

Council Meeting – 19 July 2011

Report of Councillor John Williams – Leader of the Council

1. First Scheduled Full Council of the New Quadrennium

- 1.1 I appreciate we have already held a “special” Full Council meeting but this is the first set piece meeting to occur so I take this opportunity of welcoming all new Councillors and sitting Councillors that have been re-elected.
- 1.2 I look forward to working with you all in a positive manner that will allow the business of the Council to proceed and deliver the best results for the community we serve.
- 1.3 I do operate an “open door policy” so if you have any issues or points to raise please do not hesitate to contact me though your Group Leader or direct. I will do all I can to help.

2. Challenges Facing this Council

- 2.1 Our officers have been working very hard to come up with proposals for Members’ consideration to meet the biggest challenge of all, reduced funding. We are expecting unprecedented cuts of up to 40% in our Revenue Support Grants and other central Government funding.
- 2.2 In addition to this, we have the planned reduction in car park income as parking spaces are lost to implement the regeneration of Taunton and the loss of income because of rising fuel costs and the recession.
- 2.3 All Groups have now been briefed by the Chief Executive about the final phases of the Core Council review and received advice that a Members Pack is being prepared that contains a comprehensive list of cost cutting and income generating proposals. This will contain short term proposals to meet what will be a challenging 2012/2013 budget setting process and even more challenging longer term measures to achieve the reductions of around 40% over the ensuing four years.
- 2.4 We must be under no illusions, there will almost certainly be some very difficult decisions to make to achieve this level of reduction and if any Members doubt the need for urgent and drastic action then I can only refer them to the Medium Term Financial Plan over five years which I reproduce below for ease of reference.

	2012/13 £'000	2013/14 £'000	2014/15 £'000	2015/16 £'000	2016/17 £'000
TDBC Forecast Budget Position	12,230	13,457	15,012	15,636	16,287
Forecast Govt Grant	5,310	4,779	4,301	4,301	4,301
Forecast Govt Grant (CTax Freeze)	137	137	137	0	0
Forecast Council Tax	5,598	5,738	5,881	6,028	6,179
Forecast Resources Available	11,045	10,654	10,319	10,329	10,480
Predicted Budget Gap	1,185	2,803	4,693	5,307	5,807

- 2.5 All of this and we must maintain the present successful momentum on the regeneration of Taunton with, we are advised, the new Viridor building breaking ground this month and serious interest in more development on the Firepool site.
- 2.6 The High Street/Orchard Centre redevelopment is also moving forward with, I would hope, a presentation being made to Members in the next few months but, although essential for the regeneration of Taunton, these all add to the difficult decision making Members have to face to ensure we remain operating within our means.
- 2.7 We must also not overlook the need to maintain essential front line services both statutory and non-statutory where they are valued by our community. It is important that in our budget setting process we do all possible to maintain and protect these.
- 2.8 On the brighter side we do have various new income raising initiatives being given us by Central Government being the Community Infrastructure Levy, (CIL), New Homes Bonus (NHB) and repatriation of Non Domestic National Rates (NNDR) to a locally collected and retained tax but, as always, nothing is as simple as it seems.
- 2.9 CIL, although potentially wide ranging in application, is dedicated to addressing infrastructure deficiencies associated with new development. NHB, although not ring fenced will, in the main, be needed to promote development in an area and ensure the community sees benefit from it. It is also split 80/20% to District and County Council but it does remain a substantial source of income if we achieve our proposed housing numbers. Repatriation of NNDR to local Councils is the least certain at present as Central Government are still working on the detail of this. We can expect a consultation paper in the next two months - see later item in this report under LGA Conference for more detail.
- 2.7 I have referred to the difficult decisions that will be facing Members and I hope this provides an insight and reinforces the need for us to work

together on the undoubted difficult choices ahead to ensure we deliver the best possible service to our local community.

3. Local Government Association (LGA) Conference

- 3.1 Business Rates (NNDR), confirmed by Nick Clegg and Bob Neill, will be repatriated to local councils. There was some question about starting with a level playing field, no Council worse off than at present or a distribution method for NNDR where wealthier Councils subsidise poorer ones.
- 3.2 Nick Clegg wants to see Councils' local tax take back towards 85% as it used to be - this should achieve it but a concern for us has to be the level of risk we take on through potential non payment of rates. We lose out directly whereas now we receive a guaranteed amount irrespective of losses suffered by Central Government.
- 3.3 The North American system was quoted as good practice and one to be followed where possible but I have not checked out how this compares.
- 3.4 Councils will have powers to borrow against future income.
- 3.5 Nick Clegg was followed in a later session by Bob Neill speaking on the same subject. It was reaffirmed that Business Rates will be repatriated to local councils with a timetable of consultation this summer and laid before Parliament by April 2012. The intention is for it to be on the statute books and enacted by April 2013.
- 3.6 This ties in with the two year finance settlement that was granted to us recently when we were expecting a four year settlement. This will allow removal of the Formula grant in 2013 with the introduction of the NNDR retention.
- 3.7 Some redistribution from high income areas to low income areas will be required according to Bob Neill.
- 3.8 They also have to grasp and solve the thorny issue of distribution of repatriated business rates across the two authorities in two tier areas. In answer to a question on this subject, Bob was quite clear they were aware of this and provision would be made. No further detail was provided but we were advised to await the consultation paper.
- 3.9 Other matters:-

Housing borrowings to remove negative subsidy payments

Councillor Peter Charon, Leader Bournemouth Borough Council, asked if any Council was interested in working with Bournemouth to secure funding from the financial markets on a cooperative basis and perhaps gain a better deal collectively rather than individually. They are looking at securing £45m. Other Councils came forward and he had a list requiring

circa £400m in a very short time. I said we would be seeking funds and I would report back to investigate if any benefit was likely to be had working collectively, also to avoid lenders playing individual borrowers off against each other. He is looking to secure funding early, as I know is our intention, to avoid the potential premium of scarcity.

Fortnightly Waste Bins Collection

I believe at long last there is an acceptance in Government that as long as food waste is collected weekly, then fortnightly collections for inert waste is acceptable. That was the clear message given to Ministers by many which seemed to be accepted. Senior Ministers present seemed to accept that systems such as implemented by Taunton Deane were acceptable, economical and efficient in terms of recycling. Hopefully this will prevail and we will be allowed to just get on with it!

Taunton Regional Fire Centre

Although we do not have responsibility I raised this with Bob Neill on the basis that it was a huge waste of taxpayers money and consequently would not reflect well if allowed to continue. It needed dealing with and linked it with the need to create employment opportunities and our economic development potential. I will be following this up with the Minister.

Housing Issues

A lot of concern about increase in social rents, possible changes to secure tenancy rights, the Localism Bill apparently does not include RSL's within the changes to tenancy rights, we are likely to have to apply but we still have a duty to work with them. There was discussion about the possible application of a two year tenancy for future tenants and New South Wales, Australia was quoted as an example of failure for this proposal. It was reported the huge cost of reviewing all tenancies to identify about the 1% whose circumstances had changed sufficiently to warrant moving them on just did not make the end result worthwhile. It was acknowledged by all speakers we were in the midst of a housing shortage crisis and that only concerted effort by all concerned could improve the housing supply, thus address the housing shortage. A Price Waterhouse Cooper report in association with the Smith Institute was referred to. This was prepared in 2009 but a lot of its content is still relevant, it can be found at:-

<http://www.smithinstitute.org.uk/file/MindtheGapHousingSupplyinaColdClimate.pdf>

Regeneration of Longbridge Motor Car Plant Site

A field trip was arranged to view the above and it was of particular interest because our development partners for the Firepool site, St Modwen, are also the developers for the Longbridge site. Everything about this site is

huge, it is in excess of 400 acres, the existing car assembly plant building has been leased for 30 years by the Chinese company that took over MG, MG Motor UK Limited, and the building is half a mile long. They operate a design and development team from the site at present and eventually the intention is to manufacture components in China and ship them to Longbridge for assembly. It is anticipated at that stage it will require about a 400 workforce. A far cry from the circa 60,000 employed on the site around 2002!

Despite the enormity of the car plant, this only takes up a very small part of the overall site and the aim is to create the “Longbridge Technology Centre”, already a new Bournville College has been constructed of 250,000 sq ft and in total 1.8 million sq ft is allocated to employment use, 2,000 homes, a new £70 million town centre development that will become the new retail and leisure heart of the Longbridge development.

Seeing the scale and complexity of this huge development reaffirms the confidence we have placed in St Modwen when selecting them as our development partners for the major regeneration project on Firepool, which is every bit as important to our future as Longbridge is to Birmingham.

4. Meeting with British Telecom and Openreach

- 4.1 In my last report I reported the County Council efforts to secure funding for a County-wide Broadband service which I am pleased to confirm was successful. Since then, we have met with British Telecom who are in the process of enabling Taunton telephone exchange area under a separate fully funded initiative.
- 4.2 Although no visible work towards this installation is apparent I am pleased to report that a lot of preparatory work is under way. A proposed sequence of work should be available to us and the County Highways Authority very shortly and then a rapid roll out of installation through the latter part of this year and early next. Superfast Broadband should then be available to most on the Taunton exchange by March 2012 at the latest. That has to be great news for Taunton and I will be working with the County Council to ensure rural areas receive an improved service as soon as possible after.

5. Diplomats Visit

- 5.1 In conjunction with our MP, Jeremy Browne, Taunton Deane Borough Council hosted lunch in the Long Room of the Somerset County Cricket Club for seven Ambassadors from East Asian countries namely, Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.
- 5.2 They were visiting a variety of venues on a fact finding mission and to see the opportunities for inward investment and any export trade with local

companies. It was a great opportunity for us to introduce various local businesses that already, or wish to, export overseas and for them to promote their businesses direct.

- 5.3 The ambassadors were well received and were certainly interested in the variety of businesses present some of which already trade in East Asia so have been able to promote themselves to a wider audience. We are aware of some follow up by different businesses and hopefully this will lead to increased or further orders in due course. We will be monitoring this at intervals to measure the ultimate success and that will be by inward investment or increased exports as a result of the visit.
- 5.4 I would like to thank our officers and the staff at the County Cricket ground for organising this event and of course the businesses attending, all at short notice and participating in what I thought was a very well received event at the excellent venue in the Long Room of the Cricket Ground Conference Centre.

6. Longrun Meadow

- 6.1 The Green Cathedral made of living Willow has now been completed and was formally opened at an event held in the evening of the 24 June 2011.
- 6.2 Despite the overcast and, at times, slightly damp sky it was well attended and a very happy gathering. What I found particularly commendable was that the event was wholly organised by the "Friends of Longrun" which is testament to the strong community spirit that wants to ensure Longrun is run by the community, for the community, and we must do all possible to ensure this continues.

7. EDF Meeting

- 7.1 We have continued to interact with EDF whenever possible and shortly have a meeting with them to discuss their proposed "Visitor Centre" and understand the numbers involved and how we, in Taunton Deane, may be able to contribute by broadening the visit with attractions that exist locally.
- 7.2 We are also considering what, if any, Section 106 monies we should be pressing for in connection with the planning applications already made and yet to be made. When raised at a recent Somerset Leaders and Chief Executives meeting it was clear that direct "community benefit payments" were only intended for the Districts and County that were directly affected.
- 7.3 If Taunton Deane felt it should have funding to improve infrastructure or similar then the advice given was to make the case via Section 106 requests to the relevant Planning Authority.

8. Third Way and the Northern Inner Distributor Road (NIDR)

- 8.1 The Third Way is now nearing completion and although we do not have a firm date for the opening, in late June it was given as six to eight weeks time which makes it sometime from the beginning to mid-August. Delays have occurred because of supply difficulties with the stainless steel balustrade for the bridge. A late decision agreed with Wessex Water to renew an underground sewer that was nearly at the end of its useful life, thus avoid ripping up newly laid surfacing if it failed, has also contributed to the delay.
- 8.2 The NIDR is presently the subject of public advertisement by the County Council for the acquisition of land and confirming the route of the new road. I have agreement in principle with the Leader of the County Council that works can commence prior to April 2012 (when the allocated Government funding becomes available) but this will be very much dependent on the progress of any Public Inquiry that may be required following the consultation process.
- 8.3 One thing is certain, the now certainty of the NIDR construction has sparked great interest in available sites fronting it and the new boulevard which has to be tremendous news for the Firepool regeneration and Taunton Deane.

9. Taunton and Somerset Show

- 9.1 I was invited to visit the Taunton and Somerset Show held on 9 and 10 July 2011 at Taunton Racecourse. It was truly an impressive event and one that I hope becomes a regular feature in the calendar of events around Taunton.
- 9.2 The show itself covered an enormous area with an extremely diverse selection of events and stalls. Something to interest everybody. I do hope it turned out to be a real success and my best wishes for the future. Judging by the number of people in attendance, with car parks overflowing by just after midday on Saturday, it certainly appeared to be a popular event and congratulations to the organisers on achieving so much for a new event.

10. And Finally, Glastonbury Festival

- 10.1 On Friday, 24 June 2011 I was invited to attend the Glastonbury Festival on a fact finding tour and particularly to see how Mendip District Council manage and monitor this major event with limited resources.
- 10.2 Some Members will possibly recall that I visited some years ago and the difference from then to now is quite striking, besides the sheer size having increased. Whereas there was previously a certain amount of hands-on

monitoring and managing of the many services that have to be brought together to successfully run an event of this size, it is now most certainly “hands off” with a strict monitoring role only. Services are now provided mainly by private and charitable companies with the active involvement of the Police and Fire Services to maintain order and safety.

- 10.3 It is a fantastic operation, a city about the size of Swindon (circa 177,000 visitors) that is created and removed all in the space of seven to 10 days in the midst of the countryside. To see the sea of tents packed into the fields just leaves one absolutely incredulous that anybody can find their way to their particular spot in the darkness, late at night! I was so glad I was only on a fact finding tour and left the revellers to the mud and finding their tent before darkness fell! However, it has to be acknowledged despite the rain and the mud, the whole atmosphere was one of great enjoyment and irrepressible good humour. It was great to experience this.

Councillor John Williams

Council Meeting – 19 July 2011

Report of Councillor Norman Cavill - Economic Development, Asset Management, Arts and Tourism

1. Keeping Members informed

1.1 Economic Development Delivery Plan

Since completion of the Delivery Plan for 2011 and 2012 earlier this year the Economic Development team's work falls into three themes:-

- Stimulating Business Growth and Investment;
- Ensuring a Skilled and Entrepreneurial workforce; and
- Creating an attractive business environment.

1.2 Taunton Deane Economy Bulletin

The team will circulate the next Quarterly Economic Bulletin at the end of July. Feedback on Members' views on the usefulness of the Bulletin would be welcomed.

1.3 Staffing Issues – welcome to Carla Modley

Carla Modley started working with the Economic Development team at the beginning of June in the role of Economic Projects Officer. Carla's focus is on raising the profile of Taunton Deane and its business community through delivery of a range of media projects.

Some of the projects that Carla will be working on are:-

- Improving the Council's Economic Development Web presence;
- Preparation of a Cultural Events toolkit;
- Preparation of Case Studies of successful Taunton Deane Businesses for issue as media releases;
- Design of a Business e-newsletter;
- Compilation of an Image Library of the Borough;
- Improving and updating existing Economic Development publications;
- Creating a website for the Olympic Torch Relay in Taunton; and
- Assisting the DLO Nursery with its Marketing Plan.

The team now comprises 4.5 staff members, although one of those has been on sick leave since the beginning of the year.

2. Theme 1 Stimulating Business Growth and Investment

2.1 Business Liaison

The team undertakes a proactive programme of visits to larger local businesses with the aim of assisting businesses to realise their growth and investment plans. The team intends to visit 100 businesses per year. Please contact David Evans if you know of a business in your ward that could be assisted.

Organisations recently visited and currently being supported include:-

- Tarmac, Henlade
- Exmoor Plastics, Taunton
- Somerset County Cricket Club, Taunton
- Forward Space Limited, Taunton
- EDF Energy, re Hinkley Point
- IDN Limited, Creech Heathfield
- Relyon, Wellington
- Summerfield Developments
- Mr Miles Tea Shop, Taunton
- Mercedes Dealership, Taunton
- Asda Stores, Taunton
- Somerset College
- Swallowfield, Wellington
- DLO and Taunton Deane Nursery
- GSI Exotech, Taunton
- PCUK Ltd, Culmhead

2.2 Regional Growth Fund Bid

During January the team worked closely with Forward Space Limited, the owner of the Collar Factory (aka Barnicotts) on the submission of a bid to the new Regional Growth Fund. The bid, proposing the refurbishment of the property to create an incubation and business centre, was the only bid forthcoming to the RGF from Somerset.

Forward Space has since heard that the bid was unsuccessful. The team is liaising with the company over the future of the property.

2.3 Rural Post Offices

Hattie Winter is undertaking a programme of visits to Taunton Deane Post Offices to better understand the issues they face, and to come up with a programme of support. In the past two months she has visited:-

- Stawley Post Office, and
- Station Road Post Office, Taunton.

Hattie has also been working with Councillors Bishop and Morrell to lend support to Oake and Bishop's Hull Post Offices respectively.

2.4 Leader's Dinner

The team is organising a 'Leader's Dinner' for the Leader and the Chief Executive in the Autumn (date yet to be finalised) to meet eight local business leaders and to discuss with them their issues and plans.

2.5 South East Asian Ambassadors' Visit to Taunton

On 30 June 2011, the Council hosted a visit by seven Ambassadors and their senior staff from South East Asia. Organised by Jeremy Browne MP the Council also invited a dozen local businesses to the lunch at The County Ground and gave a presentation on the attractiveness of Taunton Deane as a place to live, visit and invest. The event was very well received by the Ambassadors, the businesses and by our MP.

2.6 Shop Front Grants for Wellington and Wiveliscombe

Grants for the following businesses have been progressed since April, as a carry over from the scheme which was funded in 2010/2011:-

- North Street Garden Shop, Wiveliscombe – completed;
- The Larder, Wellington - work to commence in next few weeks;
- Sunseeds, Wellington- as above.

2.7 Support for Rural Business Projects

A small grant fund is available from the Council for rural projects and innovative Renewable Energy projects.

Theme 2

Ensuring a Skilled and Entrepreneurial workforce

3.1 Halcon Regeneration Project

The team plays an active role in the Halcon regeneration project, particularly the generation of employment and training opportunities for residents. Officers are currently organising a business forum for local businesses to consider the opportunities for apprenticeships and local work placements. During May the Economic Development Team met with Job Centre Plus, Somerset College, and the National Apprenticeship Service to consider a collaborative approach to employer engagement and job seeker support.

3.2 Job Clubs for long term unemployed people

The team continues to work with Job Centre Plus to encourage Job Centre Advisors to start referring their job seekers to the Job Clubs. Both Job Clubs (Halcon and Wellington) continue to make good progress, and the team has re-negotiated the Service Level Agreements for 2011/2012 with a view to setting up further provision in Priorswood. The team is investigating extending the role of the Job Clubs to offer enhanced services to job seekers, for example, alongside Somerset College.

3.3 Fredericks Somerset

The Executive agreed in April 2011 to financially support Fredericks Somerset, offering loans to people to start up or enhance their business. The opportunity to start a business has particular relevance during the current climate of redundancies and business closures and provides a route out of deprivation and benefit dependency for many people. A legal agreement between the Council and the Fredericks Foundation for two years has been drafted alongside the scheme being rolled out.

4. Theme 3 Creating an Attractive Business Environment Project Taunton

4.1 Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)

Since November work has been underway to design a LEP covering Somerset, Devon, Plymouth and Torbay. The drafting is being led by a Steering Group comprising the County and Unitary Authorities covering that area as well as business representative organisations (including the Somerset Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses).

Since receiving Ministerial endorsement of the HotSW LEP in April a Board has been appointed comprising the following individuals.

- Nicholas Ames, Managing Director Supacat Limited;
- Simon Barker, Director Strategy and Alliances UK Government Business, Agusta Westland;
- Frances Brennan, SW Regional Director, Working Links;
- Adam Chambers, Chief Executive Officer, Peninsula Enterprise;
- Jamie Christon, Managing Director, Exeter and Devon Airport Limited;
- Nick Engert, Consultant to Clarke Willmott LLP;
- Tim Jones, Chartered Surveyor/Commercial Property Developer;
- Vaughan Lindsay, Chief Executive, Dartington Hall Trust;
- Councillor Ted Fry, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder Economic Development, Plymouth City Council;

- Councillor William Mumford, Cabinet Member for Economy, Enterprise and Employment, Devon County Council;
- Councillor David Hall, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Economic Development, Somerset County Council;
- Gordon Oliver, Mayor and Leader of Torbay Council;
- Professor Wendy Purcell, Vice-Chancellor, University of Plymouth;
- David Allen, Registrar and Deputy Chief Executive, University of Exeter; and
- Rachel Davies, Principal, Somerset College.

Through the Economic Development team the Council has actively sought to input to the design of the LEP, and will continue to try to ensure that this Council's voice is heard. It is important that:-

1. District Councils are fully engaged in the LEP to give it a local flavour and local relevance;
2. The LEP is dynamic, ambitious and innovative, and is led by business;
3. The LEP is encouraging and welcoming of business engagement; and
4. Businesses of whatever size and type are able to engage in the LEP.

4.2 Wellington Business Web site

The Council has provided funding support to the Wellington Chamber of Trade and Commerce to highlight the services of businesses in the town centre. The town now has an inter-active website and hard copies of a flyer, which are available for distribution.

4.3 10 Parish Art Festival

The Council has provided funding towards the 10 Parish Art Festival brochure and website in the west of Taunton Deane, both of which will be published later this month.

4.4 Cycling Tour of Britain

The Economic Development Team is working closely with the Tour of Britain, the Taunton Town Centre Company and Somerset County Council over Taunton hosting the start of the sixth stages of the event on 16 September 2011. The morning event will be preceded during the previous evening by a family event organised by the Town Centre Company, and the Economic Development Team is arranging a business breakfast to run alongside the race start in the town centre.

4.5 Hinkley Point Nuclear Proposal

EDF Energy intends submitting its proposal for the development of the Hinkley C

Nuclear New Build in July, and the company has already announced its intended measures to mitigate the negative effects of the development.

EDF Energy has very recently issued a consultation proposal on its investment in local transport infrastructure around the Hinkley site, particularly affecting Sedgemoor. It is important that the company fully understands the potential impact that vehicular freight traffic will have on the surrounding road network, and this Council should be particularly concerned over the potential increased use of Junction 25 of the M5. Representation will be submitted to the company to that effect.

The Economic Development Team is engaging with the Somerset Chamber of Commerce (on behalf of EDF Energy) to encourage local businesses to sign up to the Hinkley Supply Portal. Officers are discussing events in Taunton Deane to raise awareness of the Portal.

4.6 Into Somerset

Having obtained commitments from all of the constituent local authorities in Somerset to continue involvement in Into Somerset for a further year (2011/2012) the Board has produced a Business Plan to cover that period and the ensuing three years. The Chief Executive of the Somerset Chamber of Commerce, which delivers the Into Somerset programme will be attending the Corporate Scrutiny Committee in July to inform Members of the initiative's progress and success in attracting investment to the County to date.

4.7 Taunton Town Centre Company and BID Programme

The Council, at Member and officer level through the Economic Development Team, is an active member of the Town Centre Company, working closely on specific events (such as the Tour of Britain and the Olympic Torch Relay) as well as co-ordinating the provision of town centre services. This week the Company completed the 'Who Cares Wins' competition, an initiative to celebrate excellent customer care amongst businesses in the town centre. David Evans acted as one of the judges for the competition.

Planning and preparations are currently underway for the BID ballot next May 2012 to enable a second BID term from September 2012. To inform the draft BID Business plan the company is currently completing a consultation exercise amongst 150 town centre businesses. Consultation meetings will be held with businesses over the next few months to ensure that the BID proposals effectively represent businesses' needs.

The Town Centre Manager will be attending the Corporate Scrutiny Committee in the Autumn to present an update of the company's activities and to seek financial support towards the administration of the BID programme.

5. Taunton Tourist Information, Ticket and Travel Centre (TIC)

- 5.1 The TIC is led by Andrew Hopkins who would like to report that it has been another busy quarter for the TIC with throughput up by an encouraging 6% year on year.
- 5.2 The TIC partnership with the DLO Nursery continues to be a success with the promotion of both services planned at the Taunton Flower Show next month.
- 5.3 The Travel Centre have added new agencies - these include City Sightseeing Tours, the Great British Heritage Pass and Transport for London Oyster Cards.
- 5.4 The TIC Lead Andrew Hopkins is now a non-executive Director on the trade-led Somerset Tourism Association and attended the launch of the new South West Tourism Alliance.
- 5.5 The TIC has also been working with the Taunton Town Centre Company to promote the Shop Taunton initiative and has created an area within the office to promote local businesses.
- 5.6 All members are invited to visit the TIC (within Taunton Library) for an Open Afternoon which is being held on Wednesday, 27 July 20-11 from 2 pm.

6. Project Taunton

- 6.1 By this Council meeting, the first phase of the Development should have started at Firepool, Taunton. The build programme is quite tight with completion planned for May 2012.
- 6.2 With funding secure for the Northern Inner Distributor Road, a schedule that starts work in March 2012 with completion anticipated in September 2013, considerable interest is now being shown in the northern section of the Firepool site. St Modwen have two hotel operators now negotiating to set up a hotel on Firepool which bodes well for a successful outcome.
- 6.3 The work to improve Goodlands Gardens, providing a wider walkway from Coal Orchard Car Park to the Town Bridge, re-landscaping the gardens behind Debenhams and a raised improved walkway alongside the river is unlikely to start until September 2011.
- 6.4 The refurbishment work to the fabric of Taunton Museum has been completed and the fitting out of the Museum is now underway. The Museum will be open in August of this year and the official opening will be in March/April 2012.

- 6.5 Redevelopment of Castle Green and the adjacent Goodlands Garden area has been delayed by the relocation of the Bus Stops. An independent report now confirms that there are no technical or operational reasons to prevent the stops being moved to Corporation Street. This could be done as a first phase of the scheme which would enable a start in September 2011.
- 6.6 A landscape scheme is being drawn up for the improvement of the High Street which could mean a start on this scheme this Autumn.
- 6.7 There are also many other ongoing projects at various stages, as to how best to enable the Brewhouse expansion, to improve the shopping areas in the town, the Town Centre signage and of course the final stages of Longrun Meadows the last and third bridge over the river.

Councillor Norman Cavill

Council Meeting – 19 July 2011

Report of Councillor Ken Hayward – Environmental Services

1. Environmental Health Teams

Fixed penalty notices for smoking in taxis

- 1.1 Recently Licensing have issued three fixed penalty notices where drivers have been caught smoking in their vehicles. This issue was discussed at a previous Taxi Forum, where the general consensus was very supportive of Taunton Deane taking action against drivers and the operators requested that where the driver works for a company we also notify their employer.
- 1.2 Since mentioning the recent enforcement activity at the most recent Taxi Forum a noticeable improvement has been seen at Corporation Street Taxi Rank. We have 'had words' with two drivers about language and behaviour recently, reminding them that they act as 'ambassadors' for Taunton as they are often the first and last people visitors meet on arrival in the town. Both have apologised and we will continue working with the taxi trade to improve conduct and standards through the Taxi Forum.
- 1.3 Councillors can report smoking or other incidents to Licensing - giving taxi plate/ registration number, date time and location information. A brief description of the driver would also be helpful.

Gas safety work

- 1.4 Officers recently received specialist training from the Gas Safe Register (previously CORGI) on the safe operation of gas equipment and installations. This has resulted in a considerable amount of time-consuming enforcement work due to unsafe equipment and installations being found.
- 1.5 Where significant problems were discovered, prohibition notices have been served to ensure there is no danger to public or employee safety until the repairs can be completed by a qualified *commercial* gas engineer. The Gas Safe Register has been very supportive, and Wales and West Emergency Gas Service have been prompt to disconnect the most dangerous supplies. Where less serious problems are found businesses are served with improvement notices to provide a gas safety certificate within a specified time frame.
- 1.6 Where businesses continue trading following a prohibition notice formal action is likely to follow. This project is valuable as it has revealed that businesses are naively and sometimes knowingly, using dangerous appliances and installations. Thus putting themselves, customers and nearby residents at risk. We have found gas leaks, dangerously self modified appliances and pipework installed and serviced by unqualified people. Note - gas engineers need an

additional qualification to work on commercial appliances and installations due to their complexity. It is illegal to work in a commercial setting without the extra qualification.

- 1.7 Unfortunately the extensive enforcement activity caused an unavoidable dip in inspection output, but this is justifiable given the dangerous situations we have had to resolve as a priority.
- 1.8 This project will be continuing over the next year and is the Team's only priority for health and safety. As we initially targeted the businesses where we have previously raised concerns about gas safety it is hoped we have already dealt with the highest risk businesses first and won't find too many more enforcement intensive unsafe appliances.

Enforcement Summary

- 1.9 Enforcements gas work so far: Four premises received multiple prohibition notices for dangerous equipment and installations and two of these needed prohibiting a second time for failing to use qualified commercial gas engineers to repair and reconnect equipment. Five premises have received improvement notices to provide safety certificates.
- 1.10 A simple caution has been issued for food hygiene offences at a kebab shop.
- 1.11 Formal action is ongoing against three other businesses who have repeatedly failed to respond to hygiene and safety advice and have potentially put the public at risk.
- 1.12 Formal action is pending against a fly tipper.
- 1.13 As these cases are currently going through the legal process I am unable to give more details at present.

2. Crematorium

- 2.1 There has been a slippage in the project for installation of the new crematoria with the mercury filtration. Installation has been put back to January 2012 from September. This is largely due to delays agreeing the supplier contract and the long lead in times for the kit. The suppliers are also very busy as they are picking up many of the contracts for Mercury.
- 2.2 The project is, however, well on track for completion before the legislation comes into force.

3. Climate Change / Carbon Management

- 3.1 Since Taunton Deane and Tone Leisure started to implement carbon reduction actions in 2008/2009 the Council's carbon emissions could be reduced by nearly 500 tonnes CO₂ or 10.4% against the baseline that was established for 2006/2007. Equating to a reduction of about 3.5% year-on-year over the last

four years, this exceeds the 3% year-on-year reduction target that was agreed between Somerset County Council and the Somerset District / Borough Councils back then.

- 3.2 A report is being prepared by Torsten Daniel on the Council's Carbon Management Plan for 2011/2012. The report reflects on the Council's progress in reducing carbon emissions between 2007 and today, sets out the priorities for 2011/2012, and briefly describes the key actions planned. The focus of this year's Plan will be on energy generation, reduction of transport emissions and upgrading of lighting and insulation.
- 3.3 At the time of writing, this report is yet to come before Scrutiny and the Executive and so it is inappropriate to comment further on it at this stage.
- 3.4 We are also in the process of considering the options available for the installation of Solar PV on appropriate properties within the Housing Stock. This is an exciting project, but again, as a report considering these options will be submitted to the Tenants Management Board on 21 July 2011, protocol dictates that it cannot be discussed any further at this stage.
- 3.5 I mention both of the above simply to demonstrate to Members what is on the horizon in terms of climate change work within our Council.

4. Waste Management

- 4.1 Somerset Waste Board held its Annual General Meeting on 22 June 2011. The main issues for discussion were:-
 - An update on the Recycling Centres;
 - The final performance position for 2010/2011;
 - A briefing on the Impact of the Governments Review of Waste Policy; and
 - A briefing on the Emerging Waste Core Strategy from Somerset County Council (SCC).
- 4.2 The financial savings expected from the recently implemented changes at our recycling centres are being achieved (over-achieved in the first 2 months). The update report shared some figures on site usage over the 2 months since the changes have been in place. The number of visits to all sites, not just the Community Recycling Centres, is down (averaging at 54% of 2010/2011 level of visits). The tonnage of waste is also down although not to the same extent (total household arisings is down 8% on same period in 2010/2011). Sadly, as anticipated, the level of flytipping has increased.
- 4.3 The Board discussed their concerns over this, and what could be done about it, at length.
- 4.4 However there are good indications that it is all settling down. People are

getting used to the revised hours, queues are returning to the pre-change levels and the rate of increase of flytipping is levelling off.

- 4.5 The details on the flytipping reimbursement by SCC will be finalised at the September Board meeting.
- 4.6 Other issues of concern to the Board were on the communications to the public on the changes (not clear enough about the charges) and on whether the opening hours were right.
- 4.7 The Board unanimously agreed that it was too early to draw conclusions and to review this again at the September meeting when more data on usage patterns would be available.
- 4.8 At the time of writing, the Board report on this issue is due shortly to be discussed at the Corporate Scrutiny Committee.

Performance Info 2010/2011

- 4.9 The good news is that Taunton Deane has again come out top of the Districts in Somerset in terms of levels of recycling (ours is the highest at 44.98%) and the levels of residual waste per household (our is the lowest at 383.29kg).

Briefing on the Emerging Waste Core Strategy – SCC

- 4.10 The consultation on this began in 2007 and was endorsed by SCC's Cabinet on 6 July 2011 with a recommendation that it be endorsed at their Full Council on 20 July. The recommendation contained the caveat that authority be delegated to the Service Director Environmental Management and Regeneration, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Economic Development, to agree any necessary amendments to the submission Development Plan Draft (DPD) following consultation before authorising submission of the DPD to the Secretary of State.
- 4.11 The Plan supports Taunton Deane's growth ambitions. I am particularly pleased that the document clearly shows the priorities (called the waste hierarchy):-

Reduce → Re-use → Recycle → Recover

- In that order.

I welcome the profile of waste prevention and need to continue our good work with the Partnership to progress this.

Councillor Ken Hayward

Council Meeting - 19 July 2011

Report of Councillor Mrs Catherine Herbert – Sport, Parks and Leisure

1. Parks

- 1.1 Once again our parks are looking stunning and by the time you read this we will have been judged in the Britain in Bloom competition. I have been very impressed by the Taunton in Bloom Committee and their efforts to try and get Taunton behind the Bloom in these difficult financial times.
- 1.2 The Police have started using the Victoria Park Pavilion and their feedback is positive on having a base in the park. So much so that we are looking at extending the partnership into Vivary Park with them basing themselves in the pavilion near the children's play area.
- 1.3 I visited Holly Close Allotments recently and was impressed to see the progress that the plot holders have made in such a short time. It really is worth a visit so see our newest allotment site. Following discussions with Councillor Hazel Prior-Sankey we are investigating the feasibility of a composting toilet in this area to serve the allotments and the very popular play area.

2. Community Leisure and Play

- 2.1 The play area at Creechbarrow Road, Taunton has been slightly delayed in the final design stage, but is now out to tender and work will be starting as soon as possible.
- 2.2 The bandstand concerts have started in Vivary Park again and are another great reason for visiting our flagship park.
- 2.3 Longrun Meadows, Bishops Hull – the opening event went very well and feedback from the public is that they really love the natural environment that Longrun gives us. I am shortly to have a meeting with a number of interested parties who are all keen to be involved in the running and management of Longrun and I hope to bring you more news on this next time.

3. Tone Leisure (Taunton Deane) Limited Activities

- 3.1 You will remember from previous reports the **Walk Well in Taunton** scheme and before I enter into the main part of the report from Tone I would like to add my congratulations to Joy Boaden (Taunton Volunteer Health Walk Leader) who has been recognised with an Exceptional Service Award from the national physical activity initiative, Walking for Health. Joy earned this

award for her outstanding contribution to the scheme and we are lucky to have volunteers such as Joy in our communities.

- 3.2 Secondly I would like to invite you all to join me in the first Taunton “**Alzheimer’s Society Memory Walk**”. The event is on Saturday, 24 September 2011 and is taking part in Vivary Park.

“The money raised locally will stay local, benefitting the people in your community who are living with dementia. There will be activities after the walk in Vivary Park and the opportunity to visit a number of different stalls and learn more about memory problems, have an NHS Health Check, learn more about Community Transport and grab some offers and information about what Tone has to offer in your local area”

Community, Sports and Health Development

- 3.3 Tone continues to work hard to develop a number of community outreach programmes:-

Sports Development

- 3.4 Taunton Deane Foot Anstey Triathlon 2011

- 3.4.1 On Sunday, 15 May 2011, over 300 people took part in the annual Taunton Deane Foot Anstey Triathlon hosted at Wellington Sports Centre. Tone, in partnership with Somerset RC Tri Club and the sponsors, Foot Anstey, organised this event which catered for all levels of fitness with competitors either entering the Novice Event (shorter distances) or the Sprint Event (for experienced competitors). The day was a great success with record numbers, ideal conditions and good feedback from those that took part.

- 3.5 Sportivate

- 3.5.1 Tone (specifically Wellsprings Leisure Centre) has taken advantage of a funding opportunity to target young people. ‘Sportivate’ is a nationwide campaign, managed by the County Sports Partnership, providing opportunities for teenagers and young adults (aged 14-25) to receive coaching in a sport of their choice and guide them into regular participation within their community.

- 3.5.2 15 people will receive discounted membership to the leisure centre for a limited period. It is envisaged that this will be very popular and a great success and ultimately rolled out to the other Taunton sites.

- 3.6 VIBE Youth Night

- 3.6.1 Tone has appointed a Co-ordinator, Alex Stephens, to further develop and rejuvenate the VIBE Youth Night at Wellsprings Leisure Centre. Starting in July, Alex will look to expand the programming, re-launch in September and offer regular mass participation events, for example the youth disco.

3.7 Children's Centres

- 3.7.1 The parents and children's sports skills are continuing at Hillside Children's Centre and Acorns Children's Centre, with a request for the initiative to be held at The Hollies Children's Centre. The attendance continues to be strong and outcomes have been positive from both the children's centres' staff and the attending parents.

Health Development

3.8 Older People

- 3.8.1 A further Flexercise Training Course has been hosted to train a further 10 Instructors. There are approximately 150 participations per month in Flexercise across Taunton.

3.9 Active Somerset

- 3.9.1 Tone currently has 12 Active Somerset courses running across Taunton Deane, with funding for a further nine to start between September 2011 and March 2012. The courses are aimed at sedentary men, overweight/obese residents aged between 16 and 35, and those at risk of contracting Type 2 Diabetes and Cardiovascular Disease.

3.10 Walking for Health - Launch of a New Scheme in Wellington

- 3.10.1 The scheme was officially launched on Monday, 4 July 2011 outside Wellington Sports Centre. Health walks are short walks between 30 and 60 minutes for adults who are currently physically inactive. The walks will be volunteer-led and will take place twice a week.

3.11 Funding News

- 3.11.1 Tone has been successful in its application to Somerset County Council - Short Breaks Team and been awarded over £700 to provide support workers for two days per week at Wellsprings Leisure Centre, for children with disabilities and specific needs who would not be able to attend without additional support. The support workers will be available during the summer 2011 holiday activity programme.

Facility News

3.12 Taunton Pool

- 3.12.1 The Sea Scooter and Water Walker sessions are going from strength to strength. The programming of these sessions at the pool enables youngsters to have a trial session at a discounted rate. These session tickets have been handed out by local Police Community Support Officers in an attempt to get young people off the street and participating in the new aqua sessions.

- 3.12.2 Aqua Bike sessions are due to commence from mid-July.

3.13 Wellington Sports Centre

3.13.1 Young Persons' Zone - The Z3 Project is now in its second year and is continuing to deliver the milestones set. Tone has achieved Year 2 funding and sees an average of 420 visits per month. Tone has succeeded in securing a further two regular school bookings each week to utilise the facility and is also looking at working with the swimming club to offer a bespoke session.

3.14 Wellsprings Leisure Centre

3.14.1 Events - Wellsprings has had a wide variety of events taking place in the sports hall over the last couple of months: two dog shows; two majorette competitions; two gymnastics competitions; an international trampoline competition; an antiques fair; stars from the BBC Strictly Dance show; the comedian Roy Chubby Brown; and a combined Mass for 800 Christians.

3.15 Vivary Golf

3.15.1 This spring has seen the development of the practice/coaching facilities with the introduction of a seven hole 'approach game course' which has been specifically targeted towards enhancing the learning experience for junior players.

3.15.2 As well as learning swing technique, this new course will provide an opportunity for young golfers to actually experience playing the game and keeping score whilst not being intimidated by the longer holes of the main golf course.

3.16 Taunton Tennis Centre

3.16.1 Tone has expanded its tennis outreach programme, operating three after school clubs at Trinity, Blackbrook and Bishop Henderson Primary Schools in Taunton.

Councillor Catherine Herbert.

Council Meeting – 19 July 2011

Report of Councillor Mrs Jean Adkins - Housing Services

1. Housing Property Services

- 1.1 The new system for voids is now in place which will improve work flow leading to faster turnaround times. One change implemented is that surveyors will now inspect properties during the notice period.
- 1.2 A problem was encountered with damp floors in a number of properties last year resulting in an overspend on maintenance. The cause is being investigated to see whether a particular area was affected or a type of construction but it may have been due to bad weather causing a rise in the water table.
- 1.3 I have just agreed to extend the existing Gas Servicing and Maintenance contract until 31 March 2012 to enable our statutory duty as Landlord's to be carried out whilst work to re-let the contract is undertaken.

2. Regeneration of Halcon

- 2.1 Recommendations will be coming to the Community Scrutiny Committee and the Executive in September 2011. The slightly revised timetable is due to the consultants, Savills, recommending a viability report which could be undertaken in a short space of time. It is hoped that the Scrutiny meeting will take place at Halcon in the interests of community involvement.
- 2.2 The recent report from Councillor Slattery in the Weekly Bulletin regarding the state of the school buildings only serves to emphasise the need to work in partnership with other bodies to regenerate the area.

3. Affordable Housing

- 3.1 I am pleased to be able to tell you that the target was almost achieved last year with 197 completions, including Homebuy Direct. This year's target is 400 and we hope for the same success with a number of projects ongoing.

- 3.2 I had the privilege of opening this year's Affordable Housing Open Day, which was attended by the Mayor and was pleased to meet Mr Asad Butt from the Homes and Communities Agency there.
- 3.3 This has become a regular event in the Taunton Deane Civic Calendar but moved to a new venue at the Somerset County Cricket Ground and was more successful than ever in attracting 700 visitors.
- 3.4 Homebuy Direct ran out of application forms and financial and legal advice were both on offer and in high demand. I spoke to most stallholders, who said they found it a useful networking event as well as engaging with the public.
- 3.5 Discussions with SCC Supporting People and the prospective provider are ongoing regarding Parmin Close but unfortunately a recent meeting had to be cancelled.

4. Estates Team and Anti-social Behaviour (ASB)

- 4.1 The ASB Officers continue to make their mark and bring a report monthly to Housing Briefing. The number of new cases is fairly constant with the largest categories of complaint being verbal abuse/harassment, noise and vehicle nuisance.
- 4.2 The team continue to work with other agencies as well as the Environmental Health Team, liaising with Turning Point, Social Services, Citizens' Advice and, of course, the Police.

5. Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership (SWPSHP)

- 5.1 A report on Empty Homes was recently prepared, based on Council Tax lists, by the Empty Homes Officer from the Partnership. Around 200 homes were visited with approximately 20 being found to be occupied.
- 5.2 The SWPSHP took a stand at the recent Affordable Housing Day to publicise their work on our behalf.

6. Self-Financing

- 6.1 This work is ongoing with an interim Business Plan being produced to support the loan application which will be required. Our Treasury Management advisers, Arlingclose are closely involved in this work. The final settlement figure is expected to be in the region of £87million.

Council Meeting – 19 July 2011

Report of Councillor Mrs Vivienne Stock-Williams – Corporate Resources

1. Customer Contact Centre

- 1.1 Southwest One Customer Contact Centre has continued to provide excellent service for Taunton Deane, meeting and exceeding all contractual performance indicators. Service delivery continues to be impressive: 98% of calls received are now dealt with at the first point of contact, and the team maintains consistently high levels of customer satisfaction (over 86%), putting the service in the top quartile nationally.
- 1.2 The service has gained media interest with a press briefing session which culminated in articles in Public Technology, Call Centre Helper and the Sunday Telegraph. The service recently entered the South West Contact Centre Awards under the category of Best Public Sector Contact Centre. Whilst the team did not win, they were highly commended and one of only two public sector based centres to be short-listed out of a possible 8.
- 1.3 The review of the management structure is almost complete and, in the meantime, Claire Olohan-Bramley continues as Acting Head of Service.
- 1.4 A total of 7,851 enquiries have been dealt with at The Deane House main, Housing and Planning receptions, in addition to over 5,800 requests for signposting and visitors for meetings. 8,149 people visited Wellington Community Office: 5,724 to make enquiries including the Tourist Information Centre and 2,425 to make a payment through the kiosk. 437 letter and email enquiries have also been dealt with during this time.
- 1.5 The service has continued to develop and underpin its resilience with the completion of its virtual joint network and continual programme of multi-skilling Customer Service Advisers (CSAs). The service is continuing to work with ICT and the authorities to understand delivery requirements for the years ahead including self serve, automation for payments and switchboard plus enhanced reporting and quality monitoring.

2. Legal and Democratic Services

2.1 Land Charges

- 2.1.1 Implications of the Environmental Information Regulations on future charging for land searches have now become clearer. The Statutory Instrument has come into effect, which confirms that charging personal search agents should cease on 17 August 2011. The Local Government Association has, however,

advised Councils to stop charging immediately. There has been discussion about the possibility of paying back personal search fees from 2005. To date, no claims have been made from personal search agents attempting to recover back-dated fees. The Public Access Module has been purchased and will be tested shortly.

- 2.1.2 Funding has been identified, without resorting to reserves, to create a temporary post (six months in the first instance with a view to extending it), so that work has now started on getting historical data onto the Accolaid system. This task is anticipated to take at least two years, but once the data have been entered the process will become faster and lead to a fully automated system.
- 2.1.3 Fall out from the Core Council Review and the lack of resource in planning had created regrettably long delays in getting searches out to people. There has been a focus on improving this performance and searches are now back to a 5-7 day turn-around and there is no backlog.

2.2 Members Training

- 2.2.1 Since the May 2011 elections, new Members have had a full induction programme. This programme began with sessions on roles and responsibilities, which were well attended by 12 of the 13 new Members. Statutory training for Members on the Planning Committee and Licensing Committee has been provided and a visit to the Taunton Deane Nursery to see the work that the Parks Department does.
- 2.2.2 Officers have facilitated sessions on the Budget Review, Core Strategy, Local Government Finance and Ethical Governance. Officers' time is precious and it is frustrating if, having given up their time to provide a briefing, there is poor attendance – at one evening session only 2 Councillors attended!
- 2.2.3 These training sessions have been well received by those who have attended. Although the induction programme is aimed at the new Members, it is open to all Councillors. Few existing Councillors have, however, attended courses, even though they serve as a useful refresher. It is also helpful for existing Councillors to share their views and experiences with new Members – when they have attended, it has been noted that their contributions are invaluable.
- 2.2.4 Courses available in July/August include Confident Public Speaking, A Guide to Southwest One, Equalities and Diversity and Dealing with Conflict and Difficult Situations offered at different times of the day to try to accommodate everyone. The full programme is available in the Members' Room and on the Members' Portal.

2.3 Persimmon Homes

- 2.3.1 Legal Services successfully prosecuted Persimmon Homes at the Taunton Magistrates Court on the 23 June 2011 on three counts of failing to comply with a condition relating to hours of working. The developers had consistently breached the requirement not to start work before 8.00 am which had caused

a considerable amount of objection locally. The Magistrates imposed the maximum fine possible on the entry of guilty pleas.

2.4 Resources

2.4.1 Members will be aware from an email from our Democratic Services Manager that the team is currently short-staffed. This is being resolved and there are currently 2 vacancies that are in the process of being filled. The recruitment has taken longer than expected and agency staff will be needed to fill the gap meantime. Both posts are being filled on a temporary basis as it would not make sense to do otherwise whilst the Council is going through some challenging financial times.

2.4.2 I have been assured that Corporate Management Team are reviewing the situation regularly and supporting the use of agency staff if necessary to ensure our meetings continue to receive the right level of support.

3. Performance and Client Team

3.1 General

3.1.1 The team has been heavily involved over recent months in supporting key corporate projects. Specifically, the team is providing project management support to the Halcon Project and Budget Review Programme.

3.2 Client Team

3.2.1 The Client Team has continued to monitor closely the performance of the Southwest One and Tone Leisure Partnerships with no significant issues being reported. New key performance indicator (KPI) targets for 2010/2011 have been agreed with Southwest One for the majority of services. Additionally, Service Development Plans for 2010/2011 are now in place for the majority of Southwest One services. A six-monthly Southwest One update report will be going to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 21 July 2011.

3.2.2 The Client Team is also closely involved in the communication and rollout of the IT changes necessary to make the Authority 'Government Connect' compliant. Compliance with this standard will bring far greater security to the handling of sensitive data and significantly reduce the risk of potential breaches of data protection and potential fines.

3.2.3 In addition, the Client Team is continuing to monitor closely Somerset County Council's re-negotiation of its contract with Southwest One.

3.2.4 The Client Team continues to work closely with Tone Leisure, with particular focus on progressing the planned maintenance programme of all the sites

following recent condition survey completion. This work is also being aligned with the pool provision work being led by the Strategy Team.

3.3 Corporate Performance

- 3.3.1 The further development of the Corporate Performance function has been delayed due to the Lead Officer being heavily involved in supporting the project management of the Budget Review Programme. However, the existing Corporate Performance processes have continued.
- 3.3.2 The outturn performance report for 2010/2011 has recently gone through the review cycle and been reviewed by the Corporate Management Team, Executive and the Corporate Scrutiny Committee. The Corporate Governance Committee continues to receive regular progress updates in respect of the Corporate Risk Register and Corporate Governance Action Plan.
- 3.3.3 The team intends to ask Members during the next six months to review the content and structure of the Quarterly Corporate Performance Reports. This will allow them to improve these reports, ensuring that Members are receiving the information they need and require regarding how the Council performs.
- 3.3.4 Research will shortly be undertaken into the Government's proposals for the new self-regulation scheme, with a view to updating Members during the current quarter.

3.4 Retained Finance and Corporate Insurance

- 3.4.1 The Strategic Finance Officer has recently completed a new draft Debt Management Policy. This is currently being reviewed by officers and in due course will be referred to members for agreement. She also continues to support the Budget Review Strategy and the HRA reform project.
- 3.4.2 The Corporate Insurance function continues to run without any significant issues. The Corporate Insurance officer will, however, shortly be going on maternity leave. We will be working in partnership with Somerset County Council to provide cover during this period.

3.5 Retained Human Resources (HR)

- 3.5.1 The Retained HR Manager continues to provide high level support to the DLO Review and Theme 5 Review. Support for the Budget Strategy Project has been provided at the Employee Engagement Sessions, the first Budget Strategy Consultation Forum and through the completion of reports for the Budget Strategy Project. Consultation with UNISON on the Car User Allowance Review has seen progress with a ballot of affected UNISON members taking place between 4 and 22 July 2011.

4. Revenues and Benefits

- 4.1 The Corporate Scrutiny Committee will meet on 21 July 2010 to review the Performance of the Revenues and Benefits Service. Highlights include the best ever collection of Council Tax and Business Rates achieved in 2010/2011 of 98.21% and 99.01% respectively and improved processing times for working out new claims for Housing and Council Tax Benefit. Customer satisfaction with the Benefits Service is now at 90%. Challenging targets for 2011/2012 have been agreed to ensure future improvement and best use of resources.
- 4.2 At the end of Quarter 1 of 2011/2012, the Revenues and Benefits Service is 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 the rolling review of entitlement to Single Person Discounts. The final subsidy claim to the Department for Work and Pensions was submitted on time at the end of May 2011. Taunton Deane will be claiming Housing Benefit subsidy of nearly £27.8m, while our claim for Council Tax Benefit subsidy is £6.8m.
- 4.3 This is a vital service for many residents in Taunton Deane, particularly during a recession, therefore to continually improve the service as demand for it increases reflects well on the staff and the service and is a significant achievement. I am delighted that the team has been nominated for a national award for service excellence.

5. South West One

5.1 Procurement Savings Progress

- 5.1.1 The Procurement Savings Project continues to be an area of concern both at Taunton Deane and Somerset County Council, because the savings made to date are behind those originally anticipated.
- 5.1.2 Clearly this is due in part to the current economic climate and the fact that we are simply spending less. The Strategic Procurement Service is currently working to identify in detail what savings we can realistically anticipate receiving over the remaining years of the programme. This will be reported in detail through the Budget Review Programme. The Procurement Service will be providing an update to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 21 July 2011.

5.2 Property and Facilities Management “Soft FM” Services in Taunton

- 5.2.1 A more effective Shared Service arrangement has been created in Taunton for “Soft FM” services, covering The Deane House and County Hall. The service manages the safety and comfort of staff and visitors, as well as security and maintenance of the buildings at both sites.
- 5.2.2 The shared arrangement provides greater contingency, flexibility and support for both councils, with staff working on a shift rotational basis in order to

provide key essential services at both sites, whilst also covering absences and enabling staff development. Heating and plumbing services now support both sites, increasing the technical support and contingency for the heating systems at the two locations.

- 5.2.3 In addition, postal services are working together to further develop smarter working practices, and courier service arrangements have been centralised to improve quality, delivery and efficiency across both sites.

5.3 SAP Re-launch

- 5.3.1 The key elements of the system are launched and working, such as Payroll, Budgets, Procure-to-Pay, Accounts Receivable and Customer Relationship Management. There is now a robust process in place for launching the remaining modules, which requires input from Southwest One.
- 5.3.2 Taunton Deane's requirements have been clarified with Southwest One and progress in delivering our requirements, and that of the other Southwest partners, is being tracked regularly by a cross-authority Change Board.
- 5.3.3 During the next two months Southwest One will be undertaking a system 'patching' process on the SAP system. This involves loading a large number of minor updates, but all will need to be tested before they go into the live system environment. We will be working closely with Southwest One to ensure that this process runs smoothly and with minimal disruption to system users. The patching process will impact on the speed in which Southwest One can introduce the changes we require to enable the launch of the remaining SAP modules

5.4 Social and Community Development

The IBM Kid Smart Programme in Somerset

- 5.4.1 Through its linkages with IBM, Southwest One is able to access the IBM KidSmart Early Learning Programme, a scheme which introduces new interactive teaching and learning activities into pre-school units and nurseries, using the latest technology. Child friendly computers, housed in brightly coloured furniture and equipped with award-winning educational software, help children learn and explore concepts in mathematics, science and language.
- 5.4.2 Nine units have now been installed in Somerset, the most recent being at Hillside Children's Centre in Priorswood,

Councillor Vivienne Stock-Williams

Council Meeting – 19 July 2011

Report of Councillor Mark Edwards - Planning, Transportation and Communications

1. Core Strategy

- 1.1 The Core Strategy has been approved at Full Council in June 2011 and can now finally move into its last consultation period. Comments received will be considered by an independently appointed Planning Inspector in early 2012 before it moves to the Secretary of State for consideration and final approval in the summer.
- 1.2 I wish to formally thank everyone involved in preparing this document and pulling together the vital supporting documentation, which runs to 67 separate detailed reports.
- 1.3 The final approval of this Strategy will provide certainty to our community, the developers and businesses about the future growth in Taunton Deane.

2. Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document

- 2.1 We intend to formulate a draft Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which Members will have a full opportunity to discuss shortly.
- 2.2 The Affordable Housing SPD supports the district-wide affordable housing policies. These policies seek to secure the provision of an appropriate level, mix and size of affordable housing, including on rural exceptions sites, so that new housing developments planned in the district address the identified housing needs of all parts of the community.
- 2.3 The SPD will provide guidance to applicants and agents preparing development proposals to ensure the affordable housing proposed meets desirable standards at an affordable price to benefit all potential future occupiers.

3. Community Infrastructure Levy

- 3.1 A Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) workshop has recently taken place with development industry representatives and marks the first

stage in the process of developing a CIL mechanism for Taunton Deane. In due course there will be full engagement with Members.

- 3.2 The Local Development Framework (LDF) Steering Group will shortly have a paper on the consideration of the interim policy and the charging schedule.

4. Strategy Unit Forward Plan

- 4.1 In addition to these key issues there is a great deal for the Strategy Unit to do over the next year all of which will be discussed with the LDF Steering Group in advance of Scrutiny including: -

- Urban Extensions SPD;
- Town Centre SPD;
- Home Energy Improvements SPD;
- Carbon Infrastructure Fund SPD;
- Site Allocations and Development Management Development Plan Document (DPD);
- Annual reviews of Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), Infrastructure Delivery Plan, Annual Monitoring Report (including Housing and Employment Land Availability, Retail Monitor).

5. Planning Review

- 5.1 I announced at the Full Council in April that I would be proceeding with a review of Planning which I immediately started to progress with officers as I had the support of the Shadow Executive Member Simon Coles, so I was sure of continuity.
- 5.2 There are a number of areas where a review is considered necessary including areas of the planning application service, enforcement, communication and taking into account the findings of the Value adding review of procedures.
- 5.3 However the potential implications of local fee setting, which I have highlighted below in a separate section, is huge and very relevant so we need to give this careful consideration in coming to our conclusions
- 5.4 The report will be progressed over the summer and I have asked officers to have a paper ready for Scrutiny in September 2011. The service needs the review and taking all aspects into account so it can be fit for the ambitious plans that we have for our area in the coming years.
- 5.5 The levels of growth proposed for the Taunton area in the Core Strategy are such that will inevitably lead to an increase in the number of very large planning applications being submitted. Both developers

and the local communities have high expectations in terms of the level of service provided.

- 5.6 We are all aware of some of the recent issues surrounding development and the Planning and Enforcement service and it is critically important that the Council is able to respond to these expectations in an effective way. We do however have to be minded that we need a service that can deliver for all parts of the community.

6. Deregulation of Planning Fees

- 6.1 The Government is devolving responsibility for planning fees to Local Government, which will mean developers are no longer subsidised by taxpayers. However, this does not make planning entirely self-financing – community costs remain for plan making, enforcement and appeals.
- 6.2 Each Council must set its own fees to recover their costs within parameters of “no profit” or “no cross-subsidy”. This is not an option - we must have local fees or do work for free.
- 6.3 As a monopoly service our costs will be scrutinised and challenged by business. We need an honest, robust, transparent approach and have therefore joined the “benchmarking club” and will be working along side 237 other Local Planning Authorities, as well as with the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountants (CIPFA).
- 6.4 The aim will be to provide an effective tool for explaining how fees have been calculated and what services an applicant can expect for their money. PAS have tried to achieve consensus on a model that suits everyone (based on the Building Control method). This includes Counties, national parks and all the rest of the planning authorities.
- 6.5 As a member of the benchmarking club we are collecting and submitting data to CIPFA for processing and collating into a set of benchmarking reports.
- 6.6 We will submit:-
- four weeks of staff time recording information against a set of activity code (27 June 2011 until 21 July 2011);
 - direct costs - including salary information;
 - indirect costs – recharges and costs associated with delivering a planning service;
 - a set of annualised ‘counts’ including the number of applications processed, appeals handled and Section 106 agreements set up; and
 - the why, what, how and cost of local plan production via a questionnaire.

- 6.7 We are also sending out quality questionnaires to applicants over a period of eight weeks (which will be returned direct to CIPFA for collating and analysis.)
- 6.8 The fee schedule can be challenged using a judicial review (there may also be a route of complaint to the ombudsman).
- 6.9 Any under-recovery of fees is ultimately picked up by the local authority. Costs cannot be carried forward into subsequent years, so a programme to routinely assess and respond to changes in workload (up and down) will be required. There will be the ability to declare income as an accrual.
- 6.10 Councillors will need to be involved in the process, setting out a democratic process for adopting fees, engagement with some of the “kickback” from affected users and supporting longer-term work on improvements to planning assessment to ensure that our limited resources are focused on those cases, which are ultimately likely to result in enforcement action.

7. Heritage

- 7.1 Tone Works, Wellington. In recent months, The Tone Mill Trust has made positive progress in resolving the flooding issues. Relevant professionals are in place to prepare a feasibility study for the reuse of the site, which will feed into a Round 1 Heritage Lottery Fund bid, hopefully later this year.
- 7.2 Tonedale, Wellington. The site has been bought from the receiver and applications are in to renew the previous permissions. A site meeting is soon to be held, to discuss prioritising protective works to the various buildings, with everyone in agreement that the exposed roof to block A, must be recovered before this winter.

8. Parking Strategy Review

- 8.1 The present Parking Strategy originates from the late 1990s with the main aims of:-
- reducing short vehicle movements in the town;
 - encouraging those parking for the day to park on the outskirts leaving central car parks for shoppers and visitors;
 - providing park and ride facilities to the west and east of Taunton; and

- to introduce decriminalized parking enforcement.

The strategy was reviewed in 2005 and 2007 but now I believe it is time to review the strategy again.

- 8.2 The discussions with Members about the future strategy will be brought forward for discussion shortly.

9. Communications

9.1 The Publication of the Core Strategy

- 9.1.1 This resulted in good coverage in the print and broadcast media with positive coverage locally – in Taunton and Wellington. More publicity is planned for the launch of the next consultation phase as well as the e-newsletter, Involve.

9.2 The Olympic Torch

- 9.2.1 The announcement that Taunton is to host the Olympic Torch Relay and an evening celebration in May 2012 attracted widespread publicity. The BBC is an official partner and provided some excellent reports including an interview with myself as Chairman of the Steering Group. The newspapers also carried prominent stories – and have kept the story going in the run-up to the torch-bearer nominations deadline of 29 June 2011.
- 9.2.2 I would also take this opportunity to inform Members as Chairman of the Steering Group that the plans for the event whilst still in early stages are proceeding well with five main work streams being identified namely The Torch Relay, The Evening Event, The Morning Event, The Legacy and Associated events on the day. We will be bringing a presentation to Scrutiny in the Autumn.

9.3 Project Taunton

- 9.3.1 As more stages of the regeneration are rolled out, the Council is taking on more of the communications role – news on Longrun Meadow, the progress of Firepool and Castle Green.

9.4 Internal Communications

- 9.4.1 Core Brief is produced monthly in the newspaper-style format while the Budget Review newsletter is also produced regularly to keep staff up to date with the process.

9.5 Somerset Communications

- 9.5.1 Taunton Deane is a member of the Public Services Communications Group that meets regularly to exchange ideas and share work wherever possible to avoid duplication. Other members include the

other four district councils, Police, the NHS, Somerset Waste Partnership, the Fire Service and the County Council.

9.6 Smartphone Apps

9.6.1 I recently became aware there was a RINGO App (or application), which for those that are unaware is a software application for Smartphone's, which are driven via the Internet with specific tasks.

9.6.2 The RINGO App is an excellent new feature to assist in paying for parking and not only is it extremely easy to use it also texts a reminder that your parking is running out with the option to extend with the tap of a screen.

9.6.3 We are presently investigating the possibility of a TDBC App which could be used for reporting littering, fly tipping, checking collections date for rubbish. It appears other local authorities have already followed this course of action and I will be pursuing this in the coming months.

9.7 Presentation Equipment in the John Meikle Room (JMR)

9.7.1 It is very clear that we need to look carefully at the presentation equipment in the JMR. This is particularly important at the Planning Committee meetings and is part of the review I mentioned earlier in my report.

9.7.2 The benefits however will not be purely advantageous to the Planning Department and Committee but to the whole authority and consideration will be given to this issue shortly.

Councillor Mark Edwards

Council Meeting - 19 July 2011

Report of Councillor Mrs Jane Warmington - Community Leadership

Having been elected to serve on Taunton Deane Borough Council and agreeing to take on the Community Leadership Portfolio, the last two months have been spent gaining an overview of how the Council works, establishing the breadth of this Portfolio (I have my own glossary of acronyms) and meeting other Members, Officers and Partners. This report will therefore refer to things I have been to or got involved in (which may also crop up in other portfolio holder reports), with some thoughts and not necessarily fall under the usual headings.

1. Affordable Housing Event

- 1.1 This event at the the Somerset County Cricket Ground put on by Taunton Deane had hundreds of visitors, stands covering everything you needed to know and showed the cleverly designed, energy efficient, sustainable housing with a wow factor being promoted by Taunton Deane and built by housing associations across the Borough.

2. Supported Housing Forum

- 2.1 Put on at the Albemarle Centre, this was an opportunity to meet various voluntary groups who offer support to those in need (for example, advice on housing, mental health, re- training, volunteering, refuges).

3. Community Radio

- 3.1 Ofcom have invited applications from across the South West for new community radio station licences with two definite bids (and a likely third) from Taunton. If successful the station would expect to cover local news, comment, events and music which would serve around a 5km radius. The principle of a local, community radio station in Taunton has been welcomed.

4. Core Strategy

- 4.1 This long term strategic view of how Taunton Deane might develop into the future whilst looking after its character and charm is reassuring with the Council in a pro-active role more able to resist unwelcome, inappropriate and speculative development. The extra informal session attended was very useful.

5. Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Funding

- 5.1 The VCS budget is administered by the Strategy Unit through a mix of Service Level Agreements and the Small Grants Fund. The latter can be applied for on an ad-hoc basis throughout the financial year. In addition, other grants feed into this sector

from Housing, Community Development, Economic Development, Democratic Services, the Youth Initiatives Fund and the Unparished Areas Fund. A review began in October 2010 (Lisa Redston) and is nearing completion. Findings and recommendations will come before Scrutiny and the Executive to consider. Rather apposite in view of the recent call-in (the adventure sailing on Tectona).

6. The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill

6.1 Concerns were expressed with the Bill at a meeting of the Avon and Somerset Police Authority Partnership. For example it was pointed out that the proposed composition of the Police and Crime Panels would give West Somerset the same representation as Bristol only with one tenth of its population. The Police would welcome representations to Government from partners about their concerns.

6.2 The Bill has passed through the House of Commons and is now being considered by the House of Lords.

6.3 The Bill makes the following key changes:-

- Replacing Police Authorities with directly elected Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) for all Force areas from May 2012;
- Appointment of Police and Crime Panels (PCPs) to hold the Commissioner to account;
- Creation of new National Policing Agencies, replacing the National Police Improvement Agency and the Serious Organised Crime Agency;
- Minor changes to the operation of Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs/ CDRPS); and
- Changes to the operation of the licensing regime under the Licensing Act 2003.

6.4 The Police and Crime Commissioner will have the following key roles:-

- Representing and engaging with communities;
- Setting priorities for the Force and preparing the annual Policing Plan;
- Holding the Chief Constable to account;
- Setting the Force budget and setting the Council Tax precept;
- Appointing (and dismissing) the Chief Constable;
- Publishing an annual report stating how priorities and targets have been met, and other information as specified by the Secretary of State to enable greater public awareness of Police and crime performance in the area.

6.5 The first elections will be held in May 2012 and a single Commissioner will be elected for each force area on a four year term.

6.6 The Bill proposes the creation of Police and Crime Panels (PCPs) to hold the Commissioner to account on behalf of the public. The local authorities within the Force area are responsible for establishing and maintaining the PCP. PCPs are intended to provide a 'check and balance' to the directly elected Police and Crime Commissioner.

6.7 PCPs will be made up of Members from each local authority, and two independent Members. In Avon and Somerset, this will mean establishing a joint committee

made up of ten Members, one drawn from each unitary, district and county council within the Force area, plus two members co-opted by the Panel. There will be requirement for political balance amongst the elected members of the PCP.

6.8 The PCP will have powers and responsibilities including:-

- Reviewing the draft Policing and Crime Plan;
- Publicly scrutinising the Commissioner's Annual Report;
- Reviewing and scrutinising decisions and actions by the PCC;
- Reviewing and vetoing the Commissioner's proposed precept levels.

6.9 It is anticipated that the Bill will pass through Parliament by summer 2011, with the first elections scheduled for May 2012. (6.2 - 6.9 is extracted from the Avon and Somerset Police Authority web-site : www.aspola.org.uk/index.aspx?p=214).

7. Changes to Public Health Arrangements

7.1 The Primary Care Trust held a meeting with the District Councils to discuss proposals in the Health White Paper. There was concern with insufficient district representation on the proposed Health and Wellbeing Boards. Penny James was asked to liaise with both so that the established working partnerships would not be lost and health problems result.

8. Taunton Deane Partnership (TDP)

8.1 The Partnership continues to provide governance and support to the Priority Areas Strategy, developing ideas and co-ordinating resources to get work done.

8.2 The third priority of the Partnership aims to promote Taunton Deane (the first two are Priority Areas Strategy and Planning Cycles) and to 'celebrate achievements and raise the sense of pride through public events and good communication'. TDP is keen to speak to other organisations already doing this and have their contact details passed on : tdp@tauntondeane.gov.uk.

Priority Areas Strategy

8.3 This shared project led by the Council and involving other agencies in the public, private, voluntary and community sectors is trying to tackle deprivation in three areas:-

- * North Taunton (Priorswood);
- * Taunton East (Halcon); and
- * Rural areas including Wellington.

8.4 A detailed update will be presented to the Community Scrutiny Committee on 2 August 2011 following significant work in gathering local data, talking to many of those who live there, extensive consultation with partners and exploring best practice elsewhere.

8.5 The next stage is the Visioning Event at Somerset College on 21 July 2011. Invitations have gone out to partners and key members in the communities of North

and East Taunton. The aim is to draw ideas out of what we would all like to see happen, sort out priorities and list potential projects for a draft Action Plan.

- 8.6 Following this, we need to go back to the two communities to test the ideas from the Visioning Event and what support there is for these. The various partnerships will then look at suggested projects and how they might be delivered to enable the draft Action Plan to be ready early in the New Year.
- 8.7 Work on the rural areas continues but is not so far ahead. Local data gathered will be brought to the Community Scrutiny Committee in August. All Members and Parish Councils will be contacted soon for their involvement and to help identify hidden pockets of rural deprivation. Work on establishing priorities will then start in the Autumn.

North and East Taunton

- 8.8 Half a day was spent being shown around North and East Taunton by Sergeant Andy Murphy who heads up the Police team covering these areas in July.
- 8.9 That he and his team are firmly established in the community as a force for good was apparent the moment we started our walkabout. Virtually everyone we came across stopped to speak to him. The trust he had mentioned they had fought hard to win over some years was immediately apparent. I had read his five year plan which Taunton Deane is building on under the Priority Areas Strategy with partner organisations to look at much needed improvements to try and break the cycle of deprivation. His team's progress has illustrated the need for a long term approach and there seems to be an enormous amount of goodwill. The task is still daunting but I left feeling very hopeful.
- 8.10 The dedication and sheer determination of those in the frontline is inspirational. Halcon School is fortunate to have Vanessa Coles, in post as Head since January and already making a difference. All those happy children in a rather cramped and tatty environment with a must-do-better Ofsted report hot off the press, recognising the problems. The proposed regeneration of North Halcon must surely enable us to do something about this. A good school is almost a guarantee to a better life.

Total Somerset: Customer Access

- 8.11 With leadership from the Council and governance from TDP, this project is managed by the Strategy Team. It is looking at how to make services provided by Taunton Deane more accessible (particularly important given the financial pressures now faced by the public and voluntary sectors).
- 8.12 Recent additional funding of £130,000 will be spent on the following:-
- Asset mapping: mapping all public and voluntary sector buildings across Somerset on a web-based GIS system annotated with useful information;
 - Tell us Once: simplified death (and subsequently birth) notification system;
 - Customer Insight: feedback from users;
 - Customer access: pilot projects to explore new technologies and how they might help. One example is Telly Talk;

- Village Champions: working with the Rural Community Council to improve access to services in remote rural locations; and
- Wellington Voluntary Hub: working with the Citizens Advice Bureau to provide a base for the voluntary sector in the town centre.

8.13 This project will work with the other districts, sharing information and pilot studies. Governance and resources need to be looked at again given that the project is developing into a county-wide initiative.

Councillor Jane Warmington