

Council Meeting – 13 July 2010

Report of Councillor John Williams – Leader of the Council

1. A new Coalition Government and a New Administration Locally

- 1.1 There are many challenges that face us from the numerous changes coming out of national Government that will impact upon us locally. Having said this it is an exciting time as I do genuinely believe we are about to be given much greater control of our own destiny than we have previously experienced. However, this comes at a price.
- 1.2 Budget reductions - it is with certainty that we will have to deal with severe reductions to our budgets in future years. The Government mantra is that we must all learn “to do more for less”. I believe universally as Members we all want the best for our community therefore it will be essential to maintain much valued front line services and create the efficiencies in back office services. It must be acknowledged this is getting harder as we have now been doing this for some years!
- 1.3 Abolition of the Regional Spatial Strategy - this will be dealt with in more detail by my colleague Mark Edwards but it has to be welcomed. The numbers imposed by this strategy were unachievable and so therefore, incomprehensible to our community. This is certainly one of those opportunities where we can inject realism into the number of jobs and new homes to be created that will allow Taunton and the wider area to grow in a sustainable manner. But let us be under no illusions, the Government still expect growth as being necessary and we need to work with our communities to deliver.
- 1.4 The proposed abolition of Regional Development Agencies and replacement with Local Enterprise Partnerships is a change that will bring huge challenges but offer great opportunities. I believe the essence is keeping the focus as local as possible with local business and public support but with the ability to work cross boundary for the necessary infrastructure improvements that will be required. We need to be pro-active in this and ensure we create a partnership that will promote the clear objectives and strategic leadership that has stood us in such good stead to date.
- 1.5 The great question mark over the proposed changes to the Regional Development Agency (RDA) is how we access vital funds for infrastructure development. If we are to grasp the opportunities for development of homes and our economy we will most certainly need additional funding and here we will be working with Somerset County Council and other Somerset District Councils. Local Enterprise

Partnerships will need to be established and work as a credible force for Somerset. As ideas are formulated we will ensure they are presented to Members for consideration.

2. Project Taunton Progress

- 2.1 Despite the severe economic recession afflicting the country and the world we have much to be thankful for. The planned regeneration of our town is still generating a lot of interest and major projects are under way. Some notable achievements being:-
- 2.2 Inner Relief Road construction is now well under way which includes a new bridge across the River Tone and is scheduled for completion in spring 2011. It is in fact ahead of programme at present so hopefully will open earlier than scheduled as this road will provide much needed relief to the town centre traffic congestion that occurs. It will also provide access to the Tangier area, yet another town centre site for regeneration.
- 2.3 Northern Inner Distributor Road and East Goods Yard - the road construction to extend it to the East Goods Yard has now commenced. This opens up the site for construction of 108 affordable homes being built for Knightstone Housing with funding from the Homes and Communities Agency. Completion is scheduled for March 2011.
 - 2.3.1 The old Livestock Market site and car park - planning consent has been granted for the first phase of the riverside development works and our development partners St Modwen are hopeful they will shortly be submitting a planning application for offices and homes on the car park site. Serious negotiations are under way for a pre-let of a 20,000 sq ft office building as part of this phase.
- 2.4 Somerset County Cricket Club has successfully completed and opened their new conference centre which is a great addition to the facilities Taunton can offer. They have the ability to serve 350 diners at functions and a similar number can be accommodated in the Long Bar at a separate drinks reception if required. An exciting future project on the cards is the possibility of a new hotel utilising part of the car park on St James Street side overlooking the pitch. Feasibility studies are presently being carried out.
- 2.5 High Street and the Orchard Centre - an exclusivity agreement was entered into with the owners of the Orchard Centre giving them one year to demonstrate they can design a workable scheme that will improve our retail offer in Taunton at affordable cost. This agreement runs until September 2010 and from work so far, it is looking positive that a workable scheme can be produced. If an acceptable scheme is produced then the developers have a further six months to agree heads of terms for a development or sale contract.

3. Hinkley Point Opportunities

- 3.1 Even though Hinkley Point is not within Taunton Deane we do recognise that with such a massive project taking place on our doorstep we must ensure that opportunities for employment and trade are made the most of for our community. In this respect we have received presentations from EDF, met with relevant Portfolio Holders from Somerset County Council to link in with their economic development aims and pressed the case for wider Somerset economic benefits at the County and District Leaders and Chief Executive's meetings.
- 3.2 As a result of pressing our case we now have a Nuclear Development Update presentation arranged for 28 July 2010 for Leaders and Chief Executives of all Somerset authorities. I am also concerned that of the scheduled round of public consultation meetings commencing on 9 July 2010, none are scheduled for our communities in Taunton Deane. I believe this to be a mistake and will be working to rectify this.
- 3.3 We must recognise and grasp the opportunities that will arise if this development proceeds and I believe Taunton Deane Borough Council needs to be very proactive to ensure our community benefits. After all this will be the largest development project ever undertaken in the South West if it proceeds

4. Taunton Cultural Consortium

- 4.1 Recently the 2009 – 2010 report from the Cultural Consortium was sent to me which is a report on the fourth year's work of the consortium. I must commend this organisation who are our protectors and promoters of cultural regeneration in Taunton. I particularly extend my thanks to Max Hebditch and his committee for the work they do on a voluntary basis. For our part I acknowledge for the Council that culture is an absolutely essential part of the huge regeneration taking place and it must form an integral part of our thinking when producing our development plans.
- 4.2 Under "Key Points" of the report, it is pragmatic in recognising that we have difficult economic times ahead. But, the plea is that as one of the funding authorities we should pay particular attention to continuing the development of the Cultural Quarter as it is needed for the wider successful economic development of Taunton Deane. It has great economic benefit in its own right. I do have considerable sympathy with this view and I do believe that the Castle Green works should proceed and the extension of the Brewhouse has to be a priority as and when resources allow.

5. Affordable Housing Day

- 5.1 I was delighted to attend and open the Affordable Housing Day in The Deane House and my congratulations to Lesley Webb and staff for such a successful day judging by the number of exhibitors and attendees. I opened the first exhibition five years ago and in the intervening period Taunton Deane has facilitated the construction of 511 new homes which is an extremely creditable effort. Even though we are presently in difficult economic times, the need for housing still remains and more so for affordable houses. With a need established from the last survey of 576 affordable house required per annum it gives a clear indication why this is, and remains, an absolute priority of this Council

6. Funding News

- 6.1 Let me end on some good news just breaking as I write this. I have received two letters from Grant Shapps MP, Minister for Housing and Local Government dated 2 July 2010, notifying us of release of the following:-
- 6.2 Growth Point funding of £2,200,000 as first announced in 2009. We have to satisfy various points as to how this money will be used to achieve the Government's aims of increasing the housing supply but we have clear plans to move forward so this is not seen as an obstacle. It is to be welcomed and further details of how and where it can be used will be produced shortly.
- 6.3 Eco-Housing Grant - we did not expect this funding stream to be continued but we welcome an award of 50% of that previously agreed which will be extremely welcome in our bid to develop sustainable homes. Based on the 50% award we will be receiving £325,000 and again there are conditions to be fulfilled so the use and allocation of this funding will be the subject of a further report in due course.
- 6.4 Government has made it clear that these funding streams have been released to assist local authorities to raise the rate of house-building which is at a desperately low ebb; the lowest rate of build since 1924, and to improve sustainability of the houses built.

Councillor John Williams

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Report of Councillor Mark Edwards – Planning and Transportation

The recent change in Government followed by the change in administration of the Council has meant a review of a number of areas relating to this portfolio.

I am challenging the officers to look at all aspects of the Planning process and see what changes can or should be made with regards the position of this Council and to make sure that we address any concerns or problems that the community encounters or challenges.

We have to be careful not to be too reactive to all signals of change from central Government but have to be minded that change is going to occur and change that will potentially fundamentally alter how the Council operates its planning function. One message is clear - there will be change and more decisions will be made locally.

1. Regional Spatial Strategy and the Core Strategy

- 1.1 Eric Pickles has confirmed that the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) will be abolished and although it will take legislation to do so, we should no longer consider it as material for the development of Core Strategies.
- 1.2 The demise of the RSS means some changes to our work on the Core Strategy. The latest changes in the RSS meant that Taunton was required to accommodate a housing target of 18,000 new homes by 2026.
- 1.3 We had, and still have, an evidence base that around 14,000 new homes are needed in Taunton and a total of 17,300 required for the district as a whole. However, we want housing growth that is broadly in sync with employment growth. We are therefore doing some further work on what the opportunities for employment growth are and will then calculate this against housing numbers.
- 1.4 We also have to take account of other studies – such as the Strategic Housing Market Assessment which tells us what the future housing needs are within Taunton Deane and the population trajectories which help to inform future needs. Whatever the final figures are, they need to be well evidenced and justifiable, or we will face the prospect of having an “unsound” Core Strategy and equally lose the confidence of our community that projections are based on sound evidence.

1.5 Whilst we are taking time to consider these issues, work on other aspects of the Core Strategy will continue. However, it does mean that the timetable we were working to may, but not definitely, be delayed slightly.

2. Five Year Supply

2.1 Whilst we need this time to ensure we are proposing what is best for the future of the district, presently not having a five year land supply could leave us open to development where we might not have planned it.

2.2 We therefore need to move as quickly as possible to consider all the information coming forward and move to agree a sound Core Strategy that will set the scene for the planned and prosperous development of Taunton Deane. We do presently have a five year supply based on the recent inclusion of Nerrols and Cades Farm as interim sites.

2.3 The Government has indicated that they will be addressing the problem of the five year supply in particular to stop developers forcing their will on the community by challenging the Council and threatening to develop land on the basis that they believe they will win on appeal. This is far from satisfactory and I am in contact with Grant Shapps MP the Minister for Housing seeking further confirmation of the changes being proposed.

2.4 The following quote is from Grant Shapps MP Minister for Housing taken directly from Hansard in answer to questions around development. It may create more questions than answers but certainly gives a flavour of the Governments thought process.

“There is the question of the five-year land target. In the previous Administration’s view, unless local authorities planned for five, or even 15, years’ worth of land availability for housing, land simply would not become available. That is because they simply did not trust people.

By contrast, we have said that, with the abolition of Regional Spatial Strategies, we will ensure that the incentive scheme is all that is required to guarantee that local authorities will want to look a reasonable distance in advance to decide whether they need to make land available. That can be done according to local objectives, with local plans in mind and without reference to Regional Spatial Strategies imposed on the area by national Government.

I confirm to my hon. Friend that, although we will not impose five-year plans, we freely expect that many councils will want to adopt them. They may want to look ahead, mainly for reasons of their own financial and sustainable development, to see whether they want to pinpoint land because they will know that a large chunk of their funding will be down to their decision about how much development they want in their area. I confirm to my hon. Friend that the decision will be a local one”.

- 2.5 The indication is that changes will be more of a carrot rather than stick approach with Government incentives for growth but there is also a clear indication that we still need to be planning for the future and the new administration at Taunton Deane has every intention of doing so.

3. The Planning Process

- 3.1 I have concluded that the time is right to hold a review of the Planning process in Taunton Deane. We have to make sure that the service is fit for purpose and delivers what is required of the residents, local professionals and developers in a quick and efficient way without compromising the processes, which protect our communities from inappropriate development.
- 3.2 I believe that improvements can be made and I will work with the officers to instigate this review. There will be more detail to follow on this within the next month.

4. Planning Applications

- 4.1 There are two significant applications being progressed at present:-

- **Tesco**

Tesco are about to submit a planning application to extend their Castle Street store in Taunton. The proposal will be in line with the plans shown at their recent public consultation event. The proposed net floor space would increase by 1,300 square metres from 2,792 to 4,092.

The additional car parking (54 spaces) would be provided on land to the north of the existing car park across Marshalsea Walk and the proposed cycle link to Somerset College and Castle School could be facilitated.

- **Firepool**

St Modwen have submitted an outline planning application for the Priory Bridge Road Car Park site as part of the Firepool redevelopment proposals. The proposed development consists of:-

- Up to 11,200 square metres of office accommodation;
- Up to 49 residential apartments;
- Up to 4,475 sq m of hotel accommodation;
- Up to 112 car parking spaces to serve the offices (and potentially hotel) and a further 52 spaces to serve the residential apartments;
- Within the identified building zones the maximum height will be no greater than 24m (including plant);
- Two vehicular access points both of which will be taken from Priory Bridge Road; and

- Associated landscaping and infrastructure.

It is expected that this application will be determined by the Planning Committee on 22 September 2010.

Councillor Mark Edwards

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Report of Councillor Joanna Lewin-Harris – Community Leadership and Communications

1. Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)

- 1.1 The LSP has recently appointed Steve Rose to advise on the development of the LSP, establishing its key priorities and the most effective structure to ensure progress is made against them. This appointment (8 days of Steve Rose's time) is funded by the South West Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (SW RIEP). This work is currently going on and there will be an initial briefing to members at Community Scrutiny on 20 July 2010.
- 1.2 This is an important piece of work as, in my view, the LSP has long struggled to define its role. There is clearly value in the partnership approach and I very much hope that this process leads to a more focussed body, with clear (and possibly more limited) aims and a structure specifically designed to deliver those aims.
- 1.3 One of the main ways in which Taunton Deane plans to tackle the deprivation priority is by developing a Priority Areas Strategy. This is currently being developed by the Strategy Unit. The initial stage of the work is assembling as much information as possible about the deprived wards including a complete picture of the public sector spend in them. Community engagement will follow at the end of the year. The aim is to have a long term Priority Areas Strategy and shorter term (3 year) Action Plan agreed by the end of 2011.
- 1.4 The LSP has set up a Priority Areas Sub-Group with the Chairs of the Taunton East and North Taunton Partnerships and also the Chairs of the Multi Agency Groups for each area. The sub-group will act as a sounding board for taking forward the Priority Areas Strategy and will also help to improve discussion and links between the two areas.
- 1.5 North Taunton Partnership has organised a programme of activities for young people every Tuesday between 11 am and 3 pm during the summer holidays. For details contact Mark or Lesley on 01823 353643 or email rmll@hotmail.co.uk or lesley.resource@btconnect.com.
- 1.6 On 21 August, there will be a Community Day in and around the All Saints Church and the Link Centre, Halcon from noon to 4 pm. For details contact Karen Cole or David Baker on 350788 or email chair@linkpartnership.org or manager@linkpartnership.org

1.7 Energise has organised an Activity Day on 26 August in Vivary Park 12 noon to 4 pm. For details contact Craig Lloyd on 07919 540989 or email clloyd@somerset.gov.uk

1.8 Councillors would be most welcome at any of these events.

2. Youth Initiatives Fund

2.1 £30,000 was set aside in this year's budget to fund projects which help to improve the lives of children and young people within Taunton Deane (the Youth Initiatives Fund).

2.2 Any applications for a grant from this scheme should show that they will benefit children and young people from Taunton Deane, target local need and be in line with our Corporate Priorities. I would also be keen to favour schemes which attract match funding.

2.3 It is currently proposed that decisions on applications to the Youth Initiatives Fund should be made by the Portfolio Holder for Community Leadership, with support from the Community Development Team and advice from external partners and groups where appropriate.

2.4 Detailed proposals on a mechanism for allocating monies from this fund will come to Community Scrutiny on 20 July 2010.

3. Communications

3.1 Many of the press releases issued over the past couple of months have, very sadly, been in connection with the losses suffered by 40 Commando Royal Marines. I very much welcome the lead the Mayor has taken in recognising the sacrifice made by these fine young men, paying our respects to them, expressing our collective grief and wish to support the families and friends of those who have died.

3.2 Other press releases have covered happier topics: the opening of the new play areas in Lyngford Park and Hamilton Gault, the successful Affordable Housing Open Day, re-opening Station Road public toilets, free parking in Wellington during the visit of the Tour of Britain in September and the Regeneration in Halcon, Taunton.

3.3 I would be interested to know how many members actually use, or even know how to access, the Members Portal? This was an initiative led by the Member Development Steering Group and has the potential to be a valuable tool but my guess is that very few Members make use of it.

3.4 It should function as an on-line library for Councillors, providing easy access to a wide range of information. Currently the information on it is patchy and not always easy to find, but it is not worth putting a lot of

officer/Member time into improving it if is not used. I would welcome feedback.

Councillor Mrs Joanna Lewin-Harris

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Report of Councillor Norman Cavill - Economic Development and the Arts

1. Economic Development

- 1.1 As a result of the Core Council Review, the Economic Development Section has been ably managed by Stephanie Payne and assisted by Matthew Parr for the last couple of months. Our thanks go to them for ensuring the delivery of the ongoing work load, and keeping the links with our partners and organisations.
- 1.2 David Evans was appointed to the post of Economic Development specialist and started in the middle of June. He is now reviewing how we will deliver our services alongside the Development Strategy that we have recently adopted. We look forward in the near future to the return of Hattie Winter, who will take up her appointment on a part time basis in August 2010.
- 1.3 The Core Council Review also deleted the post of Arts Development Officer from Economic Development and very recently transferred the Arts budget to the Community Development Lead.

2. Local Economic Partnerships (LEPs)

- 2.1 On the 29 June 2010, the Government sent a letter informing all Local Authorities that it wished to see economic development business led. This presents an opportunity for Councils to work with businesses, strategically and practically, in moving the economy of the area forward. The Government has requested that the proposals for new LEPs be submitted by 6 September 2010.
- 2.2 This is a tight time scale, requiring a significant amount of work from our officers as it will be necessary for a report to be submitted to the Executive by August 2010. We are fortunate to have well established links with businesses in the Taunton area, however, any submission will be much wider than just Taunton Deane.

3. Proposed Hinkley Point C

- 3.1 The proposed EDF development will be without doubt the major project in the South West for many years to come. Our officers have been striving to ensure that the enormous economic benefits from that development are shared throughout Somerset, rather than being restricted to the northern end of the

County.

- 3.2 The Economic Development department has ensured that good publicity has been given to businesses for the first information event, which was scheduled for 6 July 2010 in Bridgwater. This presents an opportunity to understand the planning stages and the likely supply chains.

4. **Low Carbon Economy**

- 4.1 Achieving funding which will enable the delivery of our Economic Development strategy projects is becoming ever more difficult. Several applications have been made and their outcome is awaited. If successful it will enable such projects as the retro fitting of Duke Street flats to proceed.
- 4.2 A green exhibition is being planned which will take place on 7 – 9 October 2010. The exhibition will give local businesses an opportunity to showcase their green products and services, and give the public the chance to learn more about a low carbon economy.

5. **Local Action for Rural Communities (LARC)**

- 5.1 The Moors and Levels LARC run two project grants schemes, a main scheme which has had a large number of applications, and a small business grant programme for funds between £1000 and £5000. The latter is to assist the development of small businesses and enable them to reduce their carbon footprint. There is an opportunity here, which the Economic Development team is promoting, for businesses operating within these areas.
- 5.2 To further assist businesses in finding sources of finance, our officers are considering producing a grant directory for business and community groups. This would be linked to Taunton Deane's Homepage. It would include LARC small business grants and other information such as from the Fredericks Foundation.

6. **Taunton Tourist Information Centre (TIC)**

- 6.1 I should like to take this opportunity to thank Jill Cooper, Kathy Epps and Eleanor Samuel for the many years of loyal and excellent service that they have given to the TIC. The team is now made up of Andrew Hopkins, Jane Pemberton and assisted by Grace Rayson. The opening hours have been slightly reduced, and the centre now closes at 4.30pm.
- 6.2 The TIC has maintained its income levels on target, and a representative of Fyne Court is now at the TIC each Monday, from 9.30am to 2.00pm to promote the work of the Trust in the area. As ever, a wide variety of tickets are on sale, and the travel centre has just signed up a self catering agency 'Cottages4U'. Do take

the opportunity of meeting the team at Taunton Flower Show.

7. Asset Management

- 7.1 The various surveys required for planning permission for the redevelopment of the old nursery at Mount Street, Taunton are now virtually complete. This will enable an outline planning application to be submitted within the next couple of months.
- 7.2 The planning permission for the land at Frobisher Way, Taunton for industrial units which has lapsed is now being applied for again. All the regulations have changed, the additional work is all but complete and an outline planning application should be submitted within the next week or so.
- 7.3 The Auction Room at the Old Market site is to be used for an Arts Exhibition, starting on 10 July 2010, and afterwards will be let on a short term lease.
- 7.4 Other work continues to ensure that best use is made of our assets as laid out in the Asset Management Plan which has recently been presented to Council.

Councillor Norman Cavill

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Report of Councillor Ken Hayward – Environmental Services

1. Environmental Health Team

- 1.1 There has been considerable change in the Environmental Health Team, in terms of increased workload and reductions in staff. Add to this an anticipated busy summer with lots of events coming up in the next few weeks which will keep them busy - the Flower Show, Buddhafield and the Brewhouse organised events in Vivary Park all requiring considerable input from Environmental Health. Despite these challenges I am pleased to report that, Charlotte Dale and her Team have taken a proactive approach to their work, and are well-motivated. They are an excellent team.

Air Quality

- 1.2 Our Air Quality specialist, Sarah Taylor has left the Council to concentrate on family life. The in depth knowledge and skills needed for this role are not readily available within the local area and we are currently looking at outsourcing some of the valuable work she did to University of West of England (who have previously done some work for us), and sharing out the less technical work among the four remaining members of Environmental Protection.

Food Health and Safety

- 1.3 The Food, Health and Safety Team have reported to me that they are noticing an increase in poorly performing businesses. The biggest majority are, of course, continuing to maintain good standards in this tough time for businesses, but with some their standards are slipping.
- 1.4 Recent complaints and inspections have resulted in a considerable increase in the amount of time and visits needed to improve standards to an acceptable level. Staff resources are targeting businesses who are putting public health at risk; however this may mean delays to the inspection of the lower risk businesses.
- 1.5 Food Officers have been working closely with butchers on a one to one basis to improve standards, following the publication of the second Pennington Report on E.Coli O157 (summary report circulated for information last year).
- 1.6 Officers have carried out very thorough and detailed inspections in accordance with the advice in the report and found that butchers needed additional help with their food safety management systems. It is hoped that

through this proactive approach, the time invested with the butchers will help them improve working practices in the long term and build good working relationships with the trade.

- 1.5 We have now had the Food Standards Audit final report, and as reported by my predecessor, Cllr Tim Slattery, the auditors were particularly impressed with our internal monitoring procedures, how we assess Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) compliance in our businesses, and also the blank action plan that we send out with all our letters. The minor recommendations they made have been actioned.

Licensing

- 1.6 Licensing are carrying out a statutory consultation on the Licensing Act Policy, this has to be done every three years. There have been some very minor amendments, and we are anticipating little feedback. At the time of writing, this is planned to go to the trade and public on 9 July 2010 and ends on 24th September 2010.

Pest Control

- 1.7 The Pest Control Service has continued since the Core Council Review with one officer (previously two), however the service is getting very busy with wasp treatments and we are likely to have to turn away potential customers if demand increases much further.
- 1.8 It is anticipated that the level of service available to the public will decrease when the Pest Controller is absent from work, however two members of Environmental Protection are being trained to carry out emergency pest treatments to provide holiday or sick cover.
- 1.9 We are currently looking at the work carried out over the whole year to ensure we are as cost effective as possible, and potentially expanding the advice and services we can offer to other local authorities on seagull control as we have an officer in Environmental Protection with considerable expertise in this area.

Private Water Supply Regulations

- 1.10 The new Private Water Supplies Regulations came into force on 1 January this year and have completely changed how local authorities inspect/enforce private supplies. The main aim of these new regulations is to bring the quality of the water supplied by private supplies in line with mains water. This is achieved by introducing Risk Assessments from 'source to tap' and giving Councils more powers to make sure this happens (notices/prosecutions).
- 1.11 The guidance document telling local authorities how to implement the new regulations (over 600 pages in length) was meant to come out at the same time as the legislation but did not – we had to wait until mid-April for this to

arrive and even now it is classed as a 'living draft' and has already been amended since first being released. We are still waiting for exact definitions on information provided in the guidance from the Drinking Water Inspectorate.

- 1.13 Taunton Deane has been preparing itself as best as it can for these new regulations and everything from the analysis/laboratory/courier collection arrangements to draft letters are in place and ready to go. As the Executive Member I approved the new fee structure at the end of May. These fees have now been published. It is anticipated that we will start sampling/risk assessing during July 2010. This is required to be far more detailed than in the past and will increase the amount of time spent on this area of work. Commercial private water supplies are being prioritised this year with domestic supplies being sampled/risk assessed next year.¹
- 1.14 I am assured by Simon Moon that Taunton Deane is well prepared for the new regulations, and that we are on par with Somerset's other District Councils. The regulations bring a lot more extra work that we previously did not do which Simon says "is a challenge in these difficult times when resources are tight." but would like to assure Members that "although it may be a while before we catch up with everybody on a private supply, we will do our best."

Public Toilets

- 1.15 The public lavatories in Station Road, Taunton were reopened on 29 June 2010. As Members are aware, they were closed in April as a cost-cutting measure but budget efficiencies have now been identified which have enabled this important public facility to be provided once again.
- 1.16 The loos are the only public facilities on the station side of town, and part of the decision making process was, for me, the knowledge that some 'clients' were using the public gardens in this area, which of course is totally unacceptable. I am pleased we have found the money to ensure that they can be reopened as this forms part of our new administration's commitment to maintain services which we know are valued by the community. This is proof of our commitment.
- 1.17 I do not however want to just maintain these services. It is my aspiration to improve them. I have therefore asked officers to look at innovative ways in which we can further improve facilities across Taunton Deane with crucially little or no extra burden on the public purse.

Welfare Funerals

- 1.18 The number of Welfare Funerals arranged by Environmental Protection has increased rapidly over the past few months. Colleagues in other Councils have reported similar trends. Numbers have gone from approx 12 per year to

¹ TDBC has approximately 350 private water supplies

11 since January 2010. It is anticipated that this time consuming area of work will continue to increase over the next few years.

- 1.19 Note: Welfare funerals are arranged by Environmental Health when no next of kin can be found. The costs are kept to a minimum by the funeral directors as a service to the community, but are still around £900, plus officer time spent trying to locate family members. As we have Musgrove Park Hospital in our area we receive more than our neighbouring local authorities, and we often have to travel outside of the area to deal with the personal effects of the deceased.

2. Waste Management

Somerset Waste Board

- 2.1 Councillor Mary Whitmarsh and I took our seats for the first time on the Somerset Waste Board at its Annual General Meeting (AGM) on 25 June 2010. Mr Derek Yeomans was appointed Chairman of the Board for the forthcoming year, Mr Nigel Woolcombe-Adams as Vice-Chairman.
- 2.2 With regard to the review of Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy, it had been intended to carry public consultation on the revision of the Somerset Waste Partnership's Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy between June-August 2010. A number of stakeholder workshops were held in November 2009, March and May 2010.
- 2.3 There was strong consensus that the Board should continue to pursue a waste minimisation and recycling led strategy, with aspirations to drive down average arising per household and maximise recycling and/or composting of the material that is discarded. Despite narrowing down the field of options and investigating the financial and environmental costs associated with each, there was no clear consensus among stakeholders or Board members about an energy recovery route for the remaining residual waste. It was therefore resolved:-
- a) to confirm that the Board requires more information before it can recommend a preferred option; and
 - b) That the strategy review be extended with a view to identifying a preferred option by March 2011 and completing public consultation within 12 months (that is, by the time of the next AGM). This is effectively a nine month extension.

SORT IT Plus

- 2.4 Officers reported a problem-free first Phase rollout, resulting in the plastic and cardboard kerbside collection being provided to around 27,000 properties within Taunton Deane.

- 2.5 The scheduled September expansion of service will be provided to another 20,000 properties which will represent district-wide coverage of the service. There has been no slippage to the service commencement dates and it is expected services will begin during the weeks commencing the 13 and 20 September 2010. After the September service expansion all suitable properties will be receiving a kerbside collection of plastic and cardboard throughout Taunton Deane.
- 2.6 Unfortunately there are some properties such as flats, to which it will remain difficult to provide a box recycling service. They are currently offered a slightly different service where wheeled bins containing recycling are collected. Due to confines of the method of collection these properties are restricted to collections of glass, paper and cans. However we are looking at methods to provide this service to these locations in the next financial year.
- 2.7 I have received some communication on the removal of the Bring Banks – a few complaints. Members will recall that the reason for the early removal of these Bring Banks was in order to release money to facilitate the Sort It Plus rollout. We have had only a few complaints and we have evidence that traders were using them. Members also are asked to bear in mind that this final phase is now just nine weeks away.
- 2.8 We have asked Bruce Carpenter to consider bringing forward the rollout schedule for the final phase of Sort It Plus in Taunton Deane. However, this is not possible – the new collection vehicles will not be available until September.

Fly Tipping

- 2.9 The incidents of fly tipping have fallen again in the first three months of this year from 135 in 2008/2009, 134 in 2009/2010 and down to 96 in this period this year. Possibly as a result of recent enforcement action.
- 2.10 One of those resulted in a Simple Caution being issued, and accepted, regarding the fly-tipping of hardcore/rubble in a lay-by off Haydon Lane, Taunton. The person responsible attended the Council Offices for an interview and admitted the offence. This information has been forwarded to the National Criminal Database for recording purposes.
- 2.11 Street cleansing - the recent return to Encams for NI195 for last year (2009/2010) also shows an increase in the standards of cleanliness for the Borough and are above the national average.

3. Climate Change / Carbon Management

- 3.1 NI 185 Reporting – Percentage CO₂ reduction from local authority operations. We have submitted our return on time – the only Authority in Somerset to do so! An overall reduction of 7.6% (4,806 tonnes CO₂ in 2008/2009 to 4,441 tonnes in 2009/2010).
- 3.2 NI 186 Reporting – Reducing CO₂ emissions. Torsten Daniel is sketching out an Action Plan and Roger Mitchinson is preparing a presentation on why we are doing it and what it entails, for the meeting of the Local Strategic Partnership on 17 August 2010.
- 3.3 **Carbon Management Plan (CMP) and 10/10.** The CMP was agreed by the Executive on 28 April 2010. Current CMP savings for 10/10 is c5%. Kevin Toller and Torsten Daniel are continuing one-to-one meetings with Managers and Green champions campaign to find the extra 5%.
- 3.4 I am acutely aware that Members' views on the topic of Climate Change differ wildly, and I count myself amongst the sceptics. However, I take a pragmatic view. It is now undisputed that fossil fuels are a finite resource. As the supply/demand balance on oil shifts (some say it has already happened, others say we are looking at that shift to occur within the next 5 to 10 years), so we shall have significant changes in the way we consume fossil fuels forced upon us.
- 3.5 It is my belief that as a Local Authority we have an obligation to be leaders in the management of that change. I am therefore delighted to provide Executive support to the matter and ensure that it remains high on the Council's priority agenda and that we were able to 'outshine' many of the other Somerset districts with our proactive approach to the issue.

Councillor Ken Hayward

Council Meeting – 13 July 2010

Report of Councillor Catherine Herbert – Sports, Parks and Leisure

1. Parks

- 1.1 I am pleased to be able to contribute to the Taunton in Bloom bid for 2010. Judging day on Monday, 19 July 2010 is coming fast and the team are working hard to make sure Taunton will look its best. The long awaited sensory garden will be completed in time for the day and a special floral display in recognition of the Girl Guide's 100th anniversary will take pride of place in Vivary Park.
- 1.2 The Department are also pleased to be displaying again at the Taunton Flower Show, where they will be using the event to showcase what the business can offer to potential clients.

2. Community Leisure

- 2.1 The summer season of Vivary Park Sunday bandstand concerts have been programmed to run from 6 June 2010 and continue until 5 September. Making a welcome return to Vivary Park in September is the Entertainment Corporation which is this year bringing us the Moscow State Circus.
- 2.2 The summer edition of The Deano has been sent to all primary school aged children in Taunton Deane.
- 2.3 A family fun day is planned to take place in French Weir Park on Sunday 22 August 2010. The event is being organised by the Friends of French Weir Park with assistance from the Community Development Team.
- 2.4 Applications for capital grant aid assistance from the Parish Play Area Grant Scheme have been received and are currently being processed along with applications for assistance from the Council's capital scheme, for voluntary village halls and community centres and sports clubs.

3. Play

- 3.1 The new play areas at Hamilton and Lyngford, Taunton have been officially opened and are well used by the local communities.

- 3.2 The skate park at Hamilton has also been officially opened and is being hailed as a great success with visitors coming from far and wide to enjoy this new facility.
- 3.3 Consultation has started at Greenway Recreation Ground and Taunton Green on two new Play Builder sites, with expected completion by Christmas 2010.

4. Tone Leisure (Taunton Deane) Limited Activities

Sports Development

- 4.1 Over 400 people entered the 13th annual Triathlon race on Sunday, 16 May 2010 at Wellington Sport Centre. The event, which is organised by Tone Leisure in partnership with Somerset RC Triathlon Club and sponsored for the 4th year by Foot Anstey, proved more popular than ever, selling out in just two days. Tone Leisure is now planning the Junior Aquathlon for 8-16 year olds, which takes place on 26th September at Queen's College, Taunton.

Young People

- 5.1 Energize held its Easter Activity Day on 15 April 2010 in Vivary Park and over 300 young people attended enjoying a climbing wall, bouncy castle and circus skills workshops. Local organisations hosted stands, such as the Scouts, County Youth Workers, and Tone Leisure Fitness Teams who provided information on activities and services in the town. Energize are now planning for the Summer Holiday Activity Day on Thursday, 26 August 2010 in Vivary Park.

Health Development

- 6.1 Five children and their families successfully completed the Taunton Big Lottery Funded MEND 7-13 Programme in May, achieving exceptional results at the end of the 10 week course. The improvements in the children and their parents/carers included; reduction in Body Mass Index (BMI), improved eating habits and increased physical activity. The focus is now on recruitment of families for programmes in September and January.
- 6.2 In June, Wellsprings Leisure Centre achieved re-recognition as a provider of the ProActive Scheme. A detailed portfolio was submitted and an on-site assessment involving the Fitness Team was carried out by Somerset Physical Activity Group, with complimentary feedback being given by the team of assessors.

- 6.3 Since its start in 2005 Tone Leisure's "Walk Well in Taunton" Health Walk Programme has gone from strength to strength. 3,385 participations were recorded between 2009 and 2010 compared to 254 five years ago. The average number of walkers per outing has also risen from 11 to 31 in the same period, with the number of walks provided increasing from 24 to 110.
- 6.4 A new look Summer Programme was launched in June with the addition of new shorter led walks of 1.5 miles at a slower pace, aimed at older people who may have a lower level of fitness.

Play Development

- 7.1 Tone Leisure has co-ordinated a Giant Play Day on Sunday, 18 July 2010 (1-4 pm) at Wellsprings Leisure Centre. This has been supported by Somerset Play Forum and there will be lots of activities to take part in, including pillow bash, bouncy castle, family fun sports, trampolining, skateboarding, archery, crafts, street dance, woodland crafts and den building.
- 7.2 Wild About Play Days are funded by the Big Lottery and activities include football, cricket, lots of different games, parachutes, den building, woodland arts and crafts. All the activities are free to attend and are suitable for children aged 5-12 years. Children under the age of 8 must be accompanied by an adult.
- 7.3 Wild About Play Days will be held at 8 locations across Taunton Deane between 28 July and 18 August 2010.

Active Lifestyles

- 8.1 A six week Active Living programme has been drafted and due to start in three Active Living Centres in July along with free Flexercise Training being offered to a volunteer or staff member in each centre. Working in partnership with the Alzheimer's Society we also plan to deliver a Memory Walk in 2010.
- 8.2 An additional seven Community Activators have been recruited for Active Somerset since May 2010. An Outdoor Circuits class is set to start in Halcon through the Link Centre on Wednesday, 21 July 2010.

Facility News

- 9.1 Following the announcement of the withdrawal of the Free Swimming revenue funding, further analysis and close communication between Taunton Deane and Tone Leisure is currently taking place, and a report will be coming to Community Scrutiny later this month.
- 9.2 At the time of writing, there is still no word on the Wellington Sports Centre Capital Bid from the Free Swimming Initiative.

- 9.3 At St James Street Pool works to the pool disinfection, circulation and filtration system will start in September 2010, which will alleviate the recent problems with pool water quality. In the interim, staff have instigated additional water testing regimes and extra bacterial assessments in order to maintain water quality within the required parameters. In recent weeks, in particular, this has proved to be very challenging and there have been some unplanned closures to the small pool.
- 9.4 A full programme of summer events is ready to launch across the facilities including a full range of children's camps at Wellington Sports Centre, Wellsprings Leisure Centre and Blackbrook Pavilion.
- 9.5 The Summer Events programme at Wellsprings includes an unprecedented third visit from Jimmy Carr and a number of regional gymnastic and trampolining events.
- 9.6 Taster sessions for both adults and juniors are being offered at Vivary Golf Course during July. These are being offered at no charge and provide the ideal introduction to golf.
- 9.7 Tone Leisure staff will be attending community events being run during July and August in the North Taunton area, aiming to increase awareness of the activity programmes on offer and to enable those interested to give activities a try.
- 9.8 All Tone Leisure sites are being assessed against a national, best practice health and safety standard, called LeisureSafe, over the next year. Station Road Pool was the first of the Taunton Tone sites to undergo a rigorous, 2 day assessment. The site has performed very well, achieving a score of 73% (well above its target of 65%) demonstrating compliance against a full range of safety indicators.

Councillor Mrs Catherine Herbert

Council Meeting – 13 July 2010

Report of Councillor Jean Court-Stenning – Housing Services

1. Tenant Services Management Board

- 1.1 The Board has now held its first two meetings. Mr Dustyn Etherington was elected Chairman and two Councillors have been appointed to the Board - Councillors Bob Bowrah and Steve Brooks.
- 1.2 One of the first decisions made by the Board was to recommend the approval of the response to the Government's consultation concerning Housing Revenue Account reform proposals, which was subsequently agreed at a Special Executive and Full Council.

2. Affordable Housing

- 2.1 Another successful Affordable Housing Open Day was held on 10 June 2010, attended by more than 200 visitors.
- 2.2 Stands included one from a firm of solicitors offering a low cost package to purchasers of part-ownership properties, a transaction which requires more complex legal documents than outright ownership does.
- 2.3 Other stands included a display of the plans for the proposed scheme on National Trust land at Cheddon Road, Taunton which have been submitted for planning approval.
- 2.4 Other affordable housing schemes are well under way with completion of all units expected this year at Holyoake Street, Wellington, Westford and the Denmark Inn, Taunton whilst some completions will be also be delivered at Hyde Lane, Creech St. Michael.
- 2.5 Whilst this is good news, many more homes are needed and I am pleased to report that there are more than ten other schemes in the pipeline with work soon to start at Firepool Lock and Wordsworth Drive, Taunton.

3. Regeneration of Halcon, Taunton

- 3.1 The project at Halcon, which the Executive recently approved developing further, subject to funding being found, is more than an affordable or social housing scheme - it is about a community and its needs. It will form part of the Council's Regeneration Strategy for deprived areas which is currently being developed.

- 3.2 The community consultation is proceeding apace, with meetings being held with small groups, such as owner-occupiers and individuals who live in the affected roads. Drop-in surgeries, which I will attend, will also be held at the Link Centre, to enable the wider community to express their views and share both ideas and anxieties.
- 3.3 The consultation evenings and Community Scrutiny Committee meeting which were held at Halcon School were well attended by residents and have produced some positive feedback. Tenants have been reassured by learning about the statutory Home Loss Payment and displacement compensation, which would be paid to private, as well as Council tenants.

4. **Somerset Strategic Housing Project**

- 4.1 The project is still in existence, having been formed to address issues which received a red flag from the Audit Commission. Although Comprehensive Area Assessment has gone away, it is the general view that some of the issues raised have not.
- 4.2 Leadership passed to Mendip District Council on 18 June 2010 and Taunton Deane will continue to be actively involved in this collaboration. I have attended one meeting of the group and another which was to have been held recently was postponed by the Chairman, Councillor Ric Pallister, due to the number of changes coming out of Whitehall needing to be digested.

Councillor Mrs Jean Court-Stenning

Council Meeting – 13 July 2010

Report of Councillor Terry Hall – Corporate Resources

1. Customer Contact

- 1.1 During April to June Customer Contact have continued to provide an excellent level of service to telephone callers as well as visitors to The Deane House receptions and Wellington Community Office. This is supported by the latest customer satisfaction results that show that over 90% of callers rate the service as being “very good”.
- 1.2 Customer Contact has now completed the roll out of OLA’s (Operating Level Agreements) for Taunton Deane. These agreements vitally underpin the relationship between the contact centre and the various service departments throughout the Council. They ensure that regular, structured meetings take place between both parties with the aim of discussing the latest issues and trends. Actions are then agreed for the mutual benefit of the service area and the contact centre and this improves service to the end customer.
- 1.3 The figures in the table below show that Customer Contact exceeded agreed standards in each of April, May and June:-

Month	April	May	June
CALLS OFFERED	16092	12756	15025
ABANDONED % [Target less than 5%]	4.21	4.52	4.41
G.O.S.% [Target 80% within 20 Secs]	84.94	81.85	84.58
% Answered 1st POC (Target 85%)	99.1	99.8	99.8

- 1.4 The SAP CRM has now been incorporated into day to day operations. From April to June a total of 3272 enquiries have been dealt with at The Deane House receptions and Wellington Community Office. Housing Reception came under the responsibility of Customer Contact on the 1 April 2010 and has been integrated into the rest of the operation.

2. Revenue and Benefits

- 2.1 As members will be aware, the recent Corporate Scrutiny Committee reviewed the Performance of the Revenues and Benefits Service. Highlights

included the best ever collection of Business Rates achieved in 2009/2010 of 98.9%, improved processing times for working out new claims for Housing and Council Tax Benefit and very positive feedback from customers on the service we provide.

- 2.2 At the end of Quarter 1 of 2010/2011, we are on track to meet all Key Performance Indicators. This is despite the on-going increase in the number of customers contacting us because of financial difficulties they are having. The service has also been able to progress projects to review entitlement to Single Person Discounts, a canvass on Small Business Rate Relief and full roll out of the "There and Then" initiative to enable faster benefit claiming in future.
- 2.3 We submitted our final subsidy claim to the Department for Work and Pensions on time at the end of May 2010. We will be claiming Housing Benefit subsidy of nearly £26,000,000, while our claim for Council Tax Benefit subsidy is £6,500,000. The service is continuing to explore ways to make better use of resources.

3. Performance and Client Team

Client Function

- 3.1 The Client Team monitors the Authority's major partnerships – Southwest One, Tone Leisure and Somerset Waste. The team has been working closely with Tone Leisure to develop and submit the Wellington Sports Centre bid and to analyse the impact of Central Government having cut the free swimming grant.
- 3.2 The Waste Partnership has been rolling out 'Sortit 2' and is due to commence 'Sortit 3' in September. The Client Team is monitoring this rollout and providing support on behalf of the Authority.
- 3.3 In relation to Southwest One the team has continued to implement the new performance monitoring processes agreed last year. This has resulted in the running of the first Business Review Group with representatives from each service and Southwest One attending Corporate Scrutiny in May to present the first of what will become their regular 6-monthly update reports.
- 3.4 The team has also been working directly with the IT service within Southwest One to ensure that the necessary changes are being made to our data security provisions to enable the Authority to maintain compliance with the Government Connect standards. Additionally, the team has been working closely with Southwest One to resolve a number of performance indicator failures.

Corporate Performance Management

- 3.5 We have recently received confirmation from Central Government of the scrapping of the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) inspection programme. Consequently any work we were undertaking to support this has ceased, although the impact has been minimal as CAA was mainly focussed at county level.
- 3.6 The new corporate performance reporting process and 'scorecard', which we introduced last year, is now well 'bedded in' with regular, quarterly reports going to Corporate Management Team (CMT), the Executive and Corporate Scrutiny. The process is delivering, as intended, a mechanism to enable us to quickly pull together a short, factual update on current performance across the Authority. The next stage is to embed this methodology at service level. With this in mind the Performance and Client Team is currently trialling the use of a 'Service Performance Scorecard'.
- 3.7 The processes for managing the Corporate Improvement Plan and Corporate Risk Register are both now back on track with regular reports being made to CMT and the Corporate Governance Committee.
- 3.8 The team has recently taken on the responsibility for managing the Corporate Feedback and Complaints reporting process and will be producing an annual update report to Members. In addition the team is focussing on the completion of the 2009/2010 Annual Report, which is due to be published shortly.

Procurement Transformation

- 3.9 The total savings delivered to date are £450,000. We need to save an additional £700,000 during the current financial year however, current trends indicate a shortfall of £250,000 at the end of the year. We are working closely with the Procurement Team within Southwest One to close the gap. The position is being monitored closely by CMT.
- 3.10 Further savings initiatives are due to start delivering shortly with utilities and office supplies savings due to come into effect from September 2010. Additionally, the Procurement Team will shortly commence a review of our existing contracts and last year's spend data to identify further potential savings opportunities.

Retained Finance

- 3.11 The accounts for 2009/2010 have been completed and signed off by the Corporate Governance Committee. The external auditors will commence their inspection of the accounts on 19 July 2010.

- 3.12 During July we will be reviewing all the earmarked reserves that the Council holds. The major challenge is the budget setting for 2011/2012 and closing the budget gap, which is currently estimated at being £1,300,000. Maggie Hammond has been working with Southwest One on the re-launch of SAP. The re-launch will see Taunton Deane using the full Procure-to-Pay system as designed.

Retained HR (Human Resources)

- 3.13 The key focus for the Retained HR team in the last 2 months has been on the following:-
- Supporting Themes 3 and 5 of the Core Council Review process;
 - Completing the Organisational Management (OM) Structure Project for the SAP re-launch;
 - Developing and maintaining the working relationship with UNISON, ensuring staff consultation on major projects, for example the essential and casual car user review;
 - Working with the Southwest One HR service to develop the Service Development Plan and Improvements with the HR Service;
 - Developing and supporting the recent Staff Briefings/Workshops to feedback on the staff survey results and explain the new 'On TRAC' corporate priorities;
 - Developing the Learning and Development Programme.

SAP System Implementation

- 3.14 The initial phase of the phased re-launch programme, which lasted throughout June, had two objectives:-
- To have all staff that need to access the SAP system log-in to the system to ensure that they have access to the correct programmes within the system.
 - To conduct a pilot exercise, with 12 staff, on the use of the full Procure-to-Pay. The exercises conducted in June have been successful and we are ready to move to phase 2.
- 3.15 Phase 2, which will take place during July and August, will see the launch of the full Procure-to-Pay functionality across the Council. Once in place, this should reduce the amount of manual processing required in the payment process and improve the speed and efficiency with which we pay suppliers. During July detailed training will given to appropriate staff in the use of the Procedure.

- 3.16 In August we will formally move to using the new processes. It is anticipated that there may well be some initial delays in making payments whilst staff get used to the new processes, but these should be minimal.
- 3.17 Phases 3 and 4 of the re-launch, which will see the launching of the 'reporting and notifying and HR Management' functionality, are scheduled to take place in October and November respectively.

4. **Civic Activities**

- 4.1 The Mayor attended the Repatriation of Royal Marines Sergeant Steven William Darbyshire, Lance Corporal Michael Taylor and Marine Paul Warren. Both the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor have also attended Candle lit Vigil Services at All Saints Church, Norton Fitzwarren.
- 4.2 The Mayor has a new official car, a Ford Mondeo with an Econetic, fuel efficient engine which replaces the previous Jaguar. The Sergeant at Mace and Mayor's driver, Mike Coy, has recently attended a training session organised by the Council aimed at further reducing fuel consumption and running costs.

Councillor Terry Hall