

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Joint report of Corporate Performance Officer, Scrutiny Officer and Policy Support Co-ordinator to the Executive: 16 July 2008

Approval of Annual Report 2007/2008

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Fran Smith)

Executive Summary

The Council is required to produce an Annual Report (or 'Performance Plan'), which must be published by 30 June. This statutory requirement has been removed, but the Audit Commission expect us to produce one for this year. Its purpose is to "articulate proposals for improvement for the coming year, including how weaknesses will be addressed, opportunities exploited and better outcomes delivered". We are also required to include outturn data for finance and Best Value Performance Indicators, our annual efficiency statement and progress against past objectives and statutory statements on workforce matters.

The audience for the Annual Report is the authority itself (councillors, managers and staff), key partners, the government and the general public.

The Executive is requested to approve publication of the Annual Report.

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To comment on the draft contents of the Council's Annual Report 2007/2008.

2. Background

- 2.1 It has been a requirement for councils to produce an Annual Report / Performance Plan since April 2000, in accordance with Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1999: Best Value and Performance Improvement. The legislation provides guidelines on the content, which is revised frequently by Government.
- 2.2 The latest guidance reaffirms that the Annual Report and the Corporate Strategy should become the focus of authorities improvement planning, by articulating priorities for improvement, including how weaknesses will be addressed, opportunities exploited and better outcomes delivered for local people. It should set targets for improved future performance.
- 2.3 The Government has implemented a differentiated approach that reflects CPA categorisation. For authorities ranked as Excellent or Good, such as our own, the Government has reduced its requirements further. We have taken this into account in producing this year's Annual Report.

- 2.4 The main audience of the Annual Report is officers, members, groups and organisations with an interest in the authority, the regulatory bodies and central government. The Annual Report is still required to be available and accessible to the public. The publication deadline is 30th June each year.
- 2.5 The Annual Report will link to the Corporate Strategy 2008-2010 describing our aims for the next three years. A separate appendix contains all our performance indicator results for 2007/08 which can be viewed on our website.
<http://www.tauntondeane.gov.uk/tdbcsites/polperf/annualreport.asp>

3. Timetable

- 3.1 Members should note that the Annual Report is still draft, with some information and data still outstanding. The report has been circulated to CMT members and all Managers for comment. The Annual Report and Performance Indicators will be audited separately by the Audit Commission later in the year.

4. Effect on Corporate Priorities

- 4.1 The Annual Report makes us accountable for our past performance against previously published objectives and targets against our corporate priorities. It also focuses on future objectives, clearly laying out our plans and targets for future performance. In effect, the Annual Report is the measure of success against our corporate priorities.

5. Recommendation

- 5.1 The Executive is requested to approve publication of the Annual Report.

Contact Officers:

Michelle Hale
Corporate Performance Officer
01823 358693
m.hale@tauntondeane.gov.uk

Alastair Higon
Scrutiny Officer
01823 356415
a.higon@tauntondeane.gov.uk

Helen Phillips
Policy Support Co-ordinator
01823 356481
h.phillips@tauntondeane.gov.uk

Taunton Deane Borough Council Annual Report 2007/2008

1. Cover – To include TD logo (top right) and Excellent Council logo and IIP logo

2. Contact details and Equalities Statements.

Add: Performance Manager, contact details (telephone no and email)

3. Contents (Note document needs page numbering)

CONTENTS	Page
Foreword	X
Our vision, business principles, core values	X
Taunton Deane – overview of the Borough	X
Taunton Deane – a year in view	X
Progress against last year's promises	X
Financial performance	X
How we manage performance	X
Our commitment to the environment	X
Our partnerships	X
How we will address our weaknesses	X
Statement of contracts	X
Guide to Acronyms	X

Foreword

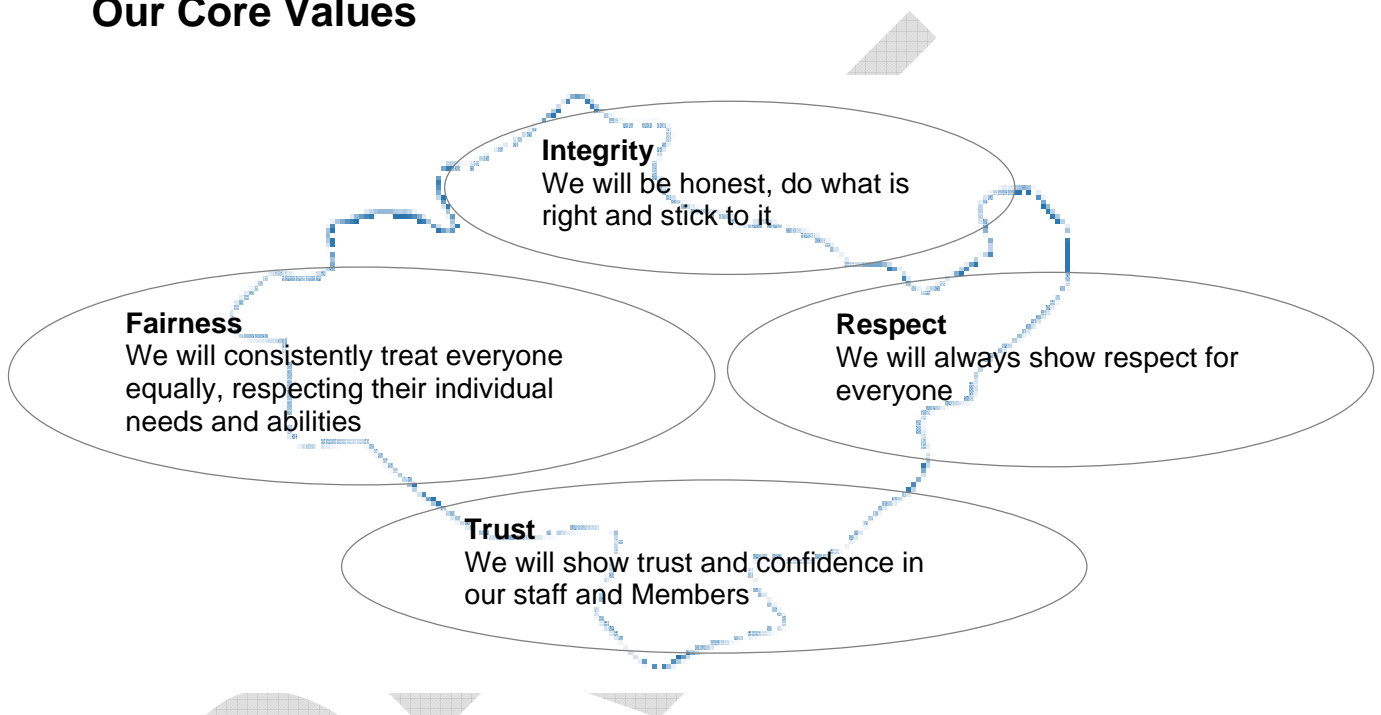
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Our Vision

“To be a high performing Council, working in partnership to create a good quality of life for all Taunton Deane Residents”

Our Core Values



Our Business Principles

Customer driven

Putting the needs of individual customers at the heart of all that we do

Excellent services

Ensuring the delivery of accessible, high quality services that provide good value for money

Local focus

Making a positive difference to quality of life in communities across Taunton Deane

A dynamic organisation

Innovative, forward looking and focused on results

Overview of the Borough

Insert map of Taunton Deane

Size: 462 square kilometres

Population: 107,400

Households: 47,686

Main settlements: Taunton, Wellington, Bishops Lydeard, Wiveliscombe

Unemployment: 1.2%

Average property price: £215,699

Taunton Deane is situated in an outstanding landscape of natural beauty, extending from the Somerset Levels along the River Tone, with the Quantock Hills to the north and the Blackdown Hills to the south. It is well served by road and rail links to Bristol, Exeter and London, as the M5, A38, A303 and rail links are within easy reach.

Taunton Deane is a predominantly rural borough, with two main centres of population, Taunton and Wellington, and a number of smaller towns and villages. The Borough is generally prosperous, with relatively low levels of crime and unemployment. However, the area does suffer from lower rates of pay and relatively high house prices. Deprivation is not prevalent but there are significant pockets of greater need in parts of Taunton.

Year in View

The stories, events and achievements from 2007/08

This will include photographs against a number of the activities

Summer

The local community comes together for the Halcon & Lambrook Community Clean-Up Day and to mark the launch of the Community Clean-Up Partnership.

We launched our Corporate Equality Scheme to ensure the Council meets the needs of customers and staff in all areas of equality and diversity.

“Your Council, Your Views” consultation starts with residents asked what the Council priorities should be and what they think Council Tax should be spent on.

Drop in sessions are arranged so that anyone can gain free advice on going smokefree.

Our Affordable Housing Open Day proved to be a successful 'one-stop-shop' with banks, solicitors, estate agents, registered social landlords, a self build company, developers and contractors available to provide advice and information.

Members of the public are asked to participate in a wide ranging consultation on free children's play provision in Taunton Deane.

From August cardboard can be recycled at all of Taunton Deane's paper banks as part of a new project to make recycling more convenient to local residents.

We offered development grants worth £2,000 to new businesses. The scheme has already helped more than 100 small firms grow and develop.

Autumn

Sun, fun and food at Wellington festival and over 10,000 visitors. We contributed £70,000 in financial support over the last two years to this festival.

Taunton becomes one of the first towns in the UK to provide tourist information by text message. This unique new service allows visitors to check everything from bus and train times to accommodation and theatre bookings on their mobile phone.

Taunton and Wellington excelled in the Britain in Bloom awards for the South West. Taunton retained the Tesco Cup awarded in the large town/small city category and won the Sargent Trophy, awarded for outstanding effort in community, schools and youth involvement.

The Mayor's charities are announced; the NSPCC and SURE, Somerset Unit for Radiotherapy Equipment.

Community Partnership Meetings are launched in Taunton Deane. Residents are invited to say what matters to them about where they live.

Taunton Deane Borough Council and Somerset County Council sign a contract to create a new Joint Venture Company with global business services provider IBM. The new company, Southwest One, will provide operational services to both councils.

The County's first Creative Business Exchange took place bringing together artists, designers, performers and others to showcase their work, enabling them to tap into advice and establish new contacts.

Triumph over disability and discrimination and his tireless contribution to the Taunton Deane community have earned Councillor Richard Lees an Honorary Doctor of Education degree by the University of Plymouth in public recognition of his achievements.

Winter

Flags were raised in Wellington, Vivary and Victoria Park which celebrated being awarded prestigious Green Flags that recognise the best parks in the country.

A Christmas fun fair was held in Taunton High Street partly funded by the Council.

The Borough is in the top ten nationally for generating the lowest amount of household waste for collection, coming in at the number six spot.

We joined forces with neighbouring Councils to launch a system of star ratings for every business or organisation serving and selling food.

We received over half a million pounds from the Football Foundation. This means we can replace the sports pavilions at Hamilton Gault and Galmington Playing Fields and recognises the Council's work to encourage all teams to get the FA Charter Standard Award.

Ring Go scheme is launched enabling drivers to park in 21 Taunton Deane car parks and pay by mobile phone. Taunton Deane is the first local authority in Somerset to introduce this technology.

Lottery funding of £207,000 has been awarded for two new play schemes "Wild Play Days" and a Play Rangers project.

Spring

Our nursery moved to a new larger HQ near Stoke Road. The new nursery has added some eco-friendly features. These include water saving measures with rainwater captured and stored from the roofs of the glasshouses and polytunnels.

Sophisticated technology will automate routine tasks such as the ventilation of the glasshouses and polytunnels, irrigation and heating.

The Mayor invited members of the community to nominate an outstanding local citizen for the 2008 Taunton Deane Citizenship Award.

When new houses and bungalows were built in Howard Road, money was put aside to improve the play facilities in the area. Local residents were invited to decide how the money should be used.

Businesses are invited to attend a special event to learn more about food hygiene and the star rating system.

The Restorative Justice scheme was launched to bring victims, offenders and communities together to decide on a response to a particular crime as a tool to tackle anti-social behaviour.

Taunton Deane Borough Council and Taunton Association for the Homeless gain a Government award of £740,000 enabling Lindley House to continue and develop as a safe base for those with nowhere to live.

A public open day showing details of town developments for Project Taunton was held at the Brewhouse.

In the last financial year, we dealt with:

Calls to Customer Enquiries Line	162,872
Enquiries through Deane House main reception	33,368
Visits to Wellington Community Office	28,322
Enquiries at Planning Reception	7,477

More information to be added in?

Progress against priorities

Last year's Annual Report set out our planned improvements under each of our six Corporate Aims. Here we report progress against each of these. The objectives were established after listening to local residents priorities' through consultation and satisfaction surveys. We also considered Government and local partnership priorities in setting these objectives.

Economy

Our aim

"Regenerating Taunton and strengthening the economy of the Borough"

Our objectives

To stimulate the creation of 14,000 new jobs in the Borough between 2006 and 2026 (of which 5% will be within the Creative Industries Sector).

To encourage 30 new businesses to set up in Taunton Deane per year (5% from the Creative Industries Sector)

Develop the Cultural Offer of the Borough, by recognising and supporting the importance of cultural activities and creative industries to the economy of the Borough.

To reduce deprivation in the most deprived wards in Taunton Deane, with a specific focus on Halcon and Lyngford, taking the most deprived sub-areas from these wards out of the 25% most deprived 'super output' areas in the country by 2020. (Based on national index of multiple deprivation rankings)

Support the development of the rural economy through facilitating and supporting agricultural diversification projects, business activity and land development

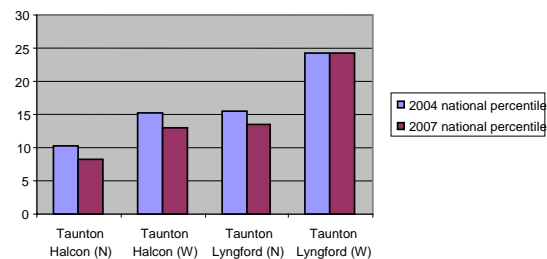
Our Progress in numbers

VAT registrations in Taunton Deane (net)

year	Total number	Change on previous year
2004	3755	70
2005	3810	55
2006	3840	30

Source: DTI Small Business Service

Change in overall deprivation in deprived sub-areas of Halcon and Lyngford wards



Note: the lower the number, the more deprived the area in comparison to the rest of England.

Progress so far

We awarded a total of 12 Business Development Grants during the year along with 6 “Acorn” start-up grants.

Creative Business Boost dealt with over 400 businesses across Somerset during the past 18 months. This project has now successfully concluded.

The Project Taunton skills group has been established to promote construction as a career option and to ensure that employment opportunities from Project Taunton are maximised.

Young Enterprise successfully delivered its second year of a three year programme in local Primary Schools, and has achieved all of its second year targets.

The second Wellington Food Festival took place in September 2007, and attracted 61 businesses and over 10,000 visitors. We also supported the expansion of the Wellington Farmers market.

We successfully lobbied, with others, to retain the UK Hydrographic Office in Taunton, therefore retaining 1,000 jobs in the town.

Work still to do

‘in2Somerset’, an inward investment agency for the county, has recently started operating with a shadow board. We part-fund this initiative.

The Taunton Town Centre Area Action plan is nearly complete and it is anticipated that it should be adopted this autumn.

Work on the Core Strategy is progressing. There will be community engagement this autumn and public consultation next February and March.

Work continues with the Brewhouse Board to increase audience attendance and diversify activities, including greater emphasis on community involvement.

Transport

Our aim

“Minimising the growth in traffic congestion”

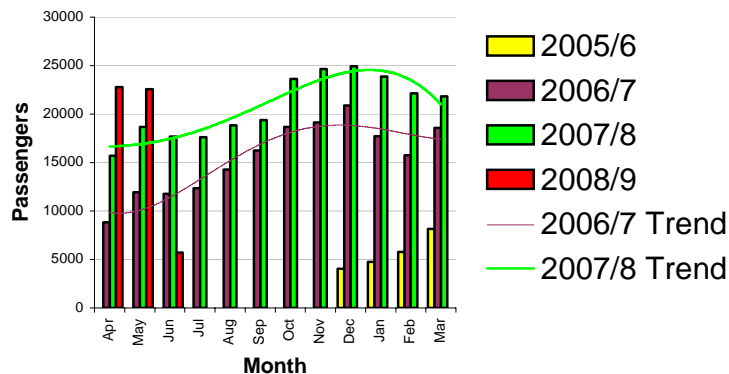
Our objectives

Support the County Council as lead agency, to limit the rate of growth of traffic congestion in Taunton (to limit vehicle delay hours at peak-time to 2,414 hours by 2011).

Support the County Council to reduce the proportion of journeys to work made in Taunton by Single Occupancy Vehicles (SOV).

Our progress in numbers

Year on Year Silk Mills P&R Comparison



Progress so far

A car park study commissioned by Project Taunton recommended actions to ease the predicted shortfall in town centre spaces for shoppers and short-stay visitors.

£4.427m has been awarded to fund the Taunton East Park and Ride. This was given outline planning permission in February 2008.

With the County Council we have jointly funded an initiative to promote cycling and sustainable travel amongst young people in Taunton.

We worked in partnership with the County Council to submit the Local Transport Plan which included agreement for the Northern Inner Distribution Road (NIDR) and the 'Third Way' – two major road schemes that will ease traffic congestion in Taunton.

Our bid for New Growth Point Funding was successful. We will receive £2.74 million capital and £287,000 revenue funding for 2008-09. Some of this funding will be used to expand the Silk Mills Park and Ride. Design and planning will be completed during 2008-09.

Work still to do

We continue to work with the County Council to reduce the proportion of journeys to work made in Taunton by Single Occupancy Vehicles.

In April 2008 we introduced higher long-stay parking charges. This is designed to encourage commuters to use the Park and Ride. This should relieve traffic congestion and help free up 200 parking spaces for shoppers and visitors.

Crime

Our aim

“Promoting safer communities and tackling anti-social behaviour”

Our objectives

To reduce overall crime in Taunton Deane by 15% by March 2008.

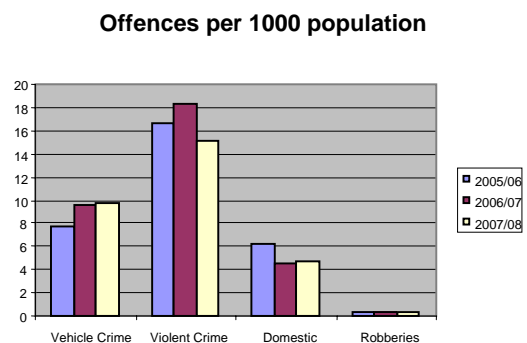
To reduce the incidence of violent crime in Taunton Deane by 15% by 2008.

To reduce anti-social behaviour incidents by 15% from baseline figures by 2007/08.

To reduce the fear and perception of crime by 5% per year to 2009

Our progress in numbers

	2005 - 2006	2006 - 2007	2007 - 2008
Vehicle Crime	7.7	9.6	9.8
Violent Crime	16.7	18.3	15.1
Domestic	6.3	4.5	4.7
Robberies	0.29	0.29	0.4



Progress so far

We have not met our overall target to reduce crime on the 'basket of indicators' by 15% since April 2005 due to increases in vehicle interference, theft from a person and theft of cycles. However overall crime reduced by 7.6% between April and March 2008 and violent crime incidents were down 17%.

In partnership with the police we began a trial of a Restorative Justice scheme in Wellington.

In February 2008, Taunton East won the "Safer Stronger Neighbourhoods, Neighbourhood Policing Team of The Year" award.

We continue to support Local Action Teams to provide diversionary activities such as Taunton Youth Paintballing scheme and youth shelters.

Funding has been agreed with the County Council for 40 additional PCSOs from April 2008.

We continue to part-fund the Bobby Van, which help victims of crime increase household security to reduce the chance of becoming a repeat target.

We paid a grant to Rowbarton Local Action Team for alley gates to allow better policing and to increase security to houses from burglary.

We have begun to address fear of crime across Somerset. Information cards were distributed along with bus passes in Autumn 2007.

We have negotiated a countywide PCSO contract in partnership with the police.

Work still to do

An extension of the No Drinking Order is planned for Summer 2008.

PCSOs and Trading Standards will carry out more test purchase operations on licensed and off-licensed premises.

Healthy Living

Our aim

"Promoting healthy and sustainable communities"

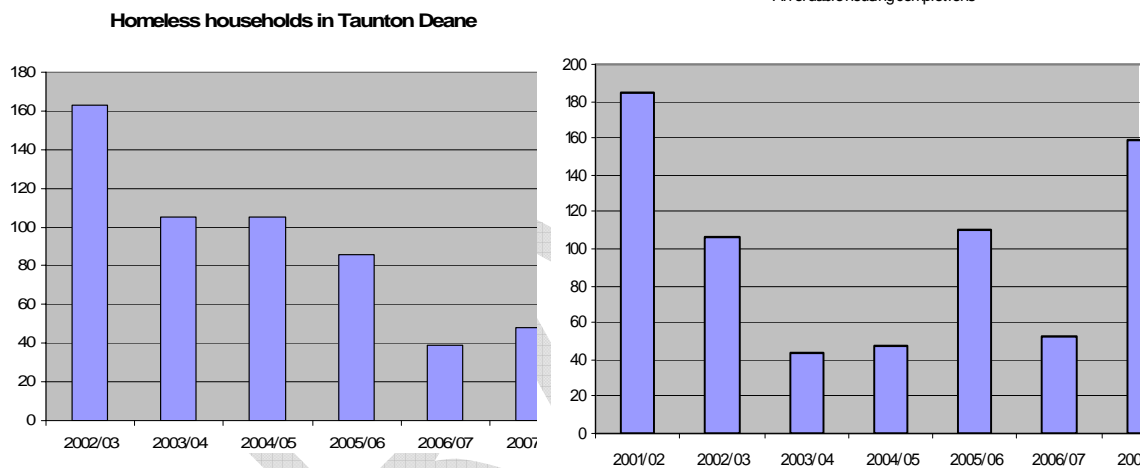
Our objectives

To enable the building of 985 units of affordable housing between April 2006 and March 2011

To reduce the number of homeless households in temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010, with an emphasis on homelessness prevention

Promote healthy activities to meet the needs of the wider community, responding to the needs of different age groups and recognising the contribution made from sports, art and culture

Our progress in numbers



Progress so far

159 affordable housing units were completed in 2007-08.

In April 2007 we reduced the affordable housing development threshold from 25 to 15. Housing schemes of 15 homes or more must now provide some affordable housing.

Staff are now trained by Relate to mediate between young people and their guardians to reduce incidents of young people requesting social housing.

We have secured government funding for Taunton Association for the Homeless (TAH) to build secure accommodation for rough sleepers.

We have been awarded £206,000 Big Lottery funding for Play Rangers.

In September 2007 we introduced four new 'BodyVive' classes at Wellsprings and Wellington for older persons.

The success of our twice weekly health walk scheme, 'Walk Well in Taunton' has led to "Walk Well Plus" which was launched by Volunteer Walk Leaders in March 2008.

The MEND programme (Mind, Exercise, Nutrition, Do it!) was launched in January 2008. This is a family-centered treatment and prevention programme for obese and overweight children and their families. "Mend Graduates" has also been established which aims to support MEND families to maintain their new MEND-friendly lifestyle.

Work still to do

We are working hard to meet the overall target of building 985 affordable homes by March 2011.

The cross-Somerset Choice Based Letting scheme will be launched in 2008-09.

The Planning-Out Homelessness Strategy will be reviewed in 2008-09.

Environment

Our aim

"Safeguarding and enhancing the local environment"

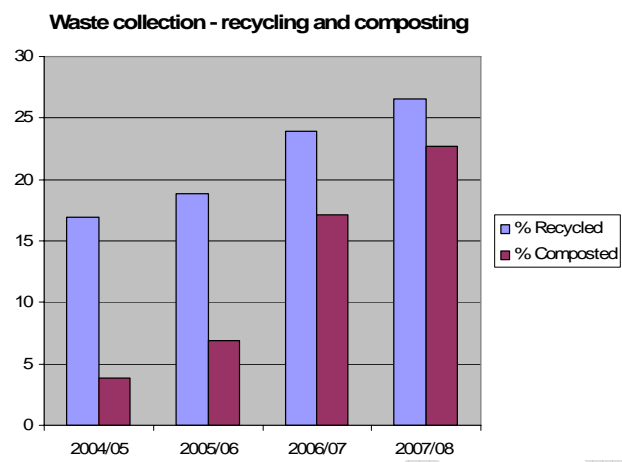
Our objectives

To increase the percentage of people who are satisfied with the cleanliness of their local environment to 75% by 2007 and to 78% by 2009

To increase the percentage of household waste recycled or composted to 45% by the end of 2008/09 and 47% by the end of 2009/10

To actively promote sustainability in Taunton Deane with a focus on climate change, energy efficiency and renewable energy, and therefore to reduce our carbon footprint on the environment.

Our progress in numbers



Progress so far

We continue to exceed our recycling targets, with over 50% of household waste recycled or composted in 2008.

The Somerset Waste Board is now in operation. The recycling and refuse contract for the whole of the county commenced on 15 October 2007.

SORT IT! collection services in Somerset are now managed by the Somerset Waste Partnership.

Victoria, Vivary and Wellington Parks were awarded Green Flags for 2007, a prestigious award recognising the best parks in the country.

Work still to do

In April 2008, trials of kerbside collections of plastic bottles and cardboard were started.

A draft Climate Change Strategy will commence in 2008-09.

Baseline carbon emissions for our vehicle fleet will be established by December 2008.

We are working to identify flooding issues in the Borough and how we can best help residents and businesses prepare for and deal with flooding.

Delivery

Our aim

“Delivering accessible, value for money services”

Our objectives

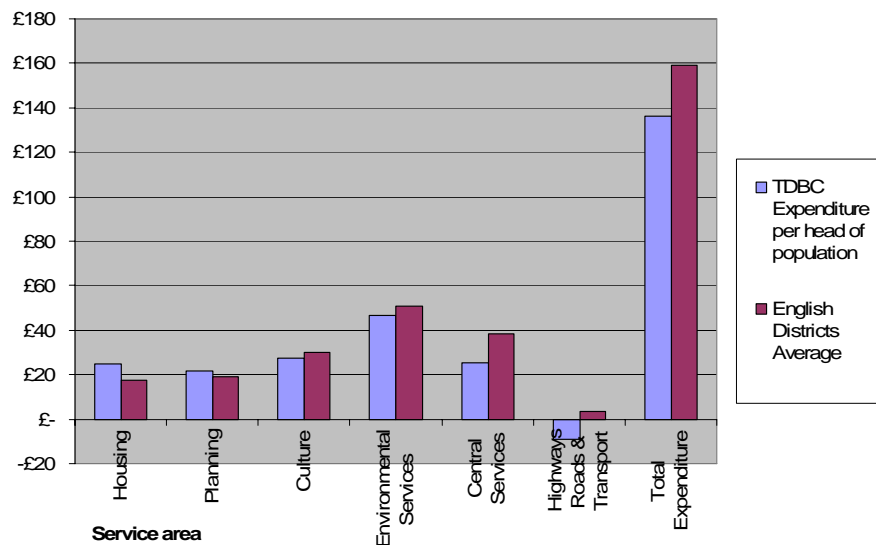
To provide value for money services where overall satisfaction with the Council is in the top quartile nationally, over 60% of national BVPIs perform above English average and council tax charges are in the lowest quartile when compared with other English districts.

To achieve level 5 of the Equality Standard for Local Government by the end of 2010.

To ensure that 90% of service enquiries to the Council are resolved at the first point of contact by 2015.

Our progress in numbers

Value for money in Taunton Deane - cost per head of population



Progress so far

The Leaders and Chief Executives of the six Somerset Councils have agreed to develop 'Pioneer Somerset' as a way to deliver improved services and cost savings across Somerset.

We have worked closely with Southwest One to develop Procurement Category Plans that will change what and how we purchase goods and services, and will lead to substantial financial savings.

The Overview and Scrutiny Board approved an extension of the Scrutiny pilot for a further six months. The Audit Commission has described Scrutiny as "improving well."

A 'Welcome to Somerset' working group was set up to produce a multi-lingual welcome pack for new-comers to the area.

We have signed a 10 year partnership with Somerset County Council, Avon and Somerset Constabulary and IBM to create Southwest One – to support our ambitious customer access arrangements, installing world-class technology, and ensuring that we continue to deliver excellent value for money services.

Work still to do

We aim to achieve Level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government in October 2008.

Work continues on the Customer Access Strategy to ensure that by 2015, 90% of service enquiries are resolved at the first point of contact.

The Deane Dispatch will no longer be distributed as a separate publication. The Somerset County Gazette will include a monthly full page feature which will still run under the title of 'Deane Dispatch'.

We will make sure that all of our services and key policies are suitable for rural areas as well as towns.

Financial performance

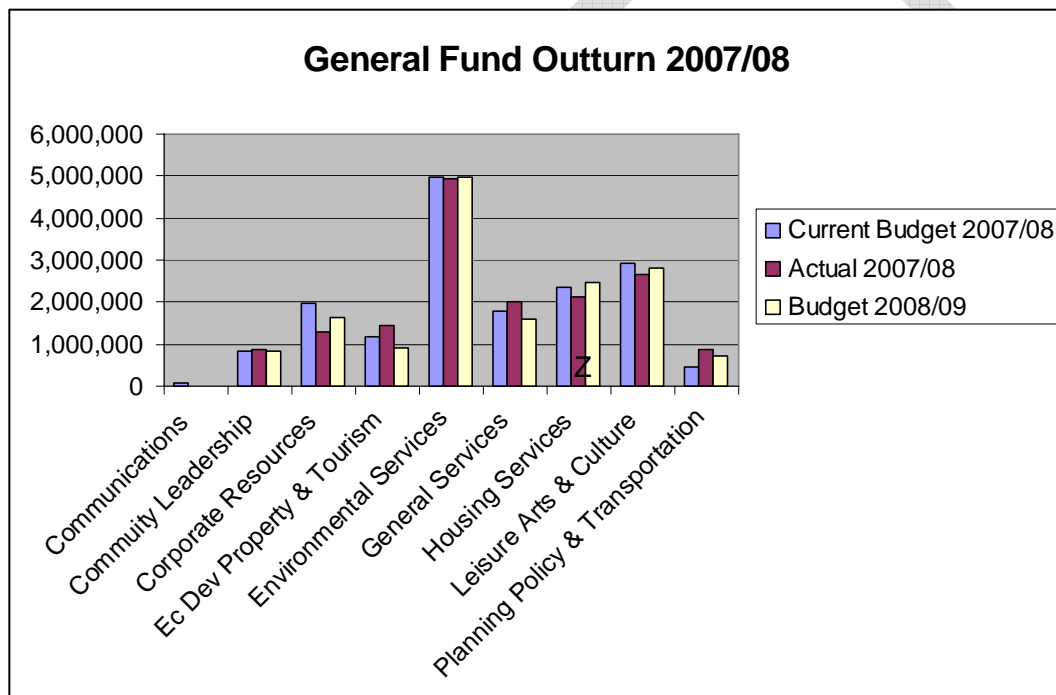
Please note the figures used in this summary are from the pre-audit version of our accounts and are subject to final audit by the Audit Commission.

General Fund

For 2007/08 the Councils actual expenditure on services was £13.68m which was £49,000 above the approved budget. The main reason for this overspend is the increased cost of the Concessionary Fares scheme.

The budget for 2008/09 has been set with a focus on achieving our objectives as described under our six corporate aims.

Below is a graph to compare the 2007/08 budget with the actual spend for 2007/08 and the budget for 2008/09.

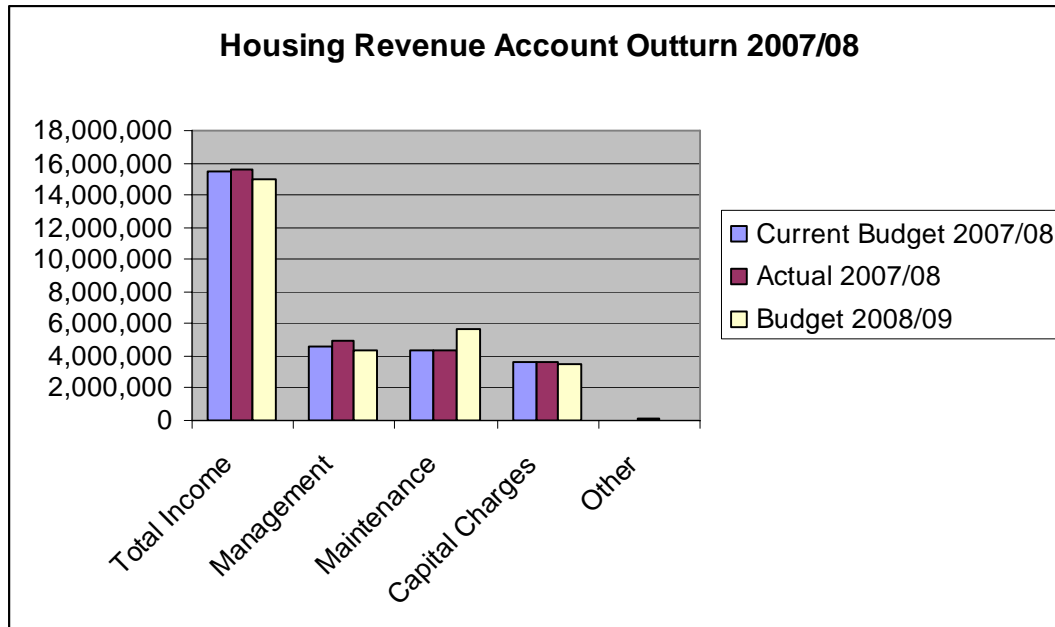


Housing Revenue Account

Housing Revenue is accounted for separately and for 2007/08 the total surplus for the year was £386k which was £235k lower than expected. The main reasons for this are reduced rental income and increased debt charges.

The Council owned 6,106 properties at 31 March 2008. It is required by law to pay for all of the costs associated with these properties from the rental income received.

22 properties were sold to tenants during the year.



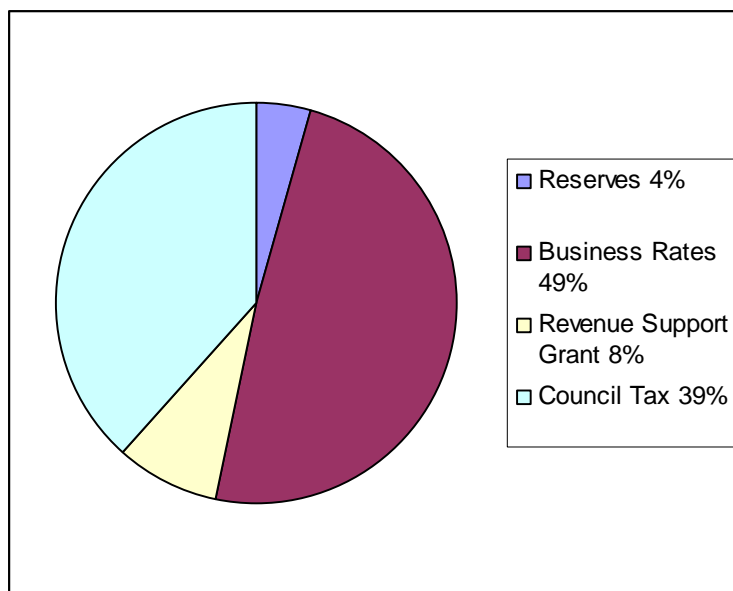
Income and Expenditure Account

The Income and Expenditure Account below shows the cost of running Council services between April 2007 and March 2008.

Income and Expenditure Account	Net Exp £'000
Housing Services	(149)
Cultural Services	3,322
Environmental Services	5,350
Planning Services	2,593
Corporate Costs including Councillors	1,478
Central Services to the public	886
Unapportionable Costs	322
Collection of Local Taxes	126
Highways Road and Transport	(575)
Net Cost of Services	13,353
Add: Interest Payable and Similar Charges	1,334
Add: Contribution of Housing Capital Receipts to Gov Pool	1,195
Add: Parish Council Precepts	385
Add: Other Costs	511
Less: Gain on Disposal of Fixed Assets	(743)
Less: Interest and Investment Income	(1,031)
Net Operating Expenditure	15,004
Net Additional Amount Required by Statute and Non Statutory Proper Practices to be Credited to the General Fund	(741)

Net Expenditure	14,263
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The pie chart shows where the money for this came from:



Balance Sheet as at 31st March 2008	£'000
Buildings, Land and Vehicles Owned	500,593
Stocks Held	534
Cash and Investments	14,464
Money Owed to the Council	10,323
Less: Money owed by the Council	(58,605)
Total	467,309
Financed By:	
Non Distributable Reserves	453,837
Distributable Reserves	13,472
Total	467,309
Distributable reserves comprise the following:	
General Fund	645
Other Reserves	8,626
Housing Reserve Balance	3,046
Collection Fund	(105)
Unapplied Capital Receipts	1,260
Total	13,472

Cash Flow during 2007/08	£'000
= Cash and Investments held on 31 March 2007	9,623
+ Cash In	146,162
- Cash Out	(141,355)
= Cash and Investments held on 31 March 2008	14,430

Capital Expenditure

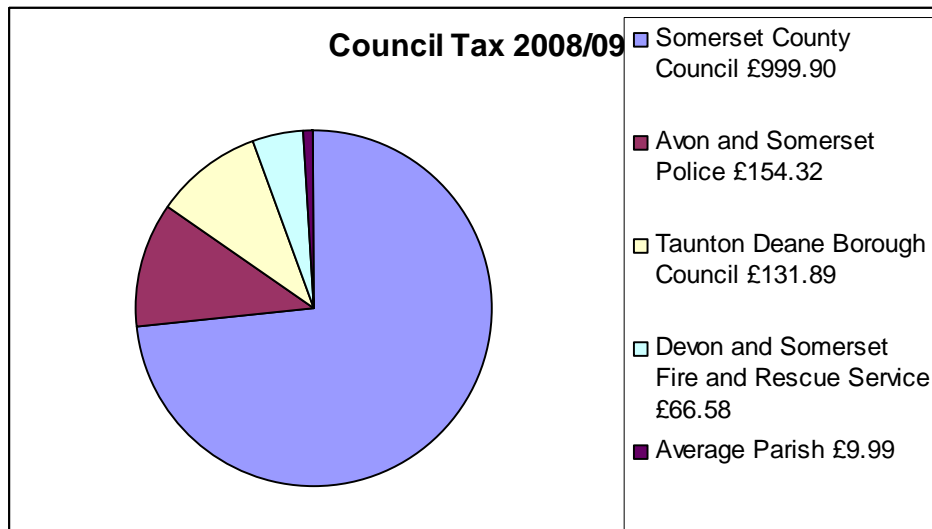
Capital expenditure is money spent by the Council on purchasing, updating and improving assets such as buildings, vehicles and machinery. The Council receives this type of expenditure over many years, so it is 'matched' in the accounts over those years. The table below shows the investment made by the Council during April 2007 to March 2008.

Capital Expenditure Summary 2007/08	£'000
Council Dwellings	4,161
Grants to Housing Associations	896
Capital Grants	932
Investment Properties	1,451
Other Land and Buildings	282
Computer Software	204
Vehicles and Equipment	102
Other Misc	133
Total	8,161

Council Tax 2008/09

The budget for Taunton Deane Borough Council for 2008/09 gives a Band D Council Tax of £131.89 which is a 3% increase (£3.84 more) on 2007/08. The Taunton Deane element of the Council tax works out at £2.54 per week for a Band D Council Tax payer.

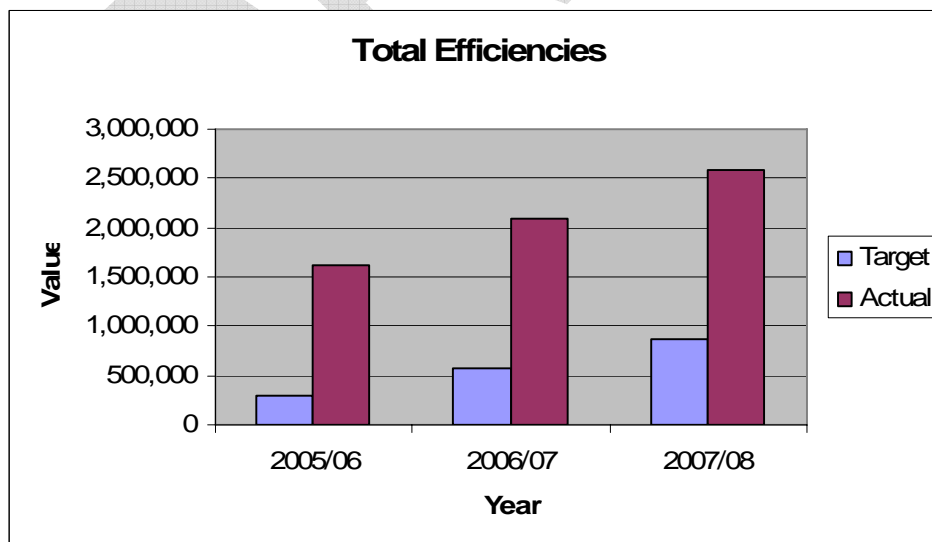
The relative proportions of Council Tax (Band D) received by each Council is shown below.



Annual Efficiency Statement

A requirement from Central Government is for the council to demonstrate 2.5% annual ongoing efficiencies each year. The Council has been issued target efficiency gains to achieve between 2005/06 and 2007/08.

The Council has made excellent progress in meeting these targets, through initiatives such as scrutinising the budget, using technology better and improved procurement through Southwest One.



If you would like more detail on the Council's finances, or a copy of our full Statement of Accounts, please contact our Chief Finance Officer Shirlene Adam on 01823 356310 or s.adam@tauntondeane.gov.uk

DRAFT

How We Manage Performance

Your local Councillors

We have 56 Councillors representing 26 wards. Councillor Ross Henley leads the Liberal Democrat group of 26 councillors, the 25 Conservative councillors are led by Cllr John Williams, and four independent Councillors. We have one Labour councillor.

All of our Councillors sit on the Full Council, which decides on the annual budget of the Council, and other important policies.

Our Councillors represent the views of residents in their wards and make sure what we do reflects what their constituents need.

The Executive

We run a cabinet style of governance, known as “the Executive”. The Executive has eight members and is chaired by Councillor Henley, who is the Leader of the Council. There are eight other Executive councillors;

- Cllr Alan Wedderkopp is responsible for **Community Leadership** issues. He is also the **Deputy Leader** of the Council.
- Cllr Fran Smith is responsible for **Resources**
- Cllr Mel Mullins is responsible for the council’s **Environmental Services**
- Cllr Simon Coles is responsible for **Planning and Transportation**
- Cllr Hazel Prior-Sankey is responsible for **Housing Services**
- Cllr Richard Lees is responsible for **Sports, Parks and Leisure**
- Cllr Jefferson Horsley is responsible for **Economic Development and the Arts**
- Cllr Steve Brooks is responsible for **Communications**

These Councillors are responsible for making key decisions on what the Council does, and they hold a public meeting every month to make those decisions.

Our **Mayor** for 2007-08 was Cllr Ken Hayward.

Monitoring

Our Corporate Strategy contains six aims and 21 objectives for the next three years. Progress is reported to Councillors quarterly, and is monitored in depth by the Strategy and Performance Panel (see “Overview and Scrutiny, page xx)

We report our progress to the Audit Commission and through many performance indicators which we are obliged to report. This information is used to identify where we are under performing, and where we could do more to improve.

The Comprehensive Performance Assessment, which rated us as “Excellent” again in 2008, is about to be replaced with the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA). CAA will provide assurance about how well run local public services are and how effectively Councils use taxpayers’ money.

Overview and Scrutiny

The 47 Councillors not on the Executive are involved in overview and scrutiny, or “scrutiny” for short. Scrutiny holds the Executive and Council services to account for the work they do, monitors the performance of the Council and recommends ways the Council could do things better. Scrutiny also oversees the work of external organizations. All the scrutiny meetings are open to public.

In the last year we have made major changes to the way scrutiny operates. We now have two panels: the “Overview and Scrutiny Board” and the “Strategy and Performance Panel”. They are responsible for monitoring the policy and performance of the Council. They also discuss issues that concern the public.

The Overview and Scrutiny Board

Over the last year, the Overview and Scrutiny Board have for example scrutinised the annual Budget and Corporate Strategy, examined the proposals to create Southwest One and the new Community Partnerships. They have also looked very closely at proposals to charge for pre-planning advice and the potential impacts.

The Strategy and Performance Panel

This panel has spent much of its time scrutinising the council’s finances and performance. They also looked at the results of the Your Council Your Views consultation and recommended how the Council could respond.

Task and Finish Reviews

One of the most exciting changes has been the introduction of “task and finish” reviews. These reviews are carried out by a small number of Councillors, and are created to look into problems or topics that affect the people of Taunton Deane. In the last year, Task and Finish Reviews have considered:

- Provision of facilities for young people
- Affordable housing
- Renewable energy and energy efficiency
- Services for older people
- Sustainability in rural areas
- Anti-social behaviour and the work of the Housing Service
- Section 106 agreements and large housing schemes

- The “Negative Subsidy” experienced by the Housing Service

Your local councillors

Pictures will be inserted here

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Our commitment to the environment

We signed up to the 'Nottingham Declaration' in November 2006. This committed the Council to work with partners and local communities to develop plans and strategies to address the causes and impacts of climate change.

As a first step we have calculated our 'carbon footprint' from the energy use generated from our buildings. The figure of over 3,800 tonnes of CO₂ emissions for the year 2006/07 will be used as a baseline from which carbon reduction is sought. The Carbon Trust has made an assessment of the key buildings used by the Council and Tone Leisure. This is currently being used to develop an action plan to achieve ongoing carbon reductions from the Council's operations. This is a National Performance Indicator on which we will now be measured.

Over the coming year we will promote the start of work on a Climate Change Strategy through the Local Strategic Partnership. This will focus on a range of commitments to tackle climate change across the Borough, ranging from improved cycling facilities to energy efficiency measures for households and businesses.

Partnership Achievements

We are a relatively small Council and know that to achieve our challenging plans for the future, we must work with other organisations in strong and effective partnerships. We are fortunate to be a member of several, very successful partnerships that help us achieve our corporate aims;

Put logos by each partnership....

Project Taunton

We are making real progress on delivering Project Taunton. This is an exciting long-term initiative that will transform our County Town into a key economic and cultural centre in the South West region. Taunton has been designated a Growth Point which gives access to funding from central Government. Taunton's bid received an allocation of £3m for use in 2008/09 and a series of priority works have been agreed.

In April this year, more than 700 people visited an exhibition of the latest plans to transform the centre of Taunton. On display were details of the proposed developments, with organisers outlining proposals and answering questions.

We are in the process of appointing a development partner to deliver the regeneration of land at Firepool in Taunton as a vibrant mixed use quarter. Flood relief works at Longrun Farm became the key priority in 2007/08. All the preparatory work was undertaken to ensure the works can be carried out in the autumn of 2008.

The first phase of development at the Somerset County Cricket Club has started. Once the building work is finished this area will be developed into a high quality public area for Taunton to enjoy.

The Project Taunton team can be contacted on 01823 250807, visit www.projecttaunton.co.uk or email info@projecttaunton.co.uk

Southwest One

Southwest One was recently set up as a Joint Venture Company between Somerset County Council, Taunton Deane Borough Council, Avon and Somerset Constabulary and IBM, the global IT and business management provider.

Southwest One provides operational services to both Councils, covering face-to-face and telephone customer services, revenues and benefits and back office services, including finance, procurement, human resources and information technology. The new company is investing in facilities, business systems and the re-engineering of functions and processes. The two councils are already benefiting from operational efficiencies and improved procurement.

Southwest One is offering its services to other councils and public bodies in the region and the company is expected to aid local economic development through employment and training of local people as the business grows.

Somerset Waste Partnership

In October 2007, Somerset became the first countywide area to combine waste service functions under a single joint committee of Councillors from all Somerset local authorities. Moving to the new Somerset Waste Partnership is a big step towards improving and harmonising recycling and waste services across Somerset, helping to remove confusion over what services are provided where, as well as making significant efficiency savings through working as a partnership.

Along with a wide range of materials already collected at the kerbside; paper, glass, food and drink cans, clothes and shoes, car batteries and food waste, Somerset Waste Partnership are trialling the collection of plastic bottles and cardboard in selected areas in a scheme called SORT IT PLUS. Results from the trial will be analysed later in the year and used to inform decisions for future developments.

Pioneer Somerset

Since the Government's rejection of the bid for a single unitary council for Somerset, the six Somerset Councils have been working together to develop an approach for enhancing Somerset's 'multi-tier' ie county, district and town/parish model of local government. Our collective approach for this is called "Pioneer Somerset".

The Pioneer Somerset Programme will bring about new approaches to multi-tier working that are truly pioneering in their design, delivery and in the positive outcomes they will bring for Somerset's residents and communities. By the end of year one of the five year Pioneer Somerset programme, a comprehensive action plan will be developed for consideration by the Pioneer Somerset Board and each individual council.

By 2013, the county and five district Councils of Somerset will be working together to deliver services of consistently high quality, generating substantial efficiency savings and making life better for our residents and diverse communities. Through the programme, we hope to be recognised as a National leader, innovator and pioneer in enhanced multi-tier working.

Somerset Tourism Partnership

Taunton Deane Borough Council coordinates the Somerset Tourism Partnership (DMO) to develop and support the county's tourism industry. The DMO delivers countywide on initiatives including marketing, sustainability, training & quality, research, public relations, lobbying, the provision of tourism information and the Somerset website www.visitsomerset.co.uk web site. We have secured SWRDA funding of £50k per annum.

And other partners who have contributed to achieving our objectives.(logos)

Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)

Tone Leisure

Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership

Taunton Town Centre Partnership

In2Somerset Inward Investment Company

Wellington Economic Partnership

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How we will address our weaknesses

Despite the Audit Commission recognising us as an Excellent Council, they have identified weaknesses that we need to address. We are developing improvement plans to tackle these and monitor progress during 2008/09. The table below summarises the main identified weaknesses from the recent Audit Commission Annual Audit Letter and how we propose to address them.

Weakness	Action
Improve information about the housing market to inform our strategic approach and strengthen mechanisms to support the development of new affordable housing	We will undertake a Strategic Housing Market Assessment to revise the affordable housing target. We will use the results of the Somerset Site Identification Project and the Strategic Land Availability Assessment to identify new affordable Housing sites. This information will be fed into a new Housing Strategy.
Review the current approach to the management and improvement of our own housing stock to support the delivery of the Decent Homes Standard.	We will survey all remaining potential non-decent homes to have a clear picture of required work. We will have a detailed work programme to meet the Decent Homes Standard by March 2011.
Ensure that effective governance and performance management arrangements are in place and appropriately monitored for each key partnership	The current list of our partnerships will be reviewed to ensure that all governance and performance monitoring arrangements are in place.
Support Councillors to ensure that they are more visible and clearly articulate expectations and priorities to the community, staff and partners and have sufficient capacity to effectively drive forward and lead the Council's ambitious agenda for this area.	Our senior managers will work closely with Councillors to agree a communications plan.
To work collaboratively to develop Pioneer Somerset and other joint working proposals across the County, with clear plans, priorities and leadership across the County.	By the end of November 2008 a comprehensive action plan will be developed for consideration by the Pioneer Somerset Board and each individual council.
Demonstrate that council services are	Our Customer Insight Project aims to

Weakness	Action
delivering consistent and equitable levels of high performance to all communities in accordance with the Council's vision and aims	produce area profiles to ensure that accurate customer intelligence is available.
Address key areas for improvement as identified in last year's Use of Resources audit	We will ensure that relevant actions are built into our Use of Resources Improvement Plan and acted on.
Review the profile of balances and reserves for the General Fund and HRA over the period of the MTFP to ensure that they are forecast to remain at adequate levels throughout that period.	We will update our Financial Strategy to address this.
Address control weaknesses that were identified in the new financial systems last year.	<p>We have reviewed and addressed weaknesses in the way we operate our new Revenues and Benefits computer system. Training has now been completed and full use is being made of the systems. As a result our performance has improved.</p> <p>We are currently reviewing our Housing Academy system to ensure that it is fit for purpose with high quality data.</p>

Statement on contracts

We are required to state, where applicable, that all individual contracts awarded during the past year involving a transfer of staff, comply with the requirements in the Code of Practice on Workforce Matters in Local Authority Service Contracts.

For example, in 2007/08 the Council awarded contracts that involved the transfer of staff, as shown below.

There were no staff transferred into Taunton Deane Borough Council during 2007/08.

Contract	Awarded to	Date	Staff transferred Out
Somerset Waste Board Partnership	Somerset Waste Board (Somerset County Council as administering authority)	1 September 2007	5

Performance Indicator Appendix

Completed and on website

Guide to Acronyms

To insert when completed

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