

Council Meeting – 13 April 2010

Report of Councillor Ross Henley – Leader of the Council

1. Employment Land

- 1.1 Taunton Deane Borough remains committed to keeping and growing jobs. To this end, I have set up a meeting of the Executive and the Corporate Management Team to informally look at the issues of a potential shortfall in employment land sites and what we can do positively to move this agenda forward.
- 1.2 Since my last report, much demolition work has taken place at Firepool, Taunton. The site is now cleared and, of course, we have moved ahead with the purchase of an asset on site with the support of the Homes and Communities Agency.
- 1.3 Just two weeks ago I was able to welcome Nick Clegg, the Leader of the Liberal Democrats to Taunton. Along with our MP Jeremy Browne, he was introduced to Ian Franklin and local business representatives who told and showed him what progress our cross party and public private partnership, Project Taunton, is making in our county town. He was particularly impressed with Somerset Square and the work on the development at the Somerset County Cricket Club.

2. The Brewhouse Theatre

- 2.1 It was with great pleasure that on the same day of the above visit that the news that the Brewhouse had received a great boost in Arts Council funding for the next two years.
- 2.2 This is, of course, fantastic news and must mean that the Brewhouse can move forward and has to be the best news they have had in many years. We have always said that until now, they have been underfunded by the Arts Council and this goes a long way to redress that balance. We remain committed to being an active partner of the Brewhouse.

3. Core Council Review

- 3.1 Since my last report, the Core Council Review has moved onto the next stage. A number of staff left the Authority at the end of March and I would like to thank them for their commitment and work for this Council over

many years. I would also like to welcome the new staff that have started or have been appointed and are about to join this Council, some of whom are of course working notice periods before they formally start with us.

4. Climate Change

4.1 Work towards this Council becoming carbon neutral continues at a fast pace. SOLACE, the local government organisation, have recently stated that Taunton Deane is the most advanced Council in the entire country on the issue of Climate Change and our work with our transition partners.

4.2 This runs alongside our other Climate Change initiatives like our green resident parking permits, our discounts on planning application fees for solar energy and our signing of the ten motion points as to the way forward. The budget commitment towards extra investment in tree planting is another good example of our ambition in the green agenda.

5. Free Swimming

5.1 This initiative continues to be an outstanding success for this Council.

5.2 Further to this success, we have made a lottery bid for improvements at Wellington Sports Centre's Swimming Pool. These plans will be coming to Scrutiny and Executive in the near future. We are only able to make this bid for improvements due to our support and participation in the Free Swimming scheme.

5.3 Free Swimming is a scheme which I am so proud that we have given so many people the chance to enjoy in the last year.

6. Southwest One Review

6.1 Somerset County Council has started its long trumpeted review that has been promised since last summer.

6.2 Penny James and I recently met Councillor John Wilkins who heads the review and also Andy Coupe who is the Council Officer who heads up the newly created County Council Cabinet Office. We listened to them and asked various questions of them regarding the terms of reference, the timescale of the review and how it may impact upon us. We have also started our own review of SAP and what lessons can be learned in future.

7. General Election

7.1 As we all know a General Election has been called on 6 May 2010. The result of that election could mean very great changes for all of us whatever

the result or whoever wins. We therefore face a period of great uncertainty.

8. Investors in People and Staff Survey

- 8.1 This has just taken place and results are due soon. I would like to thank all staff who have taken part in both pieces of work and who have worked through the uncertainty of the Core Council Review.

9. Olympic Torch Relay

- 9.1 I was saddened to hear that the Olympic torch relay will not be coming to Taunton Deane. This was a once in a lifetime chance for residents to see and share this experience.
- 9.2 The decision of Somerset County Council not to take part in this event has resulted in terribly bad publicity in many national newspapers and will result in much disappointment by many local residents.

Councillor Ross Henley
Leader of the Council

Council Meeting – 13 April 2010

Report of Councillor Nicola Wilson – Corporate Resources

1. Southwest One Customer Contact Highlights

- 1.1 During February and March Customer Contact have continued to incorporate the SAP CRM as part of day to day operations, with the customer advisors becoming more and more proficient with its use.
- 1.2 Customer Contact has nearly completed the roll out of OLA's (Operating Level Agreements) for Taunton Deane and the final meeting is scheduled for April. These agreements underpin the relationship between the contact centre and the various service departments throughout Taunton Deane. They ensure that regular, structured meetings take place between both parties with the aim of discussing the latest issues and trends. Actions are then agreed for the mutual benefit of the service area and the contact centre and this ultimately improves service to the end customer.
- 1.3 The figures below show that during February Customer Contact delivered against agreed standards, however, during March (particularly the first two weeks) the team came under sustained pressure from higher than anticipated volumes of Council Tax queries. In March volumes were some 50% higher than in February. The nature and profile of the calls is currently being analysed but the overall call volumes for March 2010 were up 11% compared to March 2009 (and this in itself was an increase of 7% over March 2008). Extra staff were recruited to handle the volumes which did alleviate some of the pressure on the team and supported service levels. A review has been scheduled between the Revenues Team and Customer Contact to look at lessons learnt and to feed into planning for 2011.
- 1.4 Despite the pressures experienced in March the service has continued to deliver a high quality service and feedback from customers has continued to be positive. Some customers have even taken the trouble to call back and speak to a team leader to acknowledge particularly good service delivered by a customer advisor.
- 1.5 Over recent days service has returned to more normal levels of activity with call volumes becoming less volatile.

Statistical Information:

Month	Feb-10	Mar-10
CALLS OFFERED	13175	19821
ABANDONED % [Target less than 5%]	4.1	8.04

G.O.S.% [Target 80% within 20 Secs]	81.8	75.08
% Answered 1st POC (Target 85%)	98.7	98.26

2. Update on progress with Investors on People Action Plan

IIP Review Completion of PREDS reviews

- 2.1 Approx 70% of reviews have been completed as at end of March 2010. Further work to be done to ensure full completion.

People Management Framework

- 2.2 All senior managers have been trained to use the Management competency framework (part of the PM framework) and receiving managers have also received familiarisation training. The People Management Framework introduces a new competency framework for managers and reinforces the need to hold regular one-to-one meetings and team meetings. This framework will be instrumental in achieving our Organisational development strategy for the next year and progressing thematic working. Top managers have completed PRED reviews using the Competency framework and the feedback from this is good and all have found it useful in focusing on priorities and development areas.

Team Meetings

- 2.3 A system has been set up to enable a central diary of all team meetings to be held by the Corporate Management Team (CMT). The quality and coverage of team meetings is being gradually assessed by Directors attending team meetings. Further feedback to be sought.

IIP Working group

- 2.4 Five meetings of this group have been held and a number of issues have been raised by members of the group – some positive and some which will require further action and discussion. The group continues to provide useful feedback from staff and a good sounding board for new ideas

Evaluation of Training

- 2.5 Reports from most managers have been received which shows how the training delivered in their teams has benefited those teams, services and the whole Council. This has formed part of our IIP assessment evidence

Learning and Development plans

- 2.6 Plans for 2010/2011 are complete and CMT have agreed budget allocations.

IIP Assessment

- 2.7 This has taken place and a full report will be produced for discussion and creation of a forward action plan in the next two weeks.

Other Organisational Development (OD) and Training Activity

Management Development

- 2.8 The managers in the Corporate and Strategy theme have been through the assessment phase of this management development programme and are now completing personal development plans. This is being finalised within the next month. Managers' development is also being augmented by mentoring arrangements in place and the competency framework discussions.

Theme Working

- 2.9 A report has been agreed by CMT, an action plan produced and now included in the OD plan to integrate with other OD activities over the next year. The first initiative is to be an all staff event scheduled for May which will give staff an update on how the Council is doing and introduce Thematic Working.

Organisational Development Plan 2010/11

- 2.10 This and the Corporate Learning and Development plan have been agreed by CMT. A detailed delivery plan has been produced by Southwest One. More work is needed to detail exactly what will be delivered, when and at what cost with some measurable outcomes to monitor progress and results.

2010 Staff Survey

- 2.11 This has been completed by 45% of the staff (average is 39% nationally) and is being analysed for report to CMT on 12 April 2010. Actions and links to the IIP assessment will be identified and communicated to staff for the end of April.

3. Performance and Client Team Update

The Performance and Client Team covers three specific areas. An update for each is provided below:-

Corporate Performance Management

- 3.1 The Use of Resources element of the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) for 2009/2010 has now commenced. The team are working closely with the Audit Commission inspectors to ensure that the inspection runs as smoothly as possible.
- 3.2 The new performance management scorecard and reporting process was trialled in the Quarter 3 Corporate Performance Report. The new style reports appear to have worked very well and have allowed both CMT and Members to quickly identify and discuss a number of key performance issues. This has resulted in Corporate Scrutiny requesting specific reports in two key areas.
- 3.3 The Theme 1 managers are now in the process of trialling out the new Service Plan templates. A Corporate Aims Delivery Plan (CAD Plan) template has also been

developed. The intention is for each corporate aim to have a CAD Plan, which will explain in detail how the particular aim is going to be delivered.

Client Function

- 3.4 The Client team have been focussing on agreeing new key performance indicator (KPI) targets with the various Southwest One services for the coming financial year. This exercise is now nearly complete.
- 3.5 The team are also in the process of rolling out a new performance monitoring structure in respect of the Southwest One contract. This will provide for greater involvement for members and the core council. The first of the new 6-monthly Southwest One performance reports will be going to Corporate Scrutiny in May.

Procurement Transformation

- 3.6 To date we have delivered savings totalling £350,000 during 2009/2010. The target for the year is £403,000. Consequently there is a shortfall of £53,000. However, we are still awaiting the savings figures in respect of various savings initiatives implemented by the DLO, which are anticipated to be in the region of £50,000 to £60,000, which will close the gap.
- 3.7 We are currently in the process of implementing new savings initiatives to reduce the cost of travel (the Click Travel online booking service) and to reduce the cost of any temporary staffing we employ.
- 3.8 Wave 3 of the procurement transformation will commence shortly and will look at areas such as utilities bills, banking and finance.

SAP System Implementation

- 3.9 The interface between the SAP system and the DLO system is now in place and working. The backlog of transactions, which had been waiting to flow through this interface, has now all been processed. Finance staff have been working with service managers in order to check the accuracy of service budgets following the posting of this backlog to individual budgets. The Finance Manager will be issuing a statement regarding the budget position in the next couple of weeks.
- 3.10 Action to recover unpaid miscellaneous income accounts has now been taken in respect of the backlog of debts. Reminder letters and final notices have been issued for debts totalling £3.4m. To date £370,000 has been received in respect of these debts. Progress against reducing the debt position is being tracked by the Members Steering Group on a monthly basis.
- 3.11 There are still a number of areas of the SAP system which we have not started using yet or that are not working correctly. We are currently working with Southwest One to agree a detailed plan to launch and, in some cases, re-launch

areas of the system to core council staff. The launch process will commence in May, but will be staggered so that we are not overloading staff with training.

4. Revenues and Benefits Service

- 4.1 Despite best efforts, Council Tax recovery fell by 0.2% in comparison with last year.
- 4.2 On a more positive note, the Revenues and Benefits Service was able to meet its target in collecting Business Rates. At the time of writing, collection is in excess of 98.84% - an improvement on 2008/2009 of 0.75%.
- 4.3 There was an increase of 30% on the previous year in the number of enquiries received on potential entitlement to Housing and Council Tax Benefit, while the number of recipients (live caseload) increased by over 1,000. However, the processing of Housing and Council Tax Benefit for new customers, the service again improved, with average processing time reducing to less than 19 days. Benefit for customers with changes in their circumstances was processed in less than nine days.
- 4.4 In meeting the significant challenges of 2009/2010, the Revenues and Benefits Service achievements demonstrate its commitment to continually improve.
- 4.5 Members will have the opportunity to scrutinise customer satisfaction and contribute to future service development through the Corporate Scrutiny Committee in April 2010. A meeting in June 2010 by the same Committee will scrutinise the Revenues and Benefits Service's performance against targets for 2009/2010.

Councillor Mrs Nicola Wilson

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Report of Councillor Alan Wedderkopp – Community Leadership

1. Corporate Strategy 2010 – 2013 (Key Priorities)

- Tackling Deprivation and Sustainable Development.
- Regeneration.
- Affordable Housing.
- Climate Change.

1.1 These four are inter-linked and should be looked at as being so. They cannot and must not be worked on in isolation. This will be a real test of our determination to work in a Themed way as envisaged in the Core Council Review. The bunker and silo are dead.

Our Corporate Aims

1.2 Most of the work is at an early stage. This includes the following:-

Deprivation - The Lead Officer is pulling together the Corporate Aims Delivery Plan for Deprivation. This will identify specific projects, resources (staff and financial) and identify areas for thematic working, as I have said, I believe Regeneration and Affordable Housing are closely linked.

We are currently working on pulling together a three year Service Level Agreement (SLA) for the North Taunton Partnership and the Link Partnership, a draft was circulated last week, and will shortly be coming to Scrutiny and the Executive.

Local Strategic Partnership - Officers are currently working with the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (RIEP) to identify a Local Improvement Advisor (LIA). The LIA is an expert on partnership working and will work with the LSP Board to help pull together a new action plan, as well as helping to restructure the LSP and develop improved partnership working. It is hoped that the LIA will be appointed in April 2010, and this review will take approximately six months to complete. There is no cost to the Council or the LSP, as this is being paid for by SW RIEP.

Somerset Strategic Partnership (SSP) - Migration Impact Fund - This is linked to the Local Strategic Partnership and the Somerset Sustainable Community Strategy. Last year the SSP was in receipt of just over £314,000 to implement a programme of work directed at implementing innovative solutions to relieving the pressures of inward migration on Somerset's towns and villages. This funding was devolved to the SSP via THE Government

Office for the South West and is sourced from a levy on the visa application fee that economic migrants and students coming to the UK from outside the EU are charged.

As a result of this first year funding, a pilot was started in the South Somerset area in conjunction with a variety of partners and South Somerset Together (LSP). Four projects are in various stages of development.

For the second year there is a pot of £551,000 and that means we can roll out other projects across the county. We at Taunton Deane are hoping to participate in an appropriate scheme.

Voluntary Sector - We will be working on new Service Level Agreements with all supported bodies, for example CAB, CVS etc, following on after the SLA's mentioned above. We are about to work with CVS to develop a staff volunteering scheme (this links to the 'deprivation' Corporate Priority above)

Note - Volunteers are hard to find on both estates, more so on Halcon due to a number of reasons, if we can get CVS volunteers to get the ball rolling it may be easier to find local volunteers because they will hopefully realise that they are more capable than they think they are, when the locals see how CVS does it.

2. Equalities

- 2.1 The Corporate Equalities Scheme was recently scrutinised by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee. This will go to public consultation during April, to be followed by Executive consideration during June 2010.
- 2.2 Managers and Leads are currently being trained on how to undertake an Equality Impact Assessment of their service area, and specific projects regarding Equalities and Diversity will be used to inform the development of an Equalities Action Plan, which is an important component of individual Service Plans.

3. The Private Sector Housing Partnership

- 3.1 Since 1 April 2010 Taunton Deane has been working with Sedgemoor and West Somerset Councils to improve private sector housing conditions. Staff in all three Council areas will be working together to:-
 - provide grants and low interest loans for vulnerable people who need help to maintain their homes;
 - bring more private sector empty properties back into use and improve their conditions when in use;
 - administer energy efficiency schemes designed to improve home insulation and heating standards;
 - improve private rented housing through a mixture of advice to and/or enforcement against landlords.

Joining this private sector housing partnership will mean that Taunton Deane will be able to operate these private sector housing services more efficiently and reduce the costs of doing so in the long term.

Councillor Alan Wedderkopp

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Report of Councillor Alan Paul - Communications

- 1.1 Both proactive and reactive work has kept communications busy since the last report to Council.
- 1.2 Press releases issued have included the successful prosecutions of a taxi driver who overcharged newlyweds and a restaurant that breached food safety regulations.
- 1.3 The forthcoming General Election has generated releases aimed at encouraging people to register to vote and alerting residents to boundary changes. It was pleasing to publicise the success of the Halcon Multi-Agency Forum in winning a top police award and to announce the winners of the 2010 Citizenship Awards.
- 1.4 Two electronic newsletters have been produced and circulated – Involve which looks at the Core Strategy and Local Development Framework and Footprint which focuses on the challenges around climate change.
- 1.5 Since the last report, the Somerset Public Services Communications Group has met and this proved extremely valuable in bringing together local authorities, the NHS and the emergency services.
- 1.6 The group will continue to meet regularly to exchange information, ideas and best practice. This is certainly working towards the Total Place concept.
- 1.7 A paper is being produced on the use of Social Media - the term commonly given to websites and online tools which allow users to interact with each other in some way – by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests. As the name implies, social media involves the building of communities or networks, encouraging participation and engagement.
- 1.8 Taunton Deane Borough Council does not have the resources available at the moment to set up a corporate presence whether on Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, MySpace or others.
- 1.9 A presence needs constant monitoring, updating and, above all, relevance. Many authorities with a Facebook page or group attract very few “friends” or followers – sometimes less than half a dozen.
- 1.10 There could be a case for occasional use – perhaps to promote a specific project or event – the Energize initiative, for example.

- 1.11 Twitter, with far fewer followers than Facebook, could be a useful tool in getting across urgent messages – but the Council would need to attract a following before this could be of any value.
- 1.12 There is a strong case to be made for monitoring social media and networks and this is already being implemented with some interesting results. Monitoring alerts the Council to issues that people in cyberspace are talking about. These are relatively simple to set up and are not as resource-hungry as updating a Council presence on social networking sites.
- 1.13 The work being undertaken resulted from an extremely useful day course attended by the Media and PR officer.

Councillor Alan Paul

Council Meeting – 13 April 2010

Report of Councillor Simon Coles – Planning and Transportation

1. Recent Legislative changes which came into effect on 6 April 2010

1.1 The Killian Pretty Review set out 17 recommendations to Government regarding ways to make the planning application system faster and more responsive and there is an ongoing implementation programme. The latest set of regulations and amendments came into force on 6 April 2010, these included the following:-

- **Streamlining Design and Access Statements** - This list of applications that are exempted from the need to submit Design and Access Statement has been extended so that simple and very minor applications are no longer included. Householder applications in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty no longer require a Design and Access Statement, however those in Conservation Areas still do.
- **Validation of Planning Applications** - Although not a legislative change, the Government has published revised policy and guidance in relation to both information requirements and the validation of planning applications. A review of the local validation requirements is already underway and this new guidance will be incorporated into the drawing up the Council's new list.
- **Time Limits for Submitting Planning Appeals** - Where an enforcement notice is in place and a retrospective planning application is refused, the time limit for appealing has been reduced from 6 months to 28 days.
- **Publicity of Planning Applications** - The time limit for the display of site notices has been extended and a requirement for Local Planning Authorities to publish planning applications on the Council's website has been brought in. As we already display all site notices for a period of 21 days and publish all applications on the website, the Council is already 'ahead of the game' in this respect.
- **Non-domestic Permitted Development** - The scope of 'permitted development' has been extended for four main groups of development: industry and warehousing; schools, colleges,

universities and hospitals; office buildings; and shops. These amendments also include changes to the regulation of hard surfacing. The Government intends to expand the range of permitted development rights which require 'prior approval' at a later date and has made no decision yet as to whether to make air conditioning units permitted development in certain circumstances, so these matters are not covered in the new Order.

- **House in Multiple Occupation (HMO)** - These have been given a new use class (C4) and a standard definition to accord with that in the Housing Act 2004. In broad terms, this use occurs where tenanted living accommodation is occupied by persons as their only or main residence, who are not related and who share one or more basic amenities. It is now permitted development to convert a HMO (C4) to a dwelling house (C3).

2. Local Development Framework Core Strategy and Site Allocations

- 2.1 This important work carries on during the remainder of this year with further Public Consultation during September and October, when again, we intend that the Public's views will be incorporated into the finished document. Indeed we are still receiving responses from members of the Public from the first round of consultation.
- 2.2 It is a matter of speculation at this time, as to whether or not the format for this finished document will be as we envisioned it. It may well be, or not be, altered as a result of the impending General Election, nevertheless, we are obliged to fully prepare this document to submit to Central Government.

3. Car Park Closures

- 3.1 Following the confirmation of funding for The Third Way, work will start shortly. Greenbrook Terrace Car Park will close as from next week. The legal process for this was completed last year, when the start date for work was expected to be July 2009.
- 3.2 A Traffic Regulation Order Panel will be organized to look at the objections raised to the planned closure of Castle Green Car Park. The closure is proposed as part of Project Taunton's redevelopment of the whole Castle Green area, in conjunction with enhancement of the County Museum.

4. Residents' Parking in Taunton

- 4.1 Consultation is underway or about to start on possible Residents' Parking provision for Mitre Court (as additional provision within the Victoria Gate Zone), the Priory Park area (the old rugby club site), where its proximity to the town centre and other facilities results in problems and Canal Road (as an extension to the Albemarle Zone)

4.2 The scheme approved to add William Street to the existing Rowbarton Zone will see work start soon.

5. Proposed County-wide Civil Parking Enforcement Project

5.1 As outlined in the recent Briefing Note, we continue working with the other Somerset Districts and the County Council on this project.

5.2 There are a number of work streams in progress, and reports will come before Scrutiny and Executive during the year. It is important to note that, the project covers enforcement activity only.

Councillor Simon Coles

Council Meeting – 13 April 2010

Report of Councillor Francesca Smith - Economic Development and the Arts

1. Core Council Review Update and appointments:

- 1.1 The future Economic Development Team proposed, as part of the Core Council Review comprises an Economic Development Specialist, two Leads and two Officers.
- 1.2 David Evans has been offered the post of Economic Development Specialist in Growth and Development and will be joining us from Swindon Borough Council where he is Head of Economic Development. Hattie Winter has been offered the post of Economic Development Lead. Hattie previously worked at Taunton Deane for a number of years and will be returning to Taunton Deane from Devon County Council. Stephanie Payne has been appointed as Economic Development Lead and is in post. Stephanie previously supported Phil Sharratt on the Economic Development Strategy. Matthew Parr has been appointed as Economic Development Officer and is in post. Matthew was previously the Regeneration Officer. The second Officer post currently remains vacant.

2. Overview of current activities

- 2.1 During the interim period until all team members are in post, Stephanie and Matthew the two Economic Development staff in post, will be doing their best to maintain a normal service. Future activities for the Economic Development Team are under review and a proposal to align activities with capacity will be put forward shortly. This is the current priority and will be taking into consideration the previous service and the projects within the Economic Development Strategy. Stephanie will work with Joy Wishlade and Tim Burton to put this together and the recommendations will be made available as soon as possible.
- 2.2 Key current activities include, working closely with Project Taunton and responding to inward investment enquiries. Attendance at SLIM 'Learning Theme' Workshop, discussing ESF (European Social Fund) and ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) funding and successful past projects. SLIM - the Skills and Learning Intelligence Module of the South West Observatory, based at the University of Exeter.

- 2.3 Business Engagement, this has included recent meetings with key local businesses. We are currently working with one to explore relocation options within Taunton Deane. We have offered assistance to another with a potential move again within Taunton Deane. This increased engagement with local businesses is key in the future development of the Economic Development Strategy.
- 2.4 Continuing support of the Young Enterprise Scheme through Officer time. Support for a Resource Efficiency event that was held at Somerset College by Somerset Waste Partnership, Application to SW Councils to the RIEP (Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership) Capital Fund for a Low Carbon Project.

3. Project Taunton

- 3.1 Firepool - Demolition of the buildings on the former livestock market site has now been completed. "The auctioneers building" refurbishment is also complete and the building is to be retained in the medium term as a marketing centre.
- 3.2 Unit 5 Canal Road has been purchased using money made unexpectedly available by the Homes and Communities Agency and this purchase was the subject of a more detailed report to the last meeting of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee.
- 3.3 Planning permission has been granted for the first phase of riverside public realm works and the first phase of actual development (planned for Priory Bridge Road car park) is likely to be submitted as a detailed application within the next few weeks.
- 3.4 Cricket Club - The Pegasus development and new stand is now complete. The terms have been agreed with a bicycle retailer/hirer for one unit under the flats and due to be agreed very shortly for an Italian deli in the other unit both fronting on to Somerset Square. The health and safety issues at Somerset Square have been resolved and it will be fully opened shortly after Easter. The construction of the Somerset County Cricket Club Hub is complete and work to convert the pavilion to a 500 seat conference facility is well underway with completion in mid-May.
- 3.5 Museum - The main contractor is on site for the refurbishment of the Museum and reopening is planned for Spring/Summer 2011
- 3.6 Castle Green and Goodland Gardens - The original planning application was submitted in May 2009. A new planning application covering all the issues that have arisen from discussion and consultation is now being considered by English Heritage. The progression of this scheme is

dependent on whether we receive our Growth Points capital allocation for 2010/2011. If funding can be secured then we remain confident that the project will be delivered successfully and will provide a fantastic public space for Taunton and one which will play a fundamental role in the future success of Taunton.

- 3.7 Third Way - Funding has now been confirmed for The Third Way Road and bridge and work is due to start on 12 April.
- 3.8 Retail - JP Morgan (EPF) has completed the £3.5m refurbishment of The Old Market Centre. Initial meetings of the project team (EPF, Project Taunton and Taunton Deane) have proved constructive and we are optimistic that good progress will be made over the coming months.
- 3.9 Northern Inner Distributor Road (NIDR) - Agreement has been reached with all parties to undertake the first stage of the NIDR. Work is due to start on site in early April. Somerset County Council (SCC) will procure and project manage the works. The build contract for the scheme of affordable housing has been signed at the same time and work on that project will also commence very shortly.
- 3.10 Urban Extension Masterplanning - Urban Initiatives and their team are making good progress with their commission and will report to members in early May.
- 3.11 Eco Development Funding – Taunton Deane, SCC and Project Taunton have bid for and successfully obtained funding from CLG towards the cost of various studies to support the future delivery of sustainable development in and around Taunton. Some of this money will help offset the cost of aspect of the urban extension masterplanning work.
- 3.12 Longrun Meadows - Planning consent with conditions has been granted for the landscaping of the 65 acres of land which includes the flood prevention scheme. Local landscape architects, Swan Paul, are managing the landscaping which began in mid March. A response has been received from Natural England/Big Lottery regarding the Access to Nature first stage submission prepared by Karen Hughes. This work is continuing through a consultancy.
- 3.13 Our Place, Your Place, Taunton - The '*empty shop*' project funded by Living Places/ Transformation funding in the former Peter Briggs Shoe shop in the High Street, closed after 6 weeks on Saturday 20 March 2010. Volunteers and paid supervisory staff provided staffing for activities, on the theme of *Taunton: past, present and future*, both in the venue and at outreach venues. This community project proved to be a success with visitor numbers exceeding 4000.

- 3.14 Funding - The Growth Points revenue allocation for 2010/2011 has been received but the capital allocation has not yet been confirmed.
- 3.15 PR and Marketing - Recent media activity included articles/features in Planning Magazine, Investment Now, the Gazette, Heart FM, New Start, Shopping Centre, the Western Morning News and Estates Gazette. The Taunton logo will feature on the new community boat which has been christened 'Future Perfect', an electric smart car and on the cricket club boundary for the new season.

4. Tourist Information

- 4.1 Since the last report in January, the Taunton Tourist Information, Ticket and Travel Centre (TIC) within Taunton Library has remained busy welcoming both local residents and visitors. Partnerships have now been formed with the Neroche Scheme, Museum of Somerset and the National Trust. The Centre is acting as a hub for the new Herepath Digital Trail Guides, these are free to borrow and use GPS technology; they are an exciting personal audio-visual guide to the trail.
- 4.2 The Museum has relocated their promotional boards about the new building from the Your Taunton shop in the High Street to the TIC and the National Trust in Fyne Court now has a permanent display. The National Trust will have a representative in the office on regular occasions over forthcoming months promoting the Trust in the local area and selling memberships.
- 4.3 The Centre and its staff hosted an event in March to mark British Tourism Week which welcomed the Mayor, Councillor Bob Bowrah, Jeremy Browne, MP and representatives from Somerset County Cricket Club, Visit Somerset and West Somerset Railway.
- 4.4 The office has now been refreshed and is full of tourist literature for the new summer season. The Ticket Centre continues to be very busy and is selling tickets for numerous concerts taking place in Taunton over future months, the new programme at the Tacchi Morris, Royal Bath and West Show and a variety of Tone Leisure events at Wellspings. The Travel Centre is hosting a promotional day with Berry's Coaches who launch their new Summer Day Tour programme in the TIC on 15 April 2010.

Councillor Mrs Fran Smith

Council Meeting – 13 April 2010

Report of Councillor Richard Lees – Sports, Parks and Leisure

1. Community Leisure

- 1.1 Vivary Park summer Sunday bandstand concerts have been programmed beginning on 5 June, continuing until 5 September 2010.
- 1.2 The Easter edition of The Deano has been sent to all primary school aged children in Taunton Deane and the summer edition will be issued in June. This publication gives details of activities for children in the main school holidays.
- 1.3 Nynehead Village Hall and Fitzhead Tithe Barn have both been successful with their applications to the Joint County and District Panel for Voluntary Village Halls and Community Centres for grant aid assistance. Two other village halls, Neroche and West Bagborough were unfortunately unsuccessful with their bids due to a reduction in Somerset County Council funding. Taunton Deane Borough Council is working with Neroche and West Bagborough to assist them in taking their projects forward.

2. Play

- 2.1 Hamilton Gault Children's Play Area
 - 2.1.1 The contractors have nearly finished the construction of the new children's play area. This has involved the removal of all of the old play equipment and any serviceable equipment will be used to replace worn out equipment on other sites.
 - 2.1.2 The hedges around the old play area have been removed to improve natural surveillance of the new play area. The new play area has been designed to encourage natural play and it consists of equipment for children up to twelve years old.
- 2.2 Hamilton Gault Skate Park
 - 2.2.1 Work has started on the construction of the concrete bowl skate park. The local skateboarders have been involved with the design and they are very excited about this being a major attraction in the town. The skate park should be completed towards the end of April and will be open once the concrete has cured.
- 2.3 Lyngford Park Children's Play Area

- 2.3.1 The construction of the new junior play area has begun and should be completed by early April. This play area replaces the former site that consisted of timber play equipment that had become too rotten for safe use.
- 2.3.2 The kindergarten play area has been refurbished with a replacement roundabout, new seat, safety surfacing and painting of the existing equipment.

3. Parks

3.1 Vivary Park, Sensory Garden

- 3.1.1. The shrub planting work has continued at the sensory garden during milder weather.
- 3.1.2. The finishing touches to the fountain and signage will be carried out in April and the garden will be open to the public in May following the official opening by the Mayor.

3.2 Wilton Lands Lake

- 3.2.1 The accumulation of silt was removed from the lake in early March before the bird nesting season began at the lake. Large areas of the lake were completely silted up and islands had formed making the lake unsightly for park visitors. The lake is used by the Tone Valley Model Boat Club that has several events planned for this year.

4. Tone Leisure (Taunton Deane) Limited Activities

Sports and Health Development

4.1 Taunton Deane Foot Anstey Aquathlon

- 4.1.1 Despite the forecast for strong winds and heavy rain, over 170 athletes turned up to show their grit and determination as they battled it out in the 6th Taunton Deane Foot Anstey Aquathlon on Sunday, 28 February 2010 at Wellington Sports Centre.
- 4.1.2 Sponsored by south-west law firm Foot Anstey, organised by Somerset RC Tri Club and Tone Leisure and supported by the Somerset County Gazette, the competition caters for all levels of fitness and stamina with competitors able to enter either the short or longer distance race.
- 4.1.3 The short distance involves swimming 500 m and running 5 k and the longer race is a 1,000 m swim followed by a 10 k run. To make it completely fair, individuals compete against others in the same age

category, which range from 14-15 years (Youth) to 60+ years (Vintage Veterans).

- 4.1.4 Particularly popular is the team event, introduced two years ago to open up the event to novices and for those that enjoyed one element of the Aquathlon, but not the other. In each team one person swims and the other runs using a relay style handover after the swim. This year, a record breaking 30 teams took part, some of which had also entered the corporate challenge, which encourages participation from south-west businesses, schools, clubs and other organisations.

Facility News

5.1 Wellsprings Leisure Centre

Health and Fitness

- 5.1.1 The site is seeing increased utilisation in all areas - gym visits and GOgx classes of nearly 15%.
- 5.1.2 The GP Referral Scheme has been boosted with the successful training of existing gym staff and the addition of a new Health and Fitness Manager. This will enable a greater number of GP Referral customers to be accommodated.

Forthcoming Events

- 5.1.3 The Wellsprings comedy nights have always been very popular, and this year Tone Leisure are welcoming back Jethro on 15 May and then Jimmy Car on 2 July. Both of these events tend to sell out. On 22 May there is a Strictly Dance evening with Darren Bennett and Lilia Kopylova from the BBC Strictly Come Dancing programme.

5.2 Station Road Pool

Free Swimming

- 5.2.1 I am pleased to say, the Free Swim Initiative continues to go from strength to strength with both Under 16s and Over 60s. Concessionary Free Swimming usage during Quarter 3 shows an increase of 45% - 4,689 swims.

5.3 St. James Street Baths

Swimskool and iPod Technology

- 5.3.1 With the launch of the new online booking system for swimming lessons, 200 parents/guardians took up the opportunity to re-book their children online within the first four weeks of its launch. Teachers are now using iPod technology on poolside to mark children's attendance

and to record their progress made in each lesson. Parents/guardians can now view their children's progress immediately after each lesson through use of the home portal on Tone Leisure's website.

Hires

5.3.2 Somerset Young Carers hired the pool during the half-term holidays in February. Organisers of the hire were extremely complimentary about the team as the young carers all had a great time. St. James Street was able to provide them exclusive use of the main pool for an hour to enjoy themselves away from their personal circumstances.

Rookie Lifeguard Programme

5.3.3 The Rookie Lifeguard Programme is growing from strength to strength. Sessions are now operating with two Instructors and attracting 20 children per class. This is a fun way of teaching children lifelong skills.

6. Blackbrook Pavilion

Feel Good Factory - Taunton

6.1.1 The Feel Good Factory opened on 4 January, 2010. It is a ladies only, power assisted exercise centre. The circuit of 12 machines takes just 30 minutes to complete and the facility is particularly appropriate to those who are overweight/obese, suffering mobility problems or in need of rehabilitation exercise. To date, the facility has attracted in excess of 150 members and the Feel Good Factory membership is growing steadily.

Teen Gym

6.1.2 The numbers for the 11-16 year old programme continue to increase. Six sessions are run per week with many sessions running at full capacity.

Sport Relief

6.1.3 Sunday, 21 March 2010 saw the return of the Sport Relief Mile which had a record number of people entering - 450.

Utilisation

6.1.4 The usage of the Centre has increased significantly. Over a 12 week period gym usage averages 1,252 visits per week, up 18% on last year. The GOgx group exercise programme regularly exceeds the target of 650 participants per week and is up 29% on last year.

7. Taunton Tennis Centre

Tournaments

7.1.1 Eight junior tournaments took place at the club in March, including the three day Under Eighteen County Cup, which saw four counties play over three days. The other events included four mini tennis tournaments and three 11-18 years junior tennis tournaments.

Training and Coaching

7.1.2 A Performance Access Day was run by Richard Huish and Taunton Tennis Club, inviting the best players in the South West to receive coaching at Bath High Performance Centre. Thirty children attended this successful event.

7.1.3 A training day for coaches wishing to coach tennis in schools was held at the club in March, with ten coaches attending, receiving coaching from Roger Jones.

8. Wellington Sports Centre

New GOGx Classes

8.1.1. With the successful trial of Belly Dancing, the class continues to maintain its committed followers. Belly Drills has now been launched and Tone Leisure is pleased to be the first in the UK to launch this new aerobic and dance fusion. Street Funk has also been a new contender on the programme for a funky dance session that certainly ticks the fitness and fun boxes.

Z3 Fitness

8.1.2 A month after the opening and the area continues to grow in popularity. Another 850 young people visited the exciting area throughout March. The committee members, who are made up of local young people, have been working hard to capture the feedback and comments from the users.

Free Swimming

8.1.3 Working closely with the ASA Area Co-ordinator, Tone Leisure has managed to secure funding which supports Open Days that inform the local community about the Free Swim Initiative and also be able to offer Free Swimming lessons to anyone over the age of 11 who is a weak or non-swimmer.

8.1.4 Concessionary free swimming usage at Wellington (which includes Under 16s and Over 60s) continues to show strong growth on last year and, at the end of Quarter 3, was showing an increase of 54% - 2,268 swims.

Junior Activities

8.1.5 The dry side courses are strengthening, with two further gymnastic courses added to help with the popular demand.

All round, I feel that Taunton Deane Borough Council are providing a wide range of sports, leisure and parks facilities to a very high standard that we can all be justly proud.

Councillor Richard Lees

Council Meeting – 13 April 2010

Report of Councillor Tim Slattery – Environmental Services

As from the 1 April 2010 the new structure for Environmental Health became operational. Charlotte Dale is Environmental Health Lead Officer; Martin Stoyles Principal EHO with a Licensing Manager due to be appointed on 26 April. Acting up appointments will now return to their previous posts.

1. Food and Health and Safety Team

Scores on the Doors, National Scheme

- 1.1 Approximately 1000 letters have been sent to all the food businesses in Taunton Deane which fall under the National Scheme asking them to complete and return a form to update their details on our database.
- 1.2 So far there has been an excellent return rate – but this has meant a lot of work for EH Support updating our computer records.

Successful Prosecution

- 1.3 Environmental Health Officer, Emily Greenway had a first successful prosecution of the Radhuni Restaurant in Wellington. The defendant pleaded guilty to all eight offences and received a fine of just over £6,000 and costs of over £2,000.

Food Standards Audit

- 1.4 I attended the recent audit inspection undertaken by the Food Standards Authority. Overall a very positive audit with many positive comments from the auditors.
- 1.5 I have received the provisional feedback, which currently details four recommendations regarding the service plan, review of policies and procedures, officer authorisation and approved premises.
- 1.6 They were particularly impressed with our internal monitoring procedures, how we assess Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point compliance in our businesses and also the blank action plan that we send out with all our letters.

Emergency Rota

- 1.7 As from 1 April 2010 there will be no further Environmental Health out of hour's emergency rota. This will be covered by the Corporate Management Team rota.

2. Environmental Protection Team

Pest Control

- 2.1 You will be aware that one of the proposals from the Core Council Review was to outsource our Pest Control Service. The current position is:-
- We have been through a tendering process and have received four full tenders. However, the contract prices have come back higher than expected. The estimated saving planned for this process was £46,000. At Scrutiny there was some concern expressed that this level of savings could not be achieved, largely due to our current pricing structure and level of business.
 - The reason that the tender prices are higher than we had anticipated is largely due to the issue of the TUPE transfer of one Pest Control Officer to the new provider. This is due to recent changes to the TUPE provisions in relation to the duty of a new private sector employer to provide a pension of equal value for the TUPE'd employee.
 - This involves the company concerned applying for, and being accepted to, "Admitted Status" to the Local Government Pension Scheme. We were aware of this requirement, but the change appears to be that new entrants are required to provide a substantial bond in order to gain entry to the scheme. This has resulted in an elevation of the TUPE element of the tenders, much higher than expected and beyond our projections for the saving from this project.
 - Our officers are now going to take stock of the situation, in light of these developments, to do some work with our accountants in relation to the best course of action and Members will be advised accordingly.

New Private Water Supply Regulations 2009

- 2.2 Implementation of the new Private Water Supply Regulations 2009 is progressing.
- 2.3 Officers attended a recent meeting with the Somerset Water Group which highlighted that all Somerset districts will now be making their own arrangements initially with the possibility of joined-up working once the monitoring schedules are embedded. Fees and charges will be published once approval has been agreed.

Buddhafield Festival 2010

- 2.4 The organisers are proposing to hold the Buddhafield festival in Taunton Deane in the same place as last year on 14 – 18 July 2010. The event will be very similar to last year with a capacity of 3000 people, dancing, music, workshops and with a no alcohol policy. A formal Licence application will be submitted to the Licensing Authority within the next few weeks.
- 2.5 In previous years the festival has been successful and there have been very few reported problems associated with the event. We will not be requiring a pre-event multi-agency meeting as our conditions will be the same as last year.

Air Quality

- 2.6 The University of the West of England have completed, on behalf of Taunton Deane, the Councils Air Quality Progress report and the Action Plan Progress Report. There are indications that air quality in Taunton has slightly improved.

Fun Farm

- 2.7 The Fun Farm at Cheddon Fitzpaine, near Taunton is applying for a Zoo Licence.
- 2.8 The intended date for the inspection is 27 April 2010 to be carried out by South Somerset District Council.

3. Waste Management

SORT IT Plus collections in Taunton Deane

- 3.1 As Members will be aware, SORT IT Plus involves the addition of weekly collections of plastic bottles and cardboard to the standard SORT IT collections. Residents due to be added to the service will be delivered an additional recycling box which is to be used for plastic bottles, cardboard and cans.
- 3.2 They will also be delivered a leaflet and stickers for the existing recycling box. Deliveries are due to begin during the week commencing 5th April and collections start during the weeks commencing 19 and 26 April 2010.
- 3.3 A series of road shows will be held throughout Taunton Deane in April to promote the new services and answer any queries that residents might have.

Waste Strategy

- 3.4 Continuing consultations in relation to the new draft Waste Strategy are progressing. Further workshops for all stakeholders will be held in May 2010 to consider work undertaken to assess favoured options and hopefully reach consensus on the headline issues to be included in a new draft strategy to be issued for public consultation in June 2010.

- 3.5 There will be morning workshop on 14 May 2010 for representatives of stakeholder organisations and a repeat of this during the evening of 19 May for representatives who prefer an evening event and for interested individuals. Please make a note of these dates in your diary now and we will send out invitations with full details nearer the time.

- 3.6 The Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP) has set up a strategy review website at: www.somersetjmwms.info. This allows strategy documents to be downloaded and hosts a discussion forum. Please visit and share your questions and views on the future management of Somerset's waste. Further Information can be obtained from Julie Searle - Strategy Officer at SWP, Tel: 01823 625717 or e-mail: julie.searle@somersetwaste.gov.uk.

Councillor Tim Slattery

Council Meeting – 13 April 2010

Report of Councillor Hazel Prior-Sankey – Housing Services

1. Review of Council Housing Finance

- 1.1 On 25 March 2010 we received details from the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) of proposals for the reform of council housing finance. The detailed plans and terms of the proposals are set out in a published consultation document titled - Council Housing: A Real Future.

The headline plan for the reform is the delivery of better homes and better housing services by:-

- Giving councils the freedom to fund and run their council houses, without annual Government decisions over subsidy;
- Creating the funding capacity to build over 10,000 new council homes a year; and
- Releasing at least 10% more money in every council for maintaining and managing their homes.

Arrangements are currently being made to enable us give the right focus to this matter and to model what has been proposed, to get insight on the implications and or opportunities for Taunton Deane Borough Council.

All responses from a wide range of local authorities and others to the proposals are to be received at the CLG by the closing date of 6 July 2010.

2. Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership - Working on a new 'Housing Adaptations and Housing Options Agreement'

- 2.1 To help with reducing the time it takes to adapt the homes of disabled people, making them safer and easier to live in, we are engaged in work on a new partnership agreement involving Taunton Deane, West Somerset District Council, Sedgemoor District Council and Registered Social Landlords (RSL's). The new agreement will ensure that social housing residents are provided with a consistent, fair, timely, efficient and customer focused adaptations service.
- 2.2 A timetable of consultation and discussion has been agreed, with the planned approval of the new partnership agreement to be completed by September 2010

3. Increase in Disabled Facilities Grant Funding

- 3.1 Taunton Deane Borough Council is delighted to be receiving a significant disabled facilities grant increase. The Government is raising the grant by £49,000 this year, from £210,000 to £259,000.
- 3.2 The money will help people remain living independently in their own homes by helping to fund improvements to the property.
- 3.3 The grant can be used for a wide range of improvements, from widening doors and creating access ramps to improving heating systems or providing better or more suitable bathrooms and kitchens.
- 3.4 Grants are means tested to ensure they are targeted at those in most need. Any eligible disabled person can apply for this grant whether they are a homeowner, private tenant or local authority tenant.

4. Tenant Empowerment

- 4.1 We have now reached a major milestone in Tenant Empowerment in Taunton Deane with the first meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board being scheduled for the 29 April 2010.
- 4.2 An Information Pack was sent to all tenants and Councillors at the start of February 2010 which provided an overview of the board and how it would bring improvements and benefits to homes and neighbourhoods in Taunton Deane. It also offered the opportunity for tenants to put themselves forward to serve as one of the ten board members.
- 4.3 Ten applications were received by the deadline, meaning the applicants were elected unopposed. Two Councillors, one from each of the main parties, will now be nominated to serve on the board. The board will meet on a monthly basis and members will serve for a period of two years.

5. Review of Homefinder Somerset Choice Based Lettings Scheme

- 5.1 With the aim of delivering a service that serves the needs of Somerset communities South Somerset District Council's (SSDC) Scrutiny Panel is to conduct a review of the Homefinder Somerset Scheme. The reviews specific focus is on how well the scheme delivers its services to communities.
- 5.2 The review being undertaken by the SSDC Scrutiny Panel will feed into the much broader review of the Homefinder Somerset Scheme currently being undertaken on behalf of the Homefinder Somerset

Monitoring Board. A provisional date for the conclusion of the broader review is September 2010. This is dependant upon the issues identified during the course of the review and the outcomes of the SSDC Scrutiny Panel Review which is expected to be concluded in June 2010.

Councillor Hazel Prior-Sankey