worked long into the nights.
- 4.4 The DLO were also assisted by a church co-ordinated voluntary team of around 12 who helped by filling sandbags over several hours.
- 4.5 Members will all be aware that the Local Government Association is carrying an article on its website outlining the achievements of the DLO Transformation Project and citing them as national notable practice. Thus giving us, Taunton Deane Borough Council, once more, well-deserved national recognition.

We can be proud of our Local Authority, and on that truly positive note, I end by joining my colleagues on the Executive in wishing everyone a restful and reinvigorating Christmas break.

Councillor Ken Hayward

Council Meeting – 11 December 2012

Report of Councillor Mrs Catherine Herbert – Sports, Parks and Leisure

1. Parks

- 1.1 Vivary Park has again been underwater and has been closed for some days to protect it from any further damage on such wet ground. Some of the footpath was lifted and will need repair. We also had to make the difficult decision to cancel the Santa Run on Saturday, 2 December 2012, but assisted the organisers in moving the event to Queens College.
- 1.2 I would like to thank all the staff from the Parks Department who assisted with the emergency support work during the recent bad weather. Our Deane DLO staff worked tirelessly to fill and deliver thousands of sandbags to householders in need and their efforts were really appreciated by our community.

2. Community Leisure and Play

- 2.1 I would like to welcome Alison North into the new post of Community Leisure Manager. She brings with her a wealth of experience in working across arms of the Council and dealing with partners, which will be really helpful as she shapes and develops the Community Leisure Team for the future.
- 2.2 Wellington Recreation Ground is now open and the proud host of a great piece of sports play equipment. The tenders for the Wellington Pavilion works have been received and the work will start on site very soon.
- 2.3 Work on the application to Sport England for funds to assist with the refurbishment of Station Road Pool, Taunton is continuing and will be submitted to Sport England in mid-January.
- 2.4 The work on the possible Pool at Blackbrook is also progressing well.

3. Tone Leisure (Taunton Deane) Limited Activities

Community, Sports and Health Development

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

Health Development

- 3.2 Hearts and Soles Nordic Walking

- 3.2.1 Tone's Nordic Walking programme was launched on 31 October 2012, with the first free taster session for people to try it out. A total of 28 people have taken part in this new outdoor activity so far, which has included taster sessions and courses, and they are now being encouraged to Nordic Walk regularly by joining the Adventure Walks which start on 27 November.
- 3.2.2 The project, Hearts and Soles Nordic Walking has been part funded by the British Heart Foundation and will help older adults in Taunton Deane, particularly heart patients and their family members, to lead an active lifestyle.
- 3.3 Back on the Bike - Cycling Initiative for Older Adults
 - 3.3.1 Five women took part in the Back on the Bike cycling course in Taunton during October, which Tone provided in partnership with DC Cycleworks and NHS Somerset. The aim was to help older adults start cycling again by giving them skills and confidence to ride their bike.
 - 3.3.2 The course consisted of four sessions of group instruction held in the community on weekend mornings in October. The participants received an exclusive pack containing cycle accessories, a retail voucher and local information to help them continue cycling beyond the course.
- 3.4 Volunteering Strategy
 - 3.4.1 Tone Leisure now has over 100 volunteers working across Somerset and Devon. Since launching the Volunteering Strategy in May 2012 Tone has recruited approximately 10 new volunteers in Taunton Deane in various posts such as Health Walk Leaders, Flexercise Leaders, and Promotional Assistants. A celebration event for all Tone volunteers will be held early in 2013.

Facility News

- 3.5 Wellington Sports Centre
 - 3.5.1 The Upper Hall floor is being replaced which has prompted some great positive feedback from the regular members. A temporary programme will be in place for three weeks, from 3-21 December 2012, while the work is being carried out. Also during this period the Studio will be repainted and carpet laid in the lobby entrance.
 - 3.5.2 The Z3 Lottery funded project is now about to finish its third year of the project. A full report is about to be submitted measuring the outcomes for the third year. Tone have committed a further two years' funding on this project which will see a great range of programming, to include teenage parties, family and group sessions and opening the door to many more schools and private bookings.
 - 3.5.3 Swimskool swimming lesson enrolment hit an all time high last month of 660 members. The key challenge is to maintain these numbers during December and build on this next year. The summer Olympics has had a positive effect on this sport.

3.6 Taunton Tennis Centre

3.6.1 Following the success of Lucy Shuker winning a Bronze medal in the Wheelchair Tennis Doubles at the Paralympics this summer, Tone has seen an increase in the numbers attending the regular Sunday afternoon wheelchair Pay and Play session.

3.6.2 Lucy is a member of the FANS (Free Access for National Sportspeople) scheme and therefore receives a free membership to use the indoor courts at Taunton Tennis Club and the gym for her off court training.

3.6.3 In addition, Tone has also seen an increase in participation following the 'summer of sport' in the tennis courses across Taunton Deane, reaching a record high of nearly 400 children playing tennis once a week in a Tone coaching programme.

3.7 Wellsprings Leisure Centre

3.7.1 The successful opening of the GX Revolution Studio took place in October. There are now 17 Studio Cycling classes available throughout the week for customers to book into.

3.7.2 The majority of Tone's Instructors have now completed their Level 2 Vibe Cycling course following an invigorating six hour workshop with a master trainer.

3.7.3 Following the opening of the Wyvern Day Nursery in June, Wellsprings is now joining with Wyvern and is offering a crèche facility to the customers, which will start in January 2013.

3.8 High Ropes

3.8.1 The school summer holidays produced more clients than Tone first anticipated and this continued on from the submission of the last report. From 25-31 August the centre saw 436 visits.

3.8.2 The centre has seen 2,745 visits since 25 August and 6,795 since opening in June.

3.8.3 Good relationships have been built with Somerset College, King's College and Taunton School and Tone continues to build relationships with other schools and colleges.

3.8.4 During October half-term Tone ran three days of adventure day camps for 24 young people. The day started at 8.30 am and finished at 5.30 pm, allowing working parents to drop off and collect outside of working hours. All 24 places sold out on all three days and parents are already talking about booking their children onto the next ones in the Easter break 2013.

Best wishes for the festive season to you and your families.

Councillor Catherine Herbert.

Council Meeting – 11 December 2012

Report of Councillor Mrs Jean Adkins – Housing Services

1. Affordable Housing Target

- 1.1 There are 70 completions to the end of October against a target of 200. Most of the 140 homes in the pipeline are due to complete in Quarter 4, so there is a danger of slippage.
- 1.2 However, the Government's Firstbuy Scheme is selling well with 22 completions reported so far, so we are reasonably confident that any shortfall will be made up and that the target is still achievable.

2. Right to Buy Sales

- 4.1 The improved Right to Buy scheme attracted a large number of enquiries with 20 sales completed to date.
- 4.2 The original flurry of interest has abated although there were 26 applications still with the Legal Department so we will exceed the budgeted number of sales this year.
- 4.3 The extra receipts can be used for building more Council Houses or put to enabling schemes for affordable housing, so these will be kept in a separate reserve.

3. Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership

- 3.1 SWeLT – (Somerset West Landlord and Tenant Services) - This new service was launched at the Landlords' Forum held at Bridgwater Albion Rugby Club on 18 October 2012.
- 3.2 I attended the Landlords' Forum which was very successful and had a higher attendance than last year. Revenues and Benefits were amongst those on hand to offer advice.
- 3.3 Next year's Forum will be held in Taunton.

4. Estates Management – Anti-social Behaviour

- 4.1 Working in co-operation with the Police, a Crack-house Closure Order was recently obtained on a flat in School Road, Monkton Heathfield. A letter has been sent to local residents thanking them for their

assistance in this. As I write, the Gazette have published a report on this with a photo of Taunton Deane officers and the Police.

5. Self-Financing and HRA Business Plan

- 5.1 The refresh of the Business Plan has recently been through Scrutiny and approved by the Tenant Services Management Board.
- 5.2 Social Housing Development Fund : Four sites have been chosen as suitable for Phase 1 including one for Passiv Housing. Knightstone Housing Association have been appointed to project manage these for the Council.

6. Shelter

- 6.1 Regrettably, it has been announced that Shelter are closing their local office. Housing are looking for another provider for the Court Desk service which Shelter currently provide.

Councillor Mrs Jean Adkins

Council Meeting – 11 December 2012

Report of Councillor Mrs Vivienne Stock-Williams - Corporate Resources

1. Customer Contact Centre

Customer Service Excellence and Celebration of Achievements

1.1 Training

1.1.1 Customer Service Excellence training is now undertaken in October and November annually. A programme was devised and implemented last year to develop the professionalism and skills within the service to ensure quality of service for customers which enhanced their expectations. This programme is run in conjunction with the SWCCF (South West Contact Centre Forum) and we will be looking at the possibility of accreditation for this programme next year.

1.2 CCA Accreditation

1.2.1 At the beginning of November, the Head of Service, Claire Olohan-Bramley, and Business Development Manager, Rob Liddell, attended the Customer Contact Association (CCA) Convention in Glasgow. This gave them an opportunity to hear about new developments and thinking in the industry from Contact Centre industry experts.

1.2.2 It was interesting to hear that the SWOne Contact Centre is actually at the forefront of thinking and development in its own way and it is Claire's aim that it stays this way. The main purpose for attending the Convention was to pick up the CCA Accreditation plaque which was presented by Olympic gold medallist Greg Rutherford – an extremely proud moment for both Claire and Rob who had been working towards Accreditation for several years. If you go to the home page of www.southwestone.co.uk there is a very embarrassing photo!

1.3 SWOne Celebration of Achievements

1.3.1 The day following Convention was the SWOne Celebration of Achievements event, where the week was rounded off well for Customer Contact staff with two well deserved accolades - the Taunton Deane Face to Face Team received the Silver Award in the Unsung Heroes category, and the Training and Buddying Team received the Gold Award in the Working Together category.

1.3.2 I should like to congratulate all members of the Customer Contact Centre Team on receiving these well deserved and hard earned accolades of excellence.

1.4 Service Delivery

1.4.1 September was an excellent month for service delivery until the last three days of the month, when an unexpectedly high volume of calls into the service caused one of the KPIs not to be met. A meeting has taken place with the Client Team to discuss this issue and the matter is being taken forward internally.

1.5 Statistical Information – September and October 2012

1.5.1 During September and October a total of 8,310 enquiries were dealt with at The Deane House main, Housing and Planning receptions. 3,648 people visited Wellington Community Office - 2,048 to make enquiries including TIC and 1,600 to make a payment through the kiosk. Staff dealt with 594 letter and email enquiries during this time.

Service Line	Reporting Authority	KPI No	Performance Measure	Frequency of Reporting	2012/2013 Target	Sep-12	Oct-12
						QUART	QUARTE
Customer Contact	TDBC	1	% of calls answered in 20 secs	Monthly	80%	78%	82%
Customer Contact	TDBC	2	% of calls resolved at first point of contact	Monthly	92%	95%	95%
Customer Contact	TDBC	3	% of external customers rating the Customer Contact service as Very Good/Good	Annually (monitored quarterly)	75%	95%	
Customer Contact	TDBC	4	Abandoned call rate - less than 5%	Monthly	<5%	4.06%	2.95%

1.5.2 One customer has raised an issue about the service received and this is being investigated.

1.6 Service during the bad weather

1.6.1 As you can imagine, Customer Contact became the first port of call for many during the floods. The team across the whole service worked tirelessly to ensure that all calls were prioritised and dealt with efficiently and effectively. Some highlights are:-

- Initially 12 people across the service (both Somerset County Council and Taunton Deane Teams) were unable to make it in, but

three people turned up later on Wednesday. Others came in even though unexpected.

- All members of the service except three were working on the telephones (including the Head of Service – that was an experience!) at some point during the first few days, with people working extra hours and changing shifts to help cover.
- There were doughnut runs, sandwich runs and coffee runs in The Deane House as advisors offered to work through and not take proper breaks.
- A serious IT issue caused systems to start failing on Friday and meant the service had to go to manual processes, with resolution being finalised and tested at 9.45pm (to ensure we were able to run our Saturday SCC Service) – our thanks to IT for their support.
- EVERYONE worked to deliver the best possible service to the customers of Taunton Deane and the County Council across all service levels.

Taunton Deane Statistics during the flooding:-

Bad Weather - Forecast Vs Actual Offered

	Wednesday 21st		Thursday 22nd		Friday 23rd		Monday 26th	
	Forecast	Actual	Forecast	Actual	Forecast	Actual	Forecast	Actual
Volumes	546	659	528	649	558	647	722	657

1.6.2 I should like to record my thanks publicly to all members of the Contact Centre Team for their unstinting devotion to duty during the recent devastating floods. Their dedication is an exemplar of service before duty.

2. Corporate and Client Services

2.1 Client Team

2.1.1 The key focus for the Client Team at present is the feasibility study into the potential return of the Revenues and Benefits service. A detailed study has been completed over the past six weeks to understand the financial, contractual and staffing implications of bringing the Revenues and Benefits service back in-house. The team are also in the process of drafting a detailed exit plan, which will be required should Members decide to terminate the Revenues and Benefits element of the contract.

2.1.2 In addition, the Client Team continues to closely monitor the performance of Southwest One (SWO) services and specifically the delivery of key performance indicators (KPI's) and Service Development Plans (SDP's). Any issues with service delivery continue to be promptly identified and raised with SWOne. Work has started to agree the KPI's and SDP's for 2013/2014.

2.2 Procurement

- 2.2.1 The shortfall in delivered savings through the Procurement Transformation Project remains a significant concern and issue for the Authority. However, we are continuing to manage the position closely and ensuring that regular reports are being made to Members by the Strategic Procurement Service (SPS), the next report due to go to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee in January 2013.
- 2.2.2 Recent new savings initiatives include savings of £12,000 in relation to child care vouchers, £170,000 on the bathroom replacement project and £22,000 in respect of the bed and breakfast contract. The procurement service is currently working on the tendering for the renewal of our Treasury Management and Insurance contracts.

2.3 Retained Finance and Corporate Insurance

- 2.3.1 The Retained Finance Officer focuses on maintaining the day-to-day delivery of the retained finance functions and in providing support to the Section 151 Officer.
- 2.3.2 The Retained Finance Officer is also heavily involved in modelling the financial implications of the Revenues and Benefits Feasibility Study and in agreeing the required financial changes to the contract.
- 2.3.3 In addition, we are currently in the process of procuring new bank, insurance and treasury management advice contracts. This process is progressing well and we will have new contracts in place for banking in this financial year and for the others during 2013. It is expected that the bank contract will unfortunately be more expensive. However, areas where savings can be made to compensate for this have been highlighted through the tender process. For the other two contracts the market is very small and, even though the best contract for Taunton Deane will be selected, it will not automatically follow that savings will be made.

2.4 Retained HR

- 2.4.1 The Retained HR Manager provides strategic HR support to the Authority and assists the Client Team in monitoring the HR aspects of the SWOne contract.
- 2.4.2 The current priorities for the Retained HR Manager are to closely monitor sickness levels within the Authority, implement key policy changes (for example the new lease car and car allowance policies), manage any significant staffing issues, maintain an effective working relationship with the union and to identify and agree KPI's for 2013/2014 for the HR service with Southwest One.
- 2.4.3 Recent activity has included:-

- The agreement of a Wellbeing and Sickness Absence Plan with SWOne HR;
- Working with the DLO and UNISON on the 37 hour working week agreement; and
- Supporting the Revenues and Benefits Feasibility Study.

2.5 SAP Re-Launch and Patching

2.5.1 The key elements of the system have been launched and are working.

2.5.2 The staff performance review (PREDS) module will be ready for rollout across the Authority early in the New Year. The priorities for 2013 will be to launch the remaining outstanding modules - sickness, e-recruitment and overtime modules.

2.6 Corporate Projects

ICT Infrastructure Upgrade

2.6.1 The initial stage of the infrastructure upgrade has commenced, which has involved the upgrading of network switches in The Deane House. New servers are due to be delivered before Christmas and will be configured and installed in the New Year.

Revenues and Benefits service return

2.6.2 The feasibility study into the possible return from SWOne of the Revenues and Benefits service is being run as a major corporate project and is being managed from within the Corporate and Client Services Team. The project is currently progressing well and is on-track for a Member decision on 11 December 2012.

Welfare Benefits

2.6.3 The Welfare Benefits project is being managed from within the team. Initially the changes to the welfare benefits system will involve the replacement in 2013 of the existing national Council Tax Benefit Scheme with a new local Council Tax Support (CTS) Scheme. The project to implement our new local scheme is progressing well. A proposed new CTS scheme has been identified and will go to Full Council on 11 December 2012 for a decision.

3. Corporate Performance

Corporate Performance

- 3.1 The Quarter 2 (July – Sept 2012/13) corporate performance report has recently been through the Corporate Scrutiny and Executive cycle. Quarter 3 (Oct - Dec) will be reported in February – March 2013. Once the new Corporate Business Plan is approved, CMT will commence a review of the Corporate Performance Scorecard and recommend new measures / updated targets for implementation in 2013/14. Members will also be invited to help develop a refreshed scorecard and suite of performance indicators

Performance Scorecards

- 3.2 Members are reminded that a full suite of 'Theme / Service' performance scorecards are also now produced quarterly by Theme Managers – these include a wide range of operational performance measures and are a useful tool for Members and Managers when discussing performance issues and progress against objectives

South West Audit Partnership

- 3.3 The Performance Lead is liaising with South West Audit Partnership (SWAP) to develop improved monitoring arrangements for all the Council's audit recommendations and follow-up management actions. Progress will be reported to the S151 Officer's Corporate Governance Group, and to the Corporate Governance Committee (next report due December 2012)

Corporate Risk Management

- 3.4 An audit (SWAP) report was received in October on Risk Management in Major Projects – this was assessed as 'reasonable assurance'. The recommendations were minor control issues and have been added to the Corporate Risk Management Action Plan

Corporate Change Programme

- 3.5 The Council's Corporate Change Programme is now being overseen by the Strategy and Performance team. CMT commenced a new approach to formal Programme Management in September – Project Managers for all major corporate projects are now reporting monthly to the 'Programme Management Group'. The major corporate projects currently within the scope of this group are:-

- Corporate Business Plan (Simon Lewis / Dan Webb)
- Community Infrastructure Levy (Tim Burton)
- Revenues and Benefits Service Feasibility Study (Richard Sealy)
- Deane DLO depot relocation business case (Sue Tomlinson)
- Welfare and Finance Reform (Paul Harding)
- Flood Alleviation Solutions (Mark Green)
- Taunton Retail and Firepool (Ian Franklin)

- New Swimming Pool (Simon Lewis).

4. Legal and Democratic Services

Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) Elections – 15 November 2012

- 4.1 The recent PCC elections, from our perspective, went without a hitch. The turnout for Taunton Deane was only 18.8%.
- 4.2 As everyone is aware, Sue Mountstevens was appointed as the new Police and Crime Commissioner for the Avon and Somerset Constabulary.

Additional Full Council

- 4.3 Due to additional business at this time of year, an extra Full Council meeting has been scheduled for 22 January 2013 to agree the Business Rate Tax Base for 2013/2014 and the Corporate Business Plan.

5. Revenues and Benefits

Customer Service Excellence

- 5.1 It has been a very successful time for the Revenues and Benefits Service since my last report. At the end of September, the service received re-certification for Customer Service Excellence. The feedback provided in the report by the independent Inspector stated:-

we gave a high priority to continuous improvement in service delivery; our analysis of data for improvements was impressive; and we had made customer consultation integral to improvements.

National Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation (NIRRV) Award

- 5.2 Further success came in October when the Benefits Team received the Bronze Award in the "Team of the Year" Category from the National Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation. This award recognises excellence at a national level.

SWOne Award

- 5.3 Finally, on 8 November 2012, the Revenues and Benefits Service won a Gold Award in the Accountability category at the SWOne Celebration of Achievement. The submission detailed the work undertaken by the Benefit Letters Improvement Working Group. The judges were obviously impressed by the proactive work undertaken with our customers, leading to increased satisfaction and a reduction in avoidable contact.

- 5.4 I should like to congratulate all members of the Revenues and Benefits Team on the well deserved and hard earned accolades of excellence.

Localised Council Tax Support Scheme

- 5.5 Preparation for the new Localised Council Tax Support Scheme from April 2013 is progressing well. Since the start of September 2012, the Revenues and Benefits Service has dealt with 3,800 reviews from existing Council Tax Benefit recipients of working age.

Speed of Benefit processing

- 5.6 The service continues to perform well in speed of benefit processing for 2012/2013. The average time to reassess benefit is seven days from when the customer tells staff of a change in their circumstances. On average, new claims are worked out within three weeks of the date they are submitted.

Council Tax and Business Rates

- 5.7 Council Tax collection remains ahead of target, but as confirmed in my last report, Business Rates collection has been difficult. The Revenues Team has worked extremely hard to reduce the gap between collection and the target. At the end of October 2012, Business Rate collection was 72.06%, which was less than 1% short of the target.

Fraud

- 5.8 Our battle against benefit fraud continues. There was recent notable success in achieving a conviction against a person who had failed to declare he was living with his partner. In that case, the man was given a sentence of 100 hours community service. There are two more cases due before the Magistrates in November and a further case scheduled for a Crown Court Hearing in the New Year.

Customer Satisfaction

- 5.9 We now have preliminary results from the annual customer satisfaction survey. Overall satisfaction with the Benefits Service remains at 90%, with our Council Tax and Business Rate customers recording satisfaction of 83%. A full report on the survey will be presented to Members in early 2013.

Finally, I wish you and your families a happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

Councillor Vivienne Stock-Williams

Council Meeting – 11 December 2012

Report of Councillor Mark Edwards - Planning, Transportation and Communications

I would like to wish everyone a Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

1. Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan

- 1.1 The Council will commence formal consultation on this Plan early in the New Year. This Plan will set out smaller allocations to meet the strategic housing, employment and other requirements as well as detailed development management policies which will help to inform decision-making on planning applications.
- 1.2 Officers are preparing a consultation draft setting out 'Issues and Options' for the Plan and will carry out a series of public exhibitions and 'listening events' in areas likely to be affected by development.

2. Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)

- 2.1 The 2012 SHLAA will be published before Christmas.
- 2.2 The document will set out the latest five-year deliverable supply of housing land as well as the potential stock of housing sites from which future plans like the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan can draw allocations.

3. Authorities Monitoring Report

- 3.1 The Annual Monitoring Report, required under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 has been renamed the Authorities Monitoring Report under the Localism Act 2011. It reports on the progress of Plan preparation and the effectiveness of policies in statutory plans prepared by the Council (for example housing and employment completions).

- 3.2 Previously it had to be submitted to the Secretary of State. This is no longer a requirement although in the interests of transparency the report must be 'publicly available on-line'. This will be completed and published on the Councils Planning web-page in December 2012.

4. Technical Policy Reports

- 4.1 The Planning Policy Team have recently prepared two technical reports on the 'Criterion for Assessing Rural Workers Dwellings' and guidance for 'The Change of use of rural service provision and conversion of existing buildings'.
- 4.2 The former fills the void created by the abolition of Annex A of PPS7, which set out specific criteria and the latter sets out a consistent approach to marketing and viability requirements for consideration of proposals that could impact on the sustainable development in rural areas. These documents were considered at the Local Development Framework Steering Group.

5. Neighbourhood Planning

- 5.1 The Neighborhood Plans are progressing with a joint meeting of Trull, Wellington and Wiveliscombe scheduled for next week.

6. Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

- 6.1 The consultation on the preliminary draft schedule has led to a number of questions and issues being raised that will need to be resolved before the Council can consult formally on the charging schedule and proceed to implementation. This additional work will be completed this year with the charging schedule being considered by Members in January 2013.
- 6.2 This will be followed by a four week consultation, with the proposal being submitted to an examiner in late February. The timing of an examination is in the hands of The Planning Inspectorate, but it is now hoped that an Examination could take place in April or May with implementation following reference to the Executive and Full Council in July.
- 6.3 A multi-disciplinary project group has been formed to look at the processes for collecting and monitoring. The processes are identified on process maps prepared by the Planning Officers Society and the issues that need to be addressed can be subdivided into four sections:-
- IT to support process;
 - Monitoring;
 - Calculating the charge; and

- Holding the money.
- 6.4 The monitoring of CIL will require an officer who holds clear responsibility for the implementation of statutory requirements, production of detailed reports, Government returns and where necessary production of evidence for legal proceedings. This person will also have responsibility for calculating CIL liability. This post could ultimately be funded by top slicing CIL receipts.
- 6.5 Options are currently being explored for governance of the process of identifying those projects, which should be funded, by CIL and priorities once the charge is received. Whilst Taunton Deane is the charging authority, there will need to be engagement in this process with those responsible for key elements infrastructure delivery, including Somerset County Council and the Environment Agency.

7. Positive Planning Protocol

- 7.1 Whilst Taunton Deane does a lot of good positive work with developers to find solutions to allow sustainable development to come forward, little is currently done to promote this approach. Tim Burton has therefore started work on developing what is being called a Positive Planning Protocol.
- 7.2 This will outline how the Council will adopt a positive “can do” approach, working proactively with applicants to unblock development and identify opportunities to add value to proposals which meet local visions. It will also promote the benefits of pre-application discussions and engagement with those communities most affected by development. It will be primarily focused on major and complex development proposals and is seen as a means of selling Taunton Deane as a positive planning authority to work with and therefore a good place in which to invest.
- 7.3 An important way of making the planning process work better for everyone is through planning performance agreements (a project management tool which sets out the process, timetable and resource requirements for the entire planning process). The protocol will set out the Council’s approach to PPAs, as well as explaining the potential consequences of failing to engage with the Council before submitting an application.
- 7.4 The Government’s current consultation on ‘Planning Performance and the Planning Guarantee’ clearly signals the importance of determining applications speedily and the consequences for local authorities who perform badly in this area will be that their power to determine major planning applications would be transferred to The Planning Inspectorate and planning fees refunded. It is therefore suggested that the protocol must give a clear message to the development industry that in the absence of a PPA the Council will seek to determine all

major planning applications within the statutory period and that this will inevitably increase the likelihood of an application being refused in such circumstances.

- 7.4 As part of this process, options for simplified planning regimes such as Local Development Orders are being explored as well as an alternative approach to pre application charges for employment generating proposals.
- 7.5 A report outlining the Protocol in more detail will be brought to Members in the New Year.

8. Heritage

- 8.1 Sandhill Park - The building has a fully sheeted scaffold and progress is being made in clearing debris from the building. Revised applications for the enabling development to the rear and conversion of the main building are expected in the New Year.
- 8.2 Tonedale - Works to reinstate the unprotected roof of Block A and protect other vulnerable buildings from further decay will be undertaken early in the New Year. Due to the passage of time, certain reports require updating and relevant conditions have as yet to be discharged.
- 8.3 Once the latter has been secured, the approved conversion works and new build will recommence. The developer is aware that at present there is a deteriorating asset and as such wishes to progress the approved scheme as soon as possible.
- 8.3 Tone Works/ Grease Works - final negotiations are actively underway and a resolution expected in December.

9. Communications

- 9.1 Flooding dominated the news, locally, regionally and nationally, in late November with Taunton Deane being one of the first places to suffer following torrential rain.
- 9.2 Working with partners, including the Environment Agency, we were able to satisfy requests for information and updates. Deane DLO was featured on BBC national news, in daytime and evening bulletins, thanks to their sandbag operation.
- 9.3 There was good and positive coverage of the Council's response to the flooding. The Press Office was kept updated throughout which enabled the Council to respond quickly to media enquiries.
- 9.4 Communications continues to work closely with partners – campaigns recently have included elections for the Police and Crime Commissioner, Empty Homes Week on behalf of the Somerset West

Private Sector Housing Partnership, and with Somerset County Council on the opening of Castle Green and the next stage of works.

- 9.5 With Project Taunton, we are working on an inward investment campaign for a regional business publication and on public realms work near the Viridor building.
- 9.6 The Deane Dispatch in November focused on events at Castle Green in the run-up to Christmas and the availability of parking in Taunton even at busy times of the year.

Councillor Mark Edwards

Council Meeting - 11 December 2012

Report of Councillor Jane Warmington - Community Leadership

1. Police and Crime Commissioner

- 1.1 Avon and Somerset Police Constabulary has a new Police and Crime Commissioner, Sue Mountstevens, the independent candidate from Bristol.
- 1.2 One of the first visits after her appointment was to come down to East Taunton to meet the neighbourhood policing team which has won several awards and is upheld as exemplar. The partnership of TDBC and others working across the priority areas with the police were acknowledged as key to the success of their approach.

2. Safer Somerset Partnership

- 2.1 The SSP objective is to help make Somerset a safer place through a core partnership of those with a statutory requirement to do so - the Local Authorities, Police, Fire, Health, Probation and Road Safety with the support of the relevant Voluntary Sector bodies eg the Drug & Alcohol Partnership.
- 2.2 All five Districts are now formally signed up to the Safer Somerset Partnership.
- 2.3 The Partnership has reviewed and refreshed the Somerset Community Safety Strategic Assessment for the new PCC to help her set community priorities for policing.

3. Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Panel

- 3.1 The Grants Panel has brought its methodology and previous contributions (through Service Level Agreements to the Voluntary Sector) for Corporate Scrutiny to look at. Their comments and recommendations will have been considered by the Executive.
- 3.2 For small grants the proposal is to advertise (VCS and YF) at the beginning of January for a six week application period. This should be in time for those projects starting at Easter.
- 3.3 Next year, a small underspend and windfall from SCC means there is more grant aid available (one off for 2013/14) and more projects can be supported. We are very grateful for the transfer of nearly £30K from SCC for the Youth Fund.

4. Health and Wellbeing

- 4.1 The draft Health and Wellbeing Strategy has completed its consultation. The shared vision for health and wellbeing in Somerset is people living healthy, independent lives, supported by thriving and connected communities with timely and easy access to high-quality and efficient public services when they need them.
- 4.2 Taunton Deane has agreed the health and wellbeing focus for the year following its

third Health and Wellbeing Event at the Cricket Ground as part of the continued consultation. Active Lifestyles will be the focus next year with our partners Tone Leisure leading on this.

5. Priority Areas Strategy

- 5.1 This Strategy is the **action plan** for our priority areas and an ongoing commitment to tackling some tough entrenched problems with the multi-agency approach (MAGs) through the Taunton Deane Partnership.
- 5.2 More effort is being put into working as a team across the agencies particularly in Taunton East. This is the approach adopted to tackle the Troubled Families agenda and is being referred to as Family Focus across the five districts.

6. Family Focus (Troubled Families)

- 6.1 Within Taunton Deane there are 182 families that meet the Governments definition. Over the next three years the project needs to work with all of these and hopefully support them to improve their quality of life.
- 6.2 By March of 2013 the Government would like us to work with one third of these, a total of 61. So far the project has identified 98 families with the majority living in Halcon and Priorswood with small clusters living elsewhere.
- 6.3 Work has begun with six families with four families in Wellington agreeing to work through the ESF Programme attached to this. Next month a further 9 families should be signed up (and a further 5 to ESF).
- 6.4 It is apparent at this early stage that debt and money management are key issues for all the families that have been discussed in the practioner group.
- 6.5 The project has now got the much needed administrative support from within Childrens Social Care and shortly expects to receive the attachment funding from the Government of £163K.
- 6.6 No one doubts that this will be a challenge but it offers the opportunity to develop the best way to help these families improve their lives with a joined up, streamlined, less intrusive approach which should be more effective and cost less.
- 6.7 For a regular update visit www.tauntondeane.gov.uk/familyfocus

Councillor Jane Warmington

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 11 December 2012 at 6.30 pm.

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

1. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of Taunton Deane Borough Council held on 2 October 2012, copies having been sent to each Member, were signed by the Mayor.

2. **Apologies**

Councillors Mrs Govier, D Reed and Ross.

3. **Declaration of Interests**

Councillors A Govier, Henley and Mrs Waymouth declared personal interests as Members of Somerset County Council. Councillors Brooks, Prior-Sankey and D Wedderkopp declared personal interests as Members of Somerset County Council and personal and prejudicial interests in agenda item 11 (iv) (a) as a family member was either in receipt of, or in the process of applying for, Council Tax Benefit. Councillors Mrs Hill and Mrs Smith declared personal interests as employees of Somerset County Council. Councillor Wren declared personal interests as an employee of Natural England and as Clerk to Milverton Parish Council. Councillor Hayward declared a personal interest as one of the Council's representatives on the Somerset Waste Board. Councillor Nottrodt declared a personal interest as a Director of Southwest One. Councillor Tooze declared a personal interest as an employee of the UK Hydrographic Office. Councillors D Durdan and Stone declared prejudicial interests as Tone Leisure Board representatives. Councillor Swaine declared a personal interest as a part-time swimming instructor. Councillor Mullins declared a personal interest as EDF Energy at Hinkley Point was his employer. Gill Slattery declared personal interests as a member of the Board of Governors at Somerset College and a Patron of the Supporters of Taunton Women's Aid. Councillor Farbahi declared a personal interest as a local owner of land in Taunton Deane. Councillors R Lees, Mrs Messenger and Mrs Warmington declared personal and prejudicial interests in agenda item 11 (iv) (a) as a family member was either in receipt of, or in the process of applying for, Council Tax Benefit. Councillor Coles declared a

personal interest in agenda item 11 (iii) (a) as he was a member of Somerset County Cricket Club.

4. **Somerset Armed Forces Community Covenant**

Councillor Bowrah reported that in July, Councillor Williams, along with the other partner representatives, officially signed the Somerset Armed Forces Community Covenant at a ceremony at RAF Yeovilton.

The Somerset Armed Forces Community was made up of both the serving and former members of the Armed Forces, including Territorial and Volunteer Reserve Forces and their families, who were working and residing in Somerset.

The Covenant had been made between the Armed Forces and a number of partners including the six Somerset Councils, the Local Health Authority, the Business Community, local education interests, the Charitable and Voluntary Sector and Religious Communities.

It was a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its local Armed Forces Community which sought to complement the National Armed Forces Covenant.

The purpose of the Somerset Community Covenant was to encourage support for the Services Community and recognise and remember the sacrifices made by members of this Community.

For Taunton Deane, the Covenant presented an opportunity to bring knowledge, experience and expertise, to bear on the provision of help and advice to members of our Armed Forces Community. It would encourage the integration of Service life into civilian communities and also offered the opportunity for members of the Armed Forces Community to help their local community.

The supporting objectives of the Covenant's continuing work plan would include, but were not limited to, the following:-

- To monitor the changing military footprint within Somerset;
- To establish the economic contribution of the military to the County;
- To identify community building projects for the military community;
- To identify opportunities for projects, which would enhance closer integration between civilian and military communities in Somerset;
- To assist the realignment of and access to, services which met the changing needs of the military, their families and veterans;

- To ensure that Somerset remained an attractive county for long-term investment by the Ministry of Defence (MoD); and
- To create an imaginative and practical educational and training scheme for veterans and their families to encourage productive re-settlement in Somerset.

Taunton Deane was looking to further enhance our relationship with the local Armed Forces and reservists, through our Human Resources (HR), Housing and Benefit departments, as well as building on the already strong relationships built with them over many years, through the Civic Office.

Councillor Bowrah went on to say that ex-service employees were automatically reservists, who could be called up at any time up to the age of 55. However there was currently no way of monitoring how many reservists or ex-service employees there were at Taunton Deane Borough Council, nor was there any system of encouraging employees to join the Territorial Army or Reserve Forces.

HR was considering what we should do now regarding this, what we had been asked to sign up to and also to have a full understanding of the MoD consultation taking place with employers, on changes to all of the arrangements contained in Employment Law Bulletin 595.

In the very near future, the Government would be stating the future position of our Armed Forces which could very well have a sizeable impact on Taunton Deane, regarding housing, employment and other services.

Councillor Bowrah concluded by reporting that 40 Commando RM would be exercising their right to “March Through” Taunton when they returned from their current tour of duty in Afghanistan in May next Year and the Rifles, who had also previously been awarded the Freedom of Taunton, were planning an event later in 2013.

He thanked Councillors for listening.

5. **Motion – Parking and Public Transport in Taunton**

Moved by Councillor Horsley and seconded by Councillor Coles.

“This Council fully supports the drive to ensure the long term viability of the Taunton Town Centre Shopping Area and to resist measures to encourage out of town shopping applications in accordance with the Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan and the recently adopted Core Strategy.

The Council also notes that in the past three years it has closed Greenbrook Terrace, Castle Green, parts of Coal Orchard, Castle Street and Enfield Car Parks with the loss of 361 car parking spaces most completely or partially zoned for shopping in the town centre. In addition it has lost part of the Priors Bridge Road Car Park to office development with a further 264 spaces going.

In conjunction with Somerset County Council, it has provided two Park and Ride sites at Silk Mills to the West and at junction 25 of the M5 to the East.

This Council notes that traffic congestion in the town centre has increased significantly over the past few weeks and delays in movement are reducing footfall in the town centre. The lack of electronic signing about availability of car parking spaces for shoppers adds to the disquiet for the town centre retailers. The retailers are equally vociferous about the extra distance shoppers now have to walk to reach their destinations following the closures mentioned above damaging their businesses.

This Council therefore urges Somerset County Council to:-

- (a) Open its Park and Ride on Sundays in the period up to Christmas 2013;
- (b) To permit bus pass users to travel free from the Park and Ride sites to compete with Exeter and similar venues around the region; and
- (c) Introduce as quickly as possible electronic signing of availability of parking spaces on the main arterial routes into Taunton.

Furthermore, to enhance the encouragement of shoppers to come to Taunton, it urges the Council to adopt immediately the discount equivalent to three hours free parking for those customers who spend up to £20 in selected stores in the town centre as already negotiated with Debenhams and to extend this system as widely as possible. It urges the Council to allocate an officer to devote time immediately to address these issues especially the introduction of the discount scheme for shoppers parking in the town centre.”

During the discussion of this motion, Councillor Mrs Hill proposed, and Councillor Mrs Floyd seconded that sub- paragraph (a) above be amended to read “Open its Park and Ride on Sundays and on Thursday late shopping nights in the period up to Christmas 2013”.

The amendment was accepted by the mover and seconder of the motion

The mover and seconder of the motion requested that a formal roll call of votes be taken and recorded in the Minutes in accordance with Standing Order 18(2).

The motion was put and was lost with twenty five Councillors voting in favour of the amendment and twenty six Councillors voting against, as follows:-

Yes	No
Councillor Mrs Baker	Councillor Mrs Adkins
Councillor Brooks	Councillor Mrs Allgrove
Councillor Coles	Councillor Beaven
Councillor Farbahi	Councillor Bishop
Councillor Mrs Floyd	Councillor Bowrah
Councillor Gaines	Councillor Cavill

Councillor Mrs Hill	Councillor Denington
Councillor Horsley	Councillor D Durdan
Councillor Miss James	Councillor Miss Durdan
Councillor R Lees	Councillor Edwards
Councillor Mrs Lees	Councillor A Govier
Councillor Ms Lisgo	Councillor Hall
Councillor Mrs Messenger	Councillor Hayward
Councillor Morrell	Councillor Mrs Herbert
Councillor Mullins	Councillor C Hill
Councillor Prior-Sankey	Councillor Hunt
Councillor Gill Slattery	Councillor Meikle
Councillor T Slattery	Councillor Nottrodt
Councillor Mrs Smith	Councillor Ms Palmer
Councillor P Smith	Councillor Mrs Reed
Councillor Stone	Councillor Mrs Stock-Williams
Councillor Swaine	Councillor Mrs Warmington
Councillor Tooze	Councillor Watson
Councillor A Wedderkopp	Councillor Mrs Waymouth
Councillor D Wedderkopp	Councillor Williams
	Councillor Wren

6. **Motion – Economic Growth and Regeneration**

Moved by Councillor Horsley and seconded by Councillor Coles.

“The Council notes that the Local Government Association Peer Group Review urges Taunton Deane to put economic growth and regeneration as its top priority in formulating its Corporate Business Plan. It notes too that the Council should adopt a policy of acquiring assets which provide an “income stream” to meet the reduction in expenditure brought about by the recession and the cuts demanded by central Government.

The Council therefore deeply regrets that the opportunity to pursue a bid to acquire the Orchard Centre from JP Morgan was not followed through as it would have:-

- (a) Secured the future of the Taunton Town Centre;
- (b) Given the Council the chance to redevelop the retail offer here;
- (c) Resisted applications for retail development out of town; and
- (d) Provided the Council with an income stream of some 6% per annum to assist in reducing the budget deficits identified in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

The Council recognises that these circumstances have shown it to be ill equipped to meet the commercial realities of our time and demands that the ruling group sets its sights higher.”

The motion was put and was carried.

7. Changes to the Standards Committee and appointment of the Independent Co-optees

At the meeting of Full Council in July 2012, Members agreed a series of recommendations relating to the introduction of a new Standards Regime for Taunton Deane in accordance with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011.

One of those recommendations was to create a Standards Committee and decide its composition. Full Council agreed that there should be a Committee of nine made up of five elected Members, politically balanced, two parish representatives and two co-opted members.

Three of the ex-independent members of the Standards Committee had recently been interviewed by a Panel of Councillors for the independent co-optee positions on the new Standards Committee.

The Panel had found it extremely difficult to choose two out of the three members as all were extremely knowledgeable and would bring a great deal of experience to the Committee. The Monitoring Officer had confirmed that subject to Full Council agreement the number of independent co-optees on the Committee could be extended.

Resolved that:-

- (1) the number of Independent co-optees able to sit on the Standards Committee be increased to three; and
- (2) Anne Elder, Terry Bowditch and Adrian Cox be appointed to those roles.

7. Recommendations to Council from the Executive

(a) Review of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2012-2042

The first review of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan 2012-2042 had recently been undertaken.

In the first few months of the financial year it had become apparent that there were a number of issues – set out below – that required amendment or inclusion in the Business Plan, as the context in which Housing Services operated continued to change rapidly.

Uplift of Disabled Facilities Grant and Aids and Adaptations Budget

The HRA had budgeted £500,000 capital per year to provide disabled aids and adaptations for tenants in our stock. This work was undertaken by the Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership (SWPSHP).

In view of the fact that need is likely to increase in future years as the

population aged, SWPSHP had been commissioned to undertake a needs analysis. For business planning purposes it was thought prudent to increase this provision by 5% per year for the next 10 years and then for it to remain fixed for the remainder of the plan period.

Stock Investment Figures and Data Cleanse

Work had been undertaken to cleanse the stock data of certain inaccuracies and carry out stock condition surveys. The impact of this work had been a slight reduction in the Future Major Works requirement for our stock over 30 years of approximately £4,000,000.

However, there remained a significant backlog of work created in part by tenant refusals for improvement works previously and other works not completed as part of the Decent Homes programme. As a consequence, the overall capital expenditure over the 30 year period had risen to £191,000,000.

Extension of Properties

The review had identified the need for a budget to provide Housing Services with an additional means of helping to alleviate the housing need of those who were living in overcrowded conditions. It was proposed to create a new improvements budget of £160,000 per year to fund approximately 4 two storey extensions per year.

Related Assets

In the original Business Plan an additional budget allocation of £3,600,000 over 30 years and £600,000 in Years 1-5, for related assets had been made. This was in respect of a programme of repairs for non dwelling assets such as garages and sewage treatment works.

Environmental Improvements

£150,000 per annum had been allocated for environmental improvements on estates such as additional car parking, waste storage facilities, mobility scooter stores and fencing.

Sustainable Energy Fund

A Sustainable Energy Fund of £6,600,000 over 30 years had been established to provide affordable warmth and improve the energy efficiency of homes. In order to utilise this fund, a project was emerging which had two key elements - 'Retrofit works to properties' and 'Tenant Lifestyle Awareness'.

Full project planning, commissioning and evaluation would be required and it was felt that recruitment of a Project Manager to undertake the next level of detailed planning would be required.

Social Housing Development Fund (SHDF)

Following the establishment of this fund (£2,300,000 in the first four years) in the new Business Plan work had progressed to identify sites that may be suitable for development.

Reported that approximately 26 new units were feasible, at an approximate cost of £3,430,000. If the Phase 1 sites were to be delivered, an additional

£1,130,000 would need to be added to the Capital Programme.

Alongside these early wins in terms of site development, Taunton Deane also needed to create a development policy to frame the way in which this fund would be used and to identify some of the relevant variables concerning house building. An Interim Development Policy had been drafted which was included in the report to the Executive. .

Exceptional Extensive

Funding amounting to £18,300,000 over 30 years for works such as asbestos removal, subsidence and works to our non traditional properties had been allocated in the Business Plan. Survey work was due to take place shortly to assist in planning for the future of non traditional stock in the years to come.

Planned Maintenance

One of the changes that was made following the “No” vote to stock transfer in 2006, was to reduce the frequency of planned maintenance from a cycle of five years to eight years. It was now potentially possible to reverse this position and re-establish a five-yearly programme.

Welfare Reform

An emerging Housing Services Welfare Reform Strategy had set out actions over the next 12 to 24 months for effectively managing the changes contained in the Government’s Welfare Reform Programme.

However a potential impact was that the level of financial hardship was likely to increase in the community with greater challenges in collecting rent being experienced and debt levels likely to increase.

The amount of irrecoverable debt could also increase leading to a higher level of write offs. Consequently, it was proposed to increase the bad debt allowance in the HRA Business Plan from 0.5% to 2% for a period of three years.

Right to Buy review and policy on use of additional receipts

The Council had signed an agreement with the Government under which the Council would continue to receive the income it was expecting from Right to Buy (RtB) receipts and this income would continue to support the Council’s General Fund Capital Programme.

The additional receipts produced from the completion of a total of 18 properties in the current year showed potential additional receipts in Year 1 of approximately £600,000.

To meet the conditions of the agreement and keep the additional income, the £600,000 would need to be matched with £1,400,000 of other resources such that total expenditure on affordable housing would reach £2,000,000 between April 2012 and March 2015.

Staffing

Development Team staffing

In order to deliver the projects identified above, additional resources would be required to lead on the HRA's development activities.

1. Housing Enabling - The current part time post holder would increase hours from three days a week to four on a temporary basis. The HRA would pay for two days of this officer's time to work on site development. The remaining two days would be committed to continuing regeneration projects funded from the SHDF.

2. Housing Development Projects Lead (Sustainable Energy) - A temporary post (18 months) would be recruited to lead on the Sustainable Energy project and other related projects in the HRA. This post would be funded from the Sustainable Energy Fund.

3. Housing Development Projects Lead - An additional post would be recruited to bring forward some of the capital projects with new allocated resources. This post would be funded by the Exceptional Extensive and Environmental Improvements budgets.

4. Development Manager - It was proposed to create a senior manager position to oversee all development activity, and potentially draw together the above posts to create a small Development Team. It was proposed that an additional salaries allocation of £70,000 should be made for this post and administrative support.

Repairs Line

The Repairs Line service was open to Housing tenants to report repairs required Monday to Friday. It was proposed to restore staffing levels by the 26 hours lost over the past few years. The additional cost of this proposal was £15,000.

IT Improvement

Taunton Deane Housing currently used four business critical software applications. Deane DLO would be replacing its dated software system which would involve certain changes having to be made to the other three applications. These works would require around three years to complete at an approximate total one off cost of £500,000, with continuing costs of £33,000 per annum ongoing.

Other Financial Adjustments

Inflation Adjustment

Retail Price Index (RPI) inflation had been falling in recent months and had reduced substantially over the past 12 months. It would therefore be prudent to reduce the level of inflation included within the model from 3.5% to 2.5%.

Interest Rate Saving

Due to better interest rates than modelled at the point of the transaction there

were additional savings in the Business Plan of £936,000 in Year 1. It was considered inadvisable to use interest savings at this time to pay off any debt capital.

The difference in interest rate on the loans had also affected the forecasted investment income on the HRA reserve balance, and the overall net saving was now estimated to be £817,000.

The HRA was likely to generate significant cash surpluses over the long term. It was proposed to establish a principle that surplus resources should be added to the Social Housing Development Fund, where prudent, to support further affordable housing provision. This was seen as a more sensible alternative to building excessive balances in the HRA reserve.

On the motion of Councillor Mrs Adkins, it was

Resolved that:-

- (1) The Disabled Facilities Grant and Aids and Adaptations budget be uplifted by 5% for the next ten years pending the outcome of the needs analysis;
- (2) A new improvements budget of £160,000 per year be created which would be used to fund approximately 4 two storey extensions per year;
- (3) Extending the reach of the current Social Housing Development Fund by utilising some of the borrowing headroom towards funding for housing development be explored;
- (4) The Interim Development Policy set out in the report to the Executive be approved;
- (5) Allowance for bad debt in the HRA be increased to 2% for a period of three years from 1 April 2013;
- (6) The additional Right to Buy receipts be ring-fenced and allocated to a separate budget code. Subsequently proposals would be brought to Members to make decisions as to how they were allocated - either to traditional housing enabling projects or to development within the Housing Revenue Account, on the basis of the continuing project need and spending the receipts within the restrictions of the agreement with the Government;
- (7) The outlined approach to additional staffing to support the Business Plan objectives and a consequent increase in revenue staffing costs of £55,000 be agreed;
- (8) It be agreed that any surplus Social Housing Development Fund budget remaining at the end of any financial year be allocated to a new Social Housing Development Fund earmarked Housing Revenue Account reserve; and

- (9) The principle be agreed that surplus cash resources within the Housing Revenue Account be allocated to the new Social Housing Development Fund Reserve at the end of each financial year, where prudent.

(b) Earmarked Reserves Review

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

The level of earmarked General Fund reserves as at 31 March 2012 was £7,072,000. This included money set aside for specific revenue purposes, but did not include the £3,336,000 in General Fund balances.

As a result of the review, there were various earmarked reserves, totalling £298,819.52, that were no longer required.

On the motion of Councillor Williams, it was

Resolved that:-

- (i) £59,167.44 of surplus earmarked reserves be transferred to the General Fund Reserves in the current financial year; and
- (ii) £239,652.08 of surplus earmarked reserves be transferred to the Housing Revenue Account Reserve in the current financial year.

(c) Fees and Charges 2013/2014

Consideration had been given to the proposed fees and charges for 2013/2014 for the following services:-

- Cemeteries and Crematorium;
- Waste Services;
- Housing;
- Deane Helpline;
- Licensing;
- Planning;
- Environmental Health; and
- Charging for Housing Act (Improvement and Prohibition) Notices and Immigration Visits.

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

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

On the motion of Councillor Williams, it was

Resolved that the fees and charges for 2013/2014 in respect of Cemeteries and Crematorium, Waste Services, Housing, Deane Helpline, Licensing, Planning and Environmental Health and Housing Act Notices/Immigration Visits be agreed.

(d) Proposed loan to Somerset County Cricket Club to enable development

The Executive had recently considered a request from the Somerset County Cricket Club (SCCC) for the Council to provide loan finance of £1,000,000 to enable the County Ground to become a venue which could stage one-day and twenty-twenty international cricket matches.

SCCC had made its request to the Council for the following reasons:-

- (1) The proposed terms of the loan would be much more attractive than could be achieved through bank funding;
- (2) The England and Wales Cricket Board had recently approved the move of the County Ground to international status, but this had to be achieved within a three year period or the approval would be withdrawn; and
- (3) The benefits of staging international cricket were considerable in contributing to the economic regeneration of Taunton and SCCC believed that Council loan support would enable the Club to stage international matches within a five year period.

It was within the power of the Council to offer the type of loan sought provided there was no cost to the local taxpayer. Making such a loan for capital purposes would be treated as capital expenditure and the repayment of the loan principal would be treated as capital receipts.

The type of loan recommended was the Equal Instalments of Principal (EIP) type where repayments would be the same amount of principal each year plus interest on a reducing balance.

The interest rate charged would be based on the PWLB (Public Works Loan Board) rate at which Taunton Deane could borrow, plus a 2% risk premium.

The capital expenditure incurred by the Council in making the loan would be funded by "internal" borrowing. Prudent provision would therefore need to be made to repay the borrowing under the Minimum Revenue Provision

regulations.

The loan would be secured by a legal charge over the property owned by the SCCC.

Moved by Councillor Horsley, seconded by Councillor Mrs Smith that:-

- (i) The risk premium be raised from 2% to 3%; and
- (ii) The recommendation be altered to include "(c) £10,000 of the interest paid per annum be allocated to the Youth Fund to be used to meet the cost of approved projects across the Taunton Deane area".

The amendment was put and was lost.

On the the motion of Councillor Cavill, it was

Resolved that the principle of a 15 year £1,000,000 loan to the Somerset County Cricket Club to enable further improvements towards the County Ground becoming a venue for international matches be approved, subject to:-

- (a) Final terms of the loan being approved on the lines detailed in the report and by the Section 151 Officer; and
- (b) Agreement from the Somerset County Cricket Club to enter into a legal agreement to be approved by the Section 151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer that safeguarded the Council's financial position.

(e) Taunton Deane Business Investment Fund

The Council had an ambitious strategy of growth for Taunton Deane. One important element of this strategy was that by 2027 the district would sustain an additional 11,900 jobs.

The environment to attract mobile investment was competitive, as most Councils carried out marketing activities, sometimes enhanced by specific inward investment incentives.

The Council already operated a Small Business Grant for start up businesses in Taunton Deane and also assisted rural Post Offices and retailers through financial support and assistance. The Council also funded loan finance to businesses through the Fredericks Foundation.

However, the Council had recently been approached by a business that was currently looking to invest in Wellington, which would result in the creation of around 200 jobs. It had asked the Council for a financial contribution towards its investment.

Furthermore, there were two existing businesses, also in Wellington, that urgently required new premises to enable them to expand and create jobs. Without financial assistance neither would be able to invest, and both might

leave Taunton Deane.

To enable such assistance to be provided, it was proposed to identify a fund to encourage and facilitate local job creation. The amount of that fund would be £300,000 and would support an Investment Grant scheme, payable to businesses.

The Investment Grant would be tied directly to job creation and would be offered at the level of £1,000 per FTE new job created, up to a ceiling of £100,000 for any one business. It was also proposed to put a minimum size on the application and to support a minimum of 10 jobs in any one submission.

The Investment Grant would be open to businesses in all sectors and throughout Taunton Deane and applicants would have to demonstrate that the following conditions had been met:-

- The Council's Grant was matched in at least equal part by the business's own financial contribution;
- The Council's grant was directly related to the creation of new jobs within the company. Those jobs had to be based in Taunton Deane and be offered on the basis that they were permanent positions. If jobs disappeared within a two year period the Council would retain the right to reclaim the money;
- The Council's financial contribution did not breach EU State Aid Rules; and
- Projects to be supported were ready to proceed within an agreed maximum period.

The Council's grant support would lead to the direct creation of a defined number of jobs, which could be valued based on the earnings of each job created. The average annual salary for a full time employee in Taunton Deane was £22,318. If the grant led to the creation of one job per £1,000 grant, the £300,000 fund would directly generate £6,695,400 of new earnings.

Currently insufficient financial incentives existed to support businesses to invest into or expand in Taunton Deane. An Investment Fund, with an Investment Grant, would significantly enhance the Council's offer, and would enable it to put real money into its stated growth strategy to attract new businesses and to support growth amongst local, existing businesses.

On the motion of Councillor Cavill, it was

Resolved that:-

- (1) The sum of £300,000 be allocated from within the existing 2012/2013 Budget to a Business Investment Fund, which would encourage investment in Taunton Deane and would directly lead to job creation in the district; and

- (2) Authority to approve individual grant applications be delegated to the Executive Portfolio holder for Economic Development and Regeneration in conjunction with the relevant Director and Section 151 Officer.

(f) Castle Green, Taunton Completion Works

The initial works at Castle Green, Taunton were now almost finished. Only the correction of a small number of agreed defects and the installation of a ramp to the grassed area remained to be completed.

The scheme agreed by Members and for which planning permission and Scheduled Ancient Monument consent had been obtained also included:-

- Closure of Castle Way to all vehicles;
- Resurfacing of Castle Way in the same materials as the rest of Castle Green;
- Relocation of the bus stops from Castle Way to Corporation Street;
- Installation of new planter beds on both sides of Castle Way;
- Installation of a turning head at the junction of Castle Green and Castle Way; and
- Reprioritisation and re-marking of the junction of Tower Street and Castle Street.

The cost of completing the agreed scheme was £340,000. This was £200,000 more than the remaining approved budget for the following reasons:-

- (i) £64,000 of additional costs relating to the initial works as a result of delays in laying the stone setts caused by extreme wet weather during late spring and early summer;
- (ii) £64,000 of additional costs relating to the initial works as a result of archaeological excavations, investigation and recording;
- (iii) £50,000 of additional costs relating to the completion works as a result of the delays in agreeing a satisfactory scheme to relocate the bus stops with the County Council; and
- (iv) £22,000 of additional costs for new bus shelters as the positioning of these was now expected to be adjacent to the Old Municipal Buildings listed building and therefore had to be in keeping.

£50,000 of savings had been identified which reduced the budgetary shortfall to £150,000 which could be funded from unallocated resources in the Growth Points capital reserve.

On the motion of Councillor Cavill, it was

Resolved that a further £150,000 of Growth Points capital funding be transferred to the Council's Capital Programme in respect of the completion

works for Castle Green, Taunton.

(g) Local Council Tax Support Scheme for Taunton Deane

The proposed introduction of a Local Council Tax Support Scheme for Taunton Deane to replace the current national Council Tax Benefit (CTB) scheme had recently been considered by the Executive.

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 provided for the abolition of Council Tax Benefit, to take effect from 1 April 2013 and each Council Tax Billing Authority had to have its own, locally set, Council Tax Support Scheme, effective from the same date.

Although the Council had discretion concerning the rules of the local scheme as far as they affected people of working age, the Government intended to prescribe rules which did not permit a reduction in expenditure for people of pensionable age.

In common with their Somerset Council counterparts, Taunton Deane proposed to base the local CT scheme in Year 1 for working age citizens on the broad principles of the present CTB scheme given that the existing benefit system had been developed to protect a number of disadvantaged groups and carried least risk in terms of software development.

A number of features of the current scheme had been assessed to see if the changes would deliver the reduction in expenditure necessary to match the likely grant from the Government. Certain common scenarios had also been considered collectively to see if they would potentially be suitable to all Somerset authorities.

From those discussions, the key changes which were proposed between Taunton Deane's local scheme for working age claimants and the current CTB scheme were:-

- Maximum support would be 75-80% of Council Tax – everyone of working age would have to pay something;
- Non-dependant deductions would be increased;
- Second adult rebate to cease;
- Child maintenance to be counted as income;
- Earned income disregards to rise; and
- A hardship fund to be established for short term help. (This would be a collection fund commitment rather than be fully funded by Taunton Deane).

The draft proposals for Taunton Deane's Local Council Tax Support Scheme

had been subject to an extensive public consultation exercise which ran over eight weeks, commencing 6 August until 5 October 2012.

A total of 113 responses to Taunton Deane's consultation were received. Across Somerset as a whole a total of 3,508 responses were made to the consultation of whom 59% were respondents in receipt of CTB.

There was nothing arising from the consultation response which demonstrated overwhelming opposition to any particular element of the proposed scheme or to the scheme itself although some respondents had highlighted that the proposals were likely to have an appreciable adverse impact on their particular household finances.

A copy of the full, proposed Council Tax Support Scheme together with a copy of the Equality Impact Assessment had been circulated to Members to ensure the issues connected with the scheme were fully understood prior to a decision being taken.

On the motion of Councillor Mrs Stock-Williams, it was

Resolved that subject to the Government making the necessary regulations:-

- (a) The scheme for providing Council Tax support for working age households on low incomes from 1 April 2013, as set out in the report to the Executive, be adopted; and
- (b) The Discretionary Housing Payment and Council Tax Assistance Policy to enable additional short-term assistance to be given in respect of Council Tax for those in hardship from 1 April 2013 be also adopted.

(h) Council Tax Charges – Empty Properties and Second Homes

Consideration had been given to the Government's proposal to allow Council's to amend (within limits) the Council Tax charges which would apply from 1 April 2013 in respect of:-

- second homes;
- homes undergoing, or requiring, structural work;
- properties empty for six months or less; and
- properties that had been empty for more than two years.

Decreasing the reductions would increase the Tax collectable for both this Council and the precepting authorities and could act as a stimulus for bringing empty properties back into occupation.

Full details of the proposed changes to the Council's current level of charging had been circulated to Members.

On the motion of Councillor Mrs Stock-Williams, it was

Resolved that subject to the Government making the necessary regulations, the following changes to Council Tax charges be introduced from 1 April 2013:-

- (i) To allow a discount of 100% for a maximum of 12 months, in respect of properties which would have qualified for a Class A exemption, had that exemption continued;
- (ii) To allow a 100% discount, but limited to a maximum period of three months, in respect of properties which would otherwise have qualified for a Class C exemption, had that exemption continued;
- (iii) To remove the 10% discount on second homes; and
- (iv) To impose a premium levy of an additional 50% of Council Tax due on properties that had been empty and unfurnished for more than two years.

(i) Revenues and Benefits Service Feasibility Service

The feasibility of bringing the Revenues and Benefits service back in-house in response to the forthcoming changes which were likely through the Government's proposals for Welfare Reform and the localisation of Business Rates had recently been discussed.

The Government's proposals were likely to result in significant changes in workload for the Revenues and Benefits service coupled with an overall cut in the Government grant that was received to administer benefits.

Three key objectives for the Council as to how the legislative changes in the Revenues and Benefits service should be carried out had been identified as follows:-

- i) To minimise the cost to the Authority and the impact on customers of implementing the changes to the Benefits and Local Taxation Regulations;
- ii) To maximise the Council's flexibility to manage the Revenues and Benefits service resources through the period of significant change; and
- iii) Look to reduce the costs to the Council of delivering the Revenues and Benefits service.

Two broad options for accommodating these changes within the contract with Southwest One had been tested against these objectives. These were:-

Option 1 - Changing the pricing model within the contract to provide a pricing structure that could keep pace with a rapidly changing environment and varying workloads, whilst ensuring the Council maintained service delivery; or

Option 2 - Return the Revenues and Benefits service to in-house service provision through the service termination provisions built into the contract.

Both options had been discussed with Southwest One and it has been agreed that Option 2 would be the most effective solution to allow Taunton Deane to meet the objectives outlined above.

As a result, a detailed study into the feasibility of bringing the service back in-house has been undertaken which had concluded that it would be feasible to:-

- make this change from a financial perspective and to do so would not be prejudicial to the Council's overall budget position; and
- terminate the Revenues and Benefits service within the terms of the contract and to amend the contract to reflect this change.

Negotiations with Southwest One had been completed on the key elements of a termination agreement. Consequently the Council was now in a position to make a decision to terminate.

An 'in principle' agreement with Southwest One had been reached for the service to be returned on 1 April 2013 and for the termination costs to be limited to the fixed amount only.

On the motion of Councillor Mrs Stock-Williams, it was

Resolved that:-

- i) The Revenues and Benefits service element of the Southwest One contract be terminated and the Corporate and Client Services Manager be authorised to issue the required termination notice with immediate effect;
- ii) The Corporate and Client Services Manager be authorised to complete the necessary changes to the contract to implement the termination of the Revenues and Benefits service in line with the 'in principle' termination agreement;
- iii) Decision making authority be delegated to the Group Leaders, if required, to decide upon any key changes to the agreement (It was not anticipated that this would be required, but this delegation was recommended to facilitate quick decision making should any key changes be required between now and completing the detailed contract changes at the end of January 2013); and
- iv) Up to £20,000 be allocated to cover the cost of additional resource required to support the service transfer and staff transition (This would be funded from the initial savings set out in the report to the Executive).

Resolved that Standing Order 28, Time limits for all meetings, be suspended to enable the meeting to continue for a further half an hour.

(j) Refurbishment of Station Road Pool and Sport England Bid

The proposal for the refurbishment of the Station Road Pool in Taunton had previously been presented to Members as part of the overall Pools Provision Project.

The findings of the Swimming Task and Finish Review along with the further feasibility work of the Pools Provision Project had identified that the required Capital investment needed to ensure that Station Road Pool continued to remain attractive to users was in the order of £1,200,000

It had also been identified that to ensure the delivery of sufficient swimming provision and preserve the existing water space already available would require the combination of the delivery of a new pool and the refurbishment of Station Road Pool.

An opportunity for the Council to apply to the Sport England Improvement Fund for funding of up to £500,000 specifically for improvements to swimming pool changing rooms, had become available earlier in the year.

A two stage application had been made to Sport England and at the end of October 2012 the Council was informed that it had been selected for the final application stage.

The final stage bid was driven by a short timescale set by Sport England where the final and third stage application had to be submitted by 18 January 2013.

One of the key criteria to satisfy eligibility to receive the funding was a confirmed commitment from the Council to provide funding to meet the remainder of the overall £1,200,000 refurbishment project.

If successful, the Sport England Funding would be dedicated to improving the changing rooms, changing room plant and the reception area.

The £770,000 to be provided by the Council would fund the upgrade of pool plant equipment, refurbishment of the pool hall and pool disinfectant system.

On the motion of Councillor Mrs Herbert, it was

Resolved that:-

- (1) The Council's bid for Sport England Improvement funding of up to £500,000 towards the Station Road Swimming Pool Refurbishment Project be supported; and
- (2) The proposed contribution of £770,000 from Taunton Deane's unallocated capital receipts be approved.

(k) Orchard Multi-Storey Car Park, Taunton – Structural Survey and Lifts

The Executive had recently considered the findings and recommendations of specialist investigations into the condition of the Orchard Multi-Storey Car Park structure and its integral lifts.

Although the structure had performed well over the past 40 years and was not in danger of failing, there were repairs and protective measures which needed to be carried out to prevent further deterioration and to provide a parking environment that was both safe and attractive to motorists. The works fell into three categories:-

Capital	
Structural repair work required within 12 months	£27,500
Preventative maintenance work required within five years (to give a life beyond 10 years)	£705,000
Revenue	
Minor repairs and redecorations	£25,000

The three passenger lifts within the car park were of a similar age and breakdowns were not an irregular occurrence, leading to public frustration and complaint. The lift maintenance contractor had estimated that it was likely to cost an additional £180,000 to fully refurbish them.

The Capital Estimate provision for works to the Orchard Multi-Storey Car Park was currently £245,000 and following detailed discussion, the Executive had agreed that this finance should be used on replacing all three lifts as a matter of priority.

The Executive had also considered that the Capital resources amounting to £164,000 which remained unallocated should be allocated towards the other works needed at the car park and that the shortfall of funding required to complete all the works to the car park should be accumulated from Revenue Contributions to Capital Outlay over the next four years.

On the motion of Councillor Edwards, it was

Resolved that the identified structural and preventative maintenance works to the Orchard Multi-Storey Car Park be included in the future Capital Programme – funded by the £164,000 of unallocated Capital resources and a four years Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay (RCCO) of £125,750 (to be agreed as part of the Budget Setting for the 2013/2014 Financial Year).

8. Reports of the Leader of the Council and Executive Councillors

Due to Standing Order 28, Time limits for all meetings, insufficient time was available to enable the following Executive Councillor reports to be formally presented to Members. These reports were submitted for information only.

(i) Leader of the Council (Councillor Williams)

Councillor Williams's report covered the following topics:-

- Flooding;
- Budget Setting;

- Project Taunton;
- A303/A30/A358 Somerset County Council Initiative;
- Infrastructure Costs and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL); and
- Local Enterprise Partnership.

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

The report from Councillor Cavill covered:-

- Launch of Taunton Means Business;
- Launch of Taunton Events website;
- Taunton Local Enterprise and Innovation Area;
- Business Start up Grants and Rural Retailer Grants;
- Jobs Clubs;
- Taunton Youth and Community Centre;
- Recent Events; and
- Taunton Tourist Information, Ticket and Travel Centre update.

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

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

- Environmental Health;
- Climate Change / Carbon Management;
- Waste Management; and
- Deane DLO.

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

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

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

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

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

- Affordable Housing Target;
- Right to Buy Sales; Housing Enabling - Regeneration;
- Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership;
- Estates Management – Anti-social Behaviour;

- Self-Financing and HRA Business Plan; and
- Shelter.

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

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

- Customer Contact Centre;
- Corporate and Client Services;
- Corporate Performance;
- Legal and Democratic Services; and
- Revenues and Benefits.

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

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

- Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan;
- Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA);
- Authorities Monitoring Report;
- Technical Policy Reports;
- Neighbourhood Planning;
- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL);
- Positive Planning Protocol;
- Heritage – Sandhill Park, Tonedale and Tone Works; and
- Communications.

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

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

- Police and Crime Commissioner;
- Safer Somerset Partnership
- Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Panel;
- Health and Wellbeing;
- Priority Areas Strategy; and
- Family Futures (Troubled Families).

(Councillors Brooks, Mrs Lees, Prior-Sankey, Mrs Warmington and D Wedderkopp all left the meeting at 9.08 pm. Councillor Tooze left the meeting at 9.17 pm. Councillors Mrs Baker and Mrs Floyd left the meeting at 9.43 pm and Councillors Mrs Messenger and Swaine at 9.45 pm.)

(The meeting ended at 9.48 pm.)