

COUNCIL MEETING – 20 APRIL 2004

REPORT OF COUNCILLOR MRS. D. BRADLEY - LEISURE, ART AND CULTURE

LEISURE TRUST UPDATE

Last December the Council deferred for six months the decision to transfer its Leisure Services and facilities to Tone Leisure Limited. It also resolved to start work immediately on a medium-term strategic review of the service which would need completing before any final decision to transfer the service.

This is being undertaken in two parts. The first involves a detailed assessment of the current services being provided with a view to producing a facility-by-facility and service-by-service cost/benefit analysis. This analysis will be used to determine if it is possible to make immediate savings by reducing service levels. The second relates to the potential longer-term appraisal of the facilities themselves. It will be limited to consideration of swimming provision in Taunton, the future role and management of Vivary Golf Course and the range of opportunities to be provided at Blackbrook.

The Health and Leisure Review Panel will be overseeing the Leisure Services Strategic Review and hopefully making recommendations to the June Executive. The Shadow Board of Trustees is continuing to meet and two Trustees have been nominated to get involved with the Strategic Review, as well as attending the Health and Leisure Review Panel meetings.

LEISURE SERVICE ACTIVITIES

These have included the **Optika Wheelchair Tournament** at the Taunton Indoor Tennis Centre which was one of the most successful in the history of the Centre; 24 players from throughout the UK competed in the two-day event. Three local players, Shaun Regan, Lucy Shuker and Dave Cook, played well and showed the improvements in their games which they have been working on in their weekly coaching sessions at the Centre. Both Shaun and Lucy are working towards their goal of achieving selection for the 2008 Paralympics.

The **Tone Leisure Proactive Physical Activity Referral Scheme** has again increased significantly. Over 500 people were referred to the Deane's three main leisure facilities last year. The scheme works in partnership with Musgrove Hospital to provide individuals with the opportunity for them and their partners or friends to gain confidence as well as fitness to help them lead a fulfilling life. Tone Leisure has also been awarded a grant of £28,300 by the **Better Play Lottery Fund** to provide inclusive play opportunities for disabled children. The award will fund support workers to work on a 1:1 basis with children in all our leisure facilities, during the school holiday activities or for children who want to attend out-of-school sporting activities (eg. Swimming lessons, gymnastics etc.)

SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

Coach Education included 5 courses held at Wellsprings for local sports clubs, coaches and leisure centre staff. 61 people attended the courses which covered Good Practice & Child Protection, Coaching Disabled Performers, Motivation and Mental Toughness, Sports Facility Development, and Tri Golf Leaders. Also to come are the Badminton Leaders Award and Assistant Gymnastics Award offering 25 places in total.

Football Development provides high level coaching to talented players from across the Deane numbering 45 boys aged 7-11. In addition to fortnightly coaching they have guest coaching from Exeter City Centre of Excellence. It is hoped to link the team with future development at Castle School and Taunton Town FC.

BMX Tracks at Taunton and Wellington have been enhanced by funding from the Crime and Disorder Partnership. The Taunton Track will host a race day run by Tiverton BMX Club on 8th May for all local people to take part in which will be open to all ages and abilities. BMX bikes, pads and helmets owned by the council will be available on site for those without suitable gear.

Vibe Sport; this weekly multi-activity session at Wellsprings on a Friday evenings is again funded by the Crime & Disorder Partnership. It will be run by local youth workers and police to help tackle issues of anti social behaviour. It is one of the projects of the Diversionary Delivery Team.

Taunton Deane Triathlon is due to take place on Sunday 16 May. Over £1,200 in sponsorship has been obtained and Orchard FM is backing it and entering presenters in the race. The event is full once again with 350 entries with some travelling from Loughborough and West Midlands to attend the race and have a great weekend in the Deane. The event has become nationally recognised with a reputation for great organisation and fantastic scenery.

PARKS AND GREEN SPACES

Our Parks Service is gearing up for a busy season with several interesting initiatives underway:

Paws in the Park on 19 June 2004 in Vivary Park, is an event aimed at promoting "responsible dog ownership". Members of the public will be able to watch trained dogs from local dog clubs undertaking a variety of demonstrations; from flyball to heelwork to music. A number of stalls from various organisations and charities will also be there along with the Council's dog warden service. A companion dog show for breed and novelty classes will also be held. This event is kindly supported by West Country Feeds based in Norton Fitzwarren.

Friends of Vivary Park is now up to 80 members and holds its first AGM on 6 May 2004 followed by a tour of Taunton Deane's Nursery. The Council officers are keen to support the Friends groups and hope that they may be instrumental in accessing external funding for investment in park facilities. **Bandstand concerts** in Vivary

Park resume on June 6 with a concert by the Deane Big Band on the 60th anniversary of the D-Day landings.

The Friends of Wellington Park has a programme of summer music and events for all to enjoy this summer starting on Bank Holiday Monday - 3 May - with a Children's Festival. The AGM for this Friends group will be on May 12.

The Victoria Park Development Plan is to be presented to Members of the Health and Leisure Review Panel in June. It includes proposals suggested by the local community on improvements to encourage greater and wider community use of the park. This group and the Play Development Workers based there have made a real difference to Victoria Park in the last year.

A recent cycling awareness event was very well received. This was one of two events proposed to promote safer cycling in and around our parks and open spaces.

Following the success of the **Schools Sunflower Competition** last year, this competition will see over 700 Year 5 pupils growing sunflowers to find the 'heaviest head'. The competition engages young people in learning more about plants, how they grow and develop and why they are important to the environment. It links in with Key Stages of the National Curriculum. The competition is supported by Taunton in Bloom and Wellington in Bloom.

Taunton In Bloom and Wellington in Bloom, in conjunction with Taunton Parks Section, will hold an invitation evening celebrating the achievements of local community groups including the "In Bloom" groups on Thursday 20 May 2004.

CULTURE AND ART

Our busy Art Officer publishes the Spring / Summer **Deane Arts Update** shortly giving useful information on local arts initiatives, updates on project grants and highlights activities from key strategic organisations such as The Brewhouse, Take Art! and Somerset Art Week. It also flags up regional and national opportunities for artists and others in the arts community

The **Cultural Consortium**, which has been set up to enable partners and stakeholders to make joint recommendations to the Vision for Taunton, is investigating constitutions and modus operandi of other development agencies for making Hunts Court an art gallery and community arts space. It is talking to potential tenants.

The value of the arts to our local economy is flagged up in the interim results from the **Economic Impact Study of Creative Industries** in Somerset which reveals that the Creative Industries in Somerset are responsible for the employment of 2.3% of the total employed in the county. Taunton Deane accommodates a third of this percentage. While this is a relatively low percentage compared to the regional figure of approximately 5 % employment in the creative industries, there are indicators of significant growth in employment, turnover and business/workplace count in the 1998 – 2002/3 period as follows:-

- Overall creative industries employment growth of 13%
- Overall creative industries turnover growth of 15%
- Overall creative industries workplace growth of 11%

An **arts development grant** of £5,000 for two years awarded by the Council to Take Art! and Actiontrack , has enabled these organisations to lever in £100,000 of funding from the Youth Music organisation. This will fund an extensive programme of world music concerts and workshops for young people in Taunton Deane and West Somerset.

Other arts projects planned for the coming year include a number of **community multi-cultural events** initiated by the Afro-Caribbean Cultural Committee and the Chinese-Anglo Society, and supported by officers. South African artist, Marian Beukes, is currently Artist in Residence in Victoria Park, working with the Barnardos' Saturday Club to make a mosaic for the outside wall of the Pavilion.

Real Art is an organisation that will be developing quality summer creative activities with **people with learning difficulties and profound sensory disabilities**, providing social and educational opportunities such as visits to the park and The Brewhouse Theatre that they might not otherwise have.

The summer **Deano** will be out in the first week of June, full of activities for children over the long holiday period. It will include details of some exciting new activities for older children in the parks this summer being planned in partnership with the Sports Centre staff.

I trust that from the detail in this report it will be apparent just how extensive and wide-ranging are the activities organised by quite a small team of Taunton Deane Officers and how successful they have been in levering in funding. What is clear from all this multitude of activity is that the new way of working is by partnership. Not only does it draw down funding but it is a way of building up community involvement and encouraging responsibility and social inclusion. Many of the projects quite clearly have a role in promoting the quality of life in Taunton Deane and its overall economy. While leisure services may be discretionary they do contribute in many ways to our corporate priorities of the Taunton Vision, the economy, health and social inclusion.

Councillor Mrs. D. Bradley