

PART II REPORTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE

COUNCIL MEETING – 9TH OCTOBER 2007

Report of Councillor Ross Henley – Leader of the Council

Since my last report in July, much has happened and much has changed. At the last Full Council meeting we were waiting for the Unitary result and wondering what the future held. Now that is out of the way and I am pleased to say that the Leaders and Chief Executives of all the Districts and the County Council are meeting and jointly working on new ideas for close partnership working and ways of jointly making efficiency savings. Since the last meeting the joint waste partnership has been signed. This is a groundbreaking venture which will be the envy of many. As we are the only area in the country to deliver this, many Council Leaders across the country have asked me just how we did it. The opportunities are immense with this contract.

Last week heralded the launch of our ISiS Project, the signing of which took place just over a week ago. The launch of Southwest One is very exciting. The joint venture company will transform the way we work and deliver significant improvements for our customers. Once again we and the County Council area breaking new ground which others can only envy. I really believe this project can deliver real change.

The Overview and Scrutiny Board reported a budget gap of about £1 million last week. It will be an extremely challenging task to close this gap. We will have to take difficult decisions and make efficiency savings. There is no easy answer to this problem and tough decisions will be taken. One of the major problems facing us is the concessionary travel scheme. This scheme, in principle, is good. However it cannot be right that central government does not give us nearly enough to administer it. The scheme is certainly not fair as all Council Tax payers are feeling the effects of this.

I also want to talk about some positive events. Wellington Food Town was a fantastic success. 15,000 people in Wellington Town centre to celebrate local food and showcase all our local food producers. One of the best events Wellington has seen in years. Also fantastic news is the success of Wellington and Taunton in Bloom. I am proud that this Council has worked so hard to support the relevant Bloom Committees to ensure their success. The Council working alongside the wider community was critical to this victory for our area. I was also pleased to attend Taunton Flower Show. The decision to move to Friday and Saturday resulted in record crowds. So many people enjoy this premier event which showed the best to Taunton, a show we can be proud of and one as Leader I will always support.

I was lucky to attend two shows put on by young people at Wellington Arts Centre. These showed what talent we have here. The star of the show was Charles Dyke, who should be on the stage, he is that good. Wellington Arts

Association continues to entertain so many people. I was very impressed with the forward programme of events at the Brewhouse. This Council will support them and to this aim we have just appointed two members to attend Board meetings as observers. Closer working with the Brewhouse can ensure their long term success.

The new system of overview and scrutiny has begun. Our new Task and Finish Group way of working is highlighting many important subjects which will now get special attention. It will be interesting to see how it works.

In the last few weeks I have been continuing to meet local partners and stakeholders to listen to their ideas about Taunton Deane. These have included meeting with the Managing Director of Swallowfield International, Kit Chapman from The Castle Hotel, the new head of Taunton Chamber of Commerce, the head of Cotleigh Brewery and members of the Taunton/Wellington Pensioners Forum and accepted an invitation to speak at their AGM.

Councillor Ross Henley

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Report of Councillor Steve Brooks - Communications

Public Relations

I would like to welcome Debbie Rundle as the new Media and Public Relations Officer. Debbie started with us at the beginning of August and has enjoyed getting to know the Council and the issues we face.

We are increasingly focusing on promoting the Waterlinks project. Once the shortlist has been announced we will make sure that Waterlinks becomes a top priority for PR. The next issue of Deane Dispatch will be going out to all residents at the end of November and if we are shortlisted, there will be a feature on Waterlinks for that edition.

Website

We continue to make improvements to the website. We are currently focusing on improving online forms to increase their usability and encouraging visitors to use them. We have 37 online Report it forms and we want to make it as simple as possible for visitors to use them, this includes removing the requirement for visitors to register before they submit a form. One of the first forms we redesigned was the planning representation form and this has had a dramatic effect on the number of people using this service. In July we received an average of 9 planning representation a week via the website. During the last week in August, following the changes we received 30 representations.

The Heart of Somerset website homepage was revised in July in response to feedback from the Accessibility Audit. Further work is planned to improve this site.

In July we had 32,867 new visitors and in August 31,495. This is an increase of nearly 30% on August 2006. At the moment we have around 10,000 returning visitors a month and we plan to improve the service we offer to the visitors.

We have been working hard with services across the Council to help them improve their areas of the website. Fiona Baker has already run five "Writing for the Web" courses and more are planned in September and October. These courses will help current contributors to the TDBC website have a basic understanding of how to write for a website and meet all the accessibility criteria. If any Member would like to attend one of these courses, please contact Fiona Baker.

Consultation and Information

Charissa De zeeuw is currently working with the Somerset County Council Customer Accessed team on jointly improving how we measure customer

satisfaction. She is currently developing some core questions which are based on the key drivers of customer satisfaction. These aim to measure the experience of receiving services rather than just perception of the service. It is hoped that the improved questions will enable us to identify potential areas for improvement that will influence customer satisfaction. As part of the Breakthrough Project to improve customer services, a telephone customer satisfaction survey was conducted in early September. The results will be available in due course.

The results from Your Council, Your Views 2007 survey have been presented to the Executive Councillors at their away day and to partners and Councillors at the Corporate Priorities event in September. These results will be presented to the Strategy and Performance Panel on 16 October. If any Member would like a copy of the results before then, please contact Charissa. The results from this consultation exercise reinforced what the community have told us in previous consultation exercises and gave a clear idea of what is important to them.

To enable those involved with the new Community Partnerships due to start in October the team is putting together a profile of information about each Community Partnership Area. Once this work has been completed, it will be available to all Members.

Other Communications

Ruth James has been very involved in supporting the ISiS Programme over the last few of months. It has been a period of intense activity, particularly in preparing for the launch of Southwest One. I would like to personally thank all of those who have been involved in the programme over the last two years for all their hard work. I am looking forward to working together to improve our services for our local community.

Councillor Steve Brooks

COUNCIL MEETING-9TH OCTOBER 2007

Report of Councillor Simon Coles-Strategic Planning and Transportation:

1. Improving Services in Somerset

I am delighted to announce that this strategic partnership over the next ten years was signed on 30th Sept.

The new Joint Venture Co will be called "South West One" and is a joint venture between Taunton Deane Borough Council, Somerset County Council & IBM. Avon&Somerset Constabulary are still hoping, and are expected to join with us, as a founding partner, in the next few months. This is a groundbreaking partnership which will have many benefits for the people of Somerset not just the Deane in terms of accessibility of services along with the modernisation of them and the quality of those services, along with significant inward investment. One of the enormous benefits to the staff seconding over is the guarantee of employment over the full life of the contract, currently ten years.

I should like to add my thanks to the officers that have worked tirelessly to achieve this historic partnership, in particular Shirlene Adams, Jill Sillifant and their staffs. We owe a particular vote of thanks to Ian Taylor for working through the night to complete the deal on time.

2. Taunton FIREPOOL Regeneration

I was privileged to attend a very exciting presentation by the three shortlisted bidders for the first phase of this all important regeneration.

I was delighted by the scale and commitment from all three companies to the core ideas of this first phase we are seeking an extremely high level of sustainability the like of which has not been achieved anywhere else to the best of my knowledge, more importantly, perhaps is the fact that all three of the developers are fully committed to provide these levels. A final announcement as to the preferred development partner is expected soon.

3. Development Management Staffing

The search for the additional two members of staff (area planning managers) required goes on with new adverts being placed and the services of a Recruitment Agency being utilised to speed up the whole process. In the meantime the previous arrangements continue.

4. Procurement of New Development Management IT System

The two suppliers previously identified have now provided demonstrations of their packages. We will now look to proceed to full implementation in the very near future and certainly aim to have the new system implemented in this current financial year.

5. Monkton Heathfield Major Planning Application

The Consortium has lodged an appeal regarding "Non-determination" of their current application. At the same time a further two applications have been submitted.

6. Residents Parking

It has been resolved that John Lewis and I as portfolio holder will have a series of meetings to formulate a plan to move forward the issue of Residents Parking with particular regard to the number of Visitors Parking Permits issued and on what basis they are issued in relation to the timing of, and the validity i.e. should they be limited to say 2/4/6/hours duration, all the time anytime(no restriction) should they take the form of tear out/scratch off vouchers and/or should they be, along with Residents Parking permits be reduced to say, one or two for each household. When this work has been carried out then it will go to the appropriate Scrutiny Panel for their comments.

I continue to work closely with other members of the Executive and chief officers to hold regular meetings with them to ensure that where our various departments overlap we are all aware of the thinking and strategies being employed in order that we may progress in a coherent and effective manner.

Councillor Simon Coles
Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning&Transport

COUNCIL MEETING 9 OCTOBER 2007

REPORT OF COUNCILLOR JEFFERSON HORSLEY - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, REGENERATION, TOURISM & PROPERTY

I am concentrating on meeting the shakers and movers in the business community over the next few months to ensure that the council is in touch with the latest developments. Accordingly I have asked the Economic Development Team (EDT) to take me to the key sites and companies to see how we are addressing the main issues.

I am also reviewing the Corporate Strategies set out in the Economy section of the 2007 to 2010 plan. These amendments will be brought to the relevant Scrutiny Panel during October and early November.

The Council's EDT has focused on a number of key activities since the Council Meeting in July:

a) Inward Investment Agency

The proposal to establish a separate Inward Investment Company has moved forward over recent months – with a 'Shadow' Board of Directors having been selected, who currently represent each of the funding Councils.

Discussions are also underway with a prominent Somerset businessperson to Chair the Board for the company's initial year.

The Shadow Directors have chosen to name the new company "In2Somerset"

It is anticipated that advertisements will be placed for the small staff group for the company during October 2007, and that the company will go live early in the New Year.

b) Destination Management Organisation (DMO)

This Council has, and continues to support proposals to establish a Tourism Destination Management function for Somerset. Recent meetings have established that the current team of Council Tourism Officers will continue to manage this process for a further eighteen months in order to fully integrate existing marketing materials, and develop further the range of services offered to the trade.

It is likely that synergies with the work of the Inward Investment Agency will be identified, and the DMO has already agreed to report on

developments to the County-wide Economic Leaders Group on a regular basis, thus addressing recent concerns over governance of the initiative.

c) Taunton Business Improvement District (BID)

Members will wish to welcome the successful outcome of Taunton Town Centre Company's submission to Government for a Taunton BID. This was based on a successful ballot of over 750 town centre businesses, who have voted to pay an additional Business rate that will be ring-fenced and used to improve the economy of the town centre.

The EDT together with Officers from the Finance Division are putting the final touches to the proposals for collection of the new levy, and the EDU is working closely with the Town Centre Company to support a range of projects.

d) Wellington Food Festival

On 8/9 September the first Wellington Food Festival took place. Over 61 producers stalls were set out on the High Street and an estimated crowd of 15,000 attended.

The post-event canvas of traders suggests that more than 90% taking part rated the event as Excellent or Very Good, and it is clear that more than £500,000 worth of trade was achieved during the Saturday Festival.

We are working with Wellington Economic Partnership to support their aspirations to establish a Community Interest Company to manage both Food Town and other Economic Initiatives in and around Wellington, and I anticipate that a detailed report outlining these proposals will be brought to the Executive before Christmas.

e) Waterlinks

Work by the Waterlinks Partnership to carry out filming for the television vote is currently underway. The producers have chosen to centre much of the 'six-minute clip' on proposals for Taunton (The Wondertree Project and other projects connected with the River Tone through the Town).

We are all working hard to ensure that we give the best possible presentation, and now look forward to the vote, which we understand is now due to be screened and held in January 2008.

f) Taunton and Wellington Tourist Information Centre

The TIC continues to win new business for its booking services, and has again won plaudits from the travel trade for its consistent high levels of business. I am sure that Members will wish to join with me in congratulating the TIC staff on their professionalism and continued success.

g) Taunton East Development Trust

I recently visited TEDT to discuss their work and activity, and have been impressed with their levels of community involvement. The EDU is working closely with the new Chief Executive David Dundas to support their further development, including work to ensure that the Trust is fully able to carry out its community training function as part of the new policy to use Section 106 agreements to bind construction companies employed in Project Taunton schemes to employ and train local people on individual site developments.

h) Sub National Economic Development and Regeneration Green Paper

I attended an Economic Leaders Conference on 19 September and heard the GOSW (Government Office of the South West) and SWRDA (South West Regional Development Agency) outline the proposals which could well affect our work in the future. For the first time it will give a statutory duty to local authorities to pursue economic development. It is proposed that this should be held by the county in two tier areas. We will have to watch carefully this legislation as it unfolds.

More importantly, the ideas of unifying the Regional Spatial Plan with the RDA is to be welcomed but we will have to guard carefully the scrutiny of the newly empowered RDA to ensure that districts in particular are not marginalized in the new environment. There is the danger of a democratic deficit notwithstanding the weaknesses of the Regional Assembly with its forthcoming abolition. To make the plan succeed a Regional Plan should also embrace the Environment and Highways Agencies proposals for the region..

The future of driving forward Economic Development depends on enabling the business community to thrive. There are 2 areas to concentrate on. Firstly avoiding duplication with the work of the County and secondly, retaining our funding sources from LABGI, essential for Taunton's long term's prosperity.

i) Project Taunton

Last but not least. 12 members attended the presentation made by the short listed candidates to be our partners on the future of Firepool on 27 September at the Genesis building at Somerset College. It was very exciting and I am pleased with the progress that it is being made towards the selection of a company that will fulfill our expectations on an employment-led, sustainable and high quality public realm and architecturally acceptable site for some 3000 jobs.

It is also important that we have identified 30 October as the date at which Savills will reveal to us the developments for the retail area stretching from the Old Pig Market to the East to the Crescent to the West. With the

competition from Broadmead, Bristol, Cribbs Causeway and the newly opened Princesshays site in Exeter we have to respond with making this area attractive.

JEFFERSON HORSLEY

Council Meeting 9 October, 2007.

Report of Councillor Richard Lees – Leisure, Arts and Culture.

Herewith I present my second report to Full Council. Due to my holiday in late September/early October, this report had to be submitted for the Democratic Services Team to prepare for Full Council papers earlier than I would have intended.

The Vivary Park summer season of free bandstand concerts ran successfully from June – September with 11 bandstand concerts.

The family fun day held in French Weir Park, run for the first time this year by the newly formed Friends Group in conjunction with TDBC, was a great success. This event attracted large numbers of families who enjoyed activities including archery, fencing, Punch & Judy show, river boat trips, candle rolling, circus skills and woodcarving.

The Great Moscow State Circus came to Vivary Park in September. This proved to be another popular attraction. Tickets were sold by our Tourist Information Centre.

We saw the 5th River Festival in French Weir during September, with many attractions to encourage people to enjoy themselves. Though we had some rain on the day, it didn't dampen down spirits and people from not just Taunton Deane came along. In fact, a group of people from Yeovil, including South Somerset Councillors, stopped Sue and I and said what a wonderful event it was. The Wurzels were at their expected best providing fantastic entertainment for the people around.

Capital grant aid has been awarded to Corfe Village Hall for new heating and cavity wall insulation. Applications have also been received from Bishops Lydeard, Pitminster, Lydeard St Lawrence, Chipstable and Milverton halls for assistance. Due to the size of these applications they are to be considered at the next meeting of the Joint County and District Panel for Voluntary Village Halls and Community Centres in October.

SOUTH WEST IN BLOOM TRIUMPHS:

On the 19 September, I went to St. Ives and had the extreme pleasure of attending the presentation day of the South West in Bloom Competition. To say we were successful is an understatement. Here are the full results just in case you didn't know:-

Taunton in their category were given Gold and won the TESCO Cup
Wellington in their category were given Gold and won the Portman Cup.
Taunton were awarded the Sergeants Trophy for Community Involvement.

The Neighbourhood Awards sponsored by R.H.S. and the Government went to:

Taunton Railway Station; Victoria Park Action Group; Kingston Road Allotments; Swains Lane, Wellington; and Friends Meeting House, Wellington.

Isabel Ward won the trophy for Best Individual Involvement.

Can I register here my delight for Isabel who was referred by the person presenting the trophies as "A Dragon" but, as he went on to say, without her Wellington would never have achieved the successes over the years that it has!!

These results are a fitting tribute to the Taunton Deane workforce that put so much effort into making all of the Borough look so attractive. Not only that, but to the Committees and the mass of volunteers that work constantly to make our area looking as welcoming and attractive as they do. It was a privilege to have been there to witness the results!

ARTS

The summer has seen the fruition of a number of arts projects and events which have been supported by TDBC.

Despite terrible weather in July, two dance workshops and outside performances entitled 'Landance' drew local participants and over 88 visitors to the Blackdown Hills. From this a short film has been produced, which is now showing in the New Eyes exhibition at the Brewhouse Theatre. The New Eyes exhibition is the culmination of a 2 year project of artists exploring new mediums and techniques, and collaboration with each other. The result is an eclectic mix of work generated in the Blackdown Hills and an ongoing commitment to working collectively and working in the community.

At the time of writing, The Ten Parishes Festival is well underway with open studios, music, heritage, food and other community events being run by many different village organisations and individuals. The amount of people that have thanked me for the Council's support regarding this has certainly shown that people do appreciate the efforts that the Council put in to helping the Parishes outside of the main towns.

WESTIVAL

I am informed that attendances were up 30% on last year, and we are currently waiting for a final report.

A call is now out for consultants to undertake a Feasibility Study for a Theatre for Taunton. The research will explore the optimum size, location and technical specifications for the Brewhouse redevelopment theatre and consider the financial constraints and potential funding sources as well as the location. The fee of £25,000 will be paid for by Project Taunton, and the final report with recommendations is due by 2 January 2008.

The Somerset Art Week is planning to be an annual event rather than bi-annual, in order to increase the opportunities for artists to showcase their work and to provide a significant visitor attraction on a more frequent basis. In 2006, 365 venues featured over 800 participants, and this attracted total projected visitor numbers of 137,000 spending an estimated £743,000. Their first annual event next year will feature artists in their studios; there will be a focus on galleries and shared exhibition spaces.

LEISURE DEVELOPMENTS

A Big lottery bid was submitted on time in September. It will fund two projects over three years. The biggest project is a team of play rangers to work initially in Halcon, Blackbrook and Holway and Pyrland and Rowbarton to make play safe and exciting for children with least local play provision and greatest needs. In future years the rangers may extend into Fairwater, Norton Fitzwarren Bradford on Tone and Lyngford wards. The second project will play days which will be showing children how to maximise play value in found materials and wilder spaces around the Borough. The outcome of the application is due in January

The Play Strategy and Policy were adopted by the Executive in August. This will broaden the definition of play and requires every service to consider how their decisions can make a difference. The outline Action Plan is being developed into a detailed plan of work for the coming five years with a view to children having better, more challenging opportunities to play out in their local communities.

GET GROWING DAY IN VICTORIA PARK

We have organised a day to promote growing your own fruit and vegetables in Victoria park on 7th October from 12noon until 5pm. We are developing an allotments strategy for the Borough and this event will not only provide information, inspiration and fun for new growers, but also help to collect evidence about peoples' views on allotments and the level of demand. There will be entertainment, demonstrations, competitions and plenty to see for everyone.

HIGHER HOLWAY OPEN SPACE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

The outline use-zones agreed some time ago are now being fleshed out with ideas for play, activity and community use, based on consultation with children and young people and residents. We will be fully involving children, young people and the community in the coming stages of agreeing the details for the site, as we have stated we will in the Play Strategy. We hope to have tendered the development early in the new year with the construction work completed for the May half term holiday.

Sports Services:

VIVARY TENNIS COURTS

Contractors began work on 10th September to renovate 2 of the 4 tennis courts in Vivary Park. The surrounding fencing is being replaced and the surfaces are being repaired as both have become very 'worn'. It is expected that the work will take 5 weeks to complete. The work is being funded from the Vivary Park Trading Account and through developer contributions.

THE TOUR OF BRITAIN

The Tour finished in Taunton on 11th September after a gruelling 105 miles through the Somerset and Devon countryside. Thousands were in the town centre to witness an exciting finish, which was somewhat unfortunately overshadowed by an accident close to the finish line. It was a spectacular event that received good TV and media coverage for the town. I attended this event myself and many people said to me how they were enjoying the event which was blessed with good weather.

The event will be in Somerset for the next 4 years although the exact route for 2008 is yet to be decided. TDBC supported the event through the use of its car parks and through the input of Officer time and expertise.

FOOTBALL FOUNDATION APPLICATIONS

As mentioned in my previous report, applications for over £500,000 of funding have now been submitted to the Football Foundation for support towards the replacement of the Hamilton and Galmington Playing Pitch pavilions. It is expected that a decision will be reached within 2 months and that work may be able to start later this year. The Council is using developer contribution funding as partnership funding for the project.

SKATE PARK

A planning application has been submitted for a new skatepark facility on the Hamilton Gault site to replace the ageing facility that exists there currently. A group of interested skaters have indicated their willingness to attempt to raise funds for the project, which is expected to cost in the region of over £300,000+ and could be built in phases.

The skaters have been involved in the design of the facility and if completed would be of County wide significance. I feel I must add here that raising such funds is not going to be easy and will take some considerable effort as the Council do not have that amount of money readily available.

TAUNTON VALE SPORTS CLUB

The Club are on the verge of submitting a planning application for new facilities for netball, tennis and junior football on their existing site. The

overall cost will be in the region of £900,000 with all money coming from external sources. When completed the facility will become a 'central venue' for netball and the football facilities will be used by the Staplegrove Youth Football Club, one of the most successful clubs in the area.

TONE LEISURE:

Facility News

Blackbrook Pavilion and Taunton Tennis Centre

Top Wheelchair tennis player Lucy Shuker, who is based at Taunton Tennis Centre, has had a very successful Summer, reaching her highest ever world ranking of 8, and is now preparing for her next challenge at the Open Wheelchair Tennis Championships in America.

Members and staff took part in the British Heart Foundation Lands End to John O'Groats cycles challenge over the Summer, completing the full 800 miles, and raising around £300 for the charity in the process.

Blackbrook Pavilion played host to the second Schools Sports Festival on Wednesday, 27th June. Around 1,200 children from 14 schools attended during the day. Activities included tennis, climbing, mountain biking and a mass participation dance mat competition. The event was run in partnership with the Tone Schools Partnership and is being followed by a two day event on 26th and 27th September, attracting around 3,000 children into trying new activities.

Wellsprings Leisure Centre

Highlights of the Wellsprings Autumn events programme include Freddie Starr, who made his first appearance at Wellsprings on 8th September, and Alan Carr, co-host of Channel 4's Friday Night Project, who appears on 17th October.

Following the inaugural Wedding Fair last year, Wellsprings has attracted a larger number of exhibitors to this year's event, which is being run on 23rd September, in association with the Somerset County Gazette.

Vivary Golf Course

Vivary staff have been out in the community promoting the benefits of golf as a skill for life. Manager, Neil Hobbs, and Coach, Richard Coffin, took golf 'have a go' stands to the town centre and the inaugural secondary schools competition, run in partnership with the Tone Schools Partnership. Around 250 children participated in the two events, some of whom have since taken up golf at Vivary.

Programme Initiatives

As usual Tone Leisure has been looking at new ways to get more people into activity over the last few months. Programming initiatives include:

Socca-tots, a football coaching programme, tailored to give toddlers the skills and co-ordination needed to play football. The programme was launched at Wellsprings in June, with an average of 12 children now taking part each week.

Following the successful 8 week pilot of an outreach programme for young people in Wellington, funding has now been secured for a follow-up programme. The sessions have attracted around 20 young people per week. Four locations have been selected (including some of the most deprived areas) and twice per week an informal 'drop in' sports (e.g., football, rounders and basketball) and fun games/fitness session has been delivered to children aged 5-16 years by Danny Earles (Wellington Sports Centre Fitness Instructor). To date, some 400 children have taken part.

The Zone at Blackbrook has gone from strength to strength and is now being used for a number of new activities including birthday parties, fitness sessions for Tennis Academy players and exercise sessions for people with Multiple Sclerosis.

Pre and post-natal sessions at Station Road Pool have been extremely successful and the programme has been expanded to cope with demand.

Wellsprings has successfully launched a new programme of cycling courses, aimed at 3-6 year olds. The courses, named 'No More Stabilisers' aim to give young children the skills they need to successfully progress from fun balance bikes to cycling safely, with no stabilisers.

Sports and Health Development

MEND (Mind, Exercise, Nutrition, Do It!) - On Wednesday, 10th October a Seminar for Professionals will be held at Wellsprings Leisure Centre. The seminar will be provided by MEND and delivered by experts in the field of obesity. The seminar aims to raise professionals' awareness of child obesity and to inform them of the forthcoming MEND programmes that will be delivered by Tone Leisure in Wellington and Taunton from January 2008. The MEND programme aims to encourage overweight children aged 7-13 and their families to change unhealthy attitudes to food and eating, motivate them to exercise on a regular basis, empower them to make informed food choices and then show them that it is fun, easy and maintainable!

Health Walking - Walk Well in Taunton - The Health Walking programme has seen the average number of participants per walk increase over the summer to 24 participants per walk. Good weather on Friday, 7th September saw the number of people walking peak for the first time at 40 people! There are currently 9 Volunteer Walk Leaders actively supporting the scheme, which

takes place throughout the year on Wednesdays and Fridays.

Taunton Foot Anstey Junior Aquathlon - The Taunton Foot Anstey Junior Aquathlon takes place on Sunday, 16th September. The Junior Aquathlon, now in its 5th year, is sponsored for the first time by Taunton Solicitors Foot Anstey and will again be organised by Tone Leisure, local triathlon club Somerset RC Tri, and Queen's College who will provide the excellent venue. The competition has five different age categories - 8 years, 9 and 10 years, 11 and 12 years, 13 and 14 years and the new 15 and 16 years youth category, who each swim and run distances according to their category. This new category will provide a link for talented youngsters to go on from this competition to compete in the challenging Taunton Deane Foot Anstey Triathlon, one of the most popular sporting events in the South West calendar that involves swimming, cycling and running.

Energize Youth Activity Day - Tone Leisure supported the successful Energize Youth Activity Day which took place in Goodland Gardens on Thursday, 16th August from 12.30 pm to 8.30 pm. The day, organised by Somerset County Youth Service, Town Centre Company, Taunton Deane Borough Council Community Safety Team and Tone Leisure, provided activity for young people including dance mats provided by the Zone at Blackbrook Pavilion, DJ, street dance and art workshops, football, basketball and cheer leading skills sessions, a 25 foot climbing tower and demonstrations from the animal stunt bike team.

Holiday VIBE - Holiday VIBE activities took place over the summer holidays supported by Somerset County Youth Service for 13-19 years. Two hour multi-sports games sessions took place at Wellsprings Leisure Centre, Blackbrook Pavilion, Hamilton Park and Cheddon Road Multi-Use Games Area and the total attendance figure over the 12 sessions was 92.

Cllr. Richard Lees.

COUNCIL MEETING – 9th October 2007.

REPORT OF COUNCILLOR MEL MULLINS–ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

1.0 ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH.

1.1 Licensing

Licensing Trade Fair and Exhibition

Preparations are well underway by the Environmental Health Departments of Taunton Deane and South Somerset District Council who are working together to run an event for the Licensed Trade on 3rd October. Over 400 delegates are due to attend the event at Haynes Motor Museum. The day is split into three sessions, comprising a mixture of presentations and displays from regulators, followed by commercial exhibitors, a sample of local bands all followed by free entry to the museum. The aim of the day is to give the licensed trade the opportunity to talk to regulators for advice and to establish how the regulators can help and support the licensed trade and gain a better understanding of how all the regulators work. Delegates will include pub landlords, people involved with village halls and community premises, and event organisers, along with Councillors and other key people.

The commercial exhibitors include; local breweries, local licensing solicitors, the trade's newspaper (Morning Advertiser), plastic glass manufacturers, specialist licensing recruitment companies and drinks suppliers. The regulators stands include; Food Safety, Health and Safety, Environmental Protection, Community Safety, Police, Trading Standards, Fire Service, STARC(Somerset Tackling Alcohol Related Crime), DAAT (Drugs and Alcohol Action Team). It is hoped that the event may become an annual one and develop as time goes on.

1.2 Food Safety.

“Scores on the doors”

A “Scores on the Doors” Scheme is going to be introduced in Taunton Deane next year. It is intended to give businesses a rating from one to five stars using information routinely collected at programmed food hygiene inspections. This information will be uploaded on a monthly basis to a website and the businesses will be asked to prominently display a sticker showing their star rating. There is a growing public interest in hygiene issues, it is hoped that promoting the hygiene standard of a business will assist the public in making informed choices about where they eat and shop. ‘Scores on the doors’ will recognise the best businesses who comply with food hygiene legislation and will draw attention to the businesses who are poor.

The Somerset Authorities are working together to ensure a consistent approach is applied across the County. The information available to the public will be presented in an easily understood format both on the business’s premises and on a website. ‘Scores on the doors’ also enables TDBC to meet obligations under The Freedom of Information Act as information on food hygiene inspections is currently available only by written request.

Areas examined during the routine inspection which contribute to the star rating are

- Structural matters including cleanliness and disrepair
- Staff hygiene practices e.g. hand washing, preventing contamination
- Management of the business, such as good procedures

A letter has recently been sent to all relevant food premises in the Borough to let them know about the scheme that will go live in February 2008.

1.3 Environmental Protection Team

Gull Control

All dummy gull eggs have been collected in following the 2007 breeding season, this year was the first time we were using dummy eggs that are used to replace the real gull eggs, egg oiling has been used in previous years. The parents sit on the eggs throughout the summer until it is too late for them to re lay, thereby reducing the number of eggs hatching. This year 167 dummy eggs were placed in nests on roof tops around Taunton which potentially equates to 167 gull eggs not hatching, this is the most successful year to date in this programme.

2.0 STREET CLEANSING

New uniform

During August the highways and toilet cleansing team have been issued with a new uniform, not only will it raise the profile of the team but it will assist with health and safety by increasing visibility and providing extra protection to legs with the use of Teflon reinforced trousers. To help promote the service high visibility waistcoats and high visibility site coats carry the wording "Keeping Deane Clean" or the Litter Hotline 356346.

3.0 BRITAIN IN BLOOM – DEANE WINNERS!

At the South West presentation held at St Ives on the 20 September both Taunton and Wellington were placed first in their respective category, not only does this mean that the floral displays were outstanding but the cleanliness was to a high standard as this aspect accounts for a considerable number of points. May I thank all those involved in bringing these prestigious awards to our towns.

4.0 WASTE COLLECTION AND RECYCLING

Somerset Waste Board Project Update

The final details to the set up of the Somerset Waste Board and to let the waste and recycling collection contract were agreed by the Executive in July. ECT has won the contract and final negotiation and contract signature is due to take place at the end of September. The new collection contract will commence on October 14th with the first collections happening on October 15th. There will be no change to the rounds, days of collection in the first instance so members of the public should not notice any change on day one. In the spring rounds will change so that we can optimise the routes and get best value from working across district boundaries. Before this happens there will be a

significant amount of communication with the areas that it will concern. One change that might be noticed on day one are that some of the vehicles will be new, and those that are will have a different logo to represent the Somerset Waste Board. The waste collection lorries will have a stone coloured livery, whilst the recycling vehicles will remain dark green.

The staff from all the Somerset waste teams will join the Somerset Waste Board on October 1st. The new headquarters will be at the Crescent in Taunton but as this will not be available until sometime in November some staff will continue to be based at Flook House, whilst others will be based in County Hall. Each district will be allocated a key operations officer to whom they can discuss problems. All customer contact will remain with the customer services of each authority – who will pass any enquiry they cannot deal with direct, through to the SWB.

The Member panel which governs the Waste Board met for a preliminary unofficial meeting in September and its first official meeting will take place in October.

Trials of cardboard and plastic collection will commence in late Spring 2008 with a significant number of households across Somerset. The outcome of these trials will then inform the type of service that will be rolled out in 2009 – subject of course to agreement with each of the districts.

I would like to thank Bruce Carpenter and all of the waste team for the service they have provided Taunton Deane over the years and wish them well in the new organisation.

All councillors that have had any contact with Bruce over the years, be that at panel meetings or within directly, will not need me to say just how enthusiastic and knowledgeable Bruce is regarding the issues of both waste and, in more recent years recycling.

In Bruce, we lose a valued member of staff who is now the Operations Manager for this new venture.

Can I ask, Mr Mayor, that the best thanks of the Council be passed on to Bruce for everything he has done during his employment with Taunton Deane and that this be officially recorded in the minutes of this meeting.

And Finally

The New Logo of the Somerset Waste Partnership....

Over to you Greg.

Councillor Mel Mullins

Council Meeting 9 October 2007

Report of Councillor Hazel Prior-Sankey – Housing Services

The Housing Green Paper

With senior officers of the Housing Service I have been looking closely at the wide-ranging content of the Housing Green Paper, “Homes for the Future: more affordable, more sustainable”, and Members will be aware that a formal response will be considered at Housing Review Panel and Executive on 3rd October. Work will continue on understanding how national policy is changing and how TDBC may most effectively position itself to improve housing options in the local community. We have commissioned the Housing Quality Network to look at our particular circumstances as a stockholding authority, and produce a report which will be considered by the Performance and Strategy panel on 13th November. I strongly recommend fellow Councillors to attend the presentation – one of the questions being addressed will be, “Does this mean that Taunton Deane Borough Council can build new social housing again?”

Rough Sleepers

Following a Rough Sleepers Count in April 2007 and subsequent meetings with government officials, we have received the very good news that we shall receive a grant of £250,000 from central government to improve facilities for rough sleepers and bring them in from the cold. The purpose of the grant is to enable Taunton Association of the Homeless to extend Norie House, providing a period of shelter during which each individual can be assessed for suitability for a longer-term bed space at Lindley House. It is hoped that construction will begin on site early in the New Year. This gives us a comprehensive homeless strategy to move rough sleepers through hostel accommodation and ultimately into secure accommodation.

New Affordable Housing

Nominations to Sanctuary Housing Association for Telephone House in the Crescent have been made, and the first tenants are expected to move in during November. There will be furnished show flats available for inspection, and the Enabling Officer will be publicising the opening times to Members and anyone interested will be very welcome to visit. There will be 54 rental properties and 21 shared ownership. Congratulations are due to all involved in this development, which has been delivered right on time.

Transfer Removal Grants

The current issue of *Tenants' Talk*, the tenants' own newsletter, advertises the fact that the level of Transfer Removal Grant has increased to a maximum of £2,000. The grant is used to encourage tenants who under-occupy Council homes to move to smaller accommodation by helping with removal and disturbance costs. It is hoped that the increased grant available will lead to

more tenants making the choice to downsize, and thereby freeing up larger accommodation for families in need.

Restructure

The restructuring of the housing service from May 2007 had as its main purpose the achievement of £1.85 million savings in staff and services in order that resources could be transferred to the achievement of the Decent Homes standard by 2010. The way in which the service is working is now under review by the Chief Housing Officer and some “tweaks” of the structure may shortly be required. The principle which is guiding this review is that any changes must be cost neutral or sufficiently low-cost to be affordable. It is intended that a report will be brought to the Executive in December or January.

Deane Helpline

A new contract has been negotiated with Tunstal to upgrade the system at the Control Centre from PCN4 to the new generation PCN5, which will provide the capacity to monitor new tele-health products coming on to the market. The upgrade has been negotiated at virtually nil-cost to Deane Helpline on the basis that Tunstal need a monitoring service available in order to be able to effectively sell these new products.

National News

I began my report with a national Housing issue – the Housing Green Paper – and I intend to close with an interesting item of national news reported by *Inside Housing*:

1. “No End to Salary Surge”

“The salaries of Housing Association Chief Executives soared by an average of 10 per cent last year.

Housing Association boards appeared to have ignored a caution from the Housing Corporation last year that inflation-busting increases could detach them from the communities they serve.”

Examples quoted by Inside Housing include the *Places for People* Chief Executive who currently earns over a quarter of a million pounds a year, and Anchor Trust’s Chief Executive who picked up a bonus of £40,000 above and beyond his regular salary. The Chair of the Housing Corporation is quoted as saying, “There is nothing we can do about it. All we can do is cajole them.”

Councillor Hazel Prior-Sankey

Council Meeting 9 October 2007-10-01

Report of Councillor Francesca Smith - Resources

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

Consultation has been taking place in connection with existing Polling Stations and Polling Districts. The consultation period has now closed and the results will be shared with members once it has been analysed.

Since the May elections, the Parish Liaison Officer has undertaken a hectic schedule of visits to Parish Councils. In the last couple of months he has attended 22 Parish Council meetings and during these visits the opportunity has also been taken to train Parish Councillors in the provision of the new Code of Conduct.

As mentioned in my last report the Council is hoping to achieve Member Charter status and the Steering Group are making good progress towards this achievement. It is essential that this work is driven by members; a newsletter detailing all that has been done so far, as well as inviting comments and contributions, will be circulated to all councillors shortly.

Since the last Council meeting the newly formed Rifles Regiment has exercised its Freedom of the Borough and paraded through the town. The Mayor and Lord Lieutenant took the salute at a very colourful and impressive occasion.

PERSONNEL

JOB EVALUATION

Informal appeals are currently being held. We have recently agreed with Unison and Staff Side that we will concentrate on completing informal appeals first and then deal with formal appeals during November. We will announce the results to staff when we have completed the formal appeal meetings, this should be by the end of November.

Clarification of appeals process

The informal appeals process involves a meeting between the job holder and their manager with a JE advisor present. This meeting is to agree the job and Job description and explain the rationale for evaluations and resolve any misunderstandings.

The Formal appeals process involves a panel of trained staff and a JE advisor who will decide the outcome of individual appeals which have been through the informal stage and now wish to take it to a formal panel who can determine whether the original evaluation is correct.

ABSENCE

Human Resources are working closely with the Corporate Management Team looking at different measures in order to reduce absence. From the 1st October new sickness reporting procedures are introduced to four service units who currently have high absence levels. The four units are: Customer Services, Kilkenny, DLO

Cleansing, Horticulture & Highways and DLO Housing Property Services. The new procedure involves reporting absence to a Director rather than the line manager.

There is a slight increase of 0.58 average number of days sick based on the first 4 months of this financial year.

April 06- July 06: 9.65 average number of days sick per employee

April 07 – July 07: 10.23 average number of days sick per employee

The JE process has had a minimal effect on staff absence, which is being managed through the absence management procedures

CORPORATE SUPPORT SERVICES

Work on the ISiS project has been ongoing and as Councillors are now aware the Contract was signed on 29 September. Meetings with the preferred bidder on service delivery and work streams (Property and Customer Access) are also continuing.

Customer Services:

From 1st July – 21st September:

38,908 calls were managed through the contact centre with 59% being dealt with entirely within Customer Services. A total of 7,069 people have been helped at Main Reception and 1,768 at Planning Reception. 7,435 people visited Wellington Community Office.

I visited the Customer Services department to specifically see the area where the telephone calls are dealt with and it was amazing the high volume and variety of calls that are dealt with by Customer services. I would urge any Councillors to take the opportunity to visit this area at Deane House.

A new CCTV system, linking all external and internal CCTV cameras for Deane House and providing a high quality digital recording, plus viewing from key areas within the office, has now been installed. Additional cameras have also been installed overlooking the loading bay and the front of the building. Customer Services continue to have a turnover of temporary agency staff assisting them, but recent turnover has been low.

Design and Print:

Work continues with assisting services on their professional design and print requirements with the Annual report and “Tomorrow’s Taunton Deane” having been published recently. Design have also been involved in the new signage boards for Deane House which will be installed at the beginning of October.

Corporate Administration/Facilities/WP:

Corporate Administration continue to work with services on providing cost effective solutions for large mail requirements and have been working with policy to provide analysis for the “Your Council Your Views” consultation and the recent telephone survey undertaken.

Facilities continue to work with agency staff covering the morning opening and evening closing of Deane House.

ICT SERVICE

Academy Housing System

The first 'go live' was completed on schedule, and the system is starting to bed in now. The second phase has been delayed, testing of the system is underway to verify whether the target date can be met, and this is currently scheduled for November 2007.

Planning Development Management System.

Plantech have been appointed as the preferred supplier, and contract negotiations are being undertaken. A timetable for the implementation of the system will be agreed with Plantech as part of the negotiations.

Building Control

The online search of the Building Control Register is now available on the Taunton Deane web site and in Deane House reception and has been well received by users of the facility.

Student Placement

Shanvi Permalloo has now joined ICT in place of Lee Phipps in the Technical Support team.

Intranet / Extranet

ICT have replaced the old intranet system with one based on Sharepoint, and are in the process of launching an Extranet system based on the same technology. This will enable ICT to deliver authenticated access to information and services to external user communities (such as Council Members and members of the various partnerships such as Somerset Waste Board, Somerset Housing etc) in a far more flexible manner than currently provided.

REVENUES & BENEFITS SERVICE UNIT

Revenues & Benefits Service is on track and currently above the targets set for the average processing time taken for all new Housing and Council Tax benefit, the average processing time for all written notifications to the Local Authority of changes to a claimants circumstances that require a new decision on behalf of the authority, and the amount of Housing Benefits overpayments recovered during the period as a percentage of all Housing Benefit overpayments. However we have slipped with the number of fraud investigations carried out by the local authority, also the amount of prosecutions but work is being done to amend this. Additional information on Revenues Collection and arrears was provided in the report circulated by the Revenues and Benefits Manager to all members on 6 August 2007.

The Weekly Bulletin dated 27 September 2007 includes information on work in progressing Local Housing Allowance

I visited the Revenues and Benefits department along with Councillor Horsley and was very impressed with the work that is done there. It is interesting that a number of staff work from home and that this is beneficial for the staff working in the department as well as a benefit to the successful running of the department.

FINANCIAL SERVICES

Financial services have been focussing on several key projects. The unit has continued to support the financial aspects of the ISIS project and Project Taunton. In addition Financial Services have been meeting with auditors to assist them with their annual audit of the Council's 2006-07 Statement of Accounts. The unit has been supporting the job evaluation process and looking at the ongoing financial impact of

the Quarter 1 budget monitoring report which was recently reported to the Review Board.

Legal

Legal Services have had significant involvement in the conclusion of the Waste Partnership agreement and also some involvement with the conclusion of the agreements relating to ISIS.

Members of the Legal Services team have been involved in an enforcement appeal relating to Foxmoor Nurseries and in connection with the O2 mast at Dowsland, these are two matters likely to be heard in the High Court. A planning appeal is to be prepared for, concerning the itinerants site at Oxen Lane North Curry.

Other key areas of activity include involvement with the various elements of Project Taunton, including negotiating numerous planning agreements and the sale of various parcels of land.

In addition the Land Charges unit is undergoing a review of its operation.

Scrutiny and Performance Management

Scrutiny

I would like to highlight the amount of work the Scrutiny and Performance Manager and Scrutiny Officer have put in to developing a new working structure for Scrutiny, also providing written guidance and engaging councillors and officers to ensure everyone understands the new approach.

The Scrutiny pilot launched on the 4th October is for a six month period after which it will be reviewed.

Performance Management

The annual statutory performance indicator return for 2006/07 has now submitted and is now subject to Audit. Comparison data with other District Councils will be available in the New Year. Quarter One performance was taken to the Review Board and the half yearly report will be due soon.

Comprehensive Performance Assessment

The Audit Commission visited in August to assess the Council on our 'Use of Resources' and 'Value for Money'. I was one of the Councillors who met with the Auditors from the Commission along with several officers, we will be receiving feedback from their findings in December.

In December the Auditors will be visiting again for an inspection of our 'Direction of Travel' they will meet members of the public, partners, councillors, managers and staff to assess whether the Council has a clear and sustainable direction for the future and whether we have demonstrated improvement in delivering outcomes over the past 12 months.

Procurement

The Scrutiny and Performance Manager has been working closely with SCC, the Avon and Somerset Police and IBM to develop the Procurement solution for ISiS. This work has included: 'Due Dilligence' to test the assumptions from all parties; agreeing how savings will be measured and captured; and finalising wording for the Procurement element of the contract. Procurement is a key enabler for ISiS as it will provide the savings to fund the other Transformation projects. From here on in, all Council services will need to adopt new Procurement practises, liaising with ISiS before letting new contracts.

Corporate Planning

An event with councillors and partners was held at the Deane House to ascertain whether our existing Corporate Strategy had the right focus and to ask which areas required more or less focus in the future. This information along with the area profile and public consultation results is being presented to councillors to ask them to determine the future strategic priorities of the Council and to develop the next Corporate Strategy. This work is ongoing and will lead to developing the next 2008-11 Corporate Strategy and the 2008/09 budget.

The Annual Report

The Annual Report for 2007/08 has been published and distributed

Councillor Fran Smith

Council Meeting 9 October 2007

Report of Councillor Alan Wedderkopp – Community Leadership

Taunton Deane Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)

The LSP has recently reviewed its membership and ways of working. The new partnership has a greater breadth of organisations, and there is representation from each of the various themes of the Local Area Agreement.

LSP meetings have become more action focused. At each meeting we now hold a workshop looking in detail at what the LSP can do to help tackle one of the priorities in the Sustainable Community Strategy. The first of these workshops was held at the last meeting where the focus was on affordable housing. We are currently working on taking forward the points that were raised at that meeting.

Community Partnerships

The LSP has established three sub-groups, called Community Partnerships, which will hold regular meetings within local communities to gather more information on the priorities for those communities. Like the LSP, the Community Partnerships are multi-agency meetings, with TDBC being one of the partners. The first meetings of the Community Partnerships will take place on:

- Central Community Partnership – 18 October 2007 at 6.30pm at Ladymead School. This covers the unparished area of Taunton, Bishops Lydeard, Staplegrove, Norton Fitzwarren, Bishops Hull, Trull, Comeytrove and West Monkton wards.
- West Community Partnership - 30 October 2007 at 6.30pm at Milverton Primary School. This covers Milverton, Wellington, Wiveliscombe and Monument wards.
- East Community Partnership – 1 November at 6.30pm at Creech St Michael School. This covers Ruishton and Creech, North Curry and Stoke St Gregory, Neroche and Blackdown wards.

Crime and Disorder Partnership (CDRP)

The CDRP met on 17 September. The main points were:

- Support for the issues raised by Cllr Meikle in the Task and Finish report into the needs of youth within Taunton Deane.
- Agreement for Taunton Deane anti-social behaviour reports to be entered onto Sedgemoor database along with West Somerset's thus enabling analysis of the whole West policing district.
- Neighbourhood Policing - PCSO recruitment is very nearly at full strength and community policing is working well
- Community Restorative Justice – still a shortfall in the funding. Wellington Town Council are keen to host the scheme.

- CDRP performance - slight increase in dwelling burglaries on last year; crime detection rate of 29.2% compared to 23% last year, making the district the highest performing force in nearly every category.

Community:

Mixed reactions to our Equality Forums which were intended to enable service managers provide information to the different groups in our community .

The Disability forum is gathering momentum-28 members of the public expected at the 2nd meeting on 25th September-feedback from the first meeting has been very positive.

The Race forum was very poorly attended –felt at this stage it’s better to continue to work with the racial groups separately to address issues about inequality.

Progress has been made with developing services for migrant workers-e.g Polish Association in Taunton have held useful meetings with several services. They have offered to help produce a Welcome Pack containing advice and information for newcomers to Somerset and they have successfully interpreted for Polish people during the Affordable Housing Open Day-we plan to use them again..

Services: Briefing sessions are being planned with managers to review how our services have impacted upon the minority groups in the past year so that we can update our Corporate Equality Scheme action plan and review our progress. It is felt that with initiatives such as ISIS and JE that progress has been slower in recent months.

There is an Equalities training plan in place so that general awareness training will be provided to both members and staff . More specialized training regarding Disability Awareness will be made available to front line staff and managers will be given separate training.

Councillor Alan Wedderkopp