

Taunton Deane Borough Council - 15 October 2002
Somerset County Council -16 October 2002

TAUNTON VISION COMMISSION

1. Summary

1.1 This report:-

- reminds the two Councils of their objectives in establishing the joint Taunton Vision Commission.
- asks them to receive the Commission's Report.
- asks them to agree processes and procedures to enable further consideration of the Report, the need for consultation on its findings and action to enable those findings to be taken forward.

2. Recommendation

2.1 The two Councils are ASKED:-

2.2 To receive the Report of the Taunton Vision Commission.

2.3 To refer the report to both the Taunton Deane Local Strategic Partnership (TDLSP and the Somerset Strategic Partnership (SSP) and ask them to take joint responsibility for:-

- instituting any further consultation on the Report;
- assessing action needed to implement the Commission's findings and conclusions, and the bodies and agencies which would need to be involved;
- preparing a programme for the implementation of action;
- seeking further input from the two Councils, as necessary.

2.4 In support of 2.3, to ask the two Partnerships jointly to appoint a "Reference Group" to take the lead on their behalf in championing the Vision – by advising on, progressing and monitoring the work referred to in para 2.3. We suggest to the Partnerships that the Group should comprise:-

- 3 members of Taunton Deane Borough Council, to be appointed by the Council and to include their representative on the LSP;
- 3 members of Somerset County Council, to be appointed by the Council and to include their representative on the LSP;
- 3 other members of the Taunton Deane Local Strategic Partnership, to be appointed by the Partnership.

This Group would need to be a flexible body, meeting on an ad hoc basis and able to respond to local needs and priorities.

- 2.5 To agree that the proposed Reference Group could be asked by either or both councils from time to time to advise them on appropriate matters, as outlined in paragraph 3.6 below.

3. **Background**

- 3.1 The Commission was established jointly by the two Councils in February this year, with the following brief:-
1. To demonstrate joint Authority commitment to enhancing the strategic role of Taunton as a distinct commercial, cultural and service centre for the central part of the South West Region.
 2. To raise the profile of regeneration activities and collaborate with strategic and local partners to identify the aspirations for Taunton with a clearer focus for partnership planning and investment.
 3. To question and gather evidence from any representatives of organisations and groups or persons involved with the future commercial, cultural and service centre role of Taunton to identify any distinctive criteria that should drive forward any shared vision of Taunton's enhanced role.
 4. To make joint recommendations to the Borough Council and County Council upon the key issues likely to affect Taunton's distinctive future role by 2025 and to suggest key priorities that need to be addressed.
- 3.2 The Commission comprised five members from each Council, with Mr Brian Tanner acting as independent chairman.
- 3.3 The Commission met frequently between February and September. It received evidence from a wide range of people and interests and invited a cross-section of witnesses to debate issues at the Commission's meetings. Its findings and conclusions are set out in a formal Report, a copy of which is enclosed. A presentation will be made at each Council meeting by the Commission chairman and a senior member of each Council. A press launch will take place on Monday 14 October.
- 3.4 At this stage, the two Councils are asked to receive the Commission's Report, note that publicity and further consultation on its findings and conclusions may be appropriate, and establish a process which will lead to an Action Plan for taking forward the findings and conclusions.
- 3.5 The establishment and operation of the Commission has generated considerable interest both within and outside Taunton. The press launch of the Report's submission to the two Councils will enhance that interest. The findings and

conclusions of the Commission are comprehensive and challenging, and their fulfilment will require acceptance and action by the public and a wide range of interests in the public, private and voluntary sectors. It is therefore assumed that the two Councils would wish the public and affected interests to give their reactions. If so, this process should be tightly managed in order that the Commission's work can be seen to bear results without unnecessary delay.

3.6 The Commission's findings and conclusions have implications for a wide range of interests and bodies, as well as for the community at large. Although the two Councils have taken the initiative and will have a continuing interest, responsibility for assessing and progressing those findings and conclusions will need to be vested in a strategic body or bodies which have the authority, influence, range of representation, and community involvement to achieve results. The recently formed Taunton Deane Local Strategic Partnership (TDLSP) and the county-wide Somerset Strategic Partnership (SSP) seem the obvious bodies and could be asked to take joint responsibility. This will help ease, widen and deepen participation by the public at large and help avoid any issues of 'ownership' of what is a far reaching Vision in terms of its impact on potential delivery bodies and agencies.

3.7 However, a specific mechanism is needed to advance the Vision, oversee consultation and ensure that a pro-active group is in place to take forward ideas and monitor progress on the Commission's work. A dedicated group is needed to do this effectively and make sure that things happen. Therefore, to support the Partnerships in their proposed new responsibility, to facilitate the sharing of responsibility, and to continue the two Councils' interest in the project, we suggest that the two Partnerships be asked to form a single, small "Reference Group" of representatives of the two Authorities and the LSP to "champion" progress. The Group could also advise the two Authorities direct both on implementation of the Vision and on associated issues such as the North West Taunton Transport Package, Taunton Urban Extension and the Taunton Urban Design Study

4. **Personnel and financial implications**

4.1 At this stage there are no direct implications.

5. **Legal implications**

5.1 At this stage, there are no direct implications.

6. **Equal opportunities implications**

6.1 Any further consultation should take account of this aspect.

7. **Background papers**

7.1 The report of the Taunton Vision Commission.

