

## **PART II REPORTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE**

### **COUNCIL MEETING 15 APRIL 2008**

#### **Report of Councillor Ross Henley – Leader of the Council**

##### **Tony Floyd**

I could not start this report without saying a few words about Tony Floyd. As you will all remember, Tony passed away on the day of our last Full Council so I did not have an opportunity to pay a tribute to him in my report. Tony was a friend and colleague to us all and well respected throughout the Council and will be missed by so many people. The huge turnout at his funeral by so many from lots of different aspects of life within Taunton Deane just showed how well he was liked.

##### **Post Offices**

At the last Full Council Meeting we debated the future of post offices. We now know that several in our borough are threatened with closure or a greatly reduced service for some communities. I know from the strength of feeling in the two villages I represent with a threat of closure how valued a post office is to the local community. Myself and Penny James are preparing a formal response from this Council to the consultation exercise. This will be added to the many hundreds of formal responses to the proposed closures. I chaired a public meeting in Churchinford attended by around 200 people to discuss the closure of the service and it really brought home how people feel about such a vital service in the local community.

##### **Pioneer Somerset**

Very soon we will discuss in Overview and Scrutiny Pioneer Somerset. This initiative has come together from many meetings between the Leaders of the 5 District Councils in Somerset and the Leader of the County Council. They were joined at these meetings by the Chief Executives of all the 6 councils. This is a positive step to move on from the unitary debate. The challenge from Government has always been if we did not become a unitary council then we must also make similar savings now we are not going down the unitary route. That was what Team Somerset was all about. That is what we all signed up to and this is a progression of this process. Pioneer Somerset is potentially groundbreaking. We already are setting the pace via Southwest One and the Waste Partnership and this will give us the chance to work closer together and

work better together in Somerset and make efficiency savings. I commend this work.

### **Southwest One**

I deeply regret that one Somerset MP has chosen to make comments about Southwest One which I find totally unfair. The fact that they were said in Parliament under parliamentary privilege says a lot. So far this MP has not chosen to repeat the comments outside of parliament and I think that says a lot. I hope that all Councillors would like to disassociate themselves from these comments about Southwest One which we all supported and voted for. I applaud closer partnership working with the county council.

### **Ben Bradshaw**

As promised, I have now met the South West Regional Minister and raised the issue of the unfair funding of the concessionary bus fares scheme. I gave him a chart outlining the financial facts to this council and await his response. I will follow this up shortly.

### **Staffing**

Since Full Council in February we have said goodbye to Jeremy Thornberry, Ian Taylor and Mandy Froom, Penny's PA and they will all be missed. We are though saying hello to Tonya Meers who has joined us from the Forest of Dean Council. Tonya attended Executive last week and I met her beforehand. I feel we have an excellent new senior member of staff and I would like to welcome her here tonight.

### **Annual Audit and Inspection**

Last month the Executive met the annual audit and inspection team. It is clear that they feel that Taunton Deane is moving in the right direction.

Councillor Ross Henley

# Council Meeting - 15 April 2008

## Report of Councillor Steve Brooks Communications

### 1. Public Relations

- 1.1 It has been a busy couple of months, in February 2008 16 press releases were sent out on a variety of issues from Scores on the Doors to Council Tax. In March 2008, 23 releases were issued.
- 1.2 At the end of March 2008, time was devoted to the **Oxen Lane** inquiry which again attracted widespread media interest at regional and local level.
- 1.3 Elsewhere, we have worked in partnership with other district councils on promoting the Housing Needs Survey which involves South Somerset, Sedgemoor, West Somerset and Taunton Deane; and with West Somerset on a business event for the food hygiene star ratings.
- 1.4 We have also been working with the County Council and the Police on promoting the Restorative Justice scheme which launched officially on 10 April 2008.
- 1.5 We provide ongoing support for Project Taunton, including promoting the Open Day on 3 April 2008 and at the event itself.
- 1.6 **Deane Dispatch** was completed in-house and distribution, via Royal Mail, during March 2008. This year (2008-09) Deane Dispatch will be published in a new format due to a reduction in the budget. We have decided to pay for a monthly full-page in the Gazette – similar to the Taunton Town Centre Manager's page. This will give us the chance to feature more up-to-date news and to "set the agenda" in the area's most widely read local paper. The Gazette has a readership of about 75,000 people across Taunton Deane – probably more as single purchased copies are often passed around families and friends. The stories will also be uploaded on the website to ensure as wide a distribution as possible. Hard copies at Deane Dispatch will be distributed to all Members.

### 2. Consultation and Information

- 2.1 The Information and Consultation Officer has continued to develop the Customer Insight Project. This project aims to improve consistency in the way that consultation information is collected which will improve the usefulness of the feedback we get from surveys.

- 2.2 The project aims to develop processes to help us:
- Know in greater detail who our customers are;
  - Have a better understanding of their experience with our services;
  - Know what they care about;
  - Build this knowledge into decision making.
- 2.3 The project involves:
- Developing consistency in the way customer satisfaction research data is collected and stored;
  - Sharing data between service areas and between authorities (Districts and County);
  - Conducting 'segmentation analysis' to understand difference between groups.
- 2.4 The project outline was presented to the Strategy and Performance Panel on 4 March 2008. The project has now been taken on board by the Somerset Intelligence Network (a network of Consultation Offices across the Somerset districts and County Council) and we are now working closely with our Somerset colleagues with the aim of implementing the Protocol across Somerset.
- 2.5 The Information and Consultation Officer is co-ordinating the collection of service data at Taunton Deane Borough Council and Somerset County Council for the Wellington Customer Insight Project, one of the Southwest One Transformation Projects. This project aims to develop a detailed understanding of the characteristics and needs of the residents of Wellington, which will enable us to improve our services.
- 2.6 Data is being collected from a range of Taunton Deane Borough Council and Somerset County Council service areas to get a better understanding of the people who live in Wellington. This will help us to identify:
- Gaps in service delivery;
  - Differences in service take-up;
  - What communication and marketing routes to use to reach different groups
- 2.7 A new 'Place Survey' will this year replace the Best Value Users General Survey. This new survey will no longer focus on satisfaction with specific authorities. It will instead ask residents about their levels of satisfaction with issues in their local area, regardless who provides the service. We expect to have to carry out this survey this autumn. The survey will be jointly delivered by the five Somerset Districts and Somerset County Council.

### **3. Other Communications**

- 3.1 At the end of April 2008 we will be introducing a new Service Update which will be circulated to all staff and Members electronically. This Service Update will contain brief information from a selection of Council and Southwest One

services, all services will be covered over a six-month period. It will also include updates from Established Partnerships, for example Southwest One, Somerset Waste Partnership and Tone Leisure. The Service Update will complement the information in both Core Brief and the Weekly Bulletin.

- 3.2 We are continuing to promote the Corporate Style Guide across the Council. We are currently working with Sue Catterick who provides the ICT training and we hope to integrate the style guide standards into relevant ICT training. We have also developed a Corporate Image Library which we hope will eventually contain all Council photographs.
- 3.3 The communications team are currently working with both the DLO and Parks Service and Deane Helpline to develop marketing plans to promote the services both locally and regionally. A quick win will be the introduction of an online diary on our website to promote the progress in the building of the new Nursery, this will have regular updates and photographs. Once this is on the website, we will circulate the link so you can follow the progress and send the link to any interested contacts you may have.
- 3.4 We continue to support the Southwest One Partnership communications which will become increasingly important as the work around transformation begins.

Councillor Steve Brooks

**Report to Full Council April 2008**  
**Simon Coles: Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning and Transport**

**Development Management**

We were pleased with the response received to the vacancies for Principal and Planning Officer posts. I am delighted to report that the successful candidates, Matthew Bale and Karen Purchase are due to join us in early May. The Area Planning Manager post is currently being advertised with interviews scheduled for May 13th. I am sure you will all join with me in welcoming them to their new posts.

Interviews for the three vacancies within Planning Admin will take place by the end of April. This will enable us to restructure the Admin team to give a greater focus in terms of registration of planning applications.

The national standard planning application form and validation requirements came into effect in early April.

At the end of March the Government announced that they were raising the bar in terms of planning performance and that from 2011 the requirement will be that 80% of all applications will need to be determined within their 8 or 13 week target. This will reduce our ability to negotiate with developers during the application process, particularly in the case of major proposals and will therefore further shift emphasis towards pre-application discussions.

**Monkton Heathfield**

On 26th March the Planning Committee resolved to grant permission for two applications which together will deliver the major mixed use allocation in accordance with the Local Plan. A section 106 obligation will ensure that the Eastern Relief Road is delivered in a timely fashion to enable both employment areas and housing land to come forward without delay. However, the Monkton Heathfield Consortium are continuing to pursue their alternative proposal. This shows the Eastern Relief Road realigned to the south, which will result in significant harm being caused to the Green Wedge that divides Bathpool and Monkton Heathfield. Protection of the Green Wedge was identified in the Local Plan as the key consideration for this allocation. The Public Inquiry into that proposal commenced on the 1st April with three days of evidence and cross examination of expert witnesses. The Inquiry will continue and will hopefully conclude on Tuesday 8th April (after the writing of this report). The Inspector will then prepare his report, although in this case the final decision will rest with the Secretary of State (probably sometime later this summer).

### **Oxen Lane**

You will no doubt be aware that the resumed Public Enquiry duly sat at the end of March. The Inspector has agreed to await the outcome of an important Regional Assembly Panel Report on the provision of Gypsy sites within the Deane, which is due within the next few weeks. The Inspector has agreed to await this report and to take it into account, provided, it is published before May 23<sup>rd</sup>. As both sides would be able to make written comments on the report the Inspectors Decision Letter may not be out until Mid June.

The current injunction proceedings are awaiting the outcome of the appeals, until when the Status Quo will remain.

### **The Third Way**

The application which was submitted to the Planning Committee in March for our comments as a consultee in the process has now been forwarded to Somerset County Council. A very interesting and informative Public exhibition showing the layout and plans was recently held at the Brewhouse Theatre and was well attended by local people

### **TauntonTown Centre Action Plan**

The Examination in Public of the Taunton Town Centre Action Plan is due to commence on April 29<sup>th</sup> and is scheduled to last for four days. It is anticipated that this will be adopted later this autumn and almost certainly by the year end.

### **Local Development Plan**

The revised Local Development Scheme has now been submitted to Government of the South West for its consideration. This will affect our Planning Delivery Grant in the future and we are confident that this will also be approved before the year end.

Report of SIMON COLES  
Portfolio Holder Strategic Planning and Transportation  
April 2008

## **COUNCIL MEETING: 15 April 2008**

### **Report of Councillor Jefferson Horsley – Economic Development, Regeneration, Tourism & Property**

#### **PART 1**

##### **1. PROJECT TAUNTON**

Visually the impact of Project Taunton is already there. The building of the new stand on the County Cricket Ground adjacent to the Brewhouse and the work of Midas on the former site of the Gas Works at Tangier are tangible evidence of how things are moving.

With the County Museum winning the Heritage Lottery bid of some £4.8 million attention turns to delivery over the next few months of Castle Green and the Goodland Gardens. Important decisions will have to be taken shortly on the design of the area and how it will juxtapose with the Third Way bridge design. A workshop on how these designs will come about is to be set up.

Car Parking in the future still poses the biggest challenge to Project Taunton and of course to the Council. A draft paper on the options available to the Council is being considered at present and I will update members verbally at full Council.

The Project Taunton team held a successful Open Day at the Brewhouse on 3 April. There were many exhibitors. Thrice Ian Franklin outlined the various phases of the Project so far at 12.30, 5.30 and 7.30pm on the day from the main theatre. About 800 people attended during the course of the day.

##### **2. THE BREWHOUSE**

The Theatre Development Study has now been published and is being considered. As I mentioned in February it has not come up with any major radical proposals. The Brewhouse had a successful trading period over the last 3 months making some inroads into its arrears. It is still precariously placed financially. Steve Kendall and I have redrafted the role of the Brewhouse Observers as our Representatives on the board to ensure better lines of communication in the future.

##### **3. INTO SOMERSET**

Steve Kendall reports in Part 2 on the actual state of play of the fledgling organisation. What is happening with the Sub National Review taking place is



that the Economic Leaders in the County are looking at this organisation to see if it can fulfill a larger role in the delivery of county wide economic services in keeping with the ideas of Pioneer Somerset. There is a determination that Tourism strategy should definitely come under its auspices as there is not the resource or capacity to run two organizations separately.

#### **4. GENERAL**

From 7 May this portfolio will also embrace Culture in the widest sense. I am hoping this change will consolidate all the work and will remove any confusions that may have existed.

I want to thank Steve Kendall for all his work and support he has given me in my first few months with this portfolio. He has accepted a senior post (with membership of the CMT) at the Forest of Dean District Council. I wish him every success in his new appointment.

#### **PART 2**

##### **a) Local Authority Business Growth Initiative (LABGI)**

Members will be aware that for the past two years this Council has received from Central Government significant grant funds to develop further business support and development projects members will also be aware that I advised Council in December 2007 that there was a likelihood of significant reduction in grants for the final year of the three year programme.

Government has now announced the level of award for 2008/09 Financial year. This amounts to £319,000, with a further sum (of approximately £50,000) to arrive later in the year.

I have asked my Economic Development & Regeneration Manager to identify those projects and activities to be funded from within this grant, and will bring a detailed report to the Councils' Overview and Scrutiny Board in May 2008.

The Council's Economic Development Team has focused on a number of key activities over recent weeks::

##### **1) Tourism**

- a) Work continues to develop the Destination Management products, and the development of a single Somerset Visitors guide for the 2008/09 Year is now well underway.
- b) Discussions have been held with County-wide Economic Portfolio holders over the potential to merge the work of the DMO and Into Somerset. This is still some way off, and will be subject to detailed scrutiny by this Council.

## **2) Business Support**

- a) The Young Enterprise Primary Programme moves into its third year as a result of my decision to continue to support the final year of the Programme. 28 Schools are expected to join the scheme this academic year.

Previous difficulties in recruiting 'school mentors' have now been overcome, and the Young Enterprise Organisers are currently recruiting schools for the new Academic Year in September 2008. I awarded the presentation certificates to year 5 pupils for Young Enterprise at Trull School on 5 March.

## **3) Rural Economic Development**

- a) The EDU continues to support the development of the Wellington Food Town and Market and Coastal Town Initiative Steering Groups.

The Council has organized a number of courses for Farmers this winter, and extended these to include members of both Wellington and Taunton Farmers markets

Members of the Rural Team continue to work with local groups developing significant local projects, such as the Ten Parishes Centre Group and separate Children's Centre Group in Wiveliscombe.

## **5. General Work of the Unit**

- a) The In2Somerset (Inward Investment Company) is continuing after not being able to recruit a suitably experienced candidate to act as its first Chief Executive. As an interim measure the Company has contracted with Somerset Chamber of Commerce to provide initial research and prepare

the way for the arrival of a new Chief Executive following plans to re-appraise the position later this year. Consultations are taking place with a national firm of headhunters.

- b) The Unit continues to support the work of a number of Council Task and Finish groups, and it is hoped that the initial round of Group work will be completed and reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel during this year.
- c) I must advise Members that this Council will no longer be awarding new business start-up grants. The 'landscape' for business support in Somerset is changing dramatically with the implementation of Peninsular Business Link, the evolution of Into Somerset, and the potential for closer working across District Borders offered by Pioneer Somerset.

Discussions are underway with Peninsular Business Link to replace start-up funding with business training and development provided by Business Link and targeted into our most deprived wards. This will also enable us to address the 'enterprising communities' agenda where we seek to generate a level of commitment and engagement with the enterprise agenda at community level, and with hard to reach groups.

**JEFFERSON HORSLEY**  
**7 April 2008**

## **Council Meeting 15 April 2008**

### **Report of Councillor Richard Lees – Leisure, Arts and Culture**

Herewith I present my fifth portfolio report to Full Council as follows:-

Vivary Park Sunday bandstand concerts commence on June 1st and continue until August 31st.

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 at the beginning of June. This publication gives details of activities for children in the main school holidays.

I am please to inform Council that Bishops Lydeard Village Hall, Chipstable Parish Hall, Lydeard St Lawrence Village Hall and Milverton Victoria Rooms have been successful in their application to the Somerset Joint Committee for Voluntary Village Halls and Community Centres for grant aid assistance. Bishops Lydeard and Chipstable both applied for extensions, Lydeard St Lawrence and Milverton for refurbishment works. The Committee is joint funded by both this Authority and Somerset County Council.

Letters have been sent to Parish Clerks and Playing Field Committees inviting applications and advising them the amount that may be awarded under the Parish Play Area Grant Scheme has been increased from 33% of the project cost to 50%.

#### **GALMINGTON "MASSIVE" YOUTH GROUP**

Officers met with this youth group to talk to them about the replacement play and activity equipment they would prefer to see at the Galmington Playing Field. Much of the original equipment at this site was made of timber and after 15 years it has rotted beyond repair. The young people chose some exciting modern equipment for climbing, swinging , rocking and one item based on skateboarding skills. They are also modelling their ideas for the Stoney Close play and activity area in Comeytrowe to help guide decisions on the development of this space.

#### **PLAY RANGER SERVICE**

This Big Lottery funded project is now moving forward with a preferred tenderer selected from 3 who were interviewed jointly by the 4 district councils involved in the project. The successful organisation, which will begin operations in July, will be announced as soon as contract negotiations are completed which is likely to be mid April.

## HIGHER HOLWAY OPEN SPACE

The development of a design for the new play space on this site is nearing completion. The Leisure Development Manager has project-managed a team including a Landscape Architect, the Proludic play equipment company which successfully tendered for the work, Barnardos participation workers and our own Grounds Maintenance staff. Together they have involved children at Trinity School and young people at Bishop Fox's School in decisions about the design and look of the play space and the play experiences they wanted to have there. The final designs will be on the website for the project [www.higherholway.co.uk](http://www.higherholway.co.uk) very shortly. Local residents will be invited to comment and it is anticipated that work will be completed for the school holidays.

## GREEN FLAG AWARDS

Applications have been submitted for reassessment for this award for Vivary, Wellington and Victoria Parks. The award is recognised by the Government as the standard for good park management covering issues such as safety, appropriate facilities, sustainability, community involvement, marketing, conservation and general management procedures. Judging takes place in May/June. Officers recently held an event with Friends of Parks groups from Wellington, Vivary and Victoria parks to involve them in the creation of an improvement plan for French Weir Park which is to be put forward for the Green Flag Award next year.

The sensory garden in Vivary park was an officer led suggestion. With the involvement of pupils from Ladymead School regarding the designing, and support from the Friends of Vivary Park, we hope to attract funds to progress this superb idea. Some preparatory work has been done thanks to improvements done by the parks staff to affect the area on that side of the park where flooding has been a constant feature. As matters progress I will endeavour to keep Council up-to-date.

## WELLINGTON FOOTBALL CLUB

TDBC Officers have met with the football club and the Football Association on at least 2 occasions to discuss the requirements for improvements to the ground should, as seems likely, the club gain promotion at the end of the 2007/08 football season.

Wellington FC play on the Playing Field on land owned by TDBC. The club have submitted a planning application for a new stand and other minor improvements, the results of the application are expected later in the spring. In order to comply with the requirements of the higher league the club will have to 'surround' their ground to prevent 'unauthorised viewing or access

when the match is in progress. The club will also have to close the footpath through the area in order to regulate access.

If Wellington want to play at a higher level next year then these works need to be in place before the season starts and so time is short. Funding would come from the Football Foundation should planning be approved.

#### WELLINGTON RUGBY CLUB

The Club have received planning permission for a new stand and improvements to the changing rooms. TDBC has confirmed a grant of £35,000 towards the projects (total cost £215,000) and it is our understanding that the work will be carried out in 3 phases starting this year. The majority of the funding has been provided by the RFU with the Club and BIFFA also contributing significant amounts.

#### GALMINGTON AND HAMILTON PAVILIONS

Work is progressing well with the new Pavilions on the Hamilton and Galmington sites with all of the foundations and drainage work now completed.

The majority of the walls are also now built and Morgan Ashurst expect to complete the work on schedule in June 2008 despite working through some atrocious weather.

#### VIVARY TENNIS COURTS

The refurbishment programme is almost complete with the last element, the painting of the courts, due to be completed as soon as the wind and rain abates for a day or so! There will then be 2 fantastic free-to-use courts in Vivary Park.

In the first round of community arts grants applications for 2008/9, I am delighted to announce I have approved community arts grants to the following projects.

Take Art have been awarded £500 towards the Kinder Gardens Festival, a £30,000 project bringing the best European Early Years shows to Taunton Deane and other parts of the South West over the summer.

The Taunton Deane Wheelchair Line Dance group, High Spirits, have been awarded £600 towards their running costs. £450 has also been awarded to the launch of the Flux Disability Arts Festival at The Brewhouse Theatre with the 'Count Me In' drummers organised by the Somerset Arts and Disability Coordinator.

Visual arts students from Somerset College have been granted £100 towards total exhibition costs of £800 to take their end of year show to Appledore Arts Festival in North Devon.

Take Art have also been awarded £500 for the next 3 years (2007/8, 2008/9 and 2009/10 totalling £1500 in all) for Step Change, a major dance project also supported by the Primary Care Trust, Sport England and the Arts Council England. The TDBC grant will enable Take Art to work in Taunton Deane with young people, older people and people with disabilities.

Tom Lindsey will receive £375 towards an exhibition and archiving of photographs of Taunton Agricultural Market.

£500 has been awarded to community artist, Kate Lynch, for a project documenting rural Somerset working life and creating a touring exhibition focusing on sheep, with children from Trinity, North Town and St Andrews Primary Schools.

10 Parishes Festival will receive a grant of £2,500 to enable them to develop activities in September 2008.

Bath Place Traders Association have been awarded £500 towards their first arts festival in May 2008.

The Lane Art Group at Halcon has been awarded £420 to develop their painting and arts activities in 2008/9.

These community grants, totalling £6,445 levers in approximately a further £75,000 from other external sources enabling these projects to take place in Taunton Deane, giving added value to our supporting such events.

I was privileged to attend, along with over 150 people, the ArtsXchange showcase on Friday 7 February at the Tacchi Morris Arts Centre to celebrate the culmination of a two year county wide arts project with people who have learning difficulties. Professional dancers, drummers and storytellers have been working with 250 adults with learning difficulties throughout Somerset for the past 2 years. In Taunton Deane, clients at Six Acres have been working with musician and storyteller Jeremy Dick, performer, Emma Morley and drummer and performer, Ronni Spurrs. There have been skills sharing opportunities and master classes for staff and artists.

ArtsXchange has given participants a wonderful opportunity to develop their confidence, creativity, mobility and team working skills. There has been plenty of fun and laughter. The care staff have been enjoying the project immensely, and learnt new skills that they can continue to use in their work.

Organised by the Somerset Arts and Disability Arts Co-ordinator, the ArtsXchange project was funded by Arts Council England, Somerset Social Services and funds from the Somerset Arts Partnership that TDBC have with the other local authorities. TDBC have also contributed to the success of the

project through officer time in the management of the Somerset Arts and Disability co-ordinator, Catherine Beedell.

Over the past two years, Catherine has developed a strong disability network in Somerset, and is now working closely with the regional disability arts agency, Kaleido, to run a regional pilot project supporting disabled creatives in Somerset. Such wonderful exciting support and broadening of creativity for disabled people must be commended and I look to continue supporting such projects when and wherever we can.

## TONE LEISURE (TAUNTON DEANE) LIMITED ACTIVITIES

Blackbrook Pavilion and Taunton Tennis Centre:

Tone Leisure Sport Relief Mile, Sunday, 16th March - On a very wet and windy Sunday Blackbrook Pavilion was the local host site for one of the many regional miles. On Friday there was a major doubt if the event would actually take place due to the very wet weather we had experienced during the week leading to the event. Over 500 entrants were received and, despite the atrocious weather conditions, there was a fantastic turn out.

Wellington Sports Centre

Successful swimming lessons programmed at Wellington Sports Centre continue to grow and develop, with more pre-school classes recently added to meet the high demand for this age group, along with some new additions - 'Rookie Lifeguard', 'Mini Water Polo', 'Synchronised Swimming' and the soon to be launched 'Flip 'n' Fun' (diving skills), which all add to the variety on offer.

Group Fitness Classes - On 30th January - Wellington Sports Centre staged a free 'GO Fitness' open evening to showcase some of the variety of fitness classes on offer. The four classes that ran attracted approximately 60 people in each class.

'Kids Zone' (Young Persons' Fitness) - The increasingly popular youth fitness programme, 'Kids Zone', has just been given a boost with the addition of five exercise machines (cycles, cross trainer and treadmills). This means that the 50 children currently enrolled on fitness courses now have a dedicated fitness gym and it is hoped that the programme can go from strength to strength.

Sports Hall - The longstanding arrangement where Court Fields Community School has used the sports hall at Wellington Sports Centre during term-time for PE lessons came to an end this Easter. The school has now built its own sports hall and the Sports Centre is actively seeking additional daytime hall bookings to fill as much of the vacated booking slots as possible. This also provides an opportunity to further expand the daytime activities programmes, particularly with the over 50s and pre



school children in mind.

## VIVARY GOLF COURSE

The Golf Course made the front page of the Somerset County Gazette as several large trees were dramatically felled during high winds at the beginning of the month. The main casualties were three Willow trees that stood at the edge of the stream on the left hand side of the 11th hole. One of the trees fell across the fairway; the green keeping staff worked tirelessly to cut up and remove the tree in impressive time, having the hole re-opened in two days.

## WELLSPRINGS LEISURE CENTRE

The Centre's GOgx programme has achieved numbers of over 700 users per week in the early part of this year; a growth of 40% on a year ago. Proposals on increasing capacity here are being looked into.

It is with pleasure that I am able to inform Council that Wellsprings has successfully been chosen to host the 2009 Great Britain v. Germany Youth International Trampoline Match. This is a major coup for Taunton and especially the Tone Trampoline Club coaches, who put so much into this fledgling club. The centre is now being considered for other 'major trampoline competitions.

Wellsprings hosted its first Strictly Dance event in March, with all 400 tickets selling out very quickly. The event was so popular the waiting list for the second event with Erin Boage and Anton Du Beke guarantees another sell out.

Future events booked for the next quarter include: the annual BIBIC Dinner Dance; Boxing Dinner; Jethro returns for another sell out tour date; Jimmy Carr stops off on his west country tour; and Strictly Dance 2 comes to Wellsprings.

Following major concerns on capacity of the Fitness Studio, consultation with Gym members has begun on converting the Health Suite into further fitness space. Results will be published shortly.

## SPORTS AND HEALTH DEVELOPMENT

MEND - Mind, Exercise, Nutrition, Do It! - Nine children from Taunton and Wellington have recently completed the first MEND programmes. The children have all had great success from participating in MEND and are intending to maintain a more active and healthier lifestyle beyond the programme by enrolling in further activity programmes for young people. In particular, results have included reductions in waist circumference, improved levels of fitness and self-esteem and more time spent being more physically active.

A MEND Graduates group is being launched in Taunton from April for

children and families to continue to exercise together after they have completed the MEND programme. Enrolments are now taking place for the next MEND programmes, which are due to start at the end of April.

Health Walking - Another 14 volunteers from Taunton Deane have been trained as Volunteer Walk Leaders on a training day, which took place on 5th March at Wellsprings Leisure Centre. It is hoped that these additional leaders will contribute to some new Health Walking Programmes under the Active Somerset project or that they will support the existing Walk Well in Taunton scheme.

Coach Education - Three Coach Education courses have taken place at Wellsprings Leisure Centre for local sports clubs and coaches. A total of 44 people have attended the three courses: Safeguarding and Protecting Children; a Club for All; and Equity in Your Coaching.

Aquathlon and Triathlon - A record number of more than 210 competitors swam and ran in the Taunton Deane Foot Anstey Aquathlon at Wellington Sports Centre on Sunday, 24th February. The new team race attracted 44 teams, many first timers with one completing the swim and the other the run. Another category was the Foot Anstey Corporate Challenge, the 1,000 m/10 k was won by Queen's College and the 500 m/5 k by the Environment Agency.

The annual Triathlon (swim, cycle, run) will be held at Wellington Sports Centre on Sunday, 18th May and is already fully booked.

The pleasing feature through my report I feel is the mentioning of young people, be it involved in play, parks, sport through to Tone Leisures activities. With Holy Trinity Primary School children coming second in the National Schools Table Tennis Championships recently following which the Mayor invited them to his Parlour to congratulate them, I close my report by registering my congratulations to those concerned.

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Councillor Richard Lees

## **COUNCIL MEETING – 15<sup>th</sup> April 2008.**

### **REPORT OF COUNCILLOR MEL MULLINS–ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES**

#### **1.0 ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH.**

##### **1.1 Food Safety.**

###### **FoodO**

Somerset County Council has approved the electronic version of our FoodO Board game for distribution on memory stick to all 250 Primary schools in Somerset. This removes the last hurdle in the process, and the memory sticks, pre-loaded with the programme have been received, using funding provided by the Food Standards Agency. A presentation on FoodO was given to the Somerset Food and Health Alliance, which generated considerable interest and was well received.

###### **Pizza Hut Prosecuted.**

Pizza Hut pleaded guilty to two food offences and were fined a total of £7000 and ordered to pay costs of nearly £8500. The case was brought after Food Officers found a number of food hygiene offences at visits between February and May last year. Pizza Hut pleaded guilty to failing to keep the premises clean, and failing to keep equipment clean. Pizza Hut has since managed to maintain an acceptable standard and at the most recent visit was found to be following advice given by Taunton Deane but will continue to be monitored by Food Officers.

###### **Food Trade Event 8<sup>th</sup> April Taunton School**

The Food Safety Team are hosting a Star Ratings event for businesses on 8th April. Advance bookings have already reached over 120 and around 400 businesses are expected to attend the event at Taunton School to find out more about the Star Rating scheme and get tips and advice on how to ensure they achieve a good rating.

##### **1.2 Environmental Protection**

###### **Dog Fouling ~ Fixed Penalty Notices**

The Dog Warden service has been responding to local concern about dog fouling with a renewed effort to enforce the dog fouling legislation through the use of the fixed penalty notice provision. Consequently Eleven fixed penalty notices for the offence of failing to remove dog faeces were served during the Financial Year 2007/08.

## **Air Quality - Bid for Funding**

A bid for £10,000 has been made to Defra for funding in respect of Air Quality. If we are successful, the money will be used to carry out computer modelling for oxides of nitrogen; a traffic related pollutant. The requirement for this detailed assessment has come about because our own routine monitoring of traffic 'hotspots' indicates that concentrations of this pollutant may soon exceed the permitted levels. We will not know the result of our bid for several months.

### **1.3 Licensing**

#### **Firestone Review**

A Review application was received from the Police following a number of management issues and a public order incident. Subsequently the Police and Licence holder agreed to a number of extra conditions to be attached to the premises licence. At a later meeting of the Licensing sub-committee the agreed extra conditions were attached to the licence.

#### **Naval and Military**

A Review application was received from the Police following a multi-agency visit where management issues, the use of class A drugs and stolen goods on the premises were identified as the key issues. The premises were failing to promote the licensing objectives at all levels. The review requested that the licence be revoked. Consultation has taken place between premises owners, Police and Licensing Authority and the matter is to be considered by a Licensing Sub Committee in due course.

### **1.4 Environmental Health Support**

#### **Licensing Pack**

A member of the EH Support Team has produced an information pack that will be of great help to those of our customers who are trying to understand the complexities of seeking a Licensing Review. The pack contains a "Jargon Buster" to help with the Licensing Act's terms and phrases, a list of the statutory consultees that the application form must be sent to once completed, an example of a completed application form, a guidance note for interested parties wishing to make a review and of course the relevant application form.

#### **Scores on the Doors**

Another Team member has been busy making the administrative arrangements for the launch of the "Scores on the Doors" food safety project at the Food Trade Event on April 8th. This work has included securing many very attractive prizes, kindly donated by local businesses, for the Mayor's Raffle to be held at this event, which will help to ensure interest and success for the day.

## **1.5 General**

### **Accommodation**

Last minute plans and preparations for the move of the Environmental Protection Team to Flook House have been made, to minimise disruption and to ensure that services continue to be delivered.

## **2.0 STREET CLEANSING and PUBLIC CONVENIENCES.**

### **2.1 Street Cleansing**

As a result of the "Aquazura" washer/scrubbing machine operating in the Taunton town centre it has been necessary to reschedule some of the other cleansing resources, as part of these changes and at the request of Wellington town council it has been possible to operate the "Applied" sweeper (Green machine) in Wellington for a day once every two weeks.

### **2.2 Public Conveniences**

Agreed as part of the budget for this financial year the following facilities have been closed from the 1st April, members of the public are being directed to the nearest toilet block, and disconnection of all services is currently underway.

- Canal Road
- Priory Bridge Road Car Park
- Goodland Gardens
- High Street Car Park (disabled section remaining open)

Councillor Mel Mullins

## **Council Meeting 15 April 2008**

### **Report of Councillor Hazel Prior-Sankey – Housing Services**

#### **Success after Success for the Homeless**

As members are aware, the Council has recently been successful in attracting £250,000 government investment for the construction of a Rough Sleeper Unit at Norie House, a unit owned by Taunton Association for the Homeless (TAH). It is anticipated that the construction contract will go out to tender before the end of April with a start on site in early summer, and completion will follow before the end of the year.

I am delighted to report that the Council has also succeeded in obtaining a further grant of £740,000 for developments at Lindley House, the larger hostel run by Taunton Association for the Homeless. At the moment TDBC owns two of the four original properties which make up the hostel, and two are rented by TAH from another housing association – the new funding may allow TDBC to purchase the freehold of the remaining two, thereby significantly reducing the operating costs of the hostel. In addition, there will be the development of a workshop and internet cafe which will be used to equip homeless people with the necessary skills to enter the employment market. This project will be completed in several stages over the next 3 years.

John Shipley has recently been appointed as the new Director of Taunton Association for the Homeless. John has considerable housing experience, having managed a hostel in London and worked for various housing organizations. Officers will meet John shortly and the intention is to work closely in partnership with TAH to ensure that the new developments are completed on time.

I am continuing to progressively shadow housing staff in order to fully understand the service delivered to customers, and in March I spent time with the Housing Options team. I was impressed with the caring and professional advice given by team members, and in particular with the emphasis on prevention as well as dealing with the consequences of homeless.

#### **Getting Tenants Empowered**

I intend to challenge our tenants to review the arrangements in place for them to get involved in the management of the housing stock. Though we have worked hard in the past to provide opportunities, we do struggle to attract a genuine cross-section of tenants who wish to become involved. I want to offer a challenge to tenants to join us in managing the housing stock and making decisions on its future – tenants made the positive decision to keep the management, maintenance and ownership of their homes with the Council, despite the financial incentives put in place by central government, and as a Council we need to respect that decision by allowing them every opportunity to shape the future management of their homes. I intend to establish a small working group of interested tenants, to include representation from the Tenants' Forum, which will be asked to look at ways in which tenant participation may be modernised and improved to involve a wider cross-section of empowered tenants.

#### **New Meeting Hall at Roland Close**

As reported in the local newspaper, the new meeting hall was officially opened by Jeremy Brown MP on 14th March 2008. Local residents have already set up regular weekly coffee mornings, lunch club, card/games and craft sessions. Items made at the craft sessions are sold to raise money for charities such as the Special Baby unit at Musgrove Hospital, Guide Dogs, Hearing Dogs and the Air Ambulance Service. So I can confirm that the hall is already being put to very good use. This facility was jointly funded by TDBC and Supporting People.

## **Investment for Gypsies and Travellers**

A grant of £100,000 has recently been won by the Council for the establishment of a Gypsy and Traveller Site Acquisition Fund. The Council was required to match fund this amount with a further £50,000. The total fund of £150,000 will be used to purchase and develop a suitable site for a traveller family. The intention is to sell the site to the family on a "not for profit" basis, if possible, with the proceeds being recycled back into the fund for further site purchases.

Officers have recently met the specialist Gypsy and Traveller advisor from the Government Office for the South West (GOSW), and are being actively encouraged to work in partnership with neighbouring Councils because Gypsy and Traveller accommodation problems are clearly a County and regional issue. The Centre for Urban Studies in Birmingham is currently carrying out further research into the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers and this will eventually form part of the Regional Spatial Strategy.

## **Affordable Housing**

A total of 146 Affordable Homes were completed in the last financial year. The bulk of these properties were provided on two sites, one at Ladysmith Gate where a total of 75 affordable flats were created by the conversion of a former British Telecom building and a further 36 low cost open market houses that were constructed at Chelston.

With no large-scale sites in delivery this financial year, the projected number of completions in 2008/09 is expected to be 58 properties.

## **Choice Based Lettings**

Home Finder Somerset is a new Choice Based Lettings system that will be used for allocating social housing in Somerset. This is a partnership project involving 5 local authorities and 48 Registered Social Landlords. It will be a web based system with applicants primarily using the Internet to find and bid for a suitable home. Contracts have been signed with Abitras, a specialist IT Company, and a common allocation policy agreed across the 5 districts

Applicants will be required to register on the new system in the summer with the scheme projected to go live in November. It is anticipated that in Taunton up to 4,000 applicants will register on the new system during the summer and this will create a large additional workload for the Council's Housing Options Team, as for several months they will be required to operate two completely different systems in parallel. The implementation of the new system will take place in turn in each district with West Somerset first, followed by Mendip, Taunton Deane, Sedgemoor and finally South Somerset. It will be necessary to approve overtime spending and some recruitment of temporary staff to ensure that the project is a success. The additional costs have been built in to the CBL budgets.

## **Energy Efficiency**

Officers have recently been successful in securing a total of 50,000 low energy light bulbs from the energy supplier, Scottish and Southern, as part of the Government's new Carbon Energy Reduction Targets (CERT) for the residents of Taunton Deane. These light bulbs

have been allocated to the Council as part of Scottish and Southern Carbon Emissions Reduction target, an obligation placed on energy utilities by Government requiring them to spend a proportion of their turnover on energy efficiency and renewable energy initiatives for consumers. The obligation requires 70% of the bulbs to be given to low income, or vulnerable consumers.

Hazel Prior-Sankey  
Housing Executive Member



## **Council Meeting 15 February 2008**

### **Report of Councillor Fran Smith - Resources**

#### **DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

I would like to welcome Richard Bryant as the new Manager of Democratic Services and thank Greg Dyke for all his work, but please be aware he hasn't completely left us as he has agreed to stay on to help us to develop the Member Development Steering group. As you can see we have changed the focus of this group to concentrate on member development and less on achieving Member Charter status. If Charter status is achieved as a result of the work the Group are doing, then that is good, but the Group didn't want this to be the main driver of its work. The Member Development Steering Group met recently and spent some time on improving means of communication with members, developing the Skills Framework, learning from a visit to South Somerset, hearing about the success of the Ward Walk pilot, developing the Training Plan and arranging to get some feedback on the induction process from the "Class of 2007". Already some useful comments have been received and the Group are grateful to those councillors who have responded.

The Council's Standards Committee are pleased to report that, thanks to the hard work of Parish Liaison Officer, David Greig, every Parish Council in the Borough has now been individually trained in the new Code of Conduct. This has proved a much more effective way of delivering the training and it is hoped that it will stand members in good stead when the new local arrangements are introduced.

Members will also be aware that following the sad death of Tony Floyd a vacancy has arisen in the Comeytrove Ward. The vacancy has been duly advertised and arrangements are now in hand for a by-election to take place on 1 May.

#### **PERSONNEL**

##### **Job Evaluation**

All of the results of the appeals have now been notified to staff. There is still some further work to do with Unison to achieve a national agreement with them, but hopefully this will soon be concluded.

##### **Sickness Absence**

The sickness figures to date are encouraging, the short term absences show a decrease compared to last year. However, long term absence cases are still high. Human Resources are holding weekly discussions on managing the long term cases and doing everything to support the employees back into work, but the reasons people are off are due to serious illnesses.

The new sickness reporting procedures of reporting to a member of the SMT are continuing for the next financial year, this is due to the 70% reduction of short term absence in these areas. We are also extending the service areas to include all of Housing and Environmental Health.

We are also launching a well-being event at the Deane House and DLO in June 2008. The aim is to encourage staff to participate in physical activity, and provide information on the benefits we can offer to support a healthier lifestyle.

## **SouthWest One**

The HR Manager continues to be involved in weekly meetings with IBM and SCC. Part of the transformation is looking at the organisation design of the HR services. Any changes will take place gradually over the next eighteen months. The SAP SWO project team has now commenced and the HR Admin Assistant has joined the project to represent the TDBC HR aspects of the new payroll/personnel system.

## **CORPORATE SUPPORT SERVICES**

The past two months have been extremely busy agreeing full monthly client reporting and determination of KPI's/SPI's for each service in preparation for service credit readiness on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008.

### **Customer Services:**

Due to secondment opportunities, retirement, and a member of the team obtaining a post in Housing we currently have 4 vacancies within Customer Services, which we are filling temporarily with agency staff until we complete the full recruitment process.

### **Statistical Information:**

29,206 calls were managed through the contact centre with 60% being dealt with entirely within Customer Services and 83% of calls being answered within 20 seconds. The total abandonment rate for the period was 3.6% a very impressive improvement on previous periods. A total of 6,805 people have been helped at Deane House main and planning receptions and 1,731 people visited Wellington Community Office – February is always a quiet month at the Wellington Community Office where footfall numbers are traditionally 65-70% lower than other months.

### **Design and Print:**

Work continues with assisting services on their professional design and print requirements. Throughput of work has increased and, as expected, evened out by year end. The customer satisfaction survey was very favourable with a high return rate of 64% and a satisfaction rating of 96.5%.

### **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 services to see how they can assist with new initiatives in the coming year. Significant work has been undertaken to determine new reporting procedures to enable us to provide client updates.

Facilities continue to work with agency staff covering the morning opening of Deane House, evening Facilities Assistant continues at present on a fixed term contract but this is currently being reviewed. Corporate Admin/Facilities Manager is continuing to assist at County Hall and discussions are taking place on future arrangements. Backfill has been arranged with one of the Corporate Administration Assistants being seconded half-time to assist with agency staff covering her role for 18 hours a week.

### **Accommodation:**

Work has been continuing on accommodation issues, Finance moved to Quantock House and Environmental Health are now totally located within Flook House. Discussions are still continuing with Economic Development, Forward Planning and Leisure Development on arrangements to relocate them to the first floor, to enable the majority of the second floor to be reorganised as a joint contact centre for TDBC and SCC.

### **ICT SERVICE**

The major news has been Avon and Somerset Police joining the partnership of SouthWest One. This opens up a new set of great opportunities in the way we design our services, as well as significant complexities in terms of the governance and compliance of Police versus Council Services.

The end of financial year processing has passed off relatively smoothly, including the move of the TDBC Finance team to Quantock house as part of the wider accommodation changes.

A major reconfiguration of the TDBC network over the Easter break was carried out to enable better connectivity with the network at County Hall – this will facilitate some of the moves proposed as part of the contact centre changes and moves to the Deane House. This major piece of work was something that the old TDBC service would have struggled to complete over a weekend, but the new Southwest One organisation was able to bring in additional resources and expertise to help ensure the work was carried out with as low a risk to services as possible. Thanks to Alistair and his team, and also colleagues from Somerset CC and IBM for giving up some of their Easter weekend to help with this.

The SAP back office project has now kicked off in earnest, and Diana is taking a role on the project as a trainer, so we are in the process of back filling her post to ensure we can maintain the level of service TDBC users have come to expect.

### **REVENUES & BENEFITS SERVICE UNIT**

The Revenues & Benefits Service Unit has made significant progress during 2007/2008, with improvement in all areas in comparison with the previous year. Performance in benefits processing has been particularly pleasing with new claims being turned round in 19.88 days at 29 February 2008 (this compares to 44 days in 2006/2007) and changes of circumstances worked out in 8.23 days (this compares to 21.2 days in 2006/2007).

In collecting Council Tax and National Non Domestic Rates (Business Rates – NNDR) we have unfortunately missed our targets this year. At 31 March 2008 we had collected 97.22% of the Council Tax debt raised during the year against a target of 98%. In NNDR we collected 98.21% against our target of 98.8%. Whilst the Revenues & Benefits Service have not done as well as they would have hoped in this area, it is noteworthy they have nevertheless achieved collection in the very late 90%'s. It also needs to be understood these collection figures are NOT the sum total of collection for 2007/08 but are instead only a snapshot of what we collected as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008. The uncollected balance will not be lost or overlooked but will be collected after 1<sup>st</sup> April.

Over previous years our total Council Tax and NNDR collection rates for all years is in excess of 99.3%. Outstanding Council Tax and NNDR collection is very much in focus with over 1,500 summons relating to outstanding 2007/08 accounts issued on 1 April 2008.

Our ability to collect debt quickly is governed by the taxpayer's ability to pay and there is no question that people in general are experiencing significant financial pressures through increased mortgage, utility & petrol payments. This unquestionably makes the collection team's job and that of the bailiffs more difficult.

Finally in summarising performance in tackling benefit fraud in 2007/2008, we received a total of 209 referrals requiring investigative work. We were able to successfully prosecute 7 fraudsters with penalties handed down ranging from conditional discharges to a suspended prison sentence with a curfew order. In addition to prosecutions we also issued 7 formal cautions and 3 administrative penalties (all of which were immediately paid in full by the perpetrators of the fraudulent activity)

### **FINANCIAL SERVICES**

In the last couple of weeks the Financial Services Unit has been making preparations for the closedown of the old financial year, 2007/08. This has included holding briefing seminars for budget holders and preparing the timetable used to ensure the smooth closedown of the Councils accounts. In addition the Unit just recently moved locations – the accountancy team is now located on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of Quantock House in Paul Street. The payments and insurance team is to be located from 6 April on the ground floor of Deane House near ICT. All contact numbers and email addresses remain the same. The team has also recently concluded the retendering of our Treasury Management advisors – our new advisors with effect from 1 April will be Arlingclose.”

### **LEGAL SERVICES**

Ian Taylor has now retired and we welcome Tonya Meers who has taken on part of Ian's and Jeremy Thornberry's role in the restructure as well as responsibility for Member Services and is now the Legal and Democratic Services Manager.

### **SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT**

#### **Scrutiny**

The Scrutiny pilot project has now been running for a full 6 months. As promised, the Overview and Scrutiny Board will now discuss the successes and failures of the pilot, and will do so at their meeting on the 17<sup>th</sup> April. At that meeting they will agree a way forward for Scrutiny on the basis of the lessons learned over the last six months. It is encouraging to note that during the pilot project, the Audit Commission produced their “Annual Audit Inspection letter” for Taunton Deane, and stated that Scrutiny is “improving well”. This is a significant improvement on previous year's inspections where Scrutiny was described as weak.

#### **Performance / CPA**

The Quarter 3 (to December 2007) updates of 2007/08 performance against our Corporate Strategy objectives, performance indicators and budget position was taken to the Strategy and Performance Panel on the 1<sup>st</sup> April for Scrutiny.

Work is underway to collect our end of year performance against targets against for our Best Value and Local Performance Indicators. Following collection and submission of our results we will be audited on our performance improvement and the data quality for a number of these indicators. This is the last year Best Value Performance Indicators will be collected. From April 2008 we will be expected to collect a smaller number of National Indicators. Managers have been asked to integrate these into their 2008/09 Service Plans.

An update of progress against our Corporate Improvement Plan was taken to the Corporate Governance Committee on 17 March. This highlighted progress against the Audit Commission's “Use of Resources” criteria and also against weaknesses

highlighted by Audit Commission inspections. The Audit Commission will visit us in April/May to assess our progress against each of these.

The Audit Commission has now finalised our Annual Audit Inspection letter and presented their findings to the Corporate Governance Committee. The weaknesses highlighted will be addressed in our Corporate Improvement Plan.

### **Corporate Strategy**

The Corporate Strategy (2008 -11) has now been published and will be shortly presented to Full Council. Managers have been requested to develop their 2008/09 Service Plans based on this Corporate Strategy.

### **Procurement**

Southwest One are working closely with the two councils to develop 'Category Plans' to identify better ways to procure goods and services for various categories of spend. Most of the Category Plans have now been produced and are going through the sign off process. From the Category Plans benefits savings are currently being identified.

Councillor Fran Smith

## **Council Meeting 15 April 2008**

### **Report of Councillor Alan Wedderkopp – Community Leadership**

#### **Local Strategic Partnership (LSP):**

At its last meeting the LSP agreed funding for three projects:

- a project being led by the Brewhouse Theatre in conjunction with Taunton East Development Trust, the Police, Connexions and Somerset County Youth Service.

The project is aimed at young people aged 14 to 18 who live in the Halcon, Lane and Lambrook estates. One of the main aims of the project is to break down the barriers that prevent young people from all three estates working together whilst raising their skill levels, as well as targeting potential anti-social behaviour. This will be achieved by offering arts based activities

- a continuation of the Energize project which develops activities for young people in and around the town centre. The *Energize* programme came out of a discussion about the need for positive activities for young people, and developed monthly discos at Deller's Warf Nightclub, an activity day in August and a training programme for young people interested in developing their skills in the increasingly popular sport of Parkour. The group is keen to provide a wider range of activities and to support new developments in 2008.
- A project with Exmoor National Park to work with up to 20 young people, aged 12-16 years from the Halcon area of Taunton, on a range of activities, culminating in an outdoor residential experience at Pinkery Outdoor Centre.

#### **Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP)**

The CDRP received an update on progress on the Wellington Community Restorative Justice project which is now recruiting volunteers and will launch in June.

One of the main agenda items was the plan to merge the three CDRPs in the West of the County i.e. West Somerset, Taunton Deane and Sedgemoor. This has been agreed by the three CDRPs at previous meetings, and discussions took place about what this means in practice. Over the coming weeks members of all three CDRPs will meet to discuss practicalities such as membership of the joint CDRP, and how to ensure that local issues are still represented.

#### **PLAY RANGER SERVICE:**

this Big Lottery funded project is now moving forward with a preferred tenderer selected from 3 who were interviewed by the 4 district councils involved in the project. Both officers and Portfolio Holders attended the interviews and a joint decision was made on the preferred tenderer. The successful organisation, which will begin operations in July, will be announced as soon as contract negotiations are completed in April

### **Local Area Agreement (LAA)**

The Local Area Agreement is in its final stages of development. 35 indicators have been selected which public agencies County-wide will work together to deliver. The LAA will be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Board on 17 April.

### **Taunton Deane Council for Voluntary Service:**

We are at present negotiating a new Service Level Agreement if they come to a satisfactory conclusion an announcement will be made in the Weekly Bulletin.

Councillor Alan Wedderkopp