

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 9 December 2014 at 18:30.

Agenda

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

- 1 Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 30 September 2014 and of the Special Meeting of the Council on 21 October 2014 (attached).
- 2 To report any apologies for absence.
- 3 To receive any communications.
- 4 Declaration of Interests
To receive declarations of Disposable pecuniary Interests or personal or prejudicial interests, in accordance with the Code of Conduct. The usual declarations made at meetings of Full Council are shown on the attachment.
- 5 To receive questions from Taunton Deane Electors under Standing Order 15.
- 6 Receipt of Petition calling for the local Council and the Government to ban the selling of all Psychoactive Substances (known as 'Legal Highs') that are devastating our town and to remedy the effects that these are having on our community. The petition contains over 200 signatures and Councillor Simon Coles has formally requested that a debate takes place at the Full Council meeting. Councillor Coles to present the petition.
- 7 To receive any further petitions or deputations from Taunton Deane Electors under Standing Orders 16 and 17.
- 8 Legal Highs - To consider the attached Motion proposed by Councillor Federica Smith and seconded by Councillor Simon Coles.
- 9 Christmas Lights in Taunton - To consider the attached Motion proposed by Councillor Jefferson Horsley and seconded by Councillor Habib Farbahi.
- 10 Hinkley Point C (HPC): Housing Funding Strategy. Report of the Housing and Community Strategy Officer (attached).

- 11 Proposed Social Media Policy and Recording of Meetings Protocol. Report of the Assistant Chief Executive (attached).
- 12 Joint Independent Remuneration Panel – Process to Review Members' Allowances. Report of the Assistant Chief Executive (attached).
- 13 Swimming Pool Project at Blackbrook Pavilion Sports Centre Update on Capital Budget. Report of the Community Leisure Manager (attached).
- 14 Part I - To deal with written questions to, and receive the following recommendations from, the Executive:-
 - (i) Councillor John Williams
 - (a) Earmarked Reserves Review (attached);
 - (b) Fees and Charges 2015/2016 (attached);
 - (ii) Councillor Jean Adkins
 - (a) Regeneration of Weavers Arms, Rockwell Green, Wellington (attached);
 - (b) Photovoltaic Systems to be fitted to existing Housing Stock (attached);
 - (iii) Councillor Norman Cavill - Firepool, Taunton – Acquisition of Remaining Third Party Interests (attached);
 - (iv) Councillor Edwards - Publication of the Taunton Deane Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (attached);
 - (v) Councillor Mrs Vivienne Stock-Williams - Review of Council Tax Support Scheme for 2015/2016 (attached).
- 15 Part II -To receive reports from the following Members of the Executive:-
 - (a) Councillor John Williams - Leader of the Council;
 - (b) Councillor Jean Adkins - Housing Services;
 - (c) Councillor Vivienne Stock-Williams - Corporate Resources;
 - (d) Councillor Mark Edwards - Planning, Transportation and Communications;
 - (e) Councillor Jane Warmington - Community Leadership;
 - (f) Councillor Norman Cavill - Economic Development, Asset Management, Arts and Tourism;
 - (g) Councillor James Hunt - Environmental Services; and
 - (h) Councillor Catherine Herbert - Sports, Parks and Leisure.

Bruce Lang
Assistant Chief Executive

28 July 2016

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

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

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

Except at meetings of Full Council, where public participation will be restricted to Public Question Time only, if a member of the public wishes to address the Committee on any matter appearing on the agenda, the Chairman will normally permit this to occur when that item is reached and before the Councillors begin to debate the item.

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

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

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

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



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

If you would like an agenda, a report or the minutes of a meeting translated into another language or into Braille, large print, audio tape or CD, please telephone us on 01823 356356 or email: enquiries@tauntondeane.gov.uk

Council Members:-

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

Councillor J Warmington
Councillor P Watson
Councillor (Historic)Mrs 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 30 September 2014 at 6.30 p.m.

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

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of Taunton Deane Borough Council held on 22 July 2014 and 19 August 2014, copies having been sent to each Member, were signed by the Mayor.

2. Apologies

Councillors Bishop, Mrs Gaden, P Smith and Ross.

3. Communications

- (a) Mrs Liz Payne-Ahmadi informed the Council that next year would be the seventieth anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz Concentration Camp and, as such Holocaust Memorial Day on 27 January 2015 would be even more poignant.

She added that a Holocaust Memorial Service was to be held in St John's Church, Park Street, Taunton at 12.30 p.m. on this day and hoped that as many Councillors as possible would be able to attend.

- (b) Mr Nick Smith representing the South West Action Group (SWAG) gave a short presentation to Members about the dangers of legal highs which, in Taunton, were currently being sold from two shops in the town centre.

He showed a DVD titled 'Lethal Highs' which demonstrated how the substances being sold from outlets across the country had caused or contributed to the deaths of numerous young people.

Mr Smith went on to explain that his daughter had recently pricked herself with a used, discarded syringe in Victoria Park and it would be some months before his family would know if this had had any ill-

effects.

He called on Councillors to support the aims of SWAG which were to encourage the Government to introduce measures to prohibit the sale of legal highs in the future.

It was confirmed that a letter had been sent to the Home Secretary requesting appropriate action to be taken to address this growing issue of concern.

The Mayor thanked both Liz Payne-Ahmadi and Nick Smith for their contributions.

4. Declaration of Interests

Councillors Mrs Baker, Coles, A Govier, Prior-Sankey, A Wedderkopp and D Wedderkopp declared personal interests as Members of Somerset County Council. Councillor Henley declared personal interests as a Member of Somerset County Council and as an employee of Job Centre Plus. Councillor Hunt declared personal interests both as a Member of Somerset County Council and as one of the Council's representatives on the Somerset Waste Board. Councillor Mrs Hill declared a personal interest as an employee of Somerset County Council. Councillor Tooze declared a personal interest as an employee of the UK Hydrographic Office. Councillor Wren declared a personal interest as Clerk to Milverton Parish Council. Councillor Nottrodt declared a personal interest as a Director of Southwest One. Councillors D Durdan and Stone declared prejudicial interests as Tone Leisure Board representatives. Councillor Gill Slattery declared personal interests as a member of the Board of Governors at Somerset College, a Patron of the Supporters of Taunton Women's Aid and as one of the Council's representatives on the Parrett Internal Drainage Board. Councillor Farbahi declared a personal interest as a local owner of land in Taunton Deane. Councillor Mrs Herbert declared a personal interest as an employee of Job Centre Plus. Councillor Ms Lisgo declared a personal interest as a Director of Tone FM.

5. Public Question Time

Ms Tracey Peace referred to a current planning application relating to a property in Hillfarrance, near Taunton. She was very concerned about the impact this application would have on another nearby business should planning permission be granted.

Ms Peace asked if this matter could be looked into.

In response, Councillor Edwards undertook to find out more about the current application and its possible implications.

6. Proposed Loan to Somerset Waste Partnership for Waste Vehicles

Considered report previously circulated, concerning a proposal to make a loan of £3,500,000 to the Somerset Waste Partnership.

Most of the SWP's Refuse Collection Vehicles were approaching the end of their economic working life and needed to be replaced to avoid escalating maintenance costs and the impact of increasing breakdowns on customer service. There was a contractual requirement that vehicles provided should be no more than seven years old.

The SWP sought to borrow £7,000,000 over a seven year period, paying back both principal and interest on an annual basis.

Taunton Deane was able to offer the partnership a fixed rate of 3.50% for £3,500,000 and South Somerset District Council would be recommending the same rate for the residual £3,500,000 to their Full Council meeting in October 2014. This compared with interest rates that Somerset County Council (SCC) and Kier could offer (4.64% and 4.5% respectively) and was therefore considered competitive.

The start date of the loan would be 1 April 2015. In the event that monies were required sooner, SCC would be willing to order the vehicles and pay ahead of completion if required.

This proposal was considered by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 18 September 2014 when the principle of the proposal was supported.

Resolved that:-

- (a) The principle of a seven-year fixed rate loan at 3.5% to Somerset Waste Partnership of £3,500,000 be agreed (detailed terms within this framework to be agreed, through delegated authority, by the Section 151 Officer); and
- (b) It be agreed to add this capital expenditure to the Capital Programme with the understanding that the principal payments would be treated as capital receipts offsetting the Capital Financing Requirement.

7. Review of Petition Scheme

Considered report previously circulated, which reviewed the Council's position on dealing with petitions.

The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 had made it a statutory duty for all Councils to adopt a formal petition scheme.

The scheme adopted by the Council in July 2010 had obliged the Council to respond appropriately to compliant petitions and inform people what action would be taken to address their concerns.

The scheme had to be published on the Council's website and by any other method appropriate for bringing it to the attention of those who lived, worked, studied and did business in the area.

The Council was also required to respond to petitions which related to the functions of its partner authorities and which sought an improvement in the economic, social or environmental wellbeing.

The Council was currently required to respond to all compliant petitions and set thresholds for taking certain steps in response to a petition where practicable. There were currently three types of petitions relevant to the scheme:

- Ordinary petitions – which must contain at least 25 signatures. The petition organiser could present their petition to a meeting of the Council who would, without discussion, refer the petition to the relevant decision maker, or the petition organiser could meet with the relevant decision maker direct to present their petition.
- Petitions for Council debate – which had to contain at least 1500 signatures which if validated would be debated or discussed at a meeting of Full Council.
- Petitions calling for the Council employees to give evidence at a Scrutiny Committee meeting – which had to contain at least 750 signatures which could call for a senior Council employee to give evidence at a public meeting of a Scrutiny Committee.

To date, very few petitions had been received that had required a Council debate or a referral to a Scrutiny Committee.

Further reported that the Localism Act 2011 had repealed the requirement for such a statutory petition scheme and there now was the opportunity for the Council to review its position and provide greater clarity and flexibility if it so wished.

As part of a review undertaken by the Constitutional Sub-Committee some research had been undertaken as to the trigger points for petition schemes that were currently operated by nearby and neighbouring local authorities. As a result the following three options had been considered:-

- (1) To retain the current scheme and perhaps consider giving this facility a higher profile to encourage the public to avail themselves of it;
- (2) To withdraw the current scheme and make the receipt and consideration of petitions as flexible as possible so that they could be dealt with in line with any correspondence received by the Council;
and
- (3) To continue with a more formal scheme but to vary the trigger points in terms of amounts of signatures required to encourage greater participation.

The Sub-Committee had concluded that the authority had an overriding responsibility to promote democracy and it would therefore be advisable for the Council to retain a scheme of some form but to ensure that any such scheme should be flexible and user-friendly to encourage more petitions to be submitted in the future.

It was therefore recommended that consideration be given to instituting a simplified scheme whereby there was only one definition of a petition which must contain at least 200 signatures which, if validated, would be debated or discussed at a meeting of the Full Council. This approach had subsequently been endorsed by the Corporate Governance Committee.

Resolved that the revised Petitions Scheme be approved.

8. **Review of the Standards Regime**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the future composition and operation of the Standards Regime at the Council.

The Council had agreed in July 2012 to retain a Standards Committee to oversee the Standards Regime following the Localism Act 2011.

At its most recent meeting the Standards Committee had reviewed the processes by which it currently operated. During the debate there was much discussion and concern shared by all Members of the Committee that since the introduction of the Localism Act 2011, the Parish Councillors and Independent Members, who were now co-opted and had no right to vote, and therefore felt increasingly disenfranchised from the process.

In addition, reference was made to the fact that now that only Councillors had the right to vote there was a risk that the Committee could be perceived as operating in a "political" way when any Standards Regime needed to be perceived as being objective and be able to operate in an independent manner.

The Standards Committee had therefore agreed to request the Constitutional Sub-Committee to review the current arrangements. This review had recommended that consideration should be given to amending the Constitution in respect of the Standards Committee as follows:-

- (i) to increase the Parish Council representatives from two to three;
- (ii) the selection process for such membership to be determined and implemented by the Monitoring Officer;
- (iii) Independent and Parish Members of the Committee be granted full voting rights alongside the five elected Members appointed to serve on the Committee;
- (iv) the current requirement for the Committee and all Sub-Committees to be Chaired by an elected Member be amended so that the the Committee and any such Sub-Committees can be chaired by any Committee Member.

It was acknowledged that in the event of these recommendations being adopted, the Standards Committee would need to become an Advisory Committee in order to comply with the requirements of local government legislation and thereby need to make recommendations to Full Council.

The Constitutional Sub-Committee was also cognisant of the financial pressures currently being experienced by the Council and had therefore proposed that the reimbursement arrangements for members of the proposed Advisory Committee should remain as they were now to ensure that the proposal was cost neutral.

The Sub-Committee's proposals had been endorsed by the Corporate Governance Committee.

Resolved that the proposals made by the Constitutional Sub-Committee with regard to the Council's Standards Regime be approved, to come into effect after the May 2015 Local Government Elections.

9. **Proposed Membership of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel**

Reported that an opportunity had arisen for the Council to join a Joint Independent Remuneration Panel.

Each Council had to establish an Independent Remuneration Panel to advise on the scheme of Members Allowances. In this respect Taunton Deane had an Independent Panel consisting of three Members.

The legislation nevertheless allowed the creation of a Joint Panel supporting more than one Council and put no limit on the number of Councils that could be supported by an individual Panel.

The legislation recognised that a Joint Panel arrangement could be an appropriate and cost effective local arrangement. In this regard, Somerset County Council, Mendip District Council and West Somerset Council had already agreed to have a Joint Panel and Taunton Deane had been invited to also join.

The Panel would consist of three Independent Persons appointed by the County Council and three Independent Persons appointed by the three District/Borough Councils and would report separately to each of the four Councils to ensure continued sovereignty in terms of decision making.

Each Council could therefore continue to make its own decisions on Remuneration Rates as it saw fit in the light of the particular circumstances that pertained to that Authority.

Further reported that the most significant benefits from the proposal would be accrued via access to County-wide officer expertise and the provision of greater resilience and increased efficiencies in terms of the use of Taunton Deane officer time.

The proposal had been considered at a recent meeting of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee when it was recommended that the Council should agree to join the Panel.

Resolved that Taunton Deane Borough Council became a Member of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel alongside Somerset County Council, Mendip District Council and West Somerset Council and that arrangements be made to appoint an Independent person to represent the Council on the Joint Panel.

10. **Motion – Democratic Deficit in Taunton**

Moved by Councillor Ms Lisgo, seconded by Councillor Coles

“This Council recognises that there is an ongoing and increasing concern being expressed within our community about the democratic deficit at the heart of our County Town due to its unparished status.

This Council therefore resolves to ensure that services provided within the Unparished Area are not reduced and furthermore, services previously deleted such as public conveniences, are reinstated until an appropriate body or bodies, with precepting powers, is in place to properly undertake such responsibilities.”

The motion was put and was carried.

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

Jurston (Wellington) Development Brief

The Taunton Deane Core Strategy 2011-2028 Development Plan Document had set the strategic framework for development across the district for the period to 2028. It included a number of strategic sites including Cades/ Jurston in Wellington.

In the Core Strategy Jurston was identified in Policy SS4 as a new compact urban extension east of Wellington which would include around 900 new homes at an overall average of 35-40 dwellings per hectare including affordable homes, a new local centre, a north-south link road between Taunton Road and the A38 and a green wedge.

The Core Strategy also stated that development of strategic sites in Wellington should be guided by a Masterplan and design code to ensure a coordinated approach to the delivery of these sites.

At a recent meeting of the Executive it was reported that a draft Development Brief had been prepared which addressed the requirements for a Masterplan.

The Brief which related solely to the Jurston parcel of the allocation had been published for public consultation earlier in the year and a full summary of

representations received together with the Council's responses thereto were detailed in the report to the Executive.

The Executive had also been informed that although the Community Scrutiny Committee had unanimously recommended adoption of the Brief as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) it had highlighted the need for negotiations to continue in respect of highways issues, school provision and sports provision.

Under the National Planning Policy Framework and Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) Regulations, the Council could adopt documents such as SPDs where they added value, detail and guidance to the existing policies in the Core Strategy Development Plan Document. A SPD would be an important material consideration in the determination of a future planning application for Jurston.

On the motion of Councillor Edwards, it was

Resolved that the Jurston Development Brief be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document to be used in the Development Management Process for assessing future applications of the Jurston site.

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

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

Councillor Williams's report covered the following topics:-

- Scottish Referendum Vote;
- Halcon One Team;
- Firepool, Taunton;
- Monkton Heathfield;
- Infrastructure Funding;
- Westpark 26 Development;
- Broadband Availability;
- Garden Cities to Meet Housing Demand;
- Joint Management and Shared Services (JMASS); and
- Accommodation Update.

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

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

- Corporate and Client Services;
- Corporate Health and Safety;
- Customer Contact Centre;
- Health and Wellbeing;
- Legal, Democratic and Electoral Services;
- Resources; and

- Revenues and Benefits.

(iii) **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 Plan (SADMP);
- Mid Devon Junction 27;
- Neighbourhood Planning;
- Monkton Heathfield Governance Board;
- Car Parking;
- Taunton Railway Station Enhancement; and
- Communications.

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

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

- Dragon Trail;
- Self Service Kiosks;
- Police Superintendents Association Annual Conference;
- Police Innovation Fund Bid – Wider One Team Working;
- Taunton and District Citizens AD District Advice Bureau (CAB);
- Troubled Families - Family Focus Integration with Getset Services;
- Volunteering Event;
- Creechbarrow Road Hoardings Art Project; and
- Community Awards.

13. **Suspension of Standing Order**

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

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

The report from Councillor Cavill covered:-

- Staffing Issues;
- Business Support;
- The Brewhouse Theatre;
- Taunton Town Centre;
- Jobs Club;
- Castle Green; and
- Taunton Information Centre (TIC) and Marketing.

(vi) **Environmental Services and Climate Change (Councillor Hunt)**

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

- Environmental Health / Licensing;
- Deane DLO;
- Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP); and
- Community Scrap Store.

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

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

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

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

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

- Changes to Enhanced Right to Buy;
- Right to Buy Applications;
- Tenant Services Management Board (TSMB) Election;
- Deane Housing Development;
- Digital Access Project;
- Right to Move for Social Tenants Consultation;
- Somerset County Council (SCC) Extra Care Consultation; and
- Homefinder Somerset Annual Report.

(The meeting ended at 9.51 pm.)

Taunton Deane Borough Council

At a special meeting of Taunton Deane Borough Council, held at the Oake Manor Golf Club, Oake, Taunton on Tuesday, 21 October 2014 at 6.30 pm.

Present The Mayor (Councillor D Durdan)
The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Mrs Hill)
Councillors Mrs Allgrove, Bishop, Bowrah, Cavill, Coles, Denington,
Miss Durdan, Edwards, Mrs Floyd, Gaines, A Govier, Hall,
Mrs Herbert, R Lees, Mrs Lees, Ms Lisgo, Meikle, Morrell, Nottrodt,
Mrs Reed, Miss Smith, Mrs Smith, Mrs Stock-Williams, Watson and
Mrs Waymouth.

The meeting was preceded by a Prayer offered by the Reverend Rebecca Harris.

1. **Apologies**

Councillors Mrs Adkins, Farbahi, Horsley, Hunt, D Reed, Ross, P Smith, Mrs Warmington, Williams and Wren.

2. **Councillor Clifford William Bishop – Freeman of the Borough**

On the motion of Councillor Meikle MBE, seconded by Councillor Edwards, it was **resolved** unanimously that:-

- (a) Councillor Clifford William Bishop be admitted as a Freeman of the Borough of Taunton Deane; and
- (b) A Certificate of Admission be signed by the Mayor and the Joint Chief Executive.

3. **Presentation of the Certificate of Admission**

The Mayor read aloud the wording of the Certificate of Admission before presenting it to Councillor Bishop.

The Mayor congratulated Councillor Bishop.

Councillor Bishop replied. A warm tribute which had been received from Kelvin MacDonald MCIH, FRTPI, FRSA was also read out.

The meeting was closed by the Mayor at 7.48 p.m.

Usual Declarations of Interest by Councillors

Full Council

- **Members of Somerset County Council – Councillors Mrs Baker, Coles, A Govier, Henley, Hunt, Prior-Sankey, A Wedderkopp and D Wedderkopp**
- **Employee of Somerset County Council – Councillor Mrs Hill**
- **Employee of Job Centre Plus – Councillor Henley**
- **Employee of the Department of Work and Pensions – Councillor Mrs Herbert**
- **Employee of UK Hydrographic Office – Councillor Tooze**
- **Clerk to Milverton Parish Council – Councillor Wren**
- **Somerset Waste Board representatives – Councillors Hunt and 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**
- **Member of the Board of Governors at Somerset College – Councillor Gill Slattery**
- **Patron of Supporters, Taunton Women’s Aid – Councillor Gill Slattery**
- **Representative on the Parrett Internal Drainage Board – Councillor Gill Slattery**

- **Director of Tone FM – Councillor Ms Lisgo**
- **Owner of land in Taunton Deane – Councillor Farbahi**

Council Meeting – 9 December 2014

Legal Highs

Motion proposed by Councillor Federica Smith and seconded by Councillor Simon Coles

This Council recognises that there has been an impact on the community and welfare of our residents through the ongoing sale of NPS (Legal Highs) within Taunton Deane. We recognise that the South West Action Group has played an important part in bringing the negative impact of these to our attention. We have a duty to remedy this situation through restricting the sale of these substances along with assisting those affected.

- Stop the over the counter sales of NPS (Legal Highs) in Taunton Deane owned premises by a restrictive covenant. This covenant should forbid the sale/distribution of NPS in premises owned or leased by the Council. We also need to contact all local/national commercial landlords within Taunton Deane to ask them to include a covenant in all new lettings within the area.
- Call on the Council to immediately make use of new powers available under Anti-Social Behavioural (ASB) legislation which includes ensuring that a community trigger is put in place by the end of December 2014.
- Ensure that a multi-agency team with the Police, NHS and other third parties meets on a regular basis to discuss ASB within the town and look to make remedies
- Taunton Deane to fund a new post for a full time cleaning operative, building on the December trial, with a brief of assisting in the collection of reported needles, cleaning known hotspots on a daily basis and additional cleaning of our public toilets and park areas.
- Taunton Deane to fund specialist help provision to the maximum of £25,000 per annum to support users in looking to break the addiction through Taunton Association for the Homeless, Citizens Advice Bureau, Turning Point and others.
- Work with Somerset County Council to ensure the introduction of an educational programme for schools, colleges and youth provision providers to ensure impacts and dangers of Legal Highs are addressed.

Council Meeting – 9 December 2014

Christmas Lights in Taunton

Motion proposed by Councillor Jefferson Horsley and seconded by Councillor Habib Farbahi

Taunton Deane Borough Council has a proud record of supporting its town centre and has always acknowledged the importance of the Christmas period in providing the retailers with the best opportunity of being commercially successful in the calendar year. In recent years it has expanded the customer offer by extending its reach to Somerset Square, Castle Green and further up the High Street with its renting of stalls to market holders on those days when it puts on events for the traders such as the Christmas Lights switch on.

It further acknowledges the role played by the Events Organisers which has raised money towards the lights and ensuring that all visitors are welcome. It notes that the figures provided by the Economic Development Team and by the Manager of the Orchard Centre also show a year on year increase in numbers in the town centre. Taunton can be also proud that its current level of void sites is down to 4% compared with the national average of 14%.

It is disappointing to note however that for the past two years the extent of the Christmas Lights only reach nearly as far as Debenhams to the north on North Street and to well short of Primark on East Street and does not include much of High Street to the south. This means that Bridge Street and Station Road to the north, the eastern part of East Street and the whole of East Reach has no Christmas Lights nor does Corporation Street to the West. These important secondary shopping areas are getting no benefit from the Christmas Lights “project”.

Business Rates have not come down in the recession whilst market rents have halved for even the premium sites. This has led to a high volume of appeals against the Rateable Values by many owners in their attempts to reduce their outgoings. The future of Christmas Lights is going to remain a “will we, won’t we” battle every year which only creates uncertainty for the retailers and traders

Taunton Deane Liberal Democrats note that the recent Traders Survey identified that 77% of the traders believe that Christmas Lights should be “safeguarded”. They also believe that with the demise of the Town Centre Company, the responsibility for supporting a fair and longer lasting strategy for making Taunton Sparkle is for the Council to agree to (a) extend the Christmas lights to the secondary areas mentioned above and (b) to agree to provide funding until Christmas 2018.

Accordingly it asks the DLO or other such organisation to cost out a programme to cover the extended area for 2015 onwards and to examine whether to hire or

purchase. The funding for this should come from any under spend in the previous year.

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Full Council - 9 December 2014

Hinkley Point C (HPC): Housing Funding Strategy

Report of the Housing and Community Strategy Officer

(This matter is the responsibility of Councillor Jean Adkins)

1. Executive Summary

Hinkley Point C (HPC) in accordance with the provision of the Section 106 Development Consent Order (DCO), is due to release a housing fund of £660,824 to assist in delivering additional housing capacity, in order to mitigate potential adverse effects on the local private rented and accordingly, the low cost housing market.

It is estimated that by early 2016, there will be a need for 1,350 beds across all tenures and across Taunton Deane, West Somerset and Sedgemoor, and that this need will increase to 2,200 by early 2019.

The Housing Funding Strategy has been developed to prioritise and help address the potential demand that could arise from the HPC Project. It includes the following initiatives:-

- a) **Somerset Homelet**- seeking to understand and assist in moderating the supply and demand through the online resource of Somerset Homelet;
- b) **Flexible Rent Support**- providing support for the most vulnerable trying to access the private rented sector;
- c) **Landlord Accreditation**- ensuring that a section of current private rented sector accommodation, including rooms, are of a good standard through minor works that are supported by grant monies;
- d) **Sustainable Management Service**- commission a sustainable management service that will provide accommodation for the most vulnerable;
- e) **Tenant Accreditation**- providing support to tenants to help them demonstrate they are responsible to landlords;
- f) **Empty Property Regeneration**- utilising empty properties that will be brought back into use for the most vulnerable; and
- g) **First Time Buyers Loan**- assisting first time buyers to purchase their own homes through Wessex Home Improvement Loans.

These projects have been developed in partnership and their implementation will be co-ordinated by a Housing Implementation Officer (HIO). The projects will then be delivered by both internal and external services such as Housing Options, Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership (SWPSHP) and many others.

The Housing Funding Strategy has already received the Corporate Scrutiny approval on 11 November 2014.

It is recommended that Members:

- Endorse the approach of the 'Hinkley Point C: Housing Funding Strategy' so as to simplify approvals to be obtained from West Somerset Cabinet and Full Council when the monies are released.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Housing Fund of £660,824 was secured through the DCO pursuant to Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and will become available over the next year.
- 2.2 The fund was secured to provide financial support for initiatives designed to deliver additional housing capacity in order to mitigate any potential adverse effects on the local housing market that might arise from HPC.
- 2.2.1 There is the opportunity for a further £5 million to be shared amongst North Somerset, Taunton Deane, Sedgemoor and West Somerset from the Housing Fund Contingency Payments should it be evident from the private rented sector thresholds have been exceeded by unanticipated demand from the HPC workforce for accommodation and/ or unanticipated negative impacts on the housing supply.
- 2.3 The premise and angle from which the Housing Funding Strategy has been drafted is based on the fact that the current housing market in TDBC faces similar challenges to those of our neighbouring councils impacted by Hinkley, where demand exceeds supply. We recognise that the Hinkley development will put an enormous strain on housing supply in our area.
- 2.4 **Homefinder Somerset** (HFS) data for housing demand remains high despite the recent introduction of the local connection criteria whereby applicants would need to have lived in the area for the last 6 out of 12 months, have an offer / permanent employment in the area or close family living in the area.

Age/ Band	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
2013/14	406	747	2152	3305
Age N/A	0	0	3	3
17- 21	15	66	154	235
22- 29	49	229	519	797
30- 39	42	170	513	725
40- 59	196	179	602	977

60 +	104	103	361	568
2012/13	413	1439	1780	3632
Age N/A	2	12	4	18
17- 21	23	197	85	305
22- 29	43	460	376	879
30- 39	50	342	425	817
40- 59	183	292	529	1004
60 +	112	136	361	610

Bed/ Band	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
2013/14	406	747	2152	3305
1	250	306	1260	1816
2	118	272	657	1047
3	15	103	203	321
4	10	56	28	94
5	9	8	4	21
6+	4	2	0	6
2012/13	413	1439	1780	3632
1	261	837	926	2024
2	119	369	511	999
3	17	132	232	381
4	9	55	90	154
5	3	33	16	52
6+	4	13	5	22

2.4.1 The need continues to be for 1 bedroomed properties with 54.9% (2013/14) and 55.7% (2012/13) of the register bidding for 1 bedroomed properties.

2.4.2 TDBC also has the highest number of bids when compared with the 3 affected districts. Below are the figures for 2013/14.

Local Authority/ Bids by Banding	Gold	Silver	Bronze
Taunton Deane	6,596	19,398	25,249
Sedgemoor	3,500	19,464	21,756
West Somerset	1,249	3,354	5,123

2.5 Although the number of accepted **homeless** have reduced, TDBC continues to have a high number for 2013/14. The dominant reason for accepted homeless continues to be the termination of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST). The majority of acceptances were for female lone parents with dependent children. It is assumed that the HPC Project could inflate rents, making current tenants less attractive to landlords, thus increasing the terminations of AST.

Year	Accepted Homeless	Termination of AST	Non Priority Homeless
2013/14	102	35	15
2012/13	134	38	7
2011/12	174	40	11

- 2.6 There has also been a 48% increase in the **private rented sector** over the span of 10 years. The highest group of those living in the private rented sector are those aged 16-34.

*Neighbourhood Statistics: Dwelling stock by tenure- households:
QS4054EW & UV63*

Census/ Tenure	Owned	Social Rented	Private Rented
2011	31,393	7,321	7,942
2001	31,299	7,221	5,360

Nomis: DC4601EW

Age/ Tenure	Owned	Social Rented	Private Rented	Total
16- 34	2,336	1,269	3,140	6,745
35- 49	8,221	1,939	2,419	12,579
50- 64	10,093	1,745	1,454	13,292
65 and over	10,991	2,367	929	14,287

- 2.7 These figures will only increase as Housing Options become increasingly reliant on the **private rented sector** with 228 re-housed into the private rented sector and only 82 re-housed into social housing for 2013/14.
- 2.8 Revenue and Benefits data also reveal that the effects of **Welfare Reform** would make residents susceptible to the possible HPC changes.
- 2.8.1 As of April 2014, there are 2,116 PRS tenants on the Local Housing Allowance (LHA). This equates to almost 27% of the private rented sector.
- 2.8.2 LHA will now be up-rated in line with Consumer Price Index (CPI) instead of Retail Price Index (RPI). Although both these indexes measure inflation, CPI does not account for the rise in mortgage payments, rents, council tax etc. CPI also always results in a smaller figure as it utilises the geometric mean as opposed to the proportional difference. The difference each year is approximately 1.2%, with CPI losing out. This will lead to a further disparity between the level of LHA and actual market rents in the PRS.
- 2.8.3 Accordingly, the number of Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) has risen from 86 in 2012/13 to 348 in 2013/14. These payments can be used to support tenants struggling with rent or Council Tax payments (as below).
- 2.8.4 The introduction of Council Tax Support has also caused the number of Council Tax summons issued rise from 4,650 in 2012/13 to 6,610 in 2013/14. The number of Council Tax liability order has also risen from

2,501 in 2012/13 to 4,420 in 2013/14.

- 2.9 Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) data for 2013/14 also reveals the high numbers of local residents with housing issues whose situation could be further exacerbated by the HPC.

Issue/ Sector	LA	RSL	Private Rented Sector	Owner Occupier	Total footfall/ queries
Debt- Rent arrears/ Mortgage repayments	128	48	26	85	1,265
Current housing situation- Seeking housing advice	131	50	253	78	745

3. The Housing Funding Strategy

- 3.1 TDBC's Housing Funding Strategy has been developed in close partnership with Sedgemoor District Council (SDC) and West Somerset District Council (WSC). The initial principles and general shape of the utilisation of the Housing Fund has been agreed and are a range of inter-dependent initiatives, designed to help alleviate pressures on the local housing markets. It is envisioned that the initiatives will help respond to the impacts felt, however we will monitor the market closely to see whether future additional funding bids will be needed.
- 3.1.1 The Housing Funding Strategy has already received the Corporate Scrutiny approval on 11 November 2014.
- 3.2 The focus remains on the deliverability of the additional 700 bedspaces (by late 2016) required to mitigate the HPC impact. Each specific initiative has been reviewed in consultation with stakeholders and are outlined as below. Although some of the SWPSHP projects have moved on, these projects continue to deal with current issues and can act as **pilots** to be extended specifically to mitigate the impact of the HPC project. Learning from the pilots should make the initiatives more robust, lead to quicker implementation and more likely to be successful. Many elements of the initiatives are interdependent – discrete but interlinking components of Landlord and Tenant Services.
- 3.3 Four key joint principles were agreed by all three Councils and remain relevant as a focus on which to develop initiatives and are as below:

- 3.3.1 Increase capacity in the private rented sector where the impact is most likely to be felt;
 - 3.3.2 Maintain tenants in their current tenancies to prevent homelessness and reduce “churn” in the housing market;
 - 3.3.3 Make better use of existing accommodation to maximise occupation; and
 - 3.3.4 Make joint bids whenever appropriate, building on our well established partnership approach and strategic joint working processes.
- 3.4 Current evidence also suggests:
- 3.4.1 The majority of the HPC workforce will be single people, increasing competition and displacement of local residents for smaller and cheaper accommodation as existing demand for 1 bedroomed accommodation comprises around 50% of the Homefinder Somerset Housing Register.
 - 3.4.2 The construction workforce is likely to be influenced by housing and travel costs, hence looking for cheaper properties at the lower end of the market, with a preference for proximity to the HPC bus routes and the Park and Ride sites at Taunton town to reduce travel costs.
- 3.5 Hence the emphasis is on providing smaller accommodation in the Priority Area of Taunton town. To meet the timeframe, the initiatives have been developed in 4 key areas as below:
- 3.5.1 Landlord and Tenant Services - given the need to meet the potential demand in a relatively quick timeframe in the event of the works recommencing, the focus in the short-term must be on the private rented sector, already identified as the largest potential source of housing for HPC workers. Our aim is to increase, particularly the supply of good quality accommodation, available for everyone, including HPC workers, supported by a range of services to encourage some landlords to let properties to local residents who may otherwise be disadvantaged against HPC workers, especially regarding affordability.
 - 3.5.2 This will work hand in hand with existing internal HRA initiative of encouraging Mutual Exchange, designed to reduce pressure on smaller affordable accommodation by facilitating under-occupying tenants to mutually exchange their tenancies rather than seek appropriately-sized accommodation in the private rented sector or via

- the housing register. Reducing the number of tenants seeking to move via the housing register means that more social housing vacancies are available for 'general' applicants who are not social housing tenants. This will ensure that there is less need to meet their housing needs in the private rented sector.
- 3.5.3 Bringing empty properties back into use tend to be medium term, being very time and resource intensive.
 - 3.5.4 Linked to new discounted sales properties, First Time Buyer Loans can enable potential purchasers to top up their savings to enable them to pay the deposit required.
 - 3.6 The main initiatives are as below and further details of the initiatives can be found in the Strategy itself (Appendix 2).

Private Sector Initiatives

2.2.1:	Accreditation of landlords
2.2.2:	Stimulating new supply in the private rented sector through financial assistance for minor improvements
2.2.3:	Bringing empty homes back into beneficial use through financial assistance to owners:
2.2.4:	Supporting a rent deposit or guarantee scheme through the provision of rent deposits for households moving into the private rented sector
2.2.6:	Facilitating household moves from the private rented sector into intermediate or owner occupied market accommodation through equity loans to residents in the owner occupied or private rented sectors;
Other	
2.2.11:	Any other initiative that would deliver additional housing capacity that might be necessary;
2.2.12:	The employment by the Councils of Housing Initiative Implementation Officers; and
2.2.13:	Funding other housing mitigation measures , such as emergency housing services.

4. Finance Comments

- 4.1 This funding is available under a Section 106 agreement and so can only be used for the purpose of delivering additional housing capacity in Taunton Deane as set out in the agreement.
- 4.2 Where possible, the use of the funding should remain flexible to allow the chosen schemes to adapt to demand and ensure the best use of the funding. The use of recyclable loans where possible is encouraged as this allows the funding to be reinvested and further bed spaces created in the medium term.

- 4.3 The impact of HPC on housing need in the borough needs to be carefully monitored over the period to examine both the demand linked to HPC and to ensure the effectiveness of the proposals. If demand is higher than anticipated, further funding should be sought from the Housing Fund Contingency Payments.

5. Legal Comments

- 5.1 The proposed Strategy reflects the intentions for the fund as envisaged in the Section 106 Agreement and supports the DCO accordingly.

6. Links to Corporate Aims

- 6.1 The initiatives are directly linked to the aims and objectives outlined in TDBC's Corporate Business Plan 2013- 2016.
- 6.2 The initiatives would clearly increase the supply of affordable homes through avenues such as promoting an increased supply of private rented stock and tackling empty homes.

7. Environmental Implications

- 7.1 Provision of accommodation that are suitably linked to transportation for the HPC workers will serve to reduce carbon emissions.
- 7.2 Further, initiatives to increase the standard of the current private rented sector, either through the Landlord Accreditation grants or bringing back empty homes into use will serve to increase energy efficiency and to reduce fuel poverty.

8. Community Safety Implications

- 8.1 The initiative of bringing empty homes back into use will greatly reduce anti-social behaviour that is associated to vacant properties. The reduction of such anti-social behaviour will only serve to increase the security of the area, including the 'look and feel' of the area in accordance to the Priority Area Strategy.
- 8.2 The initiatives in general should also alleviate the pressure on Council and Housing Association stock to provide for the most vulnerable, therefore reducing homelessness in general.

9. Equalities Impact

9.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out and is attached at Appendix 1.

10. Risk Management

Risk	Consequence	Probability	Impact	Action to mitigate
	To the customer			
Members do not agree the Funding Strategy.	There will be the effects of the increasing and detrimental deficits in the private rented sector, thus increasing homelessness bills for temporary accommodation.	1	4	That solid foundations are put in place to ensure initiatives are financially and reputationally sound and sustainable.
Insufficient staff resources (operations).	Services offered would not be consistent. Customers would lose interest in the project.	2	4	To ensure that partners are identified and sufficient resources assigned and procedures tightened.
Incoherent Policies.	Lack of joined up Policies will lead to an inconsistent service and results.	2	4	The Project Team to continue working together to fine tune processes and procedures.
Partners unwilling to work alongside initiatives.	The initiatives relies on the crucial support of partners for delivery due to budget constraints.	2	4	The Project Team to continue working together to engage and retain partners in delivery.
Landlords and tenants offered assistance which later becomes unaffordable.	Landlords and tenants become disincentivised with the scheme.	1	4	The Project Team to set out clearly the partners and the assistance available.

10.1 A separate risk and issues log will be developed and monitored for each project.

11. Partnership Implications (if any)

11.1 TDBC will continue to work closely with the following partners: SDC, WSC, HPC, Housing Options, Taunton Association for the Homeless (TAH), SWPSHP, Somerset Care and Repair and Wessex Home Improvement Loans to deliver services that will benefit the residents of TDBC.

12. Recommendations

12.1 That Full Council is **recommended** to endorse the approach of the 'Hinkley Point C: Housing Funding Strategy' so as to simplify approvals to be obtained from West Somerset Cabinet and Full Council when the monies are released.

Contact: Christine Chu Hui Davies, Housing & Community Strategy Officer,
TDBC
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APPENDIX 1
Equality Impact Assessment – Hinkley Point C Housing Funding Strategy

Responsible person	Simon Lewis	Job Title: Assistant Director- Housing and Community Development
Why are you completing the Equality Impact Assessment? (Please mark as appropriate)	Proposed new policy or service	New service
	Change to Policy or Service	
	Budget/Financial decision – MTFP	Yes
	Part of timetable	
What are you completing the Equality Impact Assessment on (which policy, service, MTFP proposal)	The Councils are recommending that Members endorse the approach of ‘Hinkley Point C: Housing Funding Strategy’. The Funding Strategy lists a range of inter-dependent initiatives that will assist in alleviating the pressure on the private rented sector as a result of Hinkley Point C.	
Section One – Scope of the assessment		
What are the main purposes/aims of the policy?	Maximise Hinkley Point C monies to enable and support increasing the supply of affordable private rented sector housing in order to mitigate the adverse effects of Hinkley Point C workers inflating rents and reducing the numbers of 1 bed properties that are much needed in this climate.	
Which protected groups are targeted by the policy?	Persons in Housing Need- Demand outstrips supply and there is a constant need to increase affordable housing options for cross sections of the most vulnerable such as the very young and very old. Female lone parents are also more likely to be living in poor quality housing and made homeless. Consequently, they may benefit from the affordable private rented sector properties that will be made available. There are also efforts to increase the standards of these properties. Further details as below.	
What evidence has been used in the assessment - data, engagement undertaken – please list each source that has been used The information can be found on....	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Census 2011 - Somerset Strategic Housing Framework - Somerset Homelessness Strategy - Joint Strategic Needs Assessment - Taunton Deane & West Somerset Housing Waiting List from Homefinder Somerset - Empty Property Database - Other Equality Impact Assessments 	

<p>Section two – Conclusion drawn about the impact of service/policy/function/change on different groups highlighting negative impact, unequal outcomes or missed opportunities for promoting equality</p>	
<p>Age: In terms of meeting homelessness and housing need priorities, Housing Options currently capture adequate data on age of all homeless and those on the housing waiting list. The Housing Legislation provides specific protection and priority for the very young and older applicants who are homeless and looking for an allocation of social housing. Although there are no evidence that those in any age group are disadvantaged in their access to services, it is known that young people do have issues accessing housing from an affordability perspective with almost 3 million people aged 20- 34 living with their parents in 2011, a 20% increase on the number in 1997. Further, changes to entitlement to housing benefit in the private rented sector (where shared room rate applies to those single applicants that are under 35) only serve to exacerbate the affordability issue. Locally, the age group 17-44 has the highest number of homeless acceptances and the aid and access for this group is addressed by the Somerset Homelessness Strategy. Older people may also be disproportionately affected by the need to downsize as a result of welfare benefit reforms. Accordingly, it will be important that affordable private rented sector properties brought back into use are channelled for advertising through Somerset Homelet to enable communicate to a wider clientele, servicing both Hinkley Point C workers and our most vulnerable.</p> <p>Disability: In terms of meeting homelessness and housing need priorities, research done in 2009 by the Equality and Human Rights Commission indicated that disabled people have higher unemployment rates compared with the total working age population and as such may be more at risk of incurring rent arrears, therefore at a higher risk of being displaced. There is also a known shortage of accessible housing for some disabled people, leading to a lack of choice and inappropriate housing when presenting as homeless or for advice on their housing options. Again, it will be important that affordable private rented sector properties are channelled for advertising through Somerset Homelet that will reach disabled people living in unsuitable housing. It will also be the duty of the relevant partners to ensure that the additional needs of disabled people are met with adequate support such as large print documents.</p> <p>Gender, Transgender or Gender Reassignment: Transgendered people may be particularly at risk of housing crisis and homelessness arising from transphobic reactions, hate crime and harassment by family, neighbours and members of their local community. Transgendered people may also fear disclosing their identity to housing officers for fear that they will not be treated with dignity and respect, causing in turn lack of access to appropriate housing services. This is currently addressed by the Somerset Homelessness Strategy and the close partnership with the Housing Options team will ensure that the needs of this groups is not ignored.</p>	

Pregnancy and Maternity: Housing Legislation provides specific protection and priority for those pregnant or on maternity who are homeless and looking for an allocation of social housing. Since 1 April 2004, it has been unlawful for local authorities to house families with children and pregnant women in bed and breakfast accommodation for more than 6 weeks. Despite this, non-priority homeless from this group remains high and liaison with the Housing Options team will remain pivotal and provide a positive and direct impact on this group.

Race: Many migrants may choose to share dwellings for cultural or financial reasons thus creating a greater need for larger accommodation although many migrants are single people seeking work. Current economic migration from abroad from poorer countries is also likely to affect housing tenure by sustaining demand for cheaper, private sector rented accommodation which could possibly be sourced from empty properties brought back into use. BME groups also often represent a higher proportion of rough sleepers which the Somerset Homelessness Strategy addresses. Again, close relationship with the Housing Options team will ensure that discrimination against this group will be eliminated.

Religion or Belief: Caps on the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) for private rents in the area may impact on larger families and, therefore, disproportionately on certain religious groups who may have multi-generational families/ larger family groups living in 1 property. However, as the perceived impact is believed to be on 1 bed properties, it will again be liaison with the Housing Options team to monitor and to increase the use of Somerset Homelet to enable access of this group to a wider selection of properties.

Sex: In 2011, women accounted for 92% of lone parents with dependent children. This percentage has changed little since 2001 as women are more likely to take the main caring responsibilities for any children when the relationship breaks down, and therefore become lone parents. Single men are also overrepresented in rough sleeper counts and non-priority homeless categories and may be linked to the fact that 32% of rough sleepers are prison leavers and 6% have been in the armed forces at some point in their lives. Access for these groups are supported by the Homelessness Strategy and liaison with the Housing Options team will continue to ensure that access to social lettings or affordable private rented sector accommodation is achieved for this group.

Sexual Orientation: There is no known barrier to access the service and no perceived issues to potential tenants, whether local or HPC workers.

Marriage and Civil Partnership: There is no barrier to access the service and no perceived issues as there is little evidence at present that marriage and civil partnerships impacts upon availability of or access to housing.

There are no perceived negative outcomes of this work, except if the implementation is unsustainable. Accordingly, our approach is deliberately cost effective, more focussed on longer term sustainable outcomes to avoid this. The delivery of the initiatives will also seek to advance equality of opportunity for all groups identified, especially to aid the disadvantaged groups to access appropriate housing.

I have concluded that there is/should be:

No major change - no adverse equality impact identified	No adverse impact identified at this stage. To be kept under review through the 12 month term.
Adjust the policy	
Continue with the policy	
Stop and remove the policy	

Reasons and documentation to support conclusions

The engagement activity with the affected groups will identify any impacts which are unforeseen by the project team at this time.

Section four – Implementation – timescale for implementation

The project is intended to be implemented as soon as the formal approval of recommendations to proceed.

Section Five – Sign off

Responsible officer: Simon Lewis Date: 04.11.2014	Management Team Date
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Section six – Publication and monitoring

Published on

Next review date	Date logged on Covalent
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Action Planning

The table should be completed with all actions identified to mitigate the effects concluded.

Actions table						
Service area	Housing Options			Date	04.11.2014	
Identified issue drawn from your conclusions	Actions needed	Who is responsible?	By when?	How will this be monitored?	Expected outcomes from carrying out actions	
Members of disadvantaged groups do not have access to the affordable private rented sector properties.	Close working relationship with the Housing Options team to ensure these properties are marketed to appropriate groups to increase access.	Housing Options	As soon as possible	Management	Increased accommodation for the use of disadvantaged groups in housing need.	
Disabled people would need additional support.	The partner delivery agents would ensure that processes are in place eg. Literature produced in large print, one to one appointments, home visits etc.	All partner delivery agents	As soon as possible	Management	Disabled people would have better prospects of having access to affordable private rented sector properties.	

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Full Council – 9 December 2014

Proposed Social Media Policy and Recording of Meetings Protocol

Report of the Assistant Chief Executive

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Mark Edwards)

Executive Summary

This report provides a background and rationale for the Council to adopt a Social Media Policy and a Recording of Meetings Protocol and recommends that the two documents are adopted and that arrangements are made to commence audio recordings of Council and Committee meetings open to the public and that details are obtained in regard to the possibility of all such meetings being filmed and streamed live on the internet.

1. Background Information

- 1.1 The Council already operates within a world where the use of Social Media is growing and becoming an increasingly significant way of communicating with individuals and organisations.
- 1.2 The Council uses a Twitter account and currently has approximately 800 Twitter followers which are growing at approximately 100 per month.
- 1.3 In addition, some individual Councillors and members of staff already have their own Twitter accounts and Facebook pages and no doubt going forward this trend will be on the increase as Social Media continues to evolve.
- 1.4 Against this background Southwest Audit Partnership has recommended that the Councils should have an approved Social Media Policy to provide guidance for Councillors and staff and minimise the risk of exposing the Authority to reputational damage. It should be emphasised that such a Policy is not about controlling what people do as individuals but rather providing a framework for them to make informed and balanced choices.
- 1.5 In the light of this advice, Officers have looked at the practice elsewhere including liaising with the Local Government Association and external specialists and drafted a Social Media Policy - attached as Appendix A to the report.
- 1.6 The draft Policy documents were considered at the meeting of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee held on 28 October, 2014 when it was agreed to ask that the Assistant Chief Executive tidy up the draft documentation to ensure a

distinction between Policy and best practice. It felt that there were too many appendices in the report received and this could lead to confusion.

The Council are therefore requested to consider adopting the Social Media Policy as set out in the appendix. If the policy is adopted, Guidelines on how to use social media effectively and an easy to read summary policy document will be produced to assist councillors and employees to operate safely within the policy requirements.

- 1.7 On a related matter, the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 have made it a requirement for Councils to allow any member of the public to take photographs, film and audio record the proceedings, and report on all public meetings
- 1.8 In the light of these developments the Somerset Monitoring Officers' Group have prepared a draft protocol which is to be considered for adoption by all the Local Authorities in Somerset – attached at Appendix B to this report.
- 1.9 The draft protocol was also considered at the meeting of the Corporate Scrutiny meeting held on 28th October, 2014 when in addition to supporting the adoption of a clear protocol, the Committee recommended that Council support proposals to ensure that audio recordings of all public meetings of Taunton Deane Borough Council take effect from 1 January 2015 and are made available to the public via the internet or through whatever other appropriate means.
- 1.10 The Council have already agreed – and allocated funding - to update the microphone loop system and this is in hand to be introduced within two to three months. If the Council did wish to proceed with audio recording the public part of its meetings then all that would be required would be to purchase a small recording device that was compatible with the new system at an estimated cost of up to £200 which could be found from existing budgets.
- 1.11 The Corporate Scrutiny Committee also asked the Assistant Chief Executive to produce a report to Corporate Scrutiny on how to upgrade the recording to a full visual one for all meetings for streaming immediately (with the costings) for introduction later in 2015 and requested that a training programme for Members be introduced as soon as possible to improve the techniques of public speaking to ensure that the audio recordings are clear and as articulate as possible to assist those members of the public in understanding the subject matter and follow the debates with relative ease.

2. Legal Comments

- 2.1 The adoption of a Social Media Policy reduces the risk of corporate social media accounts being misused and becoming the possible source of litigation claims. In addition the adoption of a Recording of Meetings Protocol would also ensure that the Council meets its legal obligations under the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 and by audio recording its

meetings the council would ensure that it has a comprehensive and accurate record of the proceedings.

3. Links to Corporate Aims

- 3.1 This report has no direct links to Corporate Aims although the adoption of the proposed social media policy and recording of meetings protocol should underpin good governance arrangements.

4. Environmental and Community Safety Implications

- 4.1 This report has no environmental and community safety implications.

5. Equalities Impact

- 5.1 The adoption of a social media policy should enhance the ability to manage issues and minimise the risk of material on Council Social Media Accounts that could potentially put the Council at a reputational risk for breaching any aspect of the Equalities Act.

6. Risk Management

- 6.1 The adoption of the suggested policy and protocol should minimise the risks of Corporate Social Media Accounts would be misused, and regulated and reduce the likelihood of the Authority being exposed to reputational damage.

7. Partnership Implications

- 7.1 There are no direct Partnership Implications associated with this report.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1 The Council adopts the Social Media Policy, with or without amendments, as set out in Appendix A to this report;
- 8.2 That Council adopts the Recording of Meetings Protocol, with or without amendments, as set out in Appendix B to this report;
- 8.3 That Council supports the introduction of audio recording of all for all Council and Committee meetings which are open to the press and public to coincide with the installation of a new microphone system to take effect from 1 January, 2015 or as soon as possible thereafter; and
- 8.4 That Council notes the request by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee to receive a report on the practicalities and costs of introducing visual recordings of meetings and supports the Committee's request for training to be provided for members in relation to the recording of meetings protocol and the use of social media.

APPENDIX A



Deane Borough Council
The Deane House,
Belvedere Road,
Taunton TA1 1HE

Social media policy and guidelines

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Last updated: September 2014.

For more information about Taunton Deane services visit:

www.tauntondeane.gov.uk

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1 Introduction to this document

Social media policy and guidelines

The purpose of this social media policy and guidelines is to equip and enable Taunton Deane Borough Council staff and Councillors to interact and communicate safely and lawfully online.

It applies to everyone who works for and behalf of the council, including contractors, and has been designed to guide you through what you can expect from the councils. It outlines what our policies are, what we expect from you and where to get more information.

You are required to observe these guidelines when having an online conversation about the council – either personally or on behalf of the council.

We trust our staff and Councillors and encourage you to be responsible and not bring the organisation into disrepute.

It's important to avoid ambiguity. For example, if you have a LinkedIn profile stating you work for Taunton Deane Borough Council or represent a council ward, any views you share as status updates or discussions, could be seen to represent the council rather than your own view. Be mindful of that fact and act accordingly.

Remember that only designated spokespeople are permitted to communicate officially on behalf of the council.

Contact the Media and Communications Officer with any queries.

2 What is social media?

Social media is the term commonly given to Internet and mobile-based channels and tools that allow users to interact with each other and share opinions and content.

As the name implies, social media involves the building of communities or networks and encouraging participation and engagement.

Taunton Deane Borough Council enables and encourages the effective use of social media to support the work we do and things we care about.

This includes Taunton Dean Borough Council's core values of:

- **Integrity** – we will be honest, do what's right and stick to it
- **Fairness** – we will consistently treat everyone as an equal, respecting their individual needs and abilities
- **Respect** – we will always show respect for everyone
- **Trust** – we will show trust and confidence in our staff and customers

It is important that you are also aware of our ICT Security Policy:

<http://portal/sites/personnel/web%20part%20pages/EmployeeHandbook.aspx>
which covers the security and safekeeping of equipment and facilities and HR policies and guidance:

<http://portal/sites/personnel/web%20part%20pages/EmployeeHandbook.aspx>
regarding conduct, equality and diversity, harassment and bullying at work.

2.1 Which media matter?

Social media is always evolving and is now commonplace not only for individuals to have personal social media accounts but organisations too.

Interacting with audiences and stakeholders through various social media channels is a rewarding part of building a brand online and highlighting the work that we do.

Organisations and their staff use corporate and/or official social media accounts to share ideas, offer first-hand comment, and build relationships.

This policy and guidelines cover all social media including and not limited to:

- Blogs
- Community sites
- Facebook
- Flickr
- Forums
- Google+
- Instagram
- LinkedIn
- Ning
- Pinterest
- Snapchat
- Social bookmarking sites (e.g. Diigo, StumbleUpon)
- Texts
- Tumblr
- Twitter
- Wikipedia
- Videos

- YouTube

It also includes your actions on social media e.g. liking, pinning, retweeting, direct messaging and commenting.

Effective use of social media will play an increasing role in our communication and engagement work allowing us, as organisations and individually, to develop networks of influence and participate in digital discussions.

With that in mind, it's important that everyone knows what to expect from us and what we expect from you.

3 What you can expect from us

Taunton Deane Borough Council uses a number of approved social media accounts and platforms.

We use them to interact with residents and businesses, the press and interested parties. However, the primary channel for communication remains email and telephone and the organisation continues to encourage residents and businesses to log any feedback or complaints via those methods.

If you have any queries about our social media accounts please contact Debbie Rundle, Media and Communications Officer, Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset Council: 01823 356407 extension 2212.

Or email Debbie: D.Rundle@tauntondeane.gov.uk.

3.1 Our official social media presence includes:

Twitter:

@TDBC: <https://www.twitter.com/TDBC>

Other ad-hoc accounts

Taunton Deane Borough Council has specified accounts on Twitter for different purposes:

@somerfest <http://www.twitter.com/somerfest>

@tauntonbusiness: <http://www.twitter.com/tauntonbusiness>

@tauntonmayor: <http://www.twitter.com/tauntonmayor>

@tauntonTIC: <http://www.twitter.com/tauntonTIC>

There are also some dormant accounts:

YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/OurSomerset>

3.2 Creating new accounts:

Taunton Deane Borough Council has certain criteria that have to be met before official social media accounts can be approved and used.

Employees are not permitted to create social profiles bearing council names without express permission from the Media and Communications Officer.

New accounts will be considered by the Media and Communications Officer on a case-by-case basis, and any business case needs to include the following information:

1. Overall purpose for the account
2. How it links with our business strategy
3. Who will resource the account on a daily basis
4. Who will be the named person responsible for the account and the related security e.g. safe storage of passwords and access information.

3.3 Storing passwords

Official social accounts relating Taunton Deane Borough Council are managed centrally by the Media and Communications Officer. This includes storing passwords and profile information.

If you have been accepted for approval to create a social media profile on behalf of the company, your password must be kept in a central place for business continuity purposes. The Media and Communications Officer will advise you on the correct procedure should your business case for a profile be accepted.

4 Guidelines – what we expect from you

Social media guidelines – what we expect from you:

Expected and accepted behaviours

The following principles are the basis of our social media policy and guidelines.

If you are unclear about any aspect of them, talk to your line manager, HR or the Communications team.

4.1 Be honest about who you are

Best practice is always to be honest about who you are without giving out detailed personal information.

Be sure to identify yourself as working for or representing the council if the conversation is about our business or our sector. Not only is this the ethical thing to do, but in some countries, such as the USA, there may be legal personal liability if you don't.

4.2 Make it clear your opinions are your own

Unless you are authorised by the Communications team, you cannot speak on behalf of the council. Do not portray yourself as a spokesperson, even in an unofficial capacity, on any issues relating to Taunton Deane Borough Council.

You can state that you work for or represent the organisation in your personal profiles, but make it clear that your opinions are your own.

To make it clear what your relationship is with the organisation, you can include the fact you work for Taunton Deane council in your biography, or that you represent one of the council's wards.

4.3 Share only public information

It is good business practice for organisations and individuals to keep certain information and topics confidential. Share only public information when speaking about Taunton Deane Borough Council, or the public sector.

Protect your colleagues by refraining from sharing their personal information or any conversations or statements unless you have their written permission to do so.

Do not bring anyone into an online conversation without their prior permission. To do so could cause misunderstanding, violate commercial contracts or confidentiality agreements or damage a relationship. Respect confidentiality and do not disclose non-public council information or the private information of others.

4.4 Be aware that what you say is permanent

Assume that everyone will be reading every post, no matter how secure or obscure the site may seem.

Therefore, consider everything you post to the Internet to be the same as making it public. Don't forget that search engines mean it is impossible to 'take anything back' so remember your posts are both public and permanent.

4.5 Be respectful of everyone and mind your manners

Treat everyone, including yourself, with respect. Acknowledge difference of opinion and avoid posting anything that could be seen as offensive, threatening, bullying, derogatory, demeaning, abusive or inappropriate.

Withdraw from any discussions that go off the topic or become disrespectful. This includes criticising or arguing with residents, businesses or staff. Remember that people can form an opinion about the council based on your behaviour.

4.6 Keep safe online

Ensure that you choose your privacy and security settings on social networks carefully. This is important to control what information you share and who can see your updates and images. Most sites have detailed explanations to guide you through choosing what is right for you.

Be aware that 'private' is not always private – see point 4.4 above.

4.7 Same laws and rules apply

Always remember to adhere to our existing policies when participating online as a Taunton Deane Borough Council employee or Councillor when discussing our business.

Due to the nature of digital communications, ensure you respect intellectual property (e.g. trademarks, image ownership and copyright), stock exchange regulations and financial disclosure.

You are free to publish and comment via social media in accordance with the policies below and advice in these guidelines, which are applicable to all staff, contractors and consultants.

- HR policies and guidance regarding staff conduct, equality and diversity, harassment and bullying at work
- <http://portal/sites/personnel/web%20part%20pages/EmployeeHandbook.aspx>

Contact: Fiona Wills f.wills@tauntondeane.gov.uk

- ICT policy and guidance regarding the use of technology, computers, email and the internet

<http://portal/sites/personnel/web%20part%20pages/EmployeeHandbook.aspx>

Contact: Fiona Kirkham f.kirkham@tauntondeane.gov.uk

- Policies and guidance regarding the confidentiality, privacy and the protection of data applying to our staff, residents, and commercial and financial information that is not in the public domain
- <http://portal/sites/personnel/web%20part%20pages/EmployeeHandbook.aspx>

Contact: Fiona Kirkham f.kirkham@tauntondeane.gov.uk

- Copyright and intellectual property guidance
- <http://portal/sites/personnel/web%20part%20pages/EmployeeHandbook.aspx>

Contact: Fiona Kirkham
Councillor Code of Conduct
(LINK)

Contact: Bruce Lang bdlang@westsomerset.gov.uk

4.8 The need for an official response

Sometimes there may be a need for an official response from the council via social media. If you spot a potential issue, bring it to the attention of the Media and Communications Officer before it reaches a crisis. Act sooner rather than later, to stop the issue escalating.

The Communications team monitors social media on behalf of both organisations. However, we all have a duty to protect our reputation, so please do flag any issues you spot.

4.9 When in doubt, ask

If you find yourself in a situation where you are unsure what the appropriate response is on social media, pause to decide whether you should refrain, ask a colleague, your line manager or the Media and Communications Officer for advice.

5 Guidelines at a glance

1. Be honest about who you are
2. Make it clear that your opinions are your own
3. Share only public information
4. Be aware that what you post is public and permanent

5. Mind your manners: be respectful of everyone
6. Keep safe online and review security settings
7. Remember the same laws and rules apply
8. Sometimes an official response will be needed
9. When in doubt, pause or ask.

6 Expected and accepted behaviours

If you're a manager

If you are a manager, familiarise yourself with this document and be prepared to answer questions from your team.

If you're an employee

Ensure you have read these guidelines thoroughly and discuss any queries with your line manager, HR or the Communications team.

Breaching Taunton Deane Borough Council policies and guidance may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

If you're a Councillor

Familiarise yourself with this document and read the accompanying guidance for members appended to this policy. Acting without regard to this policy and guidance may result in a breach of the Members' Code of Conduct.

7 Responsibilities

Overall responsibility for this policy

Every Taunton Deane Borough Council staff member and Councillor has a responsibility to adhere to these guidelines.

The Communications team will monitor, review and escalate issues, however, all employees and councillors are encouraged to raise any concerns, queries or questions they have relating to social media use.

Updating these guidelines

These guidelines will be updated annually according to the needs of the organisation, and your input and feedback is welcomed.

Contacts

Debbie Rundle, Media and Communications Officer, Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset Council: 01823 356407 extension 2212.
Email Debbie: D.Rundle@tauntondeane.gov.uk.

Document last updated: July 2014.



Taunton Deane Borough
Council
The Deane House,
Belvedere Road,
Taunton TA1 1HE

For more information about Taunton Deane services visit:
www.tauntondeane.gov.uk

APPENDIX B

Taunton Deane Borough Council Recording Protocol: Third Party Recording of Committees, Boards and Panels:

In accordance with the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 recording is allowed at all formal meetings of the authority to enable those not present to see or hear the proceedings either as they take place (or later) and to enable the reporting of those proceedings.

In this Protocol references to:

- 'Recording' covers any means used to record the proceedings including filming, auto-recording and the use of photography.
- 'Reporting' covers the reporting of the business of the meeting via any social media.
- 'Council meetings' covers all formal Full Council, Cabinet and Committee meetings which are open to the press and public to attend and other meetings as agreed at the time by the Council.

Accordingly:

1. Recording and reporting of Council meetings is permitted subject to the requirements set out below.
2. Those wishing to record proceedings should, as a courtesy, inform the chair (or clerk) of the committee of their intentions prior to the beginning of the meeting.
3. Where the Council is notified in advance of an intention to record, the Chairman at the start of the meeting will announce that the meeting or part of it may be recorded by a third party and will ask if any member of the public objects to being recorded. If objections are raised, then the person responsible for the recording must take all reasonable steps to ensure that an individual request not to be recorded is complied with.
4. Recordings may only be taken from the area designated for the public and:
 - Recording devices must be in silent mode
 - No flash or additional lighting is permitted
 - Recordings must be taken from one fixed position and must not obstruct others from observing proceedings.
5. If a meeting includes the consideration of exempt or confidential business then recording must cease prior to the consideration of such business and the recording equipment must be removed from the meeting room for the duration of the consideration of such business. If the person doing the recording is not present then the clerk shall remove the equipment from the meeting room for the consideration of confidential or exempt business.

6. Any person can provide a written commentary during the course of a meeting that falls under this Protocol. Oral commentaries are not permitted within the meeting room during the course of the meeting.

7. The Chairman can require recording to be stopped where:

- The requirements of section 3 above are not met by the person doing the recording
- The press and public are excluded from the meeting due to the nature of (exempt or confidential) business being discussed
- There is public disturbance or a suspension/adjournment of a meeting
- The recording has become disruptive or distracting to the good order and conduct of the meeting
- Where it is considered that continuing the recording might infringe the rights of an individual or intimidate them.

Rules for use of Recordings by Third Parties

A The law applies to any information recorded and transmitted including the laws on defamation, public order, Human Rights and Data Protection and intellectual property rights. Freedom of speech within the law should also be exercised with personal and social responsibility.

B. Any published recording should be accompanied by a statement of when and where the recording was made, the context of the discussion, and a clear identification of the main speakers and their role or title.

C. Those making recordings must not edit the recording in a way that could lead to misinterpretation or misrepresentation of the proceedings or comments made by attendees. In particular there should be no internal editing of published extracts; recordings may start at any point and end at any point but the material between those points must be complete.

D Those making recordings will be responsible for any breaches of the law resulting from their use of recorded material. The Council takes no responsibility for any recording carried out by a third party or its subsequent use.

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Full Council – 9 December 2014

Joint Independent Remuneration Panel – Process to Review Members' Allowances

Report of the Assistant Chief Executive

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Vivienne Stock-Williams)

1. Executive Summary

The report seeks:-

- (a) To advise the Council of the latest position with regard to the membership of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel; and
- (b) Members' endorsement for the timetable and process to review the Council's Member Allowances Scheme in light of the May 2015 Local Government Elections.

2. Background

- 2.1 Following further deliberations, the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel now comprises Somerset County Council, Taunton Deane Borough Council, West Somerset Council and Mendip District Council.
- 2.2 Full membership of the proposed panel is set out in Appendix A to this report. Full Council is requested to note and endorse the composition of the Panel.
- 2.3 Given the impending May 2015 elections, it is important that there is clarity in terms of a process and timetable for reviewing the Members' Allowance Scheme.
- 2.4 The Joint Independent Remuneration Panel met on 27 November 2014 and have recommended to the constituent partners that the process for the formal review of the Members' Allowances Scheme should be as follows:-
 - (a) To continue to apply the existing scheme for the first part of the 2015/2016 financial year, pending the adoption of a revised scheme of Members' Allowances following the Borough Council Elections in May 2015.

- (b) To recommend to the Council to be elected in May 2015 that the budget for Members' Allowances for 2015/2016 to fund the new scheme following the election is contained within the total budget for Members' Allowances for 2014/2015.
- (c) To agree to carry out a survey of Members' views on the Council scheme in advance of the 2015 Borough Council Elections to inform decisions in relation to new scheme.
- (d) To agree the following timetable for the review and implementation of a new scheme of Members' allowances:-

(i) Pre-Borough Elections

- To carry out a survey of Members to ascertain views on the scheme, suggestions for improvements, numbers of hours worked per week on Council business (to inform future Panel recommendations in relation to the allowances scheme).
- To review the base calculation for the Basic Allowance and agree in principle (subject to affirmation by the new Council) the new basis for the basic allowance calculation.
- To agree in principle the future indexing of the Basic Allowance both in terms of the methodology and the length of time it will be applied pending review.
- To review the overall make-up of the scheme and make any further recommendations to Full Council for consideration and in principle approval prior to the elections.

(ii) Post Borough Elections

- Meeting of the Panel to be held in June 2015 once the annual meeting of the Council has agreed the Committee structure and the Leader has agreed the Executive arrangements of the Council.
- Panel to bring recommendations to the July 2015 Council meeting for a new scheme to ask Council to endorse the in principle recommendations from the earlier Council meeting in respect of Basic Allowance and agree Special Responsibility Allowances, the list of approved duties, travel allowance provisions, Carers Allowance etc.
- Full Council in July to agree new Scheme of Members' Allowances having considered the recommendations of the Panel and to backdate payments as necessary.

2.5 The Council is requested to endorse the process and timetable as put forward by the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel.

3. Finance Comments

- 3.1 In an effort to ensure that any proposals that come forward will be affordable it is suggested that a clear steer is provided to maintain the Members' Allowance Budget for 2015/2016 to similar levels as the budget included for this purpose in the financial year 2014/2015.

4. Legal Comments

None in respect of this report.

5. Links to Corporate Aims

Not applicable.

6. Environmental and Community Safety Implications

Not applicable.

7. Equalities Impact

None in respect of this report.

8. Consultation Implications

- 8.1 None in respect of this report; Members will be fully involved in any review of the Members' Allowance Scheme by providing information via a survey and having the final say in terms of the Council making a decision in respect of any recommendations emanating from the panel.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1 Council notes the formal expansion of the Panel to include Taunton Deane Borough Council.
- 9.2 The Council endorses the Panel membership including the proposed representatives for Mendip District Council and Taunton Deane Borough Council.
- 9.3 That the Council endorses the timetable and process from the formal review of the Taunton Deane Borough Council Members' Allowance Scheme as set out in Section 5.

Contact: Bruce Lang, Assistant Chief Executive
01984 635200
Email: bdlang@westsomerset.gov.uk

Appendix A

Membership of the Joint Independent Members' Remuneration Panel

- Graham Russell (representing Mendip District Council);
- Rob Culligan (representing Somerset County Council **but** membership ends January 2015);
- Eelke Zoestbergen (representing Somerset County Council **but** membership ends January 2015);
- Ian Partington (representing Somerset County Council);
- Paul Fellingham (representing Somerset County Council);
- Keith Bevan (representing Taunton Deane Borough Council). His substitute is Tony Brown;
- Robert Govier (representing West Somerset Council); and
- One vacancy – to be filled by a Somerset County Council representative.

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Council Meeting – 9 December 2014

Swimming Pool Project at Blackbrook Pavilion Sports Centre Update on Capital Budget

Report of Alison North, Community Leisure Manager

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Catherine Herbert)

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 In May 2013 Full Council agreed to the build of a new pool, learner pool and spa facility at the existing Black brook Leisure Site following
- 1.2 Council approved a capital budget of £5,353,000 funded from the Growth & Regeneration Reserve, General Reserves and borrowing
- 1.3 Since approval was given detailed design and market testing work has taken place to provide a final contract price. This has identified a need for increased capital budget and funding of £398,000 which requires a supplementary budget approval by Full Council.

2 Background

- 2.1 Full Council approved a scheme to provide a Community Pool, Learner Pool, Changing Village and Café. Councillors also approved the provision of a Spa facility to provide extra income generation supporting the affordability of the project. The business case and affordability of the investment in this service to the community remains on track.
- 2.2 Since approval was granted to proceed with the scheme in 2013 the project has:
 - Procured a Project Manager
 - Procured a design team – Cost Consultant, Architect, M & E Consultants, Structural Engineers & CDM Coordinator
 - Procured a Contractor – BAM Construction
 - Obtained Planning consent
 - Obtained a Licence from Natural England to relocate Dormice on the site and the work has been completed
 - Land purchase price agreed with the Hawkins Family, transfer in progress
 - Lease agreements nearing completion with Tone Leisure
 - Undertaken detailed surveys and site investigations
 - Progressed detailed design work with our operators Tone Leisure

- 2.3 As reported to Members anticipated construction start time is early 2015 and the programme remains on track to achieve this.
- 2.4 The design has reached RIBA Stage E which is an advanced level of design development. The tender price is currently being finalised and supply chains investigated in order to produce a final contract price and programme between the Council and our contractors BAM Construction. The original costing in 2012/13 was compiled from a data base of comparable projects previously delivered in the 'market'. Since then the improvement in the economy has resulted in some significant market changes which have increased costs.

3 Capital Costs

- 3.1 Following completion of the work described above the revised capital cost estimate requires additional budget:

Approved Capital Budget	£5,353,000
Required Capital Budget	£5,750,958
Additional Funds required	£ 397,958

- 3.2 The additional funds required represent 7.4% of the original project budget
- 3.3 When Council gave approval for the project in May 2013 the construction market was stagnant with little optimism for an imminent up-turn in the economy. Over the last 18 months however the construction industry has seen a resurgence in activity with labour and material shortages putting significant pressure on development budgets. Although inflation is often driven by rising input costs and rising demand, recent years have demonstrated that tender price inflation is affected by demand much more than cost. When demand increases, contractors and the supply chain are able to increase their profit margins and still win new work. It is this ability to increase margins which is fuelling the current tender price inflation, rather than rising input costs, which are relatively subdued.
- 3.4 Our Cost Consultant's (Mace) regular survey of supply chain has shown an improvement in the market that was established last year. Respondents reported that workload over the last 12 months has increased by an average of over 20%. The outlook for the next 12 months is also positive with workload expected to increase by an average of 14% and sales prices by 4.3%.
- 3.5 The Q3 RICS Construction Market Survey continues to show growing momentum across all sectors and all parts of the UK. The report notes concerns regarding labour and materials shortages with supply chains struggling to cope with the acceleration in activity levels. Surveyors expect workloads and employment to continue rising over the coming 12 months together with an increase in profit margins.
- 3.6 The BCIS All-in Tender Price Index (TPI) confirms an increase of 8.47% between May 2013 and November 2014, with a further 4.24% increase to the mid-point of construction in 2015. The overall tender price percentage change

from May 2013 is therefore 12.71%. The TPI uplift is £680,366 which would give a revised budget of £6,033,366.

- 3.7 The fluctuating market conditions have been managed tightly by the project team as part of the general design development and risk management of the project. This has ensured that a lean design solution has been developed whilst maintaining the Council's brief. The engagement of BAM Construction has also allowed direct feedback to be undertaken between the design team, the contractor and their supply chain allowing design solutions to be optimised.
- 3.8 Specific value engineering workshops have also taken place between our Cost Consultants (MACE), BAM Construction and the wider team which have identified further cost savings which are captured as part of the £5,750,958. This has been undertaken whilst ensuring the project as a whole, remains on track for delivery as expected. The result of this process is an increase of £397,958 from the approved budget, inside the forecast TPI uplift of £680,366.
- 3.9 To date the team have marked tested approximately 90% of the subcontract works packages, giving a high degree of confidence on the figures reported above.

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 As set out above the capital costs of the scheme have been affected by market prices. The project team have worked effectively to manage the overall costs of the scheme and help mitigate the impact. The higher costs and funding of the scheme require additional budget approval.
- 4.2 The council has a number of options to normally consider to fund capital expenditure. These include:
- Capital reserves: capital reserves include capital receipts and grants. Uncommitted capital reserve balances are low and therefore not available at this point to support this project.
 - Borrowing: The council can borrow to fund capital costs. This has ongoing revenue implications through debt repayment and interest costs.
 - Revenue Contributions: Capital spending can be funded through contributions from the revenue budget (traditionally known as "RCCO"). There is no current budget approval to support a contribution to this scheme, and projected in year underspend is not sufficient to absorb an additional contribution to this scheme.
 - Revenue Reserves: Capital costs can be supported through use of general reserves and/or earmarked reserves.
 - External funding: There is no external funding available to support the proposed change to the capital budget for this scheme.
- 4.3 The table below shows the previous and updated cost estimates and funding.

Based on the current funding availability and the aim to mitigate the impact on the affordability of the business case, it is recommended that the increase to the capital budget is funded from the Growth and Regeneration revenue earmarked reserve. This reserve currently has an uncommitted balance of £0.58m.

	Original Estimates £k	Revised Estimates £k	Change £k
Capital budget requirement	5,353	5,751	398
Funded by:			
Growth and Regeneration Reserve	1,500	1,898	398
General Reserves	1,500	1,500	-
Borrowing	2,353	2,353	-
Total Funding	5,353	5,751	398

- 4.4 Using cash reserves will have a negligible impact on the business case, and is affordable within available balances.

5 Link to Corporate Aims

- 5.1 This project aligns to the Corporate Aims of 'A vibrant social, cultural and leisure environment' and objective 7 'Facilitating and supporting cultural and leisure opportunities.

6 Equalities Impact

- 6.1 The new building at Blackbrook will significantly improve and fully address access issues of the current pool provision at St James Street. With the refurbishment of Station Road the community will have access to two quality pools that meet modern day customer expectations and provide opportunity for balanced provision. An equalities impact assessment has previously been undertaken for this scheme.

7 Partnership Implications

- 7.1 The progression of this project will require continued partnership working with Tone Leisure as our Leisure Operators Continued consultation with the swimming clubs, schools, Sport England and Taunton Disability Group will also be necessary.

8 Recommendations

- 8.1 It is recommended that Full Council approve a Supplementary Estimate of £398,000 to the Blackbrook Pool Capital Budget.
- 8.2 It is recommended that £398,000 is allocated from the Growth and Regeneration Earmarked Reserve to fund the additional capital budget requirement.

Contact:

Alison North, Community Leisure Manager

01823 356 576

a.north@tauntondeane.gov.uk

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Council Meeting – 9 December 2014

Part I

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

(i) Councillor John Williams

(a) Earmarked Reserves Review

As at 31 March 2014 the level of earmarked General Fund reserves was £8,621,000. This is equivalent to 65.5% of the Council's Net Revenue Budget of £13,162,000.

A fundamental review has been undertaken of all General Fund Revenue Earmarked Reserves, with a view to balances being returned to the General Fund.

As a result of this review, there are various earmarked reserves, totalling £65,060, that are no longer required principally arising from the Waste Contract.

This matter was discussed by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 28 October 2014 where the transfer of the above reserves into their corresponding general fund was supported.

Resolved that Full Council be recommended to approve a Budget Return of £65,060 to General Reserves of surplus balances currently held in Earmarked Reserves.

In the circumstances, it is **recommended** that a budget return of £65,060 to the General Fund Reserve of surplus balances currently held in Earmarked Reserves be agreed.

(b) Fees and Charges 2015/2016

The Executive has given consideration to the proposed fees and charges for 2015/2016 for the following services:-

- Cemeteries and Crematorium – It was proposed to increase the main cremation fee by £23 to £650 and make minor increases for other charges within the service. This was likely to increase income by £40,000;
- Waste Services – The Somerset Waste Partnership proposed to increase its charges for the Garden Waste Service Charge from £46.50 to £48 as well as for the removal of bulky items. It was anticipated this would generate additional income of £14,000;

- Local Land Charges – It was proposed to keep Land Charges fees the same as the current year. The Regulations required local authorities to ensure that the price charged was an accurate reflection of the costs involved in providing the function and not for creating surpluses;
- Housing and Community Services – The proposal was to increase charges by 2.3% (September Retail Price Index (RPI)) with the following exceptions:-
 - 1) Private rented garages rents private tenants and owner occupiers would be increased by 5%;
 - 2) Hire charges for the meeting halls and guest rooms would not be increased to increase the take up of their use; and
 - 3) The meal provision at Kilkenny Court had increased in accordance with the meal service contract.

The increases were likely to generate £27,600 for the Housing Revenue Account;

- Licensing – Fees for applications under the Licensing Act 2003 and Gambling Act 2005 were set by statute so increases under local arrangements were not possible. For those fees where local discretion existed they could not exceed the parameters set out within the appropriate statutes.

Guided by case law and through the results of the costs analysis detailed in the report, suggested fee levels were recommended to achieve, as far as possible, full recovery for the projected costs to the Council of unfettered administration and supervision of the various licensing regimes.

Noted that it would be unlawful for the Council to deliberately set fees to make a profit and any over (or under) recovery would need to be redressed in future fee levels.

In order to ensure fees levied were reasonable and lawful, consideration could only be given to setting fees at the level suggested or at a level lower than those set out within the report thereby subsidising those businesses regulated by the Council's Licensing Service.

It was anticipated the proposed adjustment in the Taxi Licensing charges would result in £20,000 less being collected;

- Planning and Environment – It was proposed to keep the fees the same as the current year;
- Environmental Health – It was proposed to increase the charges for Pest Control by the Consumer Price Index of 1.5%. This would raise additional income of £500;
- Promotional 'Rotunda' Units in Taunton Town Centre – A charge for

advertising was to be introduced which would raise £4,000.

- Deane Helpline – It was proposed to increase the current installation fee from £25 to £35. Corporate Contracts would also be increased by 1.84%. Both measures were likely to increase income by £15,100;
- Building Control - No changes to current charges were proposed for 2015/2016.

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 20 November 2014 and its comments have been taken into consideration.

It is therefore **recommended** that the fees and charges for 2015/2016 in respect of Cemeteries and Crematorium, Waste Services, Local Land Charges, Housing and Community Services, Licensing, Planning and Environment, Environmental Health, Promotional 'Rotunda' Units in Taunton Town Centre, Deane Helpline and Building Control be agreed.

(ii) Councillor Jean Adkins

(a) Regeneration of Weavers Arms, Rockwell Green, Wellington

At its last meeting the Executive considered a report concerning proposals to demolish and redevelop the recently acquired redundant public house, the 'Weavers Arms', the adjacent public toilet block and ten Woolaway properties in Rockwell Green, Wellington.

The redevelopment scheme is currently being designed with an estimated delivery of approximately 26 new build Council homes at a cost of approximately £3,500,000.

A primary deciding factor in purchasing the public house is the proximity of this site to the redundant public toilets and the nearby Woolaway houses. Together these three areas will provide an opportunity to regenerate an area of under-utilised land and buildings, to provide much needed additional affordable housing.

The land under the toilet block is currently owned by the General Fund and has been valued at £10,000.

The Council is seeking to facilitate a sustainable community by providing a mix of properties of 1, 2, 3 and 4 bedrooms to meet the housing need for the area, with the majority being 1 bed flats and 2 bed houses, with some wheelchair suitable

properties.

Once the site investigations and surveys are completed, a community consultation event will be held at the beginning of 2015 to show local residents the proposed plans prior to a planning application being submitted.

It is intended to design these properties to the Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4. This means the properties will be considerably more energy efficient than current Building Regulations. The Code for Sustainable Homes also requires features such as low water use bathrooms and sinks, A* rated combination boilers and highly insulated building fabric which would mean these properties will be cheaper to heat than the existing Woolaway houses.

Initial consultation has been carried out with tenants living in the Woolaway properties directly affected by the redevelopment and a 'decant officer' would assist the affected families throughout the process either in terms of relocating them or returning them to the development once it was completed.

The wider community would have an opportunity to comment on the scheme proposals at a community event which is scheduled to be held in early 2015 prior to the submission of a planning application.

The proposals have recently been considered by both the Tenants Services Management Board and the Community Scrutiny Committee which both supported the redevelopment scheme.

In the circumstances, it is **recommended** that:-

- (1) A supplementary budget of £3,500,000 within the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme for the Weavers Arms Regeneration Scheme be approved;
- (2) The proposed funding of the scheme be approved in principle with allocations of £488,000 capital receipts; £586,000 Social Housing Development Fund contribution; and £2,426,000 through borrowing and that the determination of the final funding arrangements (in line with the Council's Capital and Treasury Strategies) be delegated to the Section 151 Officer;
- (3) The Rockwell Green Public Convenience land be transferred from the General Fund to the Housing Revenue Account at the market valuation of £10,000, in compliance with Section 122 of the Local Government Act 1972;
- (4) The Housing Revenue Account budget and 30 Year Business Plan be updated to reflect the additional income and expenditure arising from this investment; and
- (5) The service of Initial and Final Demolition Notices be approved for the demolition of Nos 1-10 Oaken Ground, the Weavers Arms buildings and public toilets and site clearance to facilitate new development.

(b) Photovoltaic Systems to be fitted to existing Housing Stock

The Executive has also considered a proposal to design, install and commission 350 Photovoltaic systems to the retained Housing Stock.

Photovoltaic panels (PV) harness sunlight to create electricity, therefore utilising an infinite resource, making it a renewable energy source. Whilst their orientation requires a Southerly aspect it is not necessary to have bright sunshine. PV Panels continue to generate electricity in daylight hours, even on overcast days.

In order to achieve the Council's goal of reducing tenants' electricity bills, generating an income via feed in tariffs (FITs) and reducing carbon emissions, the experience of The Carbon Savings Alliance (CSA) has been used.

The CSA is a consortium of social landlords committed to reducing electricity prices for their tenants. The consortium has created a number of purchasing frameworks that are OJEU compliant and suitable for members, such as the Council, to access.

It is proposed to access the CSA's Photovoltaic Framework in order to secure a competitive price and reduce the need for tendering, thus saving valuable time considering the Feed in Tariffs are predicted to drop in early 2015.

A desktop study has been carried out to identify approximately 700 suitable properties that have a southern orientation, the correct roof pitch and suitable construction type. The Senior Leadership Team has chosen to focus on 350 of these properties as a 'pilot scheme', to allow for tenant refusal and to borrow an amount that the Housing Revenue Account could feasibly permit.

Although tenants would actively be encouraged take up the opportunity of having PV panels fitted to their properties, this would be a material change leading to the tenancies of the affected properties having to be amended to include the panels as part of the structure.

The scheme will provide significant financial benefits to tenants through free electricity generated by the PV Panels and is calculated based on the Government Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) with a saving on average of £247.54 per annum per household on current electricity bills.

Taunton Deane will also generate income through the FIT which is guaranteed for 20 years as detailed within the Energy Act. It is Indexed Linked and, based on Government SAP calculations, will generate a positive cash flow of £1,200,000 over the fixed 20 year FIT.

The PV panels will have a 25 year guarantee, although the CSA has stated that their lifespan could be up to 40 years, with efficiencies of the panels dropping by only half a percent per annum. This means tenants would continue to receive free electricity long after the FIT the Council received had ended.

The United Kingdom was the first country in the world to have a legally binding long term goal to cut Carbon emissions. This involves a 34% reduction in emissions by

2020, and 80% by 2050, based on 1990 levels. By installing 350 systems to the Housing stock, the Council can save approximately 11,015 tonnes of Carbon over 20 years.

The initial capital investment for 350 properties will be £1,509,000 for fitted systems. The systems should be paid back within the first 13 years and the revenue stream will then be additionally guaranteed for 7 years.

Consideration has also been given to the prospect of a Council property with photovoltaic panels being sold under Right to Buy (RtB). It is recommended the panels are removed prior to a RtB purchase being completed for the reasons detailed in the report to the Executive.

The proposals have recently been considered by both the Tenants Services Management Board and the Community Scrutiny Committee which both supported the PV scheme.

It is therefore **recommended** that:-

- (1) A supplementary budget of £1,509,100 within the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme for the Photovoltaic Systems Investment Scheme to install systems at 350 properties;
- (2) The funding of the scheme be approved in principle through borrowing and that the determination of the final funding arrangements (in line with the Council's Capital and Treasury Strategies) be delegated to the Section 151 Officer;
- (3) The Housing Revenue Account Revenue budget and 30 Year Business Plan be updated to reflect the additional income and expenditure arising from this investment; and
- (4) The principle that systems are removed from properties prior to disposal and reinstalled on an appropriate alternative Housing Revenue Account dwelling.

(iii) Councillor Norman Cavill

Firepool, Taunton – Acquisition of Remaining Third Party Interests

The Executive has recently considered a report concerning the authorisation of Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) action to facilitate the next phase of the development of Firepool, Taunton on the north side of the River Tone.

The Council has been working with its appointed partner, St Modwen Developments Limited, to bring forward the planned development of the Firepool site on a phased basis.

Although a previous CPO had been made by the Council back in 2010 which related to properties adjacent to Priory Bridge Road Car Park, a new CPO covering the area surrounding the Old Cattle Market on the north side of the River Tone is now needed to enable delivery of the next phases of the comprehensive Firepool Development.

This comprises a mixed-use scheme which is considered to be in the public interest as the delivery of this scheme forms a key component of the regeneration of Taunton.

A planning application is proposed to be submitted early in 2015 in relation to this phase which will be in accordance with the broad aims of the adopted Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan (TTCAAP) and the Taunton Rethink.

Provided planning permission is granted and there are no other impediments to delivery identified, then the Council will be able to progress with the next major phases of development. As St Modwen has reached an advanced stage of negotiations with prospective tenants, it is felt appropriate to proceed with the making of a CPO.

Although the Council owns almost all of the site of the planned development on the north side, there remains various interests which require to be either acquired or over-ridden. Even though negotiations with third party landowners to seek agreement on acquisition will continue, it is considered that CPO powers should be utilised in the event that agreements cannot be concluded.

This matter was considered by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 28 October 2014 when it was agreed to support the proposed CPO.

It is **recommended** that Full Council agree:-

- (1) To the principle of making of a Compulsory Purchase Order or Orders under Section 226(1) (a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) in respect of the land edged red on the plan submitted to the Executive; and
- (2) To authorise the Chief Executive and the Solicitor to the Council to:-
 - (a) Carry out all necessary steps to reference the areas of land to be considered for compulsory purchase and to consult with the owners and occupiers of that land;
 - (b) Report back on the effects that the potential Compulsory Purchase Order would have on all owners and occupiers and the steps that should be taken to mitigate those effects;
 - (c) Negotiate and agree terms for the acquisition by agreement of any of the outstanding land interests detailed in the confidential appendix to the report submitted to the Executive or those which were otherwise subsequently identified as affecting the land and interests to be acquired;
 - (d) Make any necessary preparations to consider potential future payments of compensation (including any interim payments) after future Compulsory Purchase Order notice, either as agreed with landowners or as determined by the Lands Chamber of the Upper Tribunal in relation to acquisition/overriding of properties/interests; and
 - (e) Dispose of the land interests acquired either voluntarily (or by way of a future Compulsory Purchase Order or Orders when confirmed in future), to St Modwen Developments Limited in accordance with the Development Agreement dated 15 April 2009 and made between the Council, St Modwen Properties plc and St Modwen Developments Limited.

(iv) Councillor Edwards

Publication of the Taunton Deane Site Allocations and Development Management Plan

A report concerning the publication of the Taunton Deane Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (SADMP) had recently been considered by the Executive. A copy of the Plan has been circulated to all Members and a hard copy has been placed for reference purposes in the Members' Room.

The Taunton Deane Core Strategy had been adopted by Full Council in September 2012. This plan provides an overarching framework for the Borough and its long-term development over the period up to 2028.

Whilst the Core Strategy has established long-term requirements for growth and its broad distribution, barring a number of larger, strategic site allocations and some high level development management policies, it did not include smaller allocations or more detailed development management policies to guide decision-making.

The SADMP sets out the development management policies and further site allocations to ensure sustainable development is delivered, consistent with the objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework and the adopted Core Strategy. The Plan includes strategic urban extensions at Comeytrove/Trull and Staplegrove as well as further allocations in Taunton and elsewhere in the Borough consistent with the adopted Core Strategy.

Work commenced on the SADMP in early 2013 with the Council publishing an 'Issues and Options' consultation. The comments made through this exercise subsequently informed a 'Preferred Options' Plan which was issued towards the end of 2013.

At all stages the SADMP has been through the Local Development Framework Steering Group which has acted as a 'sounding board' and discussion forum for planning policy matters. The Issues and Options and Preferred Options Plans have also been considered by the Community Scrutiny Committee and the Executive prior to publication.

The current stage reached in the process is referred to as 'Publication'. It is the point at which the Council agrees the draft plan which it intends to submit for consideration by The Planning Inspectorate. The Published Plan is underpinned by a considerable evidence base and the findings of previous consultation.

Following the Plan's approval by the Council it will be published. Comments are then invited relating to the 'soundness' of the Plan from communities and other stakeholders on 8 January 2015 for the statutory six-week period ending on 19 February 2015. The Plan and these comments will then be considered by an

independently appointed Planning Inspector at an Examination which is likely to take place in late Spring / early Summer 2015.

The table below illustrates the remaining stages in the process of Plan preparation and an anticipated time frame.

SADMP TIMELINE

Key Stage/Milestone	Anticipated/Actual Date
Issues and Options consultation	January/February 2013
Preferred Options consultation	October/November 2013
Published Plan stage	January/February 2015
Submission of Plan to Sec. of State	April 2015
Examination	June/July 2015
Adoption	Autumn 2015

It is **recommended** that:-

- (1) The contents of the Draft Site Allocations and Development Management Plan be noted and that the Plan be approved;
- (2) It be agreed that minor typographical amendments to the Plan could be made following the Plan's approval but prior to its publication; and
- (3) It also be agreed that the Published Plan be submitted to the Secretary of State following the formal representation period, subject to the Executive Councillor for Planning and Transportation, as guided by officers, considering there are no substantive soundness issues raised which would warrant further amendment to the Plan.

(v) Councillor Mrs Vivienne Stock-Williams

Review of Council Tax Support Scheme for 2015/2016

On 1 April 2013 Council Tax Benefit (CTB) was abolished and replaced with a locally designed "CTS" (CTS) Scheme. The Government provided each billing authority with a grant and expected Councils to design a CTS scheme to help those on low incomes to meet their Council Tax liability. Initially, 90% of funding previously granted by the Government for CTB was provided for localised CTS.

Whilst the Council has discretion on the rules for CTS for people of working age, the Government has stipulated that pensioners should be fully protected under the same criteria that previously applied to CTB. The Government has also stipulated that, as far as possible, CTS for vulnerable groups should be protected too.

Full Council had adopted the current local CTS Scheme at its meeting on 11 December 2012. For people of working age, the scheme had a number of key elements including:-

- Maximum support was 80% of Council Tax - everyone of working age had to pay something;
- Child maintenance was counted as income; and
- A hardship fund was set up for short-term help.

On 10 December 2013, Full Council had decided to continue the 2013/2014 CTS scheme for 2014/2015. However, as indicative figures showed the Local Government Finance Settlement (LGFS) would reduce by 14.2% in 2014/2015 and by a further 16.3% in 2015/2016, officers were tasked with consulting on proposals to amend the existing CTS scheme from 1 April 2015.

Any local scheme has to be agreed with the major precepting authorities such as the Somerset County Council, Avon and Somerset Police and Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority by 31 January 2015.

In 2013/2014 the Government provided total funding of £6,110,080. However, the indicative figures shown above would reduce funding for CTS in 2015/2016 by £1,600,000 to £4,503,377 (a cut of £179,000 for Taunton Deane in isolation).

As the Council is prevented from reducing CTS spending for those of pension age, if cuts are applied they will have to be made from the support provided to people of working age. In 2014/2015, it was estimated that CTS of £3,122,765 would be paid to pension age customers and in 2015/2016 this figure was expected to increase to £3,170,566.

By reducing the overall budget for CTS in 2015/2016 to £4,503,377, it would mean the remaining budget for CTS for working age recipients would be reduced to £1,332,811. Based on the current CTS Scheme it is estimated that £2,643,757 will be required for working age recipients. However, the reduction would mean an overall CTS budget shortfall of £1,310,000, with Taunton Deane's share of that shortfall being £127,000.

Under CTB, Taunton Deane spent £3,540,000 in 2012/2013 for people of working age. If spending on CTS in 2015/2016 is reduced to £1,332,811 it will equate to a reduction in help offered to this group of 62%.

There are approximately 8,300 people who have moved from the CTB Scheme to the localised CTS Scheme. As at 31 March 2014, this reduced to 8,106. The average weekly CTS award for a Pension Age claim was £16.11, whilst for people of Working Age, it was £12.13.

The number of households billed for Council Tax has increased from 50,211 in 2012/2013 to 50,882 in 2013/2014. Although, the collection rate has remained the same as the previous year, it has become clear that the volume of recovery action has again increased to ensure collection levels remain high. A review of the current circumstances has revealed that:-

- (1) Despite overall in-year collection for 2013/2014 being 98.0%, the collection rate for working age CTS recipients is just 79.9%;
- (2) While working age CTS recipients represent 8% of households, the value of their debt accounts for nearly 37% of all Council Tax arrears; and
- (3) One in four Council Tax bills issued for working age CTS recipients in 2013/2014 has costs totalling £115,000 for summonses and liability orders added.

Although a decision to alter the scheme for 2015/2016 could be taken, the Council has to consult with the major precepting authorities, publish a draft scheme and then consult with other such persons who are likely to have an interest in the operation of such a scheme.

To ensure consultation was meaningful, the Council included potential ways of achieving each option as well as a number of proposals on how the CTS scheme could be changed to mitigate the effects on vulnerable groups. The consultation exercise took place during the Spring.

Within the 2013/2014 LGFS the Government has included funding for CTS that includes a proportion relating to parishes and Special Expenses. The Council has decided to pass on a proportion of this funding to parishes to reflect their reduction in funding as a result of CTS. For 2013/2014, a grant was given to parishes based on the tax base reduction attributable to CTS in each parish multiplied by their 2012/2013 Band D Charge.

The Funding Settlement for 2015/2016 and beyond would not separately identify the proportion of funding for CTS for any preceptors. The Council therefore needs to determine the policy for providing any CTS Grant funding to parishes for 2015/2016, at this stage to give the Council and parishes some certainty for financial planning and budget setting purposes.

For 2015/2016 there are two proposed options, based on available information:-

- Option 1:** Use the same formula that was used for 2014/2015, so each parish grant for CTS will be calculated as CTS Tax Base Adjustment x 2013/2014 Parish Band D Tax rate; and
- Option 2:** Use the same formula that was used for 2014/2015, but apply the same reduction to parish grant funding as that experienced by Taunton Deane in the Funding Settlement. Provisional figures indicate a 30.5% cut in funding for 2014/2015 and 2015/2016, so each parish grant for CTS would be calculated as CTS Tax Base Adjustment x 2013/2014 Parish Band D Tax rate x [1-0.305].

Option 1 is recommended by the Executive for approval as it will provide protection for parish budgets. However, this means that Taunton Deane will need to find savings from its own service budgets to subsidise CTS costs for parishes.

It is also recommended that the same funding principle agreed for parishes should be applied to the Council budget for the Unparished Area Fund.

The above proposals and recommendations were considered by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 28 October 2014. Members expressed concern regarding the

impact of the CTS Scheme on vulnerable people in the community.

Having considered the outcome of the consultation, the feedback from customers in how they are attempting to meet shortfall and the profile of Council Tax debt for CTS recipients, Corporate Scrutiny recommended the Executive to retain maximum support for all working age recipients at 80% in 2015/2016.

In addition, the Corporate Scrutiny Committee recommended that maintenance received for children should not be treated as income when working out CTS in 2015/2016. This recommendation was in recognition of the statutory duty on Local Authorities to reduce and mitigate the effects of child poverty.

In the circumstances, it is **recommended** that:-

(1) Having regard to:-

- the recommendations from the Corporate Scrutiny Committee;
- the outcome of the consultation exercise;
- the feedback from customers as to how they are attempting to meet shortfall;
- the profile of Council Tax debt for CTS recipients; and
- the Equality Impact Assessment,

a Council Tax Support scheme for 2015/2016 be adopted that sought, as far as possible, to balance the significant cut to the Council's resources for Council Tax Support and the Council's wider budget challenges with the need to help the most financially vulnerable members of the community;

(2) It be agreed to continue to provide maximum support through Council Tax Support for working age recipients at 80% with the current Council Tax Support scheme being amended to ignore maintenance received for a child or children;

(3) It be further agree that Option 1 be the preferred route in providing and calculating Council Tax Support Grant funding for Parish Councils in 2015/2016; and

(4) It be noted that the 2015/2016 Council Tax Support Scheme was recommended for 2015/2016 only.

Full Council Meeting – 9 December 2014

Report of Councillor John Williams – Leader of the Council

1. Town Centre Successes

- 1.1 Congratulations to all who were involved in the Christmas lights switch on and fun day. It was a great success and is to be applauded. A great big thank you to all the team involved as we sometimes forget all the work that has to go into preparing for such a major event as this. Well done all!
- 1.2 We must not forget all the Stewards and the Deane DLO who contributed so much to a safe and happy day of festivities and at the end of the day transformed the town centre back to “ready for work” mode on Monday morning including a major clean up of litter and overflowing waste bins. Within hours it was back to normal.

2. A358 and Strategic Employment Site

- 2.1 Since the last Full Council much has been happening in respect of the above as we felt there was a window of opportunity to promote the vital improvement works to the A358, Junction 25 and the Toneway into Taunton. In turn, this would allow access to the proposed much needed strategic employment site, east of the M5 Motorway.
- 2.2 With the impending Chancellor’s Autumn Statement we grasped the opportunity to lobby Ministers in respect of its “value for money” and urgently needed upgrade of overloaded and congested roads and junctions. This has been promoted on the basis of its huge economic value to Taunton but also the far wider South West Economy, as we are the closest access point to the national motorway network for many businesses and residents down to the South Coast.
- 2.3 This has resulted in the great news - announced as I write this report – that the Government has accepted the need for major investment in our road systems around Taunton. Estimated at around £250 million; the cost of dualling the A358 from Southfields Roundabout to Junction 25 on the M5 including Junction 25. A tremendous vote of confidence in our plans for economic growth in Taunton particularly when linked with projects already supported by Government, the £15 million Tangier Way project, £22 million Northern Inner Distributor Road under construction and the £4.6 million investment in upgrading the railway station. The construction alone is a huge boost to our economy but the

real benefits come from the long term return on investment that the undoubted economic growth will deliver.

3. Budget Setting

- 3.1 One thing is certain, there is always a lot more we would like to do than funds are available. Therefore it is essential to prioritise the use of scarce funds we have. Having said this, because of the proposed savings plan looking forward three years and prepared last year, we have not suffered the enormous funding gap experienced in some years. We are therefore on course to set a balanced budget whilst retaining most of the vital front line services that are important to our community.
- 3.2 A major caveat to the above is that it is all predicated on the Government Support Grants meeting the provisional amounts as previously published. The final figures will not be finalised until January 2015 so no certainty until then.
- 3.3 It is also important for Members to note that setting a balanced budget is a continuous challenge as illustrated in the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) set out below. If we do nothing, within four years our budget deficit will be over £3 million which is obviously unsustainable as not even our reserves will cover that. For the future it will continue to be very hard choices about the services we provide and how they are delivered because one thing is certain whichever party gains power nationally, the same austerity measures will apply. The Revenue Support Grant is predicted to be phased out by 2020. The following extract from our MTFP illustrates:-

Summary MTFP

	2015/16 £k	2016/17 £k	2017/18 £k	2018/19 £k	2019/20 £k
TDBC Forecast Net Expenditure	12,907	14,277	14,867	15,342	15,737
Retained Business Rates	-2,357	-2,417	-2,479	-2,542	-2,607
Revenue Support Grant	-1,901	-1,309	-720	-324	-113
New Homes Bonus	-2,782	-3,256	-3,332	-3,153	-2,935
Council Tax Freeze	0	0	0	0	0
Council Tax - TDBC	-5,323	-5,456	-5,592	-5,732	-5,875
Council Tax - Parishes & Unparished	-522	-523	-524	-525	-526
Forecast Resources Available	-12,885	-12,961	-12,647	-12,276	-12,056
Budget Gap – In Year	22	1,294	904	846	615
Budget Gap – Cumulative	22	1,316	2,220	3,066	3,681

- 3.4 A very important factor in our budget setting is the shared management and services project with West Somerset Council. This is already delivering in excess of £1.5million per year savings and the

transformation element is yet to be planned and implemented. This is already allowing us to maintain vital front line services that we might not otherwise have been able to afford and is a credit to our management and officers that have worked so hard to implement in an almost seamless manner.

4. Firepool, Taunton

- 4.1 With the Northern Inner Distributor Road progressing we are able to make tangible progress on bringing forward development of the site. We have approved the Compulsory Purchase Order process in principle which will facilitate assembly of the complete site but, as always, we try for a negotiated settlement as being far more satisfactory.
- 4.2 Acorn Blue, Housing developers for the remainder of the Priory Bridge Car Park site have now agreed terms and should take over the site and commence works in January 2015. A Planning application is under consideration for a 24 dwelling Knightstone housing site and a 99 dwelling planning application is also under consideration - these latter two are on Abbey Manor land.
- 4.3 Our development partner St Modwen have engaged in positive discussions with the Devon and Somerset Design Review Panel on a revised masterplan for the former cattle market site, which will inform public consultation early in 2015 on exciting development plans.
- 4.4 In all with dwellings already constructed and those now planned the East Goods Yard and the Firepool site and car park are planned to deliver 405 new homes with a further 123 currently under consideration and potentially a further 250 plus on the old livestock market site in conjunction with the proposed commercial development. This should be a much needed boost to footfall in Station Road and around with that number of new homes being constructed.

5. Broadband Rollout by Connecting Devon and Somerset

- 5.1 The urban centres and a number of settlements around the Deane have been enabled but there are still a lot of rural areas that feel abandoned because of lack of accurate information and lack of communication.
- 5.2 It has to be acknowledged that the whole project is an enormous engineering project. I am sure eventually it will bring great benefit to Taunton Deane as a whole, but because of the lack of information it is causing untold frustration amongst those anxiously waiting for a decent service. There is also the concern from residents that it may never

reach them and unfortunately the information shared is inadequate to resolve this question. This causes more uncertainty for those waiting.

- 5.3 I have been, and will continue to press, for much greater availability of information than we are presently receiving. Keeping residents informed stops all the misinformation and rumour-mongering that occurs so the need for up to date information on progress is vital. I will be pursuing this. I have great difficulty in understanding why it is claimed to be “commercially confidential” when the question of when, or if, somebody living in the Quantocks or Blackdowns will receive an upgraded service. It sounds more like evading the question rather than confidentiality!

6. Somerset Rivers Authority

- 6.1 Setting up a Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) forms part of the 20 Year Flood Action Plan that has been agreed by County, District and Borough Councils in Somerset and the plan has been signed off by the Government for urgent implementation.
- 6.2 Aspects of the plan have already been implemented or is work in progress. Some of these are the main river dredging, works to the Sovey River, various road works and the flood alleviation report for a proposed scheme at Bradford on Tone. A terms of reference for the SRA has also been progressed by the Flood Action Group consisting of representatives of all Councils and other interested bodies including the Government.
- 6.3 A report has already been to Scrutiny and the Executive outlining the SRA proposals as worked up by the Leaders Group so far - this is “work in progress”. It will be the subject of further reports as the detail is agreed how it should operate and be funded. It is regarded as an important element of the Somerset wide delivery of action against flooding and the Government are pressing for early establishment of the SRA.

7. The Deane House Relocation Project

- 7.1 Since the Council resolution of County Hall being our preferred option for future accommodation for the Council, work has been underway to initiate the next stage of the project. The following activities have been completed or are underway to support our move to the new site in 2017:-
- DTZ have been reappointed to provide the necessary professional services, following a competitive tendering exercise.
 - A series of customer access workshops have been initiated with staff from Taunton Deane, the County Council and Avon and

Somerset Police to consider how the new shared reception area will operate.

- Sue Tomlinson has been appointed as internal Project Manager, and a project team has been assembled. The project will be organised under a range of different work-streams for example Finance, HR, IT and Legal, with a work-stream lead appointed for each.
- Member and Staff consultation groups have been established.

7.2 As the project evolves a comprehensive communications mechanism will be established to ensure all stakeholders have up to date information on progress and project performance will be mentioned via the quarterly performance reports. However in the interim if you have any questions please route these to James Barrahan who is the project sponsor.

As this is the last Full Council before Christmas may I take this opportunity of wishing fellow Members and all officers across the Council a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Thank you for your input and continued commitment in what have been difficult times, to ensure we do the best possible for the community we serve.

A sincere thank you to all.

Councillor John Williams

Council Meeting – 9 December 2014

Report of Councillor Jean Adkins – Housing Services

1. Housing and Health and Wellbeing Board

- 1.1 Following the Housing workshop held in July 2014 an action plan has been developed which recognises the importance of Housing to Health and Wellbeing.
- 1.2 One action agreed is that a Housing Officer should be included in care conferences and another to undertake a rural Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for Somerset with a strong emphasis on rural housing need via the Somerset Strategic Housing Group.

2. Deane Housing Development: Weavers Arms/Oaken Ground, Wellington

- 2.1 With the Phase 1 sites in West Bagborough and Creechbarrow Road, Taunton well under way, the team have been working on our next project which has been consulted on with tenants and is now being brought to Council.
- 2.2 This scheme makes use of the disused toilet block site and the empty Weavers Arms, which has been acquired by Deane Housing Development as well as 10 Woolaway type houses at Oaken Ground, one of which is void.

3. Digital Access Project

- 3.1 Housing Services have been working on a project to provide tenants with free internet access as part of our response to welfare reform, especially the introduction of Universal Credit, and to enable them to search for jobs as well as other on-line services.
- 3.2 Five kiosks equipped with touch-screen computers have been opened and a further six are planned.
- 3.3 Those at The Deane House and Priorswood are well used and further work is continuing to publicise the others and encourage use.

4. Welfare Reform

- 4.1 We continue to monitor closely the rent arrears of tenants affected by the various welfare reforms, which showed a slight increase in monetary value at the end of October, but with fewer tenants affected:-
- 1 April 2014 Welfare Reform tenant rent arrears were **£38,704.25** with **187** tenants in rent arrears;
 - 1 October 2014 Welfare Reform tenant rent arrears were **£45,222.67** with **170** tenants in rent arrears.
- 4.2 In October there were 371 tenants affected, so a significant proportion were in arrears. No tenant has been evicted for rent arrears solely attributed to changes to welfare.
- 4.3 We have enabled 69 tenants to downsize so far. Comparing our figures to Hastoe Group, a housing organisation in Scotland who have a similar number of properties to TDBC, they have only moved 32 households during the same period.
- 4.4 62 Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) have so far (October) been awarded for this financial year. Some tenants who were awarded DHP in the last year are not being successful in re-applying as they have not used the time of the previous award to improve their financial situation or move to smaller accommodation.
- 4.5 In the New Year a further effort will be made to encourage Mutual Exchange as there are none currently in the system, due to tenants' reluctance to move at this season.

5. Voids

- 5.1 As at Quarter 2, the cost of repairs and maintenance on voids is over budget. However, this is offset by the actual rent lost through voids being lower than budget as the turnaround time is efficient.

6. Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) Team

- 6.1 **Performance** - Satisfaction with the service remains high: at end of Quarter 2 the satisfaction rate was 92.3% against a target 66% of tenants who reported ASB in year to date who rated the help and advice received as good or excellent.
- 6.2 39 cases were closed during the period, of these 32 were resolved.
- 6.3 **New ASB Tools** – New legislation has come into force, with the exception of

the Injunction, it is expected that this will come into force in January 2015. The Team is working up procedures for these new tools and providing briefings/training for staff, the Tenant Services Management Board (TSMB) and the Tenants' Forum.

Councillor Jean Adkins

Council Meeting – 9 December 2014

Report of Councillor Mrs Vivienne Stock-Williams - Corporate Resources

1. Corporate and Client Services

Corporate Services

- 1.1 The key priorities for Corporate Services during the autumn have been the maintenance of service delivery and the consultation on and finalising of the Tier 6 structure. Both priorities have been achieved.
- 1.2 Detailed below are specific updates in respect of each of the service areas within Corporate Services.

Corporate Strategy and Performance (Lead Officer: Paul Harding)

- 1.3 This area incorporates the management of the strategy and performance functions for both Councils and includes functions in relation to the management of audit actions, complaints, local Government Ombudsman, Freedom of Information (FOI) and Data Protection. Monthly meetings continue to be held with officers from the Southwest Audit Partnership (SWAP) in order to track progress against the delivery of the Audit Plan and an update report will be made to the Corporate Governance Committee meeting in December.
- 1.4 The Quarter 2 Corporate Performance Report is currently working its way through the November and December Corporate Scrutiny and Executive Committee cycle. This indicates that we are making good progress in relation to the majority of our corporate objectives.
- 1.5 The Corporate Services Team are currently working with the Assistant Directors to assist them in the preparation of draft Service plans for 2015/2016. In due course these will be shared with the relevant Portfolio Holders.

Facilities Management and Customer Services (Lead Officer: Angela Hill)

- 1.6 There have been no significant service delivery issues in this area. The Facilities Team are in the process of preparing for changes to the Royal Mail processes in relation to pre-paid post, which will be implemented shortly. The team have also been heavily involved in the implementation of single identity and door access cards for use by staff

at both the Taunton and Williton offices. The rollout of these cards has gone very smoothly.

Human Resources (HR) and Organisation Development (OD) (Lead Officer: Fiona Wills)

- 1.7 The HR and OD service continue to be heavily involved in supporting managers in the delivery of the staff restructure elements of the Joint Management and Shares Services (JMASS) Project. Staff consultation in relation to the Tier 6 restructure has now been completed and the recruitment phase will commence in December. In addition, the OD plan has been agreed and is now in the process of being implemented.
- 1.8 The staff pay award has now been agreed and the HR Team are liaising with the Payroll Service at Somerset County Council (SCC) in order to get the award implemented from December.
- 1.9 Corporate absence continues to be closely monitored by the team. Absence rates have started to increase slightly as we get into the winter months. Based on trends to date this year, we are now predicting an outturn absence figure of 8.39 days per employee, which is above our target of 8.2 days, but still below the national average of 8.7 days. One hundred staff have taken up the offer of a flu vaccination.
- 1.10 The HR Team are continuing to work closely with the Revenues and Benefits service to understand the impact of the Government's move to a Single Fraud Investigation Service (SFIS), which will be run by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). It is anticipated that this will necessitate the transfer under TUPE of affected staff. We will be meeting shortly with the DWP to plan for this transfer.
- 1.11 In December, new legislation comes into effect which will allow parents to share parental leave entitlement and we will be implementing a revised policy to cater for this change.
- 1.12 The 'Stoptober' initiative has resulted in four members of staff giving up smoking. I congratulate them on their perseverance with a difficult challenge.

ICT and Information Management (Lead Officer: Fiona Kirkham)

- 1.13 This area incorporates the retained ICT functions for Taunton Deane, the management of the West Somerset Council ICT service,

information management for both Councils, Design and Print for Taunton Deane and website content development.

- 1.14 The team are heavily involved in managing the delivery of the ICT changes required to support the implementation of the JMASS restructure. The implementation of WIFI at The Deane House is now complete and we hope to complete at the DLO site in the near future. 'Guest' access to WIFI has not been publicised yet, because we first need to improve the speed of The Deane House internet connection and are currently in discussions with Southwest One about the price for this. The team are also presently working on providing all staff, whether they currently use the Taunton Deane or West Somerset network, with access to the systems they need to use on both networks and hope to complete this work in December.
- 1.15 A lessons learned exercise has been undertaken in respect of the Council's Computer Room power outage in August 2014 and the team are in the process of implementing a number of changes as a result. A briefing note on 'Lessons learned' was circulated to all Members following the last Full Council meeting.
- 1.16 The team are currently preparing for the annual PSN (Public Service Network) compliance review, which is due in January 2015.
- 1.17 Work has commenced to implement a new Sharepoint based Intranet site, which we are aiming to have in place by March 2015.

Southwest One Clienting (Lead Officer: Adrian Gladstone-Smith)

- 1.18 The team are continuing to closely monitor the delivery of the remaining elements of the Southwest One Contract.
- 1.19 Specifically, they are progressing concerns in relation to capacity to deliver projects and delays in the pricing of additional work in the ICT Service.
- 1.20 We are continuing to look at succession planning for contract end in November 2017 in conjunction with the other partners.

Transformation and JMASS Project (Lead Officer: Kim Batchelor)

- 1.21 A JMASS Project progress update report went to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee in November. The report indicated that the project is progressing well and is largely delivering on time and to budget.

- 1.22 The Tier 6 restructure is progressing to timetable, consultation has been completed and we are about to enter the recruitment phase. Work has also commenced to identify the non-staff budget savings.
- 1.23 The Legal Services and Building Control shared service partnerships are also progressing.
- 1.24 Site visits are continuing to enable us to learn from the experiences of other Councils. These will help to inform the development of the transformation programme.

2. Corporate Health and Safety

Tool Box Talks

- 2.1 The Health and Safety Team have delivered tool box talks to 76 Deane DLO employees as part of the health surveillance programme roll out. The topics covered are hand / arm vibration (which can result from using vibrating tools such as drills and strimmers) and skin conditions (which can result from being exposed to substances like dusts and chemicals in the work place).
- 2.2 All talks also covered the basic dynamic risk assessment process, reporting of hazards and needle stick awareness. An advisory card on discarded needles and syringes has been produced and given to all staff at risk of finding them.
- 2.3 The programme will cover noise and statutory medicals, similar to those for the asbestos team, early in the New Year.
- 2.4 A stress tool box talk was produced as part of the national Stress Awareness Day. Tips for staff were sent out by email.
- 2.5 A tool box talk has also been developed and delivered to staff in the Supported Housing service.

Asbestos Awareness Training

- 2.6 This training has been given to all Deane DLO operatives and to staff where there was a business case requirement, such as environmental health, housing and planning officers.

Asbestos Investigation

- 2.7 Following an investigation into the incident at the Priory Depot, procedures for contractors and the information given to them prior to commencing work have been tightened up.

Lone Working Service

- 2.8 Both Councils have agreed to extend the Deane Helpline Lone Worker Monitoring Service to all staff in the One Team. This will help the Councils meet their statutory duty to care for lone workers.
- 2.9 A generic Dynamic Risk Assessment was included in the November One Team Newsletter. This enables lone workers to use a traffic light system to think PAL (person, activity, location) both before and during work to help protect themselves and others.

Activities of the Health and Safety (H&S) Team

- 2.10 An update on the work of the Health and Safety Team will come to the Corporate Governance Committee on 8 December 2014.

3. Customer Contact Centre

Performance indicators

- 3.1 The service has continued to perform exceptionally well in line with its contractual performance indicators with no failures since the last update, and consistently exceeding targets.
- 3.2 There has been a significant decrease in average abandonment, which is due to the implementation of enhanced queuing functionality. Specifically, the new Contact Centre technology now allows for certain information to be presented to customers dynamically, based on business rules, which informs them of likely wait times and queue position.

New Telephony Technology

- 3.3 The implementation of the new Siemens OpenScape Contact Centre remains extremely positive news with no interruptions to service experienced. This is important because one of the primary drivers for implementing a new Contact Centre system was to reduce the amount of operational downtime, which was regularly a problem with the old MacFarlane system.
- 3.4 Whilst the new automated attendant has still not been implemented, automated payments are continuing to prove a popular channel for our customers. Over 50% of callers wanting to make a payment to the Council now choose to use the automated system.

Our World at Work

- 3.5 The Our World at Work Team, the Customer Contacts Centre's internal staff forum, continues to successfully manage staff satisfaction surveys and provides a valuable staff engagement forum for concerns and

opportunities to be discussed. The latest staff survey has just been released and results are due back on 28 November 2014. We are hoping to see another increase in satisfaction in key areas as demonstrated in the current trend. Staff satisfaction has increased during the past 12 months and short term sickness has reduced.

Operating Level Agreement (OLA)

- 3.6 Customer Contact has provided information to the Council on its current programme of work with SCC regarding the Operating Level Agreement refresh. OLA's are the non-contractual agreements in place with service lines in both authorities which provide the forum for discussion and development. It is hoped to initiate a refresh for Taunton Deane in the coming months.

2014 Service Restructure

- 3.7 The service's internal restructure is progressing in line with the original time-scale set out in the proposals. Consultation took place during July. In August, feedback was consolidated and published and Phase one commenced with selection processes for Management posts. Management posts were confirmed and in position in September.
- 3.8 Phases 2-4 commenced in November 2014, once the Workforce Management System was implemented. This technology provides intelligent workforce planning and supports overall resource planning strategies allowing the Contact Centre to flex up and down depending on predicted demand.
- 3.9 Phase 2 is now completed and work has started on Phase 3. It is anticipated that the restructure will be completed by 1 March 2015.
- 3.10 As a result of this restructure, business support staff will be able to focus on business optimisation by concentrating on projects. Advisors will be given additional training, so that a more resilient tiered structure is in place, with greater opportunity for multi-skilling and taking on complex, specialist roles.

4. Health and Wellbeing

Deane Helpline

- 4.1 Staff continue to visit GP practices to ensure Practice Managers and Doctors have up-to-date information on the service. They are also actively promoting the service to maximise take-up and giving equipment demonstrations to local organisations.

- 4.2 A defibrillator has been purchased and is awaiting delivery. The British Heart Foundation will be training staff in its use before it is carried on response vehicles to assist clients.
- 4.3 The Fire Service will also be delivering British Start (that is, fire safety risk assessment) training to front line staff in December.
- 4.4 The Telecare Services Team Manager is now Safeguarding Champion for Sheltered Housing and attends monthly review meetings with Sheltered Housing Managers.
- 4.5 Lifeline equipment for sheltered housing tenants is being upgraded to ensure access to telecare equipment in the future.

Community Leisure Team

- 4.6 The team are working with Sport England and the Amateur Swimming Association to ensure the new swimming pool at Blackbrook meets the needs of community accessibility for all members of the community.
- 4.7 The team are part of the North Taunton Get Active Community Project. This initiative is led by Knightstone Housing, following an award by the Lottery Fund, and is intended to support the community in joining sporting activity. The first meeting took place in November and the first event is due to take place in early Spring.
- 4.8 Our leisure operators, Tone Leisure, have just received Sport England Funding to deliver a more targeted and supportive approach to new participants who would prefer to exercise in a beginners group session in the gym.
- 4.9 One group specifically targets adults aged 50+ who have a BMI of over 25. A second project targets adults aged 65+ who have long term health conditions. The sessions will enable participants to take part in regular physical activity, in a group environment, and thus build up their confidence, make new friends, and improve their mental and physical wellbeing. There will be six classes a week, each lasting for 45 minutes, held in two leisure centres in Taunton Deane.

Housing and Community Project Team

- 4.10 Staff are working to develop new inter-generational dementia projects with Reminiscence Learning – specifically their award winning Archie Project. The project seeks to make towns and villages dementia friendly through their dementia awareness activities. £15,000 has been secured from SCC, Taunton Deane's Housing Revenue Account, Wellington Town Council and Rotary thus ensuring five new areas will benefit from the project (Wiveliscombe, Bishops Lydeard, Priorswood, Halcon and Rockwell Green).

Stoptober

4.11 This year, 12 members of staff signed up and were assisted with advice and encouragement from Lisa Redston together with the additional incentive of a fruit basket in the office for those making it to the second week. All 12 continued their efforts through the month and either quit or cut down the amount they were smoking. Four members of staff successfully made it through the month and will be rewarded with an extra half-day annual leave as well as the many health and financial benefits of not smoking.

Adult Social Care (ASC) – Portal

4.12 ASC are currently developing / commissioning an on-line portal that will provide support to vulnerable / elderly adults. We are working with ASC to explore the potential for Taunton Deane/West Somerset to eventually become directly involved in order to develop a co-ordinated approach to the sign-posting and referral to a range of services, including services across the voluntary and community sector. The Portal will provide the following:-

- A central library containing information and advice in relation to services;
- An online e-market place where customers can purchase or book services directly from a wide-range of providers. In addition, 'free' services and community offerings will be included;
- An online self-triage tool to identify if the customer is likely to be eligible for SCC support and what their specific needs might be;
- Self-referral tool to relevant SCC or partner services;
- A search/self-assessment tool (aimed at self-funders) to assist customers in identifying their own needs and advising them of available services to help them meet those needs; and
- SCC has recently awarded the contract to System Associates and will now begin to work with them to develop a joint implementation plan.

Smoke Free Alliance – Emerging Priorities

4.13 A stakeholder event was held during October 2014 to receive feedback on progress with current initiatives and campaigns, and to develop collective priorities for the future. There are a few key themes which emerged from the group work as to what the Alliance's priorities should be going forward. These are:-

- Young people – prevention of uptake - ‘turning off the tap’; reducing increase in uptake during transition to college; smoke free schools;
 - Smoke free environments – for example play parks; beer gardens; schools;
 - Alliance organisations acting as exemplars;
 - Alliance working as a network going forward – identifying networks; joint working; reciprocal training; identifying those still missing from the group.
- 4.14 Public Health have set up a Yammer group for Alliance members. This will allow us to work effectively as a group in between the two formal meetings a year.

5. Legal, Democratic and Electoral Services

Legal Shared Services Draft Business Case

- 5.1 A proposal to establish an initial shared Legal Service between Taunton Deane, Mendip and West Somerset Councils has been prepared and has been submitted to the respective Scrutiny Committees of the three Councils.
- 5.2 Mendip and West Somerset Scrutiny Committees have both now recommended approval. In addition, Unison and affected staff are being consulted.
- 5.3 Following consideration of any comments, the intention is for the Business Case to be further considered at meetings of the Executives/Cabinet of the three Councils in January 2015 and Full Council meetings in February 2015. If the proposal is agreed the intended implementation date is 1 April 2015.

In-house Legal Team

- 5.4 The arrangements for securing additional capacity to support the team in regard to key corporate projects are being put in place, with a view to an appointment being made for January 2015.

Joint Independent Remuneration Panel

- 5.5 Following approval in principle to join the Independent Remuneration Panel at the last Council meeting, the first meeting of the expanded Joint Panel was held on 27 November 2014. The independent representative for Taunton Deane Borough Council is to be Keith Bevan, with Tony Brown as deputy, and the appointment thereof is formally made elsewhere on the agenda.

Electoral Services

- 5.6 The new Electoral Register was published on 1 December 2014 and a copy of the new register will be provided to all Members. An additional temporary post has been engaged to join the team to assist with the work around the publication of the new Register and preparation for the 2015 Elections.
- 5.7 Work is already in process to check where voters have not been confirmed through the Individual Electoral Registration process at the first attempt, to try and ensure that the Register will be as accurate as possible. If Members are contacted by the public in this regard, please do encourage them to contact the Electoral Services Team.
- 5.8 Once again, it is worth repeating that any electors who do not match following the local data matching process will not be deleted from the Electoral Register prior to next year's elections. Nevertheless, any electors with postal or proxy votes who do not match, will lose their postal or proxy votes unless they successfully register under Individual Electoral Registration using the new application process.
- 5.9 A mini canvas is proposed in January and February 2015, whereby all households will be contacted with the current details of persons who are on the Register at that address. This will act as a further prompt to ensure that the Register will be as up-to-date as possible before the May elections.
- 5.10 The Electoral Services Officer has been working closely with the Cabinet Office, who have welcomed such proactive initiatives. They have subsequently shared some of the practices currently being undertaken by our team, for example, the process being followed to register residents of nursing homes – often recognised as a difficult area to deal with – with other Local Authorities who are experiencing problems in this regard.

Democratic Services

- 5.11 After the last Full Council meeting, the Council has said goodbye to Sharon Grant, the Civic Officer who has done sterling work over recent years in supporting the work of the respective Mayors. We wish her well in the future. The post will be filled as part of the continuing Tier 6 restructure process. In the interim, a temporary agency worker has been engaged to assist with the transition period. It is hoped that the current restructure process will be completed by late January/early February 2015.
- 5.12 The Democratic Services Team have been adapting to cover Member meetings at both The Deane House and West Somerset as part of the shared services project. To date, the transition has been smoothly managed and my thanks go to all the members of the team for their flexible and positive approach.

- 5.13 The recent Remembrance commemoration formalities were a great success, with an exceptionally large turnout at the event in Vivary Park, Taunton.
- 5.14 The team also supported another successful, well appreciated and well attended event, where Councillor Cliff Bishop received the Freedom of the Borough.

6. Resources

Procurement

- 6.1 We continue to monitor the delivery of the Procurement Transformation Project and day-to-day procurement service by Southwest One. Latest information, as at 31 July 2014, reports that £2,274,000 savings have been delivered to the Council through the signed-off procurement related initiatives. A further £1,142,000 of savings are scheduled to be delivered from these signed-off initiatives during the remainder of the Southwest One contract.
- 6.2 The Strategic Procurement Service continues to review the 'pipeline' of further possible initiatives for Taunton Deane to provide a clearer forecast of likely savings at the end of the current Southwest One contract in 2017. The current best estimate is that a total of £4,990,000 savings could be delivered.

Financial Services

- 6.3 The structure for the Finance Service is included within phase one of the Tier 6 implementation as part of the JMASS Project. All staff have been confirmed within posts in the Finance structure with no redundancies. Staff will move into their new roles on 1 December 2014, and recruitment plans are underway to fill a small number of vacancies in the new 'One team'. I would like to take this opportunity to thank staff from both Councils for maintaining the important work of the service during this period of change.
- 6.4 At this time of year, the main focus has been the preparation of budget estimates for next financial year. A progress update was reported at the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 20 November 2014, including our latest forecast of the Council's financial position for 2015/2016 and over the medium term (four further years ahead). Whilst the budget gap is relatively small for next year, the financial pressure continues in subsequent years as Government funding is expected to reduce further year on year. The team are helping managers and portfolio holders in developing budget ideas.
- 6.5 The team continues to support the ongoing work of the JMASS Project, ensuring financial information and costings for the management and

shared services structures are robust and are on track to deliver business case targets.

7. Revenues and Benefits

Customer Service Excellence

7.1 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 a number of areas in which the Revenues and Benefits Service demonstrated good practice:-

- A customer focussed approach continues to be a key driver for the service as a whole. There is good evidence to demonstrate specific improvements and an emphasis on continuous development at a time of high demand;
- Impressive compilation of data underpins customer insight and drives future planning;
- Partnership work is extremely impressive; and
- The response to the floods across the Somerset Levels was thoughtful and constructive. The provision of relief and assistance was extremely well handled and is a credit to front-line staff as well as the service as a whole.

IRRV Awards

7.2 Further success came in October when both the Revenues Team and the Benefits Team received Bronze Awards in "Team of the Year" Category from the National Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation. These awards recognise excellence at a national level and I should like to congratulate all staff on their achievement.

Localised Council Tax Support Scheme

7.3 We have been reviewing our Localised Council Tax Support Scheme for 2015/2016. The service has obtained extensive information to inform the decision to be taken by Full Council on 9 December 2014. This decision needs to seek, as far as possible, to balance the significant cut to funding for Council Tax Support and the Council's wider budget challenge, with the need to help the most financially vulnerable members of the community.

Benefit Processing

7.4 The team continues to perform well in speed of benefit processing for 2014/2015. The average time taken to reassess benefit is 6½ days from when the customer notifies the service of a change in their circumstances. Staff are working out new claims on average within 17 days of the date they are submitted.

Council Tax Collection

- 7.5 Council Tax collection at 31 October 2014 is ahead of target at 72.43%. As many businesses this year have elected to pay their Business Rates over 12 instead of 10 months, collection is running at 2% below target at 69.77%. The service is, however, confident that it will meet the full year target by 31 March 2015.

Fraud

- 7.6 A bid was submitted to the Department of Communities and Local Government to assist us in tackling non-benefit fraud. I am delighted that we have been successful and now await confirmation of the amount awarded.

Joint Working

- 7.7 Finally, good progress has been made by managers in the Revenues and Benefits Service in establishing joint working with West Somerset. Officers are now working across both authorities to maximise efficiencies, with an aim to provide excellent services to residents in both areas.

Councillor Vivienne Stock-Williams

Council Meeting – 9 December 2014

Report of Councillor Mark Edwards - Planning, Transportation and Communications

1. Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (SADMP)

- 1.1 The SADMP goes to members for approval at this meeting (9 December 2014). It has previously been considered by the Local Development Framework Steering Group, the Community Scrutiny Committee and Executive. The Plan has been two years in the making and is founded upon an extensive evidence base and several rounds of public consultation.
- 1.2 Following approval it will be placed on deposit early in the New Year before being submitted to the Secretary of State and Planning Inspectorate.
- 1.3 We anticipate that the Plan will be examined in the Summer of 2015 prior to adoption towards the end of the Year.
- 1.4 The Plan itself comprises a number of site allocations and detailed development management policies and will mean that the Council can claim to have a comprehensive and up-to-date plan coverage for its area. It is important that the Plan is adopted as soon as is practicable in order that we can boast full plan coverage.

2. Junction 25

- 2.1 Officers continue to attend monthly meetings with Somerset County Council's (SCC) Highways and the Highways Agency (HA) to progress proposals for highway improvements to Junction 25 and a Henlade bypass to accommodate the future growth proposals for Taunton and relieve existing network problems. This includes highway modelling for a strategic employment site around Junction 25 to complement the Firepool regeneration site, allocated in the Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan.
- 2.2 A Delivery Team has also been set up to progress development of the employment site. This group includes internal and external stakeholders including the potential site developers, HA, SCC and the Environment Agency.
- 2.3 A suite of wider highway modelling is also being undertaken by the HA including potential improvements to both the M5, through the Route Based Strategy and A303/A358. Consequently it is unlikely that the

HA would be in a position to 'sign-off' the strategic employment proposals until all of the modelling is complete, which is anticipated around early summer 2015.

- 2.4 It is therefore the case that the SADMP will not be in a position to include the employment proposals around Junction 25 when it is published early in 2015, although it will contain a strong commitment to progress the proposals in a forthcoming plan as a matter of priority.

3. Junction 27

- 3.1 Mid Devon District Council are proposing to publish their Local Plan early in 2015. At this stage, although not confirmed, it is unlikely to contain an allocation at Junction 27 for a major, mixed use retail, leisure and employment development.
- 3.2 Through the Duty to Co-operate requirement, a number of authorities including Taunton Deane, Exeter, North Devon and Teignbridge have expressed concerns at the potential impact of such a proposal on town and other centres and its conflict with planning policy.
- 3.3 Devon County Highway Authority, the HA and Natural England have also expressed concerns with anticipated modes of travel and traffic impacts of such a proposal.
- 3.4 Taunton Deane Officers will continue to attend working group meetings on this issue and report back to Members when the Plan is published with a view to responding if the proposal does feature in the document or if the site developers object to its exclusion in the Plan.

4. Neighbourhood Planning

- 4.1 The Government have announced a £43,000,000 fund over the next two years to support Neighbourhood Planning. Most of the funds go direct to the Neighbourhood Plan Groups, in the form of grant payments (cash) or/and direct specialist advice tailored to specific needs. The Government is also extending the grants to local authorities to assist with costs at legal stages of the Neighbourhood Plan Process.
- 4.2 Trull and Staplehay Neighbourhood Plan group are refining a draft Plan. The Council is providing technical advice around regulatory requirements and evidence for policies.
- 4.3 Bishops Lydeard and Cothelstone Neighbourhood Plan Group are producing a draft Plan. Officers and Neighbourhood Plan group aim to meet soon to workshop the policies, evidence and provide technical advice.

- 4.4 Wiveliscombe and Wellington Neighbourhood Plan Groups are not currently progressing, although the Council understands they are still intending to work towards a Neighbourhood Plan.

5. Monkton Heathfield Governance Board

- 5.1 The Monkton Heathfield Delivery Board continues to meet regularly and negotiations are continuing between the developers and key stakeholders. The receipt of valuation advice should enable the application that seeks to vary the Section 106 obligation to reduce the amount of affordable housing to ensure that the developer can fund the Western Relief Road to be brought before the Planning Committee shortly.
- 5.2 A planning application showing an alignment for the Western Relief Road has also been submitted. Tim Burton recently attended West Monkton Parish Council to update them and answer their questions. It is hoped that a decision on the Council's Large Sites Capacity Fund application will be received shortly.

6. Routes to the River Tone Project

- 6.1 The Routes to the River Tone Project, a partnership project with the Somerset Wildlife Trust, was launched at the County Museum in October this year. The two project officers have already made a good start on the agreed activity plan for the project.

7. Car Parking

Safer Parking Scheme - Park Mark®

- 7.1 The Orchard Multi-Storey Car Park has just been inspected and again has been awarded the Park Mark®.
- 7.2 The Safer Parking Scheme is an initiative of the Association of Chief Police Officers aimed at reducing crime and the fear of crime in parking facilities. Safer parking status, Park Mark®, is awarded to parking facilities that have met the requirements of a risk assessment conducted by the Police.
- 7.3 These requirements mean that Taunton Deane has put in place measures that help to deter criminal activity and anti-social behaviour; thereby doing everything they can to prevent crime and reduce the fear of crime in their parking facility.
- 7.4 For customers, using a Park Mark® Safer Parking facility means that

the area has been vetted by the Police and has measures in place to create a safe environment:-

- Quality management;
- Appropriate lighting;
- Effective surveillance;
- Clean environment.

7.5 The scheme is managed by the British Parking Association (BPA) on behalf of 'Secured by Design'. It is supported by the Home Office and Government.

Car Park Use

7.6 Figures indicate that the use of car parks across Taunton Deane is up on last year and we anticipate that during the Christmas period this trend will continue.

7.7 As in previous years, the four Saturdays prior to Christmas will see Wellington Town Centre Car Parks available free of charge.

7.8 Taunton has also supported the 'Small Business Saturday' on the 6 December 2014 with all town centre car parks free of charge from 2 p.m.

8. Communications

8.1 The importance of social media is becoming ever more apparent with the Council's Twitter account being used as a key tool in communicating quickly and simply.

8.2 The Social Media Policy is awaiting its final approval tonight and aims to be a source of advice on how both staff and Councillors can best use social media while being aware of potential pitfalls.

8.3 The number of followers on the @TDBC account is now approaching 1,000 and we are hoping to achieve that target before the end of the calendar year.

8.4 On 26 November 2014 @TDBC took part in the national #ourday initiative inspired by the LGA to let the wider world know what local authorities do and to give an idea of the length and breadth of Council services. Thanks go to everyone who provided the information for this "tweetathon."

8.5 The Council continues to provide a steady flow of press releases and reactive statements where necessary and publishes the monthly

Deane Dispatch. Recent publications are taking a closer look at the growth and development themes.

- 8.6 Communications also works to deliver the One Team newsletter for staff and Councillors and thanks must go to all involved in this key publication.

Councillor Mark Edwards

Council Meeting – 9 December 2014

Report of Councillor Jane Warmington - Community Leadership

1. Community Safety

- 1.1 Community Safety is crime prevention plus. It is the systematic acquisition and application of skills, knowledge and techniques to prevent and reduce crime, disorder and fear of crime and develop safer communities. It extends from combating drugs misuse at one end to touch on urban and social regeneration at the other. It is also the name of the services and partnerships providing it, so community safety officers and community safety partnerships of which Safer Somerset Partnership is one.
- 1.2 Safer Somerset commissions the Somerset Community Safety Strategic Assessment (of crime and disorder) which is published annually. It gathers together research, evidence and intelligence from national and regional sources, as well as drawing on the professional expertise of those working locally. It is a joint partnership document and is designed to be a point of reference and guidance to resource community safety initiatives among partner agencies across Somerset.
- 1.3 It can be found at www.somersetintelligencenetwork.org.uk (SINe website) under Crime and Community Safety then listed under Community Safety Strategic Assessment.
 - It provides a picture of current issues;
 - Reflects trends and emergence of new issues;
 - Assesses impacts on communities, identifying those most affected by issues
 - Is independent, objective and evidence-led, reflecting the needs of our communities across public service organisations, rather than those of any single partner.
- 1.4 The main aim of the document is to identify priorities which will inform a joint strategy and action plan in order to tackle these priorities in a co-ordinated approach across Somerset. It also informs the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) following the election in November 2012 and helps the development of local Police and Crime Plans.
- 1.5 The Office of the PCC also works with key partners, including the Avon and Somerset Police Constabulary (ASP), to develop the Police and Crime Needs Assessment in October each year to inform her strategic decision making as well.
- 1.6 The Needs Assessment sits alongside and aims to identify and assess the issues that are likely to impact upon local crime and community safety services over the coming years via a horizon scanning approach. It also reviews current gaps in

services in respect of these findings, and presents shared multi-agency recommendations for improvement.

- 1.7 The consultation on the Needs Assessment has just closed. Eleven of the twelve small adjustments suggested to it by the Portfolio-Holder (PfH) have been accepted.
- 1.8 The Community Safety Budget now sits with the PCC and divides into four:-
 - (1) Victim Services Commissioning – for example, the newly commissioned Lighthouse Service for integrated victim support;
 - (2) Community Safety Commissioning – for example, Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC);
 - (3) Community Safety Grants - part Force wide, for example Youth Offending Teams (YOTs), part local for larger Somerset projects awarded through the Safer Somerset; and
 - (4) Community Action Fund – for small grants of up to £5,000 to tackle issues in local areas relating to the priorities in the Police and Crime Plans. These can be applied for across the year and the assessing panel meets quarterly (<http://www.avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk/Partnerships/Partnerships.aspx>).

2. New Anti Social Behaviour Legislation

- 2.1 The Anti Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 is intended to introduce simpler, more effective powers to tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB) which provide better protection for victims and communities. The new Community Trigger and Community Remedy will empower victims and communities, giving them a greater say in how agencies respond to complaints of ASB and in out-of-court sanctions for offenders.
- 2.2 The Act will also tackle irresponsible dog ownership and the use of illegal firearms by gangs and organised criminal groups, strengthen the protection afforded to the victims of forced marriage and those at risk of sexual harm, enhance the professional capabilities and integrity of the Police, amend the Port and Border Security Powers in Schedule 7 to the Terrorism Act 2000 to ensure that they strike the right balance between the need to protect public safety and the protection of individual freedoms and amend the Extradition Act 2003 to strengthen public confidence in, and the operational effectiveness of, our extradition arrangements. A good summary is available on <http://www.community-safety.info/18.html>.
- 2.3 The overarching aim of the Act is to provide more effective powers to tackle ASB, protect victims and communities and treat the underlying behaviour of perpetrators.
- 2.4 The Act replaces nineteen existing powers dealing with ASB with six broader powers, streamlining procedures to allow a quicker response to ASB. The Government envisages that these powers will make it easier for victims and communities to take action against ASB and reduce repeat violations.

2.5 [.https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/anti-social-behaviour-crime-and-policing-bill-anti-social-behaviour](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/anti-social-behaviour-crime-and-policing-bill-anti-social-behaviour)

3. New Psychoactive Substances

- 3.1 New Psychoactive Substances (NPSs) – so called Legal Highs – have been giving cause for concern for some time and were brought to wider public attention both locally and nationally with the formation of the Taunton based South West Action Group (SWAG). This was in response to an incident where a young girl was spiked by a discarded needle and how these were increasing in number in certain public areas despite regular sweeps.
- 3.2 SWAG voiced their concerns to Full Council in September particularly around two retail premises in the town which are selling them. They have received excellent support throughout from local Councillors particularly Councillor Simon Coles and the ASP Town Centre Police Team. They have now gathered over two thousand signatures on a petition, sufficient to support a debate at Full Council.
- 3.3 NPSs are now being used as substitutes by those addicted to harder drugs. However, their effects are less predictable, they are considered more addictive, the effects shorter-lived, leading to more frequent use, more ASB, associated crime and an increase in discarded needles. Unpredictable effects on users are putting an additional strain on emergency services and others needing to deal with users.
- 3.4 The Town Centre Police Team recently organised a community clean up with some basic training, equipment and supervision in four hotspots across the town. Forty or so joined in, including SWAG, Taunton Association for the Homeless, Councillors and Community Payback and searched the areas, collecting a total of 441 discarded needles as well as filling several bags with other litter. This deep clean is considered worth repeating in addition to the regular sweeps by Taunton Deane DLO staff in the parks and nearby streets.
- 3.5 Taunton Deane's Community Safety Lead and the PfH continue to work behind the scenes with the Constabulary Sector Inspector where the new legislation has already helped close a similar shop in Exeter. It would appear that one of the two shops in Taunton has agreed to stop selling these substances as a result of this closure. Activity around the other shop is currently being monitored.
- 3.6 This and other policing issues across wider Somerset, were recently broadcast on BBC1 in its short series Neighbourhood Blues, screened for two weeks every weekday morning in the middle of October. It is available to be viewed on BBC iPlayer for four weeks after screening.

4. Domestic Abuse

- 4.1 A new law on domestic violence, making it illegal for someone to exercise 'coercive control' over their partner, is about to be unveiled by the Government. The Home Secretary is expected to announce new powers allowing the Police to prosecute those who are guilty of psychological and emotional abuse.

- 4.2 It means for the first time people who control their partners through threats or by restricting their personal or financial freedom, could face prison in the same way as those who are violent towards them.
- 4.3 Campaigners have long called for a change in the law to put psychological exploitation on a par with physical violence, in the hope it will encourage more victims to come forward and report abuse in the home.
- 4.4 According to the charity, Women's Aid, only six and a half percent of domestic violence incidents reported to the Police result in a conviction, while a quarter of cases which are passed to the Crown Prosecution Service result in no action being taken. It is thought as many as 1.2 million women experience some kind of domestic abuse in Britain each year. Many do so silently, having little faith they will be believed or protected if they go to the Police.
- 4.5 Those who do find the courage to report an abusive partner often do not do so until there have been at least thirty incidents. Tragically it can be too late for some as the escalating pattern of abuse and violence sees an estimated two women murdered by a partner or ex-partner every week in Britain.
- 4.6 While the Government's definition of domestic violence recognises the impact of coercive control and threatening behaviour, this has not previously been reflected in law. Police investigating reports of domestic abuse, are often left frustrated as abusers are not prosecuted due to a lack of clear evidence or gaps in the legislation.
- 4.7 In cases where perpetrators are brought before the courts, they are often only charged with isolated crimes, with years of psychological and emotional abuse not taken into account.
- 4.8 The new law will be introduced as a series of amendments to the Serious Crime Bill, currently going through the House of Lords, and is expected to be on the statute books in the New Year. Under the terms of the Bill a person convicted of coercive control could face up to fourteen years in prison and there will be no statutory time limit for the offences, meaning abuse dating back years can be taken into account.
- 4.9 Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) were introduced in England and Wales from 8 March 2014. This follows the successful conclusion of a one year pilot in the West Mercia, Wiltshire and Greater Manchester Police Force areas.
- 4.10 DVPOs are a new power that fills a gap in providing protection to victims by enabling the Police and Magistrates to put in place protection in the immediate aftermath of a domestic violence incident.
- 4.11 With DVPOs, a perpetrator can be banned with immediate effect from returning to a residence and from having contact with the victim for up to twenty-eight days, allowing the victim time to consider their options and get the support they need.
- 4.12 Before the scheme, there was a gap in protection, because the Police could not charge the perpetrator for lack of evidence and so provide protection to a victim

through bail conditions, and because the process of granting injunctions took time.

- 4.13 The PfH is the district representative on the Police and Crime Panel and was invited by the PCC to sit on a Domestic Abuse Scrutiny Panel which questioned ASP recently about their improved response and support for victims. This followed an earlier report from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies which found Police Forces wanting in this area.
- 4.13 Contribution from the PfH asked for a concerted effort to get behind the One Team model, a sustained local area partnership approach which is reducing domestic abuse. John Hart, one of our two Housing Estate Officers with responsibility for Anti Social Behaviour accompanied the PfH on the Panel.

5. One Teams in North Taunton and Wellington

- 5.1 We are grateful to ASP for dedicating Police Inspector Shane Carey to take the lead in setting up the two emerging One Teams in North Taunton and Wellington. There is a lot to do and his working group meets regularly and things are moving on.
- 5.2 Full time co-ordinators and administrative/project support are expected to be in post in the two additional areas at the beginning of next year. In the meantime Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue have seconded an Interim Coordinator for Wellington, and the Police continue to cover this in North Taunton for the time being to support the emerging One Teams of existing frontline staff.
- 5.3 Co-locating frontline staff within the area they are working in, is still a work in progress and does not present any easy answers. Discussions across the various agencies are continuing. It is expected that staff squeezed into the Children's Centre in Halcon will move into the agency hub (with flats above) to be built in Moorland Road as part of the redevelopment. Getset Services are expanding and more of their staff will be area based in those centres designated as hubs which include Acorns, Hillside in North Taunton and Wellington.
- 5.4 All three areas have excellent bench marking reports undertaken in 2012 to inform the Priority Areas Strategy. These reveal the most pressing issues affecting each community and give a good overview for each area. These can be found on our website by searching Priority Areas Strategy, then clicking on it, scrolling down and clicking on the area Benchmarking Reports for North Taunton, Rural Taunton Deane (excluding Wellington), Taunton East and Wellington. Also available is the Taunton Deane Index of Multiple Deprivation Rankings.

6. Neighbourhood Policing Awards 2014

- 6.1 The Halcon One Team were overall ASP Force winners of the Neighbourhood Team of the Year Award, as well as winner of this category for Somerset. This is well deserved. Police Sergeant Andy Murphy QPM was there to receive this. He is now back working two days a week on a phased return in North Taunton before returning full time to Halcon. We would like to thank Fiona Phur for her nomination and for recognising the added value of working in this way.

- 6.2 I would also like to congratulate PCSO Linda Ebdon who received the individual Police Community Support Officer of the year award for Somerset. She leaves ASP in the New Year to join Devon and Cornwall Police Constabulary to begin training as a Police Officer. She will be much missed by her colleagues, local families and all the children she has helped during her seven years in Halcon. Linda also received a High Sheriff's Award a few weeks ago.
- 6.3 Another loss to the team is PCSO Ian Warren who has started his training as a Police Officer with ASP Constabulary. The Link Power Project has gone from strength to strength under his administration and leadership. It is a great benefit to Halcon and those who are part of this voluntary community workforce which helps them become work ready amongst other things.

7. Christmas Taunton Town Wardens

- 7.1 Taunton Deane Borough Council is funding a trial to provide two Taunton Town Wardens, throughout December at a cost of £5,000 which will pay for more than 350 hours of patrols on key routes and in parks. They will patrol crime and anti social behaviour hot spots and other areas as directed such as Castle Green.
- 7.2 The aim is to deter and disrupt troublemakers, support the Town Centre Police Team and the retailers' own troubleshooters. The wardens will report problems and make physical checks of key locations such as public loos and cash points. They are well trained, well equipped and able to administer first aid, as appropriate.
- 7.3 The patrols will be easily spotted in their high visibility jackets and badged as Taunton Deane Borough Council Town Wardens. They will work when the shops are open from 9am to 6pm and cover busy periods such as late night shopping.
- 7.4 The Police and South West Businesses Against Crime are fully supporting the pilot which could be extended in future.

Merry Christmas.
Councillor Jane Warmington

Council Meeting – 9 December 2014

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

1. Staffing issues

- 1.1 Carla Modley will be leaving at Christmas. During her three years with the Council, she has made a great contribution to the marketing of Taunton Deane, and has been involved in the delivery of cultural events, including the Olympic Torch Relay and two consecutive Somerfest events. We wish her every success in her new appointment.

2. Business Support

Taunton Business Incentive

- 2.1 This is the second year of this award supported by Francis Clark, Amicus Law, The Carly Press, The Castle Hotel, Word Gets Around, Somerset Business Agency, Santander, The Somerset County Gazette, Eskees and Taunton Deane. This group has created a support package worth £3,000 to help two businesses in 2015. A record number of applications have been received and 15 finalists from each category (turnover less than £100,000 and £100,000- £1m) have been chosen to go forward to the public vote.

The Fredericks Foundation

- 2.2 The Fredericks Foundation has awarded two grants to Taunton Deane residents. Details are still confidential until signed contracts are issued to applicants but the funding is going to worthy businesses.

New Business Grants

- 2.3 Seven new Business Grants have been awarded in the October round of awards. During the year to date grant support has been offered to 19 new businesses across the Borough.
- 2.4 The October awards were to the following people and businesses:-

Christopher Mockridge	Ludicris Cake Toppers	£500
Jack Council	Jacks Garden Maintenance	£500
Judith Stacey	Pass The Thyme (antique shop)	£500
Melanie Gale-Rose	Little Van Rouge	£500
Sarah Beasley-Stones	Stawley Orchards	£500
Tony Baker	Estate Agent	£500

Small Business Saturday on 6 December 2014

- 2.5 There are a number of events happening around Taunton Deane as part of the national campaign. The Council has granted free parking in the afternoons on Saturday, 6 December 2014. Wiveliscombe have a programme of events including a 12 days of Christmas shop window trail, Local Artisan craft market at The Bear Inn, Cotleigh Brewery Open Day, extended opening hours and special offers in shops by local traders and live music in The Square throughout the day. We will also promote small businesses across the area proactively through our social media channels.
- 2.6 Officers are currently researching and preparing a **business guide for Wellington and Wiveliscombe** to promote and celebrate the wealth of independent traders that exist in both towns. It is hoped that this will be published in time for Small Business Saturday. Copies will be circulated to all Members. In the Spring, a map promoting the independent shops in Taunton will be produced.

Support for flood affected businesses

- 2.7 Members will be aware that extensive efforts have been made across the Council to support those residents and businesses that were affected by the dreadful floods earlier this year. I am now able to report the following statistics for Members' information:-
- It is estimated that 325 businesses in the flood affected area were affected
 - 17 Repair and Renew grants have been issued to date to residents and businesses, at a value of £82,192. There are an additional 5 pending creating a total value of £101,799
 - 47 Business Support grants have been awarded at total value of £110,125
 - 2 Businesses have been offered Rate Relief, totalling £8000
 - 52 properties have been offered Council Tax Relief, totalling £35,975

Support for larger businesses

- 2.8 A £13,000 **Investment grant** has been awarded to IDN (Integrated Data Needs), a company providing ICT solutions to schools and the public sector. The grant has helped the company create 13 new jobs that will enable the company to expand its operations in Creech St Michael. The extension enabling the expansion has been assisted by the award of a "Gain" grant.
- 2.9 A grant of £10,000 has also been awarded to Swallowfield in Wellington. Officers have been liaising closely with the company with the aim of assisting the business to relocate and expand within the town. The

company is currently restricted by its premises, and needs to expand to enable it to invest and grow. The grant will assist the company to carry out the necessary preparatory work and studies.

- 2.10 Liaison is continuing with many other businesses in Taunton Deane to assist them to grow and create new jobs.

3. Support for inward investors

- 3.1 Kijlstra will be creating its first UK manufacturing plant in the former Tarmac plant in Thornfalcon, creating 42 jobs. The company is working with Job Centre Plus to target its recruitment at current job seekers, and has also specifically approached some of the employees that were laid off by Tarmac when it closed in 2012.
- 3.2 Advocate Consultancy Services has opened a new call centre in Taunton town centre, creating jobs for 20 people. This is a new business that has big growth plans in the town and it hopes to triple the employment number of the forthcoming months.
- 3.3 Officers of the Business Development Team are currently working on a new guide to employment sites in the Borough, which will be of use to inward investors as well as local businesses. It is expected that this guide will be available early in the New Year.
- 3.4 Discussions are well advanced with three national restaurant chains, each of which is bringing a currently redundant or under-utilised property back into use in Taunton Town Centre.

4. The Brewhouse Theatre

- 4.1 The Lease and the Annual Funding Agreement on the Brewhouse Theatre was concluded with the Taunton Theatre Association on 7 October 2014. The theatre is currently recruiting a Chief Executive Officer. The Council will have two officers and the Portfolio Holder of Economic Development as observers on the Board of Trustees.
- 4.2 Recently officers organised a meeting with “Art Taunton” (Taunton Cultural Consortium) represented by Kit Chapman and Peter Lewis, and the Arts Council South West to discuss the progression of a new **multi-purpose arts and cultural venue** in the town centre. A new centre has long been the ambition of the Taunton Cultural Consortium.

5. Taunton Town Centre

- 5.1 The Council is continuing to support town centre management in Taunton. The programmes include marketing of the town centre to

visitors through a new initiative called *Taunton Social iStreet*, maintaining the footfall counters, and supporting a diverse range of cultural events and festivals throughout the year.

- 5.2 The **Taunton Social iStreet** project is now underway, delivered under contract by the recently appointed company called Destination CMS. The 12 month project is two pronged; firstly visiting every retailer and hospitality provider in the town centre to obtain the current news stories, events and activities. The second aspect is to promote those stories and features, Regionally and nationally using traditional and social media channels as well as the Borough's new visitor website (at www.visitsomerset.co.uk/taunton). The company is also liaising/promoting with events and the providers. The company has already visited 80 businesses in the town centre.

Festive Lights and Switch on – 23 November 2014

- 5.3 I would like to congratulate Councillor Kelly Durdan for the work she has done with 'Make Taunton Sparkle' to raise the necessary funds for the Christmas lights in the town centre, enabling the annual Lights Switch on. Recognition should also be given to Pat Mayhew of TIME4 who coordinated the whole event, including the delivery once again of an excellent street market, which was self funding. The town was extremely busy on the day, and our footfall counters record that attendance was up by 3% on last year.
- 5.4 Make Taunton Sparkle raised £7,000 and Time4 has contributed £4,000 towards the lights and the switch-on event this year. The Council match funded £10,000 for the Christmas Lights, and has covered a number of other costs such as road closures.

6. Marketing and Tourist Information Centre (TIC)

- 6.1 The new destination/visitor website – www.visitsomerset.co.uk/taunton has been live since early August and to date, the site has had over 32,000 unique visitors and over 220,000 page views (this is over 1000% up on the previous Council pages it replaced).
- 6.2 A Christmas in Taunton Deane section has recently been added to the site and this is your comprehensive guide to what is happening in and around the district over the festive period – <http://www.visitsomerset.co.uk/taunton/whats-on/christmas-in-taunton>
- 6.3 The Economic Development Team are working with members from Destination Taunton and the Taunton Events Group to populate and then promote a year-long calendar of events taking place in the area. This in addition to the regular 'Tone' event feature in What's On Somerset magazine and new e-newsletters which are being circulated

in our TIC events mailing list.

- 6.4 The (trade-led) Visit Somerset Team have just launched their new 2015 promotional brochure for the county and I am pleased to report Cothay Manor is featured on the front cover, copies of this guide (which is distributed across the UK) will be available from the TICs in Taunton and Wellington.
- 6.5 Meetings have been held with the Bath Place Traders Association, Go Create, Phoenix Somerset, Taunton Flower Show and Taunton Live 2015 to discuss new ideas and events. Our social media channels continue to grow in popularity – @TauntonBusiness now has nearly 1,200 followers, @TauntonTIC over 2,800 and these have been complimented by a Facebook group 'TauntonTown' which is being used to promote the town centre and area as part of the Social i Street project.
- 6.6 The TIC is currently selling cards for over 25 national and local charities until 23 December 2015.
- 6.7 Tickets for numerous events (including all of those taking place at the Brewhouse Theatre and Tacchi Morris Arts Centre) are on sale in the centre.
- 6.8 The poster rotunda units (located throughout the town centre) continue to prove popular with event organisers and local businesses, bookings for these can be placed with the TIC Team.

Councillor Norman Cavill

Council Meeting – 9 December 2014

Report of Councillor James Hunt – Environmental Services

1. Environmental Health / Licensing

- 1.1 Licensing and Environmental Health have had another busy period. The Food Inspection Team has taken on a temporary member to ensure that it keeps on top of the very important food business premises inspection programme and will be up to date again as we go into Spring.
- 1.2 Both Licensing and Environmental Health have worked together with the organisers of Make Taunton Sparkle. All were out very early on the morning of the Christmas lights switch on identifying potential issues and getting them resolved in plenty of time. With good co-operation from all sides the event was able to go ahead safely and without incident.
- 1.3 South West Audit Partnership (SWAP) recently completed an audit of private water supplies. They gave an assurance rating of 'reasonable' and there are a number of small items recommended for improvement - some of which had been completed prior to the final assessment.

2. Deane DLO

- 2.1 DLO managers are receiving positive feedback from the introduction of the additional street cleaning staff in the town centre following the granting of additional funding by Full Council. All staff are working hard to ensure that the town centre remains an attractive place to shop in, especially as we approach one of the busiest times of the year.
- 2.2 The work to replace town centre waste bins has also been completed and now all normal waste containers in the town centre are all of the same type bringing a more uniform look to the town centre.
- 2.3 I was pleased to support a recent report from the Local Government Association calling on chewing gum manufacturers to pay for the cost of cleaning their products from the street. Something that can cost Taunton Deane several thousand pounds a year and millions across the country.

3. Somerset Waste Partnership

- 3.1 The recycle and collection trial programme is progressing well and will be ending shortly. Residents on the trial rounds will be asked to comment on their experience of the three different trial variations and the outcomes used to

help determine how Somerset Waste Partnership operations should continue in the future. I hope to give a fuller report once the data has been analysed.

- 3.2 The 'Reuse Shop' at Priorswood Recycling Centre has now been open for a year and has prevented thousands of items weighing over 119 tonnes of perfectly usable items being discarded to landfill. The shop covers the costs of its operation and makes a small surplus that is then used to support other waste minimisation projects.

4. Climate Change

- 4.1 Last year we were unable to recruit to the vacant post of a Climate Change Officer so the budget allocation was retained with a view towards implementing a particular project at some time in the future.
- 4.2 We have now identified a Solar PV solution as a way forward that will meet both the climate change agenda with the additional benefit of providing a positive return to the Council.
- 4.3 The proposal is to implement a 36kw array on the roof of the Tennis Centre at Blackbrook that would then service the new pool when it is constructed. The investment payback period would be around ten years and well in advance of the twenty five plus years that the panels will remain productive for. Modern panels can last much longer than even this and could continue to be productive for much longer.
- 4.4 It is anticipated that this would save 35 tonnes of CO2 emissions each year for the life of the panels so a minimum of almost 900 tonnes over the first twenty five years.
- 4.5 There is other significant good news relating to this. As I write the Executive meeting on 3 December 2014 has an agenda item on the possible implementation of solar PV panels being installed on a planned 350 houses in the Council's existing housing stock. This will provide savings to both residents and the Council and significant carbon savings as well. Please review the report for more details.

Councillor James Hunt

Council Meeting – 9 September 2014

Report of Councillor Catherine Herbert – Sports, Parks and Leisure

1. Parks

- 1.1 The award of Green Flags to Vivary Park, French Weir Park, Wellington Park and Swains Lane Nature Reserve was most welcomed. We are very lucky to have support from the friends groups and it is great for everyone's efforts to be recognised.
- 1.2 The Vivary Park Partnership have had a 'wash-up' meeting to discuss the 2014 Flower Show and are now looking at plans for next year's show and other matters relating to the Park.

2. Community Leisure and Play

- 2.1 The Blackbrook Pool Project is progressing on timetable and more and more people are asking about the start date and when they will be able to use the new pool! It is really great to get such positive interest from the people who will be using the pools.
- 2.2 We are updating the Council Playing Pitches and Allotments Strategy, this will be very important with all the development going on in our area. We must strive to ensure enough provision is supported through developments to meet the needs of a growing community.
- 2.3 As part of the Routes to the River Tone Project, the team are working with the Somerset Wildlife Trust to deliver a project enhancing the open space at Firepool Lock between the canal and the river.

3. Tone Leisure (Taunton Deane) Limited Activities

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

Active Lifestyles

Memory Walk

- 3.2 In partnership with the Alzheimer's Society, Tone Leisure hosted the fourth annual Memory Walk in Vivary Park at the end of September. There were 247 participants this year compared to 197 last year. The Taunton Walk is now the second largest in the South West after Plymouth.

Cades Farm Community Engagement Day - Project Wellington

- 3.3 Tone, in partnership with Wellington Children's Centre, Knightstone Housing and Somerset Skills and Learning, held a Family Fun Day with an Autumnal theme at Cades Farm in Wellington in October. Team sports, football skills, Ping and a 'make your own Smoothie through pedalling' bike were on offer from Tone Leisure. The event ran for a second year and attracted over 230 local residents compared to the 130 which attended last year.

Walk Well with Tone

- 3.4 Taunton Deane Walk Well in Taunton and Taunton Deane Walk Well in Wellington schemes have both been awarded accreditation to the National Walking for Health Scheme.

Funding

- 3.5 Tone's application to Sporta has been successful, with the Forever Active Project commencing in January 2015. The project will target adults aged 50+ who have a BMI of 25+ and adults aged 65+ with long term health conditions. There will be six gym based group sessions per week, which will run at Wellington Sports Centre and Blackbrook Pavilion for 18 months. Creating Active Communities is a joint partnership bid with Knightstone Housing Association and a number of other partner organisations. The project is focusing on North Taunton and Yeovil in the first year. A walking football group will be one of the first sessions to be delivered in North Taunton in January 2015.

Facility News

Wellsprings Leisure Centre

- 3.6 The Whirlwinds Trampoline Club has moved from its venue in Wellington and has successfully started at Wellsprings, using ten trampolines three times a week from beginners to competition standard.
- 3.7 Wellsprings Vibe youth night is now achieving attendances of 60+ young people on Friday nights. The varied programme has boosted attendances, with activities such as Parkour.

Taunton Pool

- 3.8 Following the refurbishment of Taunton Pool, Tone has extended early morning swimming slots. On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays the pool opens at 6.30 am.

St. James Street Baths

- 3.9 The Learn to Swim scheme at St. James Street Baths continues to grow. In October the site reached 1,675 swimmers; record levels for this facility. The transition to the ASA Learn to Swim framework took place in September and has been well received.

Seasons greetings to you all.

Councillor Catherine Herbert

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 9 December 2014 at 6.30 p.m.

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

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of Taunton Deane Borough Council held on 30 September 2014, copies having been sent to each Member, were signed by the Mayor.

2. Apologies

Councillors Bishop, Mrs Floyd, Mrs Gaden, Mrs Govier, Mrs Lees and Tooze.

3. Declaration of Interests

Councillors Mrs Baker, Coles, A Govier, Prior-Sankey, A Wedderkopp and D Wedderkopp declared personal interests as Members of Somerset County Council. Councillor Henley declared personal interests as a Member of Somerset County Council and as an employee of Job Centre Plus. Councillor Hunt declared personal interests both as a Member of Somerset County Council and as one of the Council's representatives on the Somerset Waste Board. Councillor Mrs Hill declared a personal interest as an employee of Somerset County Council. Councillor Tooze declared a personal interest as an employee of the UK Hydrographic Office. Councillor Wren declared a personal interest as Clerk to Milverton Parish Council. Councillor Nottrodt declared a personal interest as a Director of Southwest One. Councillors D Durdan and Stone declared prejudicial interests as Tone Leisure Board representatives. Councillor Gill Slattery declared personal interests as a member of the Board of Governors at Somerset College, a Patron of the Supporters of Taunton Women's Aid and as one of the Council's representatives on the Parrett Internal Drainage Board. Councillor Farbahi declared a personal interest as a local owner of land in Taunton Deane. Councillor Mrs Herbert declared a personal interest as an employee of the Department of Work and Pensions. Councillor Ms Lisgo declared a personal interest as a Director of Tone FM.

4. **Public Question Time**

- (1) Mr David Orr explained that he wanted to aid the protection of the reputation of the Councillors and the Council.

The 2011 Localism Act was based upon a set of principles, two of which were openness and accountability. He was pleased that the Council had now finally complied with the requirements of the Act to web publish the register of interests.

Mr Orr stated that he had no problem with Councillors running businesses and earning their living within Taunton Deane. However, there was a 'grey' area with this relating to the opportunity for Councillors to gain business from sub-contract work from a primary contract awarded by the Council and not declaring it in the Register of Interests.

The Guidance Notes clearly stated that Councillors must avoid ever placing themselves "under any obligation" as a result of a declarable interest.

The advice he had previously received from the Monitoring Officer was that simply declaring your trade, profession or business is sufficient and that any sub-contract from a Taunton Deane primary contract was said to be a "third party contract". This appeared to be at odds with other enquiries made of other Local Authorities.

Surely, once a sub-contract from a Council-awarded contract paid fees or earnings to the trade, profession or business of a serving Councillor, then an obligation had been created?

Breaking the Localism Act was a criminal offence as the former leader of Dorset County Council had recently found out, and this was surely a wake-up call for all Councils?

To maintain public confidence and in support of the Localism Act principles of accountability and openness, Mr Orr called upon the Council to conduct a formal Standards Committee review into the proper recording of sub-contract work awarded from Taunton Deane primary contracts into the Register of Interests.

In response, Councillor Mrs Stock-Williams stated that this issue would be discussed at a forthcoming meeting of the Somerset Monitoring Officers. If any further guidance needed to be issued to Taunton Deane's Councillors as a result of this consideration, this would be done.

- (2) Questions relating to proposed development at Jurston Farm, Wellington

- (a) Ann Loarridge expressed concerns over the additional education provision proposed. She felt this was going to be inadequate and asked where all the children who would live on the new development would be taught? There appeared to be land allocated for a new primary school but this site looked to be quite restricted. Where would

the children play? How safe would it be for the children to travel to school?

- (b) Michael Lockyer felt that the 2,000 new houses that were being built in Wellington – including at Jurston Farm – would generate up to 3,000 potential employees. Where were the jobs locally going to be created? Westpark was only a medium-sized employment site. Did this mean Wellington was destined to be a ‘dormitory town’?
- (c) Frank Cross stated that there appeared to be a rush to develop Jurston. Care needed to be taken to ensure that everything promised was capable of being delivered. The principal reason for developing the land at Longforth Farm, namely the bridge over the railway, had been ‘left behind’. Would it ever be built? Local residents would have to suffer heavy lorries coming through the town centre for some time yet.
- (d) Michael Hearn said the new road to be built as part of the development which ran parallel with Laburnum Road would be at a higher level and could result in nearby flooding. The new houses which would be ‘packed together’ would overlook existing dwellings invading privacy and violating the right to light. Wellington would be grid-locked if the development was to proceed.
- (e) Shaun Nightingill made reference to the 2012 Plan for Wellington which had talked about an extension to the sewage works that had not yet been implemented and the former Doctor’s Surgery at Bulford being used for retail purposes only. This site had since been developed as retirement flats. He used these examples to show that development proposals often did not turn out as expected. He added that between 2008 and 2012 there had been an over-delivery of 400 houses in Wellington. Surely the town had already carried its fair share of development?
- (f) Russell Loarridge submitted a petition signed by many local residents against the proposed development at Jurston Farm. He thought that Wellington residents had ‘slept-walked’ through 1,200 new dwellings being built in the town already with a further 650 dwellings proposed at Jurston Farm. The professionals had not taken into account the lack of school places and medical facilities for new residents. He added that Wellington’s population had increased by 40% - 20,000 people in less than 20 years. Was there a need to re-consider whether a further increase was the right thing to do?

In response, Councillor Edwards thanked those members of the public from Wellington for attending the meeting. He understood the strength of feeling and stated that he would be happy to come to Wellington to discuss their concerns further. Now that a planning application had been submitted to develop the land at Jurston Farm, Councillor Edwards said he had to be very cautious about attempting to reply to any of the specific points raised. He reminded those present that representations in connection with the application could be submitted as part of the planning process during the formal

consultation period – which had been extended to take account of the forthcoming Christmas period.

5. **Receipt of Petition – Legal Highs**

Councillor Coles presented to the Mayor a petition containing over 200 signatures calling for both the local Council and the Government to ban the selling of all Psychoactive Substances (known as ‘Legal Highs’). Due to the size of the petition, Councillor Coles had requested a 15 minute debate which was permitted under the Council’s Petitions Scheme.

Councillor Coles felt the Council needed to be at the vanguard to support the Police in implementing new legislation aimed at controlling access to Legal Highs. The current cost to society was enormous with many deaths across the country being recorded and lots of complaints from the public in relation to this issue. The help of the South West Action Group (SWAG) in highlighting the serious problem that existed with Legal Highs was acknowledged.

Mr Zac Smith representing SWAG reported that of the two shops that were selling Legal Highs in Taunton, the one in East Reach had stopped doing so and the one on The Bridge had been temporarily ‘shut down’ by the Police using the new powers that had only recently come into effect.

During the remainder of the debate the Members who spoke fully supported the aims of the petition.

6. **Motion – Legal Highs**

Moved by Councillor Miss Smith, seconded by Councillor Coles

“This Council recognises that there has been an impact on the community and welfare of our residents through the ongoing sale of NPS (Legal Highs) within Taunton Deane. We recognise that the South West Action Group has played an important part in bringing the negative impact of these to our attention. We have a duty to remedy this situation through restricting the sale of these substances along with assisting those affected.

- Stop the over the counter sales of NPS (Legal Highs) in Taunton Deane owned premises by a restrictive covenant. This covenant should forbid the sale/distribution of NPS in premises owned or leased by the Council. We also need to contact all local/national commercial landlords within Taunton Deane to ask them to include a covenant in all new lettings within the area.
- Call on the Council to immediately make use of new powers available under Anti-Social Behavioural (ASB) legislation which includes ensuring that a community trigger is put in place by the end of December 2014.
- Ensure that a multi-agency team with the Police, NHS and other third parties meets on a regular basis to discuss ASB within the town and look to make remedies.

- Taunton Deane to fund a new post for a full time cleaning operative, building on the December trial, with a brief of assisting in the collection of reported needles, cleaning known hotspots on a daily basis and additional cleaning of our public toilets and park areas.
- Taunton Deane to fund specialist help provision to the maximum of £25,000 per annum to support users in looking to break the addiction through Taunton Association for the Homeless, Citizens Advice Bureau, Turning Point and others.
- Work with Somerset County Council to ensure the introduction of an educational programme for schools, colleges and youth provision providers to ensure impacts and dangers of Legal Highs are addressed.”

The motion was put and was carried.

7. **Motion – Christmas Lights in Taunton**

Moved by Councillor Horsley, seconded by Councillor Farbahi

“Taunton Deane Borough Council has a proud record of supporting its town centre and has always acknowledged the importance of the Christmas period in providing the retailers with the best opportunity of being commercially successful in the calendar year. In recent years it has expanded the customer offer by extending its reach to Somerset Square, Castle Green and further up the High Street with its renting of stalls to market holders on those days when it puts on events for the traders such as the Christmas Lights switch on.

It further acknowledges the role played by the Events Organisers which has raised money towards the lights and ensuring that all visitors are welcome. It notes that the figures provided by the Economic Development Team and by the Manager of the Orchard Centre also show a year on year increase in numbers in the town centre. Taunton can be also proud that its current level of void sites is down to 4% compared with the national average of 14%.

It is disappointing to note however that for the past two years the extent of the Christmas Lights only reach nearly as far as Debenhams to the north on North Street and to well short of Primark on East Street and does not include much of High Street to the south. This means that Bridge Street and Station Road to the north, the eastern part of East Street and the whole of East Reach has no Christmas Lights nor does Corporation Street to the West. These important secondary shopping areas are getting no benefit from the Christmas Lights “project”.

Business Rates have not come down in the recession whilst market rents have halved for even the premium sites. This has led to a high volume of appeals against the Rateable Values by many owners in their attempts to reduce their outgoings. The future of Christmas Lights is going to remain a “will we, won’t we” battle every year which only creates uncertainty for the retailers and traders

Taunton Deane Liberal Democrats note that the recent Traders Survey identified that 77% of the traders believe that Christmas Lights should be “safeguarded”. They also believe that with the demise of the Town Centre Company, the responsibility for supporting a fair and longer lasting strategy for making Taunton Sparkle is for the Council to agree to (a) extend the Christmas lights to the secondary areas mentioned above and (b) to agree to provide funding until Christmas 2018.

Accordingly it asks the DLO or other such organisation to cost out a programme to cover the extended area for 2015 onwards and to examine whether to hire or purchase. The funding for this should come from any under spend in the previous year.”

The motion was put and was carried.

8. **Hinkley Point C (HPC): Housing Funding Strategy**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the Hinkley Point C (HPC): Housing Funding Strategy.

HPC, in accordance with the provision of the Section 106 Development Consent Order (DCO), was due to release a housing fund of £660,824 to assist in delivering additional housing capacity, in order to mitigate potential adverse effects on the local private rented and accordingly, the low cost housing market.

It was estimated that by early 2016, there would be a need for 1,350 beds across all tenures and across Taunton Deane, West Somerset and Sedgemoor, and that this need would increase to 2,200 by early 2019.

The Housing Funding Strategy had been developed in close partnership with Sedgemoor District Council (SDC) and West Somerset District Council (WSC). The initial principles and general shape of the utilisation of the Housing Fund had been agreed and were a range of inter-dependent initiatives, designed to help alleviate pressures on the local housing markets.

It was envisaged that the initiatives listed below would help respond to the impacts felt, however the Council would monitor the market closely to see whether future additional funding bids would be needed:-

- a) **Somerset Homelet** - seeking to understand and assist in moderating the supply and demand through the online resource of Somerset Homelet;
- b) **Flexible Rent Support** - providing support for the most vulnerable trying to access the private rented sector;
- c) **Landlord Accreditation** - ensuring that a section of current private rented sector accommodation, including rooms, were of a good standard through minor works that were supported by grant monies;
- d) **Sustainable Management Service** - commission a sustainable management service that would provide accommodation for the most vulnerable;

- e) **Tenant Accreditation** - providing support to tenants to help them demonstrate they were responsible to landlords;
- f) **Empty Property Regeneration**- utilising empty properties that would be brought back into use for the most vulnerable; and
- g) **First Time Buyers Loan** - assisting first time buyers to purchase their own homes through Wessex Home Improvement Loans

The projects had been developed in partnership and their implementation would be co-ordinated by a Housing Implementation Officer (HIO). The projects would then be delivered by both internal and external services such as Housing Options, Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership (SWPSHP) and many others.

As well as the sum mentioned above, there was the opportunity for a further £5,000,000 to be shared amongst North Somerset, Taunton Deane, Sedgemoor and West Somerset from the Housing Fund Contingency Payments should it be evident from the private rented sector that thresholds had been exceeded by unanticipated demand from the HPC workforce for accommodation and/or unanticipated impacts on the housing supply.

Resolved that the approach of the 'Hinkley Point C: Housing Funding Strategy' so as to simplify approvals to be obtained from West Somerset Cabinet and Full Council when the monies were released, be endorsed.

9. **Proposed Social Media Policy and Recording of Meetings Protocol**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the proposed adoption of a Social Media Policy and a Recording of Meetings Protocol.

The Council already operated within a world where the use of Social Media was growing and becoming an increasingly significant way of communicating with individuals and organisations.

The Council used a Twitter account as did some individual Councillors and staff and, going forward, this trend was likely to be on the increase as Social Media continued to evolve.

Against this background the South West Audit Partnership had recommended that the Councils should have an approved Social Media Policy to provide guidance for Councillors and staff and minimise the risk of exposing Taunton Deane to reputational damage.

Reported that a Social Media Policy had now been drafted. If this Policy was adopted, Guidelines as to how to use Social Media effectively together with an easy to read summary policy document would be produced to assist both Councillors and employees to operate safely within the policy requirements.

On a related matter, the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 had made it a requirement for Councils to allow any member of the public to take photographs, film and audio record the proceedings, and report on all public meetings.

In the light of these developments the Somerset Monitoring Officers' Group had prepared a draft Protocol which was to be considered for adoption by all the Local Authorities in Somerset.

When this matter was discussed by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee it was recommended that all public meetings should be recorded with effect from 1 January 2015 and were made available to the public via the internet or through whatever other appropriate means.

It was proposed to achieve this by the purchase of a small recording device which would be compatible with the new microphone loop system due to be installed shortly in the John Meikle Room.

The Corporate Scrutiny Committee had also requested investigations into upgrading the recording to a full visual one for all meetings for streaming later in 2015 together with appropriate training for Members.

Resolved that:-

- (1) The Social Media Policy be adopted;
- (2) The Recording of Meetings Protocol be also adopted;
- (3) The introduction of audio recording of all Council and Committee meetings which were open to the press and public to coincide with the installation of the new microphone system be supported; and
- (4) The request by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee to investigate the practicalities and costs of introducing the visual recording of meetings be noted and the Committee's request for training to be provided for Members in relation to the Recording of Meetings Protocol and the use of Social Media be supported.

10. **Joint Independent Remuneration Panel – Process to Review Members' Allowances**

Reference Minute No 9 from the meeting held on 30 September 2014, reported that following further deliberations, the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel now comprised Somerset County Council, Taunton Deane Borough Council, West Somerset Council and Mendip District Council.

Details of the full membership of the proposed Panel was submitted for the information of Members.

Given the impending May 2015 elections, it was important that there was clarity in terms of a process and timetable for reviewing the Members' Allowance Scheme.

The Joint Independent Remuneration Panel met on 27 November 2014 and had recommended to the constituent partners that the process for the formal review of the Members' Allowances Scheme should be as follows:-

- (a) To continue to apply the existing scheme for the first part of the 2015/2016 financial year, pending the adoption of a revised scheme of Members' Allowances following the Borough Council Elections in May 2015.
- (b) To recommend to the Council to be elected in May 2015 that the budget for Members' Allowances for 2015/2016 to fund the new scheme following the election was contained within the total budget for Members' Allowances for 2014/2015.
- (c) To agree to carry out a survey of Members' views on the Council scheme in advance of the 2015 Borough Council Elections to inform decisions in relation to new scheme.
- (d) To agree a timetable for the review and implementation of a new scheme of Members' allowances both before and after the Local Government Elections next year - full details of which were reported.

Resolved that:-

- (1) The formal expansion of the Panel to include Taunton Deane Borough Council be noted;
- (2) The Panel membership including the proposed representatives for Mendip District Council and Taunton Deane Borough Council be endorsed; and
- (3) The timetable and process from the formal review of the Taunton Deane Borough Council Members' Allowance Scheme as set out in the report be also endorsed.

(The Mayor (Councillor D Durdan) declared a prejudicial interest in the following item as one of the Tone Leisure Board representatives. He left the room during the consideration of the item. The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Mrs Hill) took the Chair.)

11. Swimming Pool Project at Blackbrook Pavilion Sports Centre Update on Capital Budget

Full Council had previously approved a scheme to provide a Community Pool, Learner Pool, Changing Village and Café at the Blackbrook Pavilion Sports Centre. Councillors had also approved the provision of a Spa facility to provide extra income generation supporting the affordability of the project.

The Business Case and affordability of the investment in this service to the community remained on track. The anticipated construction start time was early 2015.

The tender price was currently being finalised and supply chains investigated in order to produce a final contract price and programme between the Council and the contractors BAM Construction.

The original costing in 2012/2013 had been compiled from a data base of comparable projects previously delivered in the 'market'. Since then the

improvement in the economy had resulted in some significant market changes which had increased costs requiring additional budget as follows:-

Approved Capital Budget	£5,353,000
Required Capital Budget	£5,750,958
Additional Funds required	£ 397,958

The additional funds required represented 7.4% of the original project budget.

When Council gave approval for the project in May 2013 the construction market was stagnant with little optimism for an imminent up-turn in the economy. However, over the last 18 months the construction industry had seen a resurgence in activity with labour and material shortages putting significant pressure on development budgets.

The British Cost Information Service All-in Tender Price Index (TPI) had confirmed an increase of 8.47% between May 2013 and November 2014, with a further 4.24% increase to the mid-point of construction in 2015. The TPI uplift was £680,366 which would give a revised budget of £6,033,366.

The fluctuating market conditions had been managed tightly by the Project Team as part of the general design development and risk management of the project. As a result, further cost savings had been identified which meant the TPI uplift stood at £397,958 and not the figure quoted above.

Resolved that:-

- (1) A Supplementary Estimate of £398,000 to the Blackbrook Pool Capital Budget be approved; and
- (2) The £398,000 be allocated from the Growth and Regeneration Earmarked Reserve to fund the additional capital budget requirement.

12. **Recommendation to Council from the Executive**

(a) Earmarked Reserves Review

As at 31 March 2014 the level of earmarked General Fund reserves was £8,621,000. This was equivalent to 65.5% of the Council's Net Revenue Budget of £13,162,000.

A fundamental review had been undertaken of all General Fund Revenue Earmarked Reserves, with a view to balances being returned to the General Fund.

As a result of this review, there are various earmarked reserves, totalling £65,060, that are no longer required principally arising from the Waste Contract.

On the motion of Councillor Williams, it was

Resolved that a budget return of £65,060 to the General Fund Reserve of surplus balances currently held in Earmarked Reserves be agreed.

(b) Fees and Charges 2015/2016

Consideration had been given to the proposed fees and charges for 2015/2016 for the following services:-

- Cemeteries and Crematorium;
- Waste Services;
- Housing and Community Services;
- Licensing;
- Environmental Health;
- Promotional 'Rotunda' Units in Taunton Town Centre; and
- Deane Helpline.

Details of the proposed increases were submitted. No increases were proposed to Land Charges fees, Planning and Environment or in connection with Building Control.

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 2015/2016 in respect of the Cemeteries and Crematorium, Waste Services, Housing and Community Services, Licensing, Planning, Environmental Health, Promotional 'Rotunda' Units in Taunton Town Centre and the Deane Helpline be agreed.

(c) Regeneration of Weavers Arms, Rockwell Green, Wellington

A report had recently been considered by the Executive concerning proposals to demolish and redevelop the redundant public house, the 'Weavers Arms', the adjacent public toilet block and ten Woolaway properties in Rockwell Green, Wellington.

A redevelopment scheme of these three areas was currently being designed with an estimated delivery of 26 new build Council homes at a cost of approximately £3,500,000.

The land under the toilet block was currently owned by the General Fund and

had been valued at £10,000.

The Council was seeking to facilitate a sustainable community by providing a mix of properties of 1, 2, 3 and 4 bedrooms to meet the housing need for the area, with the majority being 1 bed flats and 2 bed houses, with some wheelchair suitable properties.

It was intended to design these properties to the Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4. This meant the properties would be considerably more energy efficient than current Building Regulations and would also have features such as low water use bathrooms and sinks and A* rated combination boilers.

Initial consultation had been carried out with tenants living in the Woolaway properties directly affected by the redevelopment and a 'decant officer' would assist the affected families throughout the process either in terms of relocating them or returning them to the development once it was completed.

The wider community would have an opportunity to comment on the scheme proposals at a community event which was scheduled to be held in early 2015 prior to the submission of a planning application.

The proposals had recently been considered by both the Tenants Services Management Board and the Community Scrutiny Committee which both supported the redevelopment scheme.

On the motion of Councillor Mrs Jean Adkins, it was

Resolved that:-

- (1) A supplementary budget of £3,500,000 within the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme for the Weavers Arms Regeneration Scheme be approved;
- (2) The proposed funding of the scheme be approved in principle with allocations of £488,000 capital receipts; £586,000 Social Housing Development Fund contribution; and £2,426,000 through borrowing and that the determination of the final funding arrangements (in line with the Council's Capital and Treasury Strategies) be delegated to the Section 151 Officer;
- (3) The Rockwell Green Public Convenience land be transferred from the General Fund to the Housing Revenue Account at the market valuation of £10,000, in compliance with Section 122 of the Local Government Act 1972;
- (4) The Housing Revenue Account budget and 30 Year Business Plan be updated to reflect the additional income and expenditure arising from this investment; and
- (5) The service of Initial and Final Demolition Notices be approved for the demolition of Nos 1-10 Oaken Ground, the Weavers Arms buildings and public toilets and site clearance to facilitate new development.

(d) Photovoltaic Systems to be fitted to existing Housing Stock

The Executive had also considered a proposal to design, install and commission 350 Photovoltaic systems to the retained Housing Stock.

In order to achieve the Council's goal of reducing tenants' electricity bills, generating an income via feed in tariffs (FITs) and reducing carbon emissions, the experience of The Carbon Savings Alliance (CSA) had been used.

It was proposed to access the CSA's Photovoltaic Purchasing Framework in order to secure a competitive price and reduce the need for tendering.

A desktop study had been carried out to identify approximately 700 suitable properties that had a southern orientation, the correct roof pitch and suitable construction type. The Senior Leadership Team had chosen to focus on 350 of these properties as a 'pilot scheme', to allow for tenant refusal and to borrow an amount that the Housing Revenue Account could feasibly permit.

Although tenants would actively be encouraged take up the opportunity of having PV panels fitted to their properties, this would be a material change leading to the tenancies of the affected properties having to be amended to include the panels as part of the structure.

The scheme would provide significant financial benefits to tenants through free electricity generated by the PV Panels and was likely to provide an average saving of £247.54 per annum per household on current electricity bills.

Taunton Deane would also generate income through the FIT which was guaranteed for 20 years as detailed within the Energy Act. It was Indexed Linked and, based on Government Standard Assessment Procedure calculations, would generate a positive cash flow of £1,200,000 over the fixed 20 year FIT.

By installing 350 systems to the Housing stock, the Council can save approximately 11,015 tonnes of Carbon over 20 years.

The initial capital investment for 350 properties would be £1,509,000 for fitted systems. The systems should be paid back within the first 13 years and the revenue stream would then be additionally guaranteed for 7 years.

Consideration had also been given to the prospect of a Council property with photovoltaic panels being sold under Right to Buy (RtB). It was recommended the panels were removed prior to a RtB purchase being completed for the reasons detailed in the report to the Executive.

On the motion of Councillor Mrs Jean Adkins, it was

Resolved that:-

(1) A supplementary budget of £1,509,100 within the Housing Revenue

Account Capital Programme for the Photovoltaic Systems Investment Scheme to install systems at 350 properties be approved;

- (2) The funding of the scheme be approved in principle through borrowing and that the determination of the final funding arrangements (in line with the Council's Capital and Treasury Strategies) be delegated to the Section 151 Officer;
- (3) The Housing Revenue Account Revenue budget and 30 Year Business Plan be updated to reflect the additional income and expenditure arising from this investment; and
- (4) The principle that systems were removed from properties prior to disposal and reinstalled on an appropriate alternative Housing Revenue Account dwelling be endorsed.

(e) Firepool, Taunton – Acquisition of Remaining Third Party Interests

The Council had been working with its appointed partner, St Modwen Developments Limited, to bring forward the planned development of the Firepool site on a phased basis.

Although a previous Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) had been made by the Council back in 2010 which related to properties adjacent to Priory Bridge Road Car Park, a new CPO covering the area surrounding the Old Cattle Market on the north side of the River Tone was now needed to enable delivery of the next phases of the comprehensive Firepool Development.

This comprised a mixed-use scheme which was considered to be in the public interest as the delivery of this scheme formed a key component of the regeneration of Taunton.

A planning application was proposed to be submitted early in 2015 in relation to this phase which would be in accordance with the broad aims of the adopted Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan and the Taunton Rethink.

Although the Council owned almost all of the site of the planned development, there remained various interests which required to be either acquired or over-ridden. Even though negotiations with third party landowners to seek agreement on acquisition would continue, it was considered that CPO powers should be utilised in the event that agreements could not be concluded.

On the motion of Councillor Cavill, it was

Resolved that:-

- (1) The principle of making a Compulsory Purchase Order or Orders under Section 226(1) (a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) in respect of the land edged red on the plan submitted to the Executive be agreed; and
- (2) The Chief Executive and the Solicitor to the Council be authorised to:-

- (i) Carry out all necessary steps to reference the areas of land to be considered for compulsory purchase and to consult with the owners and occupiers of that land;
- (ii) Report back on the effects that the potential Compulsory Purchase Order would have on all owners and occupiers and the steps that should be taken to mitigate those effects;
- (iii) Negotiate and agree terms for the acquisition by agreement of any of the outstanding land interests detailed in the confidential appendix to the report submitted to the Executive or those which were otherwise subsequently identified as affecting the land and interests to be acquired;
- (iv) Make any necessary preparations to consider potential future payments of compensation (including any interim payments) after future Compulsory Purchase Order notice, either as agreed with landowners or as determined by the Lands Chamber of the Upper Tribunal in relation to acquisition/overriding of properties/interests; and
- (v) Dispose of the land interests acquired either voluntarily (or by way of a future Compulsory Purchase Order or Orders when confirmed in future), to St Modwen Developments Limited in accordance with the Development Agreement dated 15 April 2009 and made between the Council, St Modwen Properties plc and St Modwen Developments Limited.

14. **Suspension of Standing Order**

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

(f) Publication of the Taunton Deane Site Allocations and Development Management Plan

The Taunton Deane Core Strategy had been adopted by Full Council in September 2012. This plan provided an overarching framework for the Borough and its long-term development over the period up to 2028.

Whilst the Core Strategy had established long-term requirements for growth and its broad distribution, barring a number of larger, strategic site allocations and some high level development management policies, it did not include smaller allocations or more detailed development management policies to guide decision-making.

The Taunton Deane Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (SADMP) set out the development management policies and further site allocations to ensure sustainable development was delivered, consistent with the objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework and the adopted Core Strategy. The Plan included strategic urban extensions at Comeytrove/Trull and Staplegrove as well as further allocations in Taunton and elsewhere in the Borough consistent with the adopted Core Strategy.

The current stage reached in the Plan-making process was referred to as 'Publication'. It was the point at which the Council agreed the draft plan which it intended to submit for consideration by The Planning Inspectorate. The Published Plan was underpinned by a considerable evidence base and the findings of previous consultation.

Following the Plan's approval by the Council it would be published. Comments would then be invited relating to the 'soundness' of the Plan from communities and other stakeholders on 8 January 2015 for the statutory six-week period ending on 19 February 2015. The Plan and these comments would then be considered by an independently appointed Planning Inspector at an Examination which was likely to take place in late Spring / early Summer 2015.

On the motion of Councillor Edwards, it was

Resolved that:-

- (1) The contents of the Draft Site Allocations and Development Management Plan be noted and that the Plan be approved;
- (2) It be agreed that minor typographical amendments to the Plan could be made following the Plan's approval but prior to its publication; and
- (3) It also be agreed that the Published Plan be submitted to the Secretary of State following the formal representation period, subject to the Executive Councillor for Planning and Transportation, as guided by officers, considering there were no substantive soundness issues raised which would warrant further amendment to the Plan.

(g) Review of Council Tax Support Scheme for 2015/2016

On 1 April 2013 Council Tax Benefit (CTB) was abolished and replaced with a locally designed "Council Tax Support" (CTS) Scheme. The Government provided each billing authority with a grant and expected Councils to design a CTS scheme to help those on low incomes to meet their Council Tax liability.

Whilst the Council had discretion on the rules for CTS for people of working age, the Government has stipulated that pensioners should be fully protected under the same criteria that previously applied to CTB.

Full Council had decided to continue the 2013/2014 CTS scheme for 2014/2015 at its meeting on 10 December 2013. However, as indicative figures showed the Local Government Finance Settlement (LGFS) would be substantially reduced, officers were tasked with consulting on proposals to amend the existing CTS scheme from 1 April 2015.

In 2013/2014 the Government had provided total funding of £6,110,080. However, the indicative figures for CTS in 2015/2016 had been reduced by £1,600,000 to £4,503,377 (a cut of £179,000 for Taunton Deane in isolation).

As the Council was prevented from reducing CTS spending for those of pension age, if cuts were applied they would be made from the support provided to people of working age.

By reducing the overall budget for CTS, it would mean the remaining budget available for working age recipients would be reduced to £1,332,811. Based on the current CTS Scheme it was estimated there would be an overall CTS budget shortfall of £1,310,000, with Taunton Deane's share of that shortfall being £127,000.

The number of households billed for Council Tax had increased from 50,211 in 2012/2013 to 50,882 in 2013/2014. Although, the collection rate had remained the same as the previous year, it has become clear that the volume of recovery action had again increased to ensure collection levels remained high.

Although a decision to alter the scheme for 2015/2016 could be taken, the Council had to consult with the major precepting authorities, publish a draft scheme and then consult with other such persons who were likely to have an interest in the operation of such a scheme. This had taken place during the Spring.

Within the 2013/2014 LGFS the Government had included funding for CTS that included a proportion relating to parishes and Special Expenses. The Council had decided to pass on a proportion of this funding to parishes to reflect their reduction in funding as a result of CTS. A grant had been given to parishes based on the tax base reduction attributable to CTS in each parish multiplied by their 2012/2013 Band D Charge.

The Funding Settlement for 2015/2016 and beyond would not separately identify the proportion of funding for CTS for any preceptors. The Council therefore needed to determine the policy for providing any CTS Grant funding to parishes for 2015/2016 to give the Council and parishes some certainty for financial planning and budget setting purposes.

For 2015/2016 there were two proposed options:-

Option 1: Use the same formula that was used for 2014/2015, so each parish grant for CTS would be calculated as CTS Tax Base Adjustment x 2013/2014 Parish Band D Tax rate; and

Option 2: Use the same formula that was used for 2014/2015, but apply the same reduction to parish grant funding as that experienced by Taunton Deane in the Funding Settlement. Provisional figures indicated a 30.5% cut in funding for 2014/2015 and 2015/2016, so each parish grant for CTS would be calculated as CTS Tax Base Adjustment x 2013/2014 Parish Band D Tax rate x [1-0.305].

Although Option 1 was recommended for approval - as it would provide protection for parish budgets – it would mean that Taunton Deane would need to find savings from its own service budgets to subsidise CTS costs for parishes. It was also recommended that the same funding principle agreed

for parishes should be applied to the Council budget for the Unparished Area Fund.

This issue had been considered by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 28 October 2014. Having considered the outcome of the consultation, Members had recommended the Executive to retain maximum support for all working age recipients at 80% in 2015/2016.

In addition, the Corporate Scrutiny Committee had recommended that maintenance received for children should not be treated as income when working out CTS in 2015/2016.

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

Resolved that:-

(1) Having regard to:-

- the recommendations from the Corporate Scrutiny Committee;
- the outcome of the consultation exercise;
- the feedback from customers as to how they were attempting to meet shortfall;
- the profile of Council Tax debt for CTS recipients; and
- the Equality Impact Assessment,

a Council Tax Support scheme for 2015/2016 be adopted that sought, as far as possible, to balance the significant cut to the Council's resources for Council Tax Support and the Council's wider budget challenges with the need to help the most financially vulnerable members of the community;

(2) It be agreed to continue to provide maximum support through Council Tax Support for working age recipients at 80% with the current Council Tax Support scheme being amended to ignore maintenance received for a child or children;

(3) It be further agreed that Option 1 be the preferred route in providing and calculating Council Tax Support Grant funding for Parish Councils in 2015/2016; and

(4) It be noted that the 2015/2016 Council Tax Support Scheme was recommended for 2015/2016 only.

Due to the lateness of the hour, The Mayor agreed that the following Executive Councillor Reports, covering the topics set out, be taken as read. Any questions Members had on the reports to be submitted to the relevant Executive Councillor by e-mail with responses circulated to all Councillors.

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

(i) Leader of the Council (Councillor Williams)

Councillor Williams's report covered the following topics:-

- Town Centre Successes;

- A358 and Strategic Employment Site;
- Budget Setting;
- Firepool, Taunton;
- Broadband Rollout by Connecting Devon and Somerset;
- Somerset Rivers Authority; and
- The Deane House Relocation Project.

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

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

- Housing and Health and Wellbeing Board;
- Deane Housing Development : Weavers Arms/Oaken Ground;
- Digital Access Project;
- Welfare Reform;
- Voids; and
- Anti-Social Behaviour.

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

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

- Corporate and Client Services;
- Corporate Health and Safety;
- Customer Contact Centre;
- Health and Wellbeing;
- Legal, Democratic and Electoral Services;
- Resources; and
- Revenues and Benefits.

(iv) **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 Plan (SADMP);
- Junction 25;
- Junction 27
- Neighbourhood Planning;
- Monkton Heathfield Governance Board;
- Routes to the River Tone Project;
- Car Parking; and
- Communications.

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

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

- Community Safety;
- New Anti-Social Behaviour Legislation;
- New Psychoactive Substances;
- Domestic Abuse;
- One Teams in North Taunton and Wellington;
- Neighbourhood Policing Awards 2014; and
- Christmas Taunton Town Wardens.

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

The report from Councillor Cavill covered:-

- Staffing Issues;
- Business Support;
- Support for Inward Investors;
- The Brewhouse Theatre;
- Taunton Town Centre; and
- Marketing and Taunton Information Centre (TIC).

(vii) **Environmental Services and Climate Change (Councillor Hunt)**

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

- Environmental Health / Licensing;
- Deane DLO;
- Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP); and
- Climate Change.

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

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

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

(Councillor Mrs Slattery left the meeting at 7.49 p.m. Councillors P Smith and Stone both left the meeting at 8.15 p.m. Councillors Ross and Mrs Baker left the meeting at 8.50 p.m. Councillor Mrs Webber left the meeting at 9.10 p.m. and Councillor A Govier left the meeting at 9.15 p.m.)

(The meeting ended at 9.45 pm.)