

# **Council Meeting – 4 October 2016**

## **Report of Councillor John Williams – Leader of the Council**

### **1. Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset Council - Creation of a New Council**

- 1.1 Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset Council have now both voted in favour of joining forces to create a new, single authority and so make significant savings to protect vital community services. Taunton Deane voted for the merger in July and now West Somerset Council has also agreed in principle to the move. This is subject to Government approval.
- 1.2 An integral part of this agreement is the implementation of a single programme to change the way services are delivered and how decisions are made – a process known as “transformation” and key to delivering the savings projected for the sustainability of the new Council.
- 1.4 The authorities entered into partnership in 2013 and is currently delivering annual savings of £1,800,000. The merger will formalise the links between the two authorities while scrapping costly duplication and reducing bureaucracy.
- 1.5 There will be consultation over the coming months with key stakeholders and we are getting mobilised on transformation. I remind all Councillors of the ‘Making a Difference’ event on 19 October 2016.

### **2. Digital Economy**

- 2.1 Members will recall the fantastic news last December that the UK Hydrographic Office (UKHO) had decided to remain in Taunton, following a detailed review including other locations in the region. Plans are now coming forward for a new headquarters building at their current site on Admiralty Way, reflecting the UKHO’s commitment not only to remain here but to invest in a modern and high quality showcase building that truly reflects their position as the world’s leading geo-spatial maritime agency.
- 2.2 UKHO is an increasingly digital business. The days of paper chart production, whilst still a requirement, are fast giving way to the digital age and IT skills such as data-mining and software engineering are an increasing requirement for the UKHO to remain competitive in a challenging global market.
- 2.3 The UKHO is not alone in needing such skills – they are increasingly needed by a variety of sectors as wide-ranging as insurance, banking and health through to more ‘obvious’ industries such as IT and web design.

- 2.4 Extending the commitment within our Taunton Growth Prospectus to support growth in high value digital and data centric businesses, Taunton Deane and Somerset County Council are working with a cluster of businesses for whom digital and data skills are the predominant factor in achieving their business success. Through this work, we will bring forward a strategy that is owned by business and local authorities alike. The strategy will outline how we can build on the strengths we already have in Taunton and grow our reputation as a 'hotspot' for digital and data-centric businesses. It will encompass actions across a number of key areas, such as skills development, property and marketing. The Strategy will also set out targets to boost job numbers and economic productivity.
- 2.5 A special feature of this work – essential to its longer term success - is the support we have already secured from key businesses such as UKHO, Claims Consortium Group and Santander. We will continue to build upon this as we finalise the Strategy and present it to members in the coming months.

### **3. Blackbrook Pool**

- 3.1 The Blackbrook Pool opened to the public on 30 July 2016. It marks a milestone as the first new public swimming facilities to be built in Taunton Deane for four decades. The complex has a 25-metre, six-lane pool plus a 13-metre learners' pool. During the first month of operation the new facility attracted 5,721 public swimming visits and 225 treatments and visits to the Spa.
- 3.2 The facilities are intended to appeal to everyone, however, families should find the new changing village especially convenient to use and Sport England funding has financed a Pool Pod which will provide easy access to the pool for customers with disabilities.
- 3.3 The Blackbrook Pavilion Swimming Programme will make the most of both pools and their different properties enabling customers to take full advantage of their time. It will consist of a variety of activities from Swim School lessons, public swimming sessions and lane swimming, to family fun sessions, adult only Swimming and specialised aqua classes for fitness, pre and post-natal. Tone Leisure's Swim School was successfully uplifted from St James Street Swimming Pool with 1,448 swimmers moved to Blackbrook and 216 moved to Taunton Pool. By the end of August there were 1,534 learning to swim at Blackbrook.
- 3.4 Tone Leisure opened the branded coffee shop 'Coffee Corner by BETTER' which has to date been well used and popular with customers.

### **4. Hinkley Point C**

- 4.1 On 15 September 2016, the Government announced the momentous decision to go ahead with the construction of Hinkley Point C. This is clearly welcome news for the local and regional economy. The desire for all parties to make the most of being the first part of the country to host a project of this type and magnitude remains as strong as ever and we continue to engage with Government, EDF Energy, their contractors, businesses, colleges and training providers via well-established networks to deliver.
- 4.2 Activity at Hinkley Point continues apace with 750 workers on site and our officer team remains in direct contact with EDF Energy on a daily basis in a range of areas. The announcement allows additional posts in the One Team structure, all funded by agreements with EDF Energy, to be filled which will add significant capacity and benefiting both Councils. Funding is available to Taunton Deane to help deliver housing Initiatives (£700,000) and our officers are already working on an updated strategy to draw down this funding from EDF Energy, building on the experience of successful projects in West Somerset spanning over the last two years.
- 4.2 We are well placed to make the most of the opportunities offered. Taunton provides the rail gateway to the Hinkley Point C site and our plans at Taunton Station will create a first class transport interchange providing fast access to the site from London, Birmingham, Bristol and beyond including the South West peninsula. The planned investment in Junction 25 will also enhance our motorway connections to two regional airports.
- 4.3 The Council has committed funds to the Somerset Chamber of Commerce and has been working with a host of partners and EDF Energy to ensure local people benefit from training and employment opportunities and local businesses can bid for contracts, adding real value to the local economy. Regionally, it is anticipated the boost to our economy will be near £4 billion comprising £1.5 billion during construction and £2.4 billion during operations all at today's values.

## **5. Deane DLO Depot**

- 5.1 I will leave my colleague Councillor Edwards to fully report but I am pleased to note that Summerfield Developments are reporting the project as being on budget and approximately five weeks ahead of schedule. This means that the anticipated practical completion of the build phase and potential hand over of the building could be as early as 1 November 2016. Let us hope they maintain progress and achieve this.
- 5.2 The new premises will introduce a new way of working for the DLO and with the introduction of new technology will mean a step change from the current procedures. Once bedded in this can only be good for the tenants we serve by delivering a much more efficient service and being able to provide early

feedback on the status of individual jobs.

- 5.3 Achieving an early completion on this site will ensure we can meet our obligations to Helston Motors by meeting the vacant possession date by the end of this year, hopefully delivering the Priory Way depot to them early. This will give them the certainty they need to start work on the major task of delivering their new premises, which is to be welcomed.

## **6. Somerset County Council**

- 6.1 Somerset County Council have recently announced they are facing a £24,000,000 overspend this financial year, unless it makes huge savings in the next few months.
- 6.2 The Council has said this year's overspend is "unprecedented" and is almost double compared to last year's.
- 6.3 The County Council has put in place a 10-point plan which includes a recruitment freeze, a review of current staffing levels and voluntary redundancies amongst other initiatives. One thing is certain they will have some very hard choices as the real problem is underfunding of essential demand led services that they have no real control over.
- 6.4 On behalf of Taunton Deane, I would like to offer my support to Somerset County Council as they grapple with a very difficult challenge ahead.

## **7. Taunton Deane Borough Council Budget Setting**

- 7.1 Having mentioned the difficulties facing Somerset County Council our own forthcoming budget process is about to commence with some very difficult decisions to be made. Let there be no illusions, there will be a need for us to show strong leadership when facing these hard choices that will have to be made.
- 7.2 We have a choice of continuing with annual financial settlements from the Government or taking a four year settlement. We will be writing to the Government to accept the four year settlement as, having considered it, we feel it is in the best interests of the community and gives stability to financial planning. This does not increase our grant awards but does give us reasonable certainty to aid our forward planning process.
- 7.3 I must also mention two major initiatives on the horizon that will be inextricably linked to the budget setting process being the major changes to Business Rates retention, National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR), (I hesitate to use the term "100% retention") and the formation of a new Council with the accepted transformation process that will take place. The latter will definitely provide

substantial savings but the revision to NNDR retention are not as certain because the Government is advising it will be “cost neutral” but our benefit will come from planned growth of businesses from which we should retain the additional income created. Neither of these will help us this year or next, as 2019 or 2020 is the earliest we are likely to see any impact.

## **8. Devolution**

- 8.1 We held a joint meeting on 5 September 2016 with West Somerset Council Members to explain the process so far and, more importantly, give Members the opportunity to ask questions. It was a very interesting and informative session very ably presented by Brendan Cleere and Alistair Higton (from the County Council).
- 8.2 Despite the meeting being well trailed to ensure all Members were fully aware of the meeting and the importance of the subject, the attendance was nothing short of abysmal, but I do thank those that did take the trouble to attend or sent apologies. Of the combined total of the two Councils of 84 Members about 8 turned up, about half were West Somerset Councillors, hence my concern at the lack of Taunton Deane Members' interest.
- 8.3 If it is thought that the Government are not pursuing devolution any longer, I get no indication this is the case. So we can be ostriches with the proverbial 'head in the sand' or actively participate to ensure we have a voice at the table when all important issues such as roads, railways, employment, skills and learning, housing and health care are discussed. Going forward this will be a very important initiative. I do hope Members will take the trouble to attend future briefing sessions when arranged.
- 8.4 As a reminder to Members, the presentation used on the night was circulated to all Members by email from Richard Bryant on the 7 September 2016.

## **9. Firepool, Taunton**

- 9.1 It was extremely disappointing that the application for major redevelopment of Firepool was refused when considered by the Planning Committee recently. However, on the other hand, it was extremely useful in crystalizing the major concerns about the proposals on this key site.
- 9.2 Although not in accord with the “Area Action Plan”, it was recognised that times had changed over the last 10 years and that it would now be highly unlikely that a scheme with the mix and quantum of uses identified originally would come forward now. Concerns expressed at the meeting centred primarily around the design and layout rather than the mix of uses. The visual appearance of the boulevard was questioned as was the layout which it was felt made it more akin to a “retail park” rather than being complimentary to the existing town centre.

- 9.2 Our partners St Modwen and their Architects have taken this on board and are taking active steps to address the issues raised. All parties are aware of the need to get this resolved soonest so this all important strategic mixed use development can be brought forward at the earliest time and we can start securing commitments from businesses wishing to locate on the development. One thing is certain, without a valid planning consent we will not be able to secure final commitment to the site from any business!
- 9.3 We now need to focus on addressing the issues and securing a planning consent which will help retain Taunton as a thriving Town Centre in the future, whilst at the same time mitigating the risk of developers securing consents for developments in less sustainable locations.

## **10. And Finally - Somerset County Cricket Club (SCCC)**

- 10.1 My heartiest congratulations to our Somerset Club for achieving runners-up in the County Championship. I appreciate they must be bitterly disappointed that they did not secure the Championship title but it is still an enormous achievement to be runner-up. Great team effort secured this with some fantastic games through the season so I reiterate my sincerest congratulations.
- 10.2 Coincidentally, I was at the Cricket Club on the day of the final match attending the unveiling of a portrait of Giles Clarke, ex-Chairman of SCCC to celebrate his outstanding contribution to the Club. In his response, following the unveiling, Giles was nothing less than fulsome in his praise for the willingness of Taunton Deane to support, assist directly and facilitate with other organisations. He was clear and emphatic that without Taunton Deane's help the superb development of the ground would not and could not have happened. He praised us for our foresight and commitment in "buying in" to the project and help seeing it through.
- 10.3 So it is thanks to the great team effort that made this happen and, in so doing, we have maintained the wonderful asset of the Cricket Ground right in our midst - "a jewel in our crown" acting as a huge driver for our economy.

Councillor John Williams

# Council Meeting – 4 October 2016

## Report of Councillor Patrick Berry – Environmental Services

### 1. Environmental Health

Officers in the Environmental Health Team have recently been involved in the following areas of work:-

- 1.1 **Somerset Rocks Concerts:** Officers were in attendance at the concerts in Vivary Park, Taunton over the August Bank Holiday weekend to carry out checks regarding health and safety, noise monitoring and inspections of mobile food traders.
- 1.2 We worked in partnership with the Licensing Team and the event organisers LCC Live. It is interesting to note that only one noise complaint was received.
- 1.3 **Environmental Health Reactive work:** The Environmental Health Team investigate service requests and complaints regarding the following issues - noise from music and barking dogs, excessive bonfires, overgrown gardens and rat sightings.
- 1.4 The team also investigate complaints regarding drainage, smoke and odour and also respond to the Planning Department regarding applications and queries relating to contaminated land and air quality as well as many FOI requests.
- 1.5 Officers working in food safety respond to issues regarding food premises and infectious diseases. Officers are continuing to work with our colleagues in Licensing regarding noise complaints including loud music associated with licensed premises.
- 1.6 **Food Hygiene Inspections:** The team is working hard to continue to maintain performance in the inspection of food premises across both Council areas.
- 1.7 As well as routine inspections, officers also inspect newly opened food businesses. We aim to complete this within 28 days of registration.
- 1.8 During Quarter 1 of 2016/2017 we carried out an additional 45 inspections of new food businesses and during Quarter 2 this figure rose to 58 in Taunton Deane. Officers also carry out revisits to check compliance with hygiene

requirements and rescore visits to assess the premises under the FSA 'Scores on the Doors' scheme.

- 1.9 **Private Water Supplies:** The Private Water Supplies (England) Regulations 2016 came into force in June 2016. Officers in the team have attended training on the new requirements of the regulations.
- 1.10 The regulations outline the sampling frequency for different types of supplies, the analysis that is undertaken and the risk assessment of the supply. The costs for any sampling and assessment will be passed on to the person responsible for the supply. The assessment of radioactive substances such as radon is now included in the assessment but only in high risk areas such as West Somerset. We have updated the information available to the public on the Council websites.
- 1.11 **Team Meetings:** The Environmental Health Team regularly holds team meetings every 6 weeks or so. Currently the work-plan for 2017 is being considered. Since shared services began two years ago, we now have joint team meetings, joint procedures for noise complaints and joint policies such as the Food Service Plan. The team works very closely together and now has a joint rota to ensure that all service requests that require investigation are shared across officers located in both local authorities.
- 1.12 **Social Media:** The team is now able to use social media such as Facebook to promote its work whether it be proactive or reactive such as responding to complaints. It is able to promote its work around public health such as that carried out at the Somerset Rocks Festival in Vivary Park. We are also able to respond to other posts that make reference to our work such as Food Hygiene Inspections or Environmental Protection. So far the team have posted information on cooking BBQ food safely and National Food Hygiene Week.
- 1.13 **Taunton Town Centre Events:** The team work closely with our colleagues in Licensing, Car Parks, Economic Development, Assets and Democratic Services to ensure that events across the area run smoothly. We are currently reviewing the systems in place to book event spaces and the system we use to communicate across the different teams.
- 1.14 **Fly-tipping :** The team are currently working in partnership with Economic Development to review how we deal with the issue of fly-tipping and fly-posting in the town centre. We have a joint meeting arranged for early November after which a further update will be available.

## 2. Licensing



## **Performance of the Service**

- 2.1 The Licensing Service is predicted to achieve its performance target for the second quarter of the 2016/2017 financial year; the first time it would have done so in over a year. The service is required to issue 95% of applications within 14 days of a decision having been reached. 95% has been achieved so far for July and August.

## **Child Sex Exploitation (CSE) guide for Taxi and Private Hire Drivers**

- 2.2 In response to high profile, national child sex abuse cases and to support the work of Somerset Local Safeguarding Children Board CSE Strategic Group and in particular its CSE 'Prevent' Sub Group, officers developed a new guide to help taxi and private hire vehicle drivers identify the signs of CSE and understand how and where to report it.
- 2.3 The pocket sized guide, which has also now been adopted by other district authorities in Somerset, is to be sent to all licensed drivers by the end of the month, whilst all new drivers will also receive copies.

## **A Taxi Driver v Taunton Deane Borough Council**

- 2.4 A former taxi and private hire vehicle driver who had his licence revoked for making a false statement on his application form and for being unable to satisfy the Council's Policy in relation to drivers living outside of the district, has appealed to Taunton Deane Magistrate's Court to have his licence reinstated.
- 2.5 The Council contacted the driver following complaints being made about him using his taxi in Bristol. When spoken to by officers, he was not able to evidence using his taxi in Taunton Deane and therefore he could not satisfy Council Policy. To compound matters, he submitted an application form, using a Taunton Deane address which, upon investigation, officers established was vacant.
- 2.6 A preliminary hearing took place at the Court in early September. The matter has been adjourned to enable a full hearing to take place in mid-October.

## **3. Deane DLO (Street Sweeping and Toilet Cleaning)**

- 3.1 **Street Sweeping and Toilet Cleaning Tender:** This Council has already approved the award of the contract for this work to the Landscape Group.
- 3.2 The proposed commencement date for the services is 1 December 2016 in West Somerset and 1 February 2017 in Taunton Deane.
- 3.3 The new Deane DLO Manager Richard Burge is now in place.

- 3.4 Preparation for the clearance of the current DLO site is well advanced and the new depot at Chelston is, it is understood, approaching completion and is expected to be ready on time.

## 4. Somerset Waste Partnership

### Recycle Centre Permits

- 4.1 On Monday, 3 October 2016, at all our Recycle Centres, the now well publicised Site Permit system based on the new free bright orange permits will come into use.
- 4.2 The new system is aimed at cutting congestion, improving services and enhancing safety at recycling sites, where visit numbers have jumped to almost 1.6m a year. Most residents, who use a car without a trailer, need no permit and can expect no change, except shorter queues.
- 4.3 A quick checklist of the new measures - from 8am on Monday 3 October, people bringing in household waste:-
- **need** a free permit to use a single-axle trailer with a car or to use a van or a pick-up (without a trailer).
  - **do not need** a permit for a car –estate, 4x4, people carrier, campervan – that is not towing a trailer.
  - **can only** apply for permits if they live at a residential address in Somerset.
  - **will not** be able to use a Luton van, box van, box trailer, horsebox, multi-axle trailer, tractor, vehicle over 3.5 tonnes gross vehicle weight, or trailer more than 3 metres floor length.
  - with a hire vehicle, **must contact** recycling site staff on arrival before unloading and show their proof of hire.
  - with a permit, **can use** recycling sites on weekdays and only 1pm to 4pm on Saturdays.

**PS:** No one outside Somerset can use the permit system to enter any recycling site.

### Vehicle Procurement

- 4.4 Delivering a service that visits every household in Somerset every week is hugely demanding on vehicles. Somerset Waste Partnership, working with collections contractor Kier, is finalising procurement of several specialist vehicles to help refresh the ageing fleet. These include a number of smaller vehicles able to access the many narrow lanes in the County that are inaccessible to full-sized trucks.
- 4.5 The fleet will include four refuse trucks with an additional “pod” or container on the side, enabling them to collect a combination of materials in a single trip. These podded vehicles will introduce greater flexibility, providing options to

improve communal and school collection services. The new vehicles should be appearing on the streets of Somerset this autumn.

## **5. Crematorium**

- 5.1 The service continues as usual. There have been a number of audits carried out within this service and all actions that suggest improvements are being implemented.
- 5.2 The Manager, Paul Rayson, has moved on to a new role for another Local Authority and I would like to acknowledge his contribution to the service over the years.
- 5.3 A recruitment exercise has been completed and a new manager has been appointed. He will be in place in early December. Interviews for a newly vacant administration post will be carried out next week. There is a part-time Interim Manager in place until the arrival of the new manager and Assistant Director, Chris Hall continues to support the service in the transition period.

Councillor Patrick Berry

# **Council Meeting – 4 October 2016**

## **Report of Councillor Mark Edwards - Economic Development, Asset Management, Arts and Tourism and Communications**

### **Section 1: Business Development**

#### **Delivery of Employment land across the Borough**

- 1.1 Significant progress has been made in recent months to progress the presentation of various employment sites to the market.
- 1.2 In Taunton, detailed conversations are being held with the developers of the Monkton Heathfield Urban Extension, to ensure the provision of the allocated employment land. The sites, totalling 18 hectares, represent one of the strategic employment allocations for the whole of Taunton Deane, and they will also generate many local employment opportunities within the Monkton Heathfield community.
- 1.3 On the other side of Taunton, it is good to see a planning application recently submitted for a new 90,000 sq.ft business park off Silk Mills Road. The owner clearly recognises the demand for commercial space amongst local businesses and inward investors and has appointed Robert Cooney Estate Agent to identify interest and market the site. The Business Development Team has met with Mr Cooney and have put him in touch with a few businesses that are searching for space.
- 1.4 Led by our Planning Officers, discussions have commenced over the preparation of a Local Development Order for the new 25 hectare employment site at Junction 25 of the M5. This site has the potential to be the most prestigious business park in the South West, given its excellent location, access on to the M5 and the high quality of the environment.
- 1.5 Westpark in Wellington has maintained a continual supply of first class accommodation over the past five years and has grown to become an attractive and thriving employment area serving Taunton Deane. New premises for the Council's own Deane DLO depot are currently under construction, due be completed at the end of this year – a full progress report and photographs is included at Section 6.
- 1.6 Finally, officers are discussing the refurbishment of the old Barnicotts Mill with the owner, Forward Space Limited. Since it acquired the building in 2009, Forward Space has held an ambition to develop the property as a business centre and work hub, offering accommodation and support to start ups and fledgling businesses. I met with the owner at the premises recently and we are seeing what we can do to assist in bringing his concept forward and as a

result officers are liaising with the owner to identify potential funding streams to fund the capital works required.

### **UK Hydrographic Office**

- 1.7 I was really pleased to see the UK Hydrographic Office submit its planning application for a new office at its site off Tone Way, Taunton. This follows close and extensive liaison by Members and officers with the agency over the past couple of years to secure its continued presence in Taunton.
- 1.8 The new HQ will enable the agency to modernise its facilities and continue to improve its position as a global leader of digital mapping. This is a fantastic vote of confidence in Taunton by one of our largest employers, providing highly skilled and well paid jobs in a globally important business.

### **Support for Digital Innovation**

- 1.9 Over the past few months the team has been building a network of business leaders to advise on a strategy to stimulate innovation amongst digital and data-centre businesses in Taunton.
- 1.10 Working alongside Santander Bank a half day business conference is currently being arranged on 9 November 2016 at the County Cricket Ground. The event will launch the bank's national Digital Ambassador Programme and will be supported by speakers and exhibitors from a range of global businesses in the banking, IT and telecoms sectors.
- 1.11 Delegates will learn about impending changes to the banking and finance sector, and can gain insights to changing digital technologies, being developed by global leaders in this field. This is an enormously prestigious event, which will also provide a platform to consult with businesses on Taunton's own Digital strategy.

### **BREXIT Research**

- 1.12 Officers within the Business Development Team have recently appointed consultants to carry out research into the likely effects of the UK's vote to leave the EU. The research will be conducted amongst a small number of larger employers and is intended to identify opportunities for Council intervention to support those businesses. The appointment has been made jointly with West Somerset Council and will cover both Districts.
- 1.13 The Council's research will complement a much larger study currently being rolled out by the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership. This research will engage a far greater number of businesses, and is intended to identify business views across sectors and types of industry in the region.

### **Appointment of Marketing Partner**

- 1.14 The Council has recently appointed Coast Communications to work with

officers over a two year period to market Taunton Deane. The company will raise the profile of the Borough as an inward investment location through a targeted, sector based communications strategy, and will support officers in communicating the progress as well as investment opportunities amongst Taunton's regeneration schemes.

- 1.15 The appointment will bring significant resource and expertise to the Growth Directorate, particularly important in the wake of the Hinkley Point C announcement and the steady roll out of the projects in the Taunton Growth Prospectus.

### **Business Support events**

- 1.16 The Business Development Team is currently sponsoring a programme of workshops for businesses to assist them to improve their use of online media. Three workshops have been arranged, in partnership with local businesses and the Connecting Devon and Somerset partnership, to be held in September, October and November. The September event provided an introduction to cloud computing and reducing information storage costs and was attended by seven local businesses. The two subsequent events will focus on improving use of social media, and how to keep one's business safe on line.
- 1.17 Officers are also teaming up with colleagues in West Somerset and Sedgemoor Councils to commission a programme of business support across the three districts. The programme will provide small businesses with enterprise and digital advice and support, including how to win contracts associated with Hinkley Point C. It will include delivering a range of workshops and one-to-one digital support activity for a twelve month period starting in January 2017.

### **Wiveliscombe Enterprise Centre**

- 1.18 The Council will recall that Somerset County Council purchased land at Sandy's Moor, Wiveliscombe, including the site of the now redundant Karro Foods facility, with the aim of developing a new enterprise centre on part of the site.
- 1.19 The capital funding has been secured and the plans are progressing, with a planning application anticipated within the next few months. Officers of both authorities are liaising with businesses in the town to try to accommodate their expansion requirements in the business park.

### **Nuclear South West Conference**

- 1.20 Officers attended the Nuclear SouthWest conference in Bristol on 20 September 2016 along with over 100 nuclear related businesses. The high profile event was intended to take stock of all that is happening in the industry in the light of the Government's recent announcement to proceed with the investment.

- 1.21 Following a key note address from Tom Greatrex, Chief Executive of the Nuclear Industry Association, delegates received updates on projects happening around the South West of England, with practical information and the chance to network with businesses and industry stakeholders.

## **Section 2: Town Centre**

### **Coal Orchard Redevelopment**

- 2.1 The planning application for a mixed use scheme on this site has now been submitted and should be registered by the time of the Council meeting. Officers intend taking a report to the next Executive to examine the Business Case, due diligence and risks, and will be seeking borrowing approvals to be put into place for funding the preferred development option.
- 2.2 If approved, this will travel on to Full Council in December 2016 for a formal commitment to be made to a preferred scheme. In parallel, once the Executive has taken its decision, officers will commence procurement and legal work to create a development agreement against the preferred option.

### **Wi-fi in Taunton, Wellington and Wiveliscombe**

- 2.3 A contractor was appointed in the summer to design a suitable scheme for the three towns and to roll out the installation over forthcoming months.

## **Section 3: Marketing the area to businesses, visitors and local residents**

### **Events**

- 3.1 Over the summer, we have seen a great number of events taking place in the area, including a very successful week for Taunton Live, Taunton Flower Show, West Somerset Steam Rally, the Somerset Rocks Concerts and Wellington Food Town.
- 3.2 The Marketing and Visitor Centre Team continue to help market and promote these and are supporting new and existing event organisers bring their ideas to life, the Marketing and Visitor Centre Manager now acting as the first point of call for enquiries. Team members are now also looking at improving the events process via the use of an online booking system.
- 3.3 The Taunton Events Group now has a membership of over 60 which is an encouraging sign of the interest and passion for putting events on in our area.

### **Marketing to visitors**

- 3.4 The Taunton Visitor Centre have had another busy summer and has just

celebrated its first year in its new home. The team have been supported this year by overseas placement students from Italy, Spain, Switzerland and our twin town Lisieux. The students have been documenting their stay through our social media channels and are helping make the destination website international friendly in addition to working in the office.

- 3.5 Work continues with local tourism attractions and businesses to promote the area in conjunction with the Destination Management Organisation Visit Somerset.
- 3.6 The centre team have recently heard they have made it through to the finals of the Somerset, Bristol and Bath Tourism Awards. I am sure Members would join me in wishing them every success at the awards evening which takes place on Wednesday, 19 October 2016.

### **Social Media and Website**

- 3.7 Over the summer the new focus the team have given to social media including the use of initiatives such as Facebook Live and the re-introduction of competitions with prizes donated by local businesses has seen an increase in followers.
- 3.8 Members will be pleased to note that @moreTaunton on Facebook has risen to 5,066; Instagram to 857 and Twitter to 5,520. The @TauntonBusiness account on Twitter now has 2,115 followers
- 3.9 In preparation for the introduction of Town Centre Wi-Fi, Facebook and Twitter accounts @moreWellington and @moreWivey have been prepared and are now live.
- 3.10 Discussions have been held with a representative of the Youth Parliament on how we can make our content more of interest to a younger audience, a @moreTaunton Snapchat account has been set up.
- 3.11 The Destination website – Visit Taunton – has had over 60,000 unique visitors during the months of July and August.

### **Town Centre Marketing**

- 3.12 The new Town Centre Marketing Assistant has now met (since he joined in July) over 140 town centre retail businesses and is gathering content and material to promote through our e-newsletters, social media, and website channels.
- 3.13 Monthly e-newsletters for events, visitors and retailers are being produced. Please contact the team if you would like to receive copies of these.
- 3.14 Work continues with the Taunton Farmers Market and other town centre trading groups.



## Section 4: Asset Management Service General Fund Activities

The past three months have continued to be extremely busy within the General Fund Asset Management work.

### Estate Management Work

- 4.1 The Estate Management Team deals with day-to-day Estate Management, Valuation and Lease Event Management work. After a trend of volumes of live projects increasing over the past two years to approximately 150 for the General Fund work alone, after much hard work we are now seeing this volume begin to reduce. This will enable the individual Surveyors to focus on a smaller number of live projects at any one time and by doing so ensuring improved turnaround times. This is being managed closely to ensure this trend does not reverse.
- 4.2 Two particularly current significant projects include the finalising of arrangements to ensure the smooth transfer of the current Deane DLO site to the purchaser with vacant possession and in accordance with the sale contract before the end of the year and the management of the vacant St James Street Swimming Pool site. The completion of both of these projects will result in the exciting redevelopment of these areas.
- 4.3 Other current and significant projects include:-
  - **Former Mike Chedzoy premises off Greenbrook Terrace, Taunton** – A number of challenges have arisen post BREXIT within the property market in general, although less than first feared and, consequently, this particular transaction has needed to be renegotiated. The outcome was positive with the deal not falling through but the long stop date for completion has had to be pushed out which, whilst frustrating, still represents the best opportunity for the Council in terms of delivering a development and a significant capital receipt.
  - **Former Park Keepers Cottage, 277 Cheddon Road, Taunton** – This property is being taken to auction in October 2016 but with the recommendation of both Asset Management and Planning Officers, without a planning consent for new dwellings within the site. It has been concluded that this approach will deliver best value for the Council.
  - **Sale of land at Frobisher Way, Taunton** – Negotiations are progressing with the existing tenant with regard to the decision of the Executive in August 2016 which if unsuccessful over the next month or two will result in the property being taken to auction. In the meantime, further due diligence is being undertaken around contamination and other matters.

### Asset Data and Compliance Work

- 4.4 Significant work is being undertaken currently in respect of surveying the General Fund stock to develop comprehensive stock condition data of a level

not had before. This will provide valuable data in respect of replacement cost of building components (roofs, windows etc) over the next 30 years together with indicative cyclical and reactive maintenance requirements to better plan future programmes and spend on assets.

- 4.5 A further benefit of having this data is that it will enable the performance of individual assets to be measured with the resulting appraisal tool being developed considering costs alongside income at individual asset level enabling the Net Present Value of assets to be known along with valuable cashflow data during that 30 year period. This is a level of sophistication not previously applied to the General Fund portfolio and will be key in enabling active asset management of these assets in the future through understanding each asset's performance, and through this greatly assisting in decision making by providing robust data to support recommendations around investment, disposal or change of use.
- 4.6 This work is really key to how assets will be managed moving forward and follows those same key principles as being applied through the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) portfolio. The data is expected to be available during October 2016 with the resulting performance appraisals within the months thereafter.
- 4.7 Importantly, it is almost all assets that are being included in this exercise, many of which currently have very little information held. We are using the inspections to also assist in respect of the landlord health and safety compliance work and to ensure that for the first time ever we have floor plans of buildings, these being essential to properly manage the portfolio.
- 4.8 As for the landlord health and safety compliance work across the General Fund portfolio, we are continuing to gather data (on asbestos, servicing, fire risk assessments, legionella testing, electrical safety etc) and where necessary commissioning further works. Whilst further work needs to be done, significant progress has been made over the past twelve months.
- 4.9 Progress is now being made on procuring a comprehensive Asset Management System to improve the availability and accessibility of data, improve and make much easier the reporting, improve efficiencies and to bring in line with the HRA portfolio. The delay over the past few years had been in respect of how to bring together alongside the HRA, something which is now advancing and subject to the necessary business approvals the system is expected to be operational during 2017.
- 4.10 It should not be underestimated the amount of work that is currently taking place in respect of asset data across the General Fund portfolio but the benefits of having this will be critical in moving forward, providing the business intelligence and making the efficiencies needed.

## **Section 5: Communications**

- 5.1 Recent weeks have been challenging for the Communications Team with high level, high profile announcements and meetings.
- 5.2 The announcement on Hinkley Point C and West Somerset Council's vote on the future of its partnership with Taunton Deane attracted considerable national and local attention. But communications were well prepared to reflect potential outcomes on both issues.
- 5.3 Taunton Deane now has a Facebook page and it is starting to build up a following. The web address is <https://www.facebook.com/tauntondeanebc/> The Council's twitter account @TDBC continues to attract new followers with around 2,700 so far. The figure fluctuates according to the posts but it remains an extremely useful tool for us.
- 5.4 While social media provides new ways of communicating with residents and businesses, we continue to issue regular press releases and the regular Deane Dispatch page in the County Gazette.
- 5.5 The aim of communications is to be proactive but a considerable amount of time is spent on responding to media calls/enquiries from local, regional and national media.

## **Section 6: The New Deane DLO Depot**

- 6.1 The project is progressing very well and is within budget.
- 6.2 First and second fix activities are now taking place in the new building. Externally, approximately half of the yards/ parking areas/ internal roads have been concreted. The trailer park is being stoned up.
- 6.3 Summerfield Developments are reporting that the project is approximately five weeks ahead of schedule. This means that the anticipated practical completion of the build phase and potential hand over of the building could be as early as 1 November 2016. Our Clerk of Works is very happy with the quality of the build process and we have not encountered any difficulties with the developers.
- 6.4 From the 1 November we will install furniture, IT and other specialist equipment. We have procured items on the basis they must be ready, constructed and available to be called upon for installation on or after the 1 November. Indications are that these installation should be achieved without affecting any current service delivery. The preparations at the current DLO site are progressing. The new service leaders Rich Prewer and Richard Burge have made a significant impact in assisting preparations. A number of teams have visited the new site and feedback is very positive.
- 6.5 We have procured some 'back scanning' of service related documents to help move mind-sets into the new open office and paperless environment that we

seek to achieve. Separately we are shaping the longer term corporate solution for scanning under the leadership of Karen Penfold.

- 6.6 An open office environment will be a really big step change for staff. Cultural norms are being further challenged with a new structure in Property Services Team, this together with an extension of PDAs to a wider workforce and the upgrading the Open Contractor under the direction of Terry May. Staff are being kept informed and additional training and support has, and is being provided.
- 6.7 We are currently trialling the 'Thin Client' server based IT solution at the depot. The intention is to iron out any problems and implement it across the Priory Road site before we move so that staff are familiar with it.
- 6.8 A procurement exercise for new telephony has just been completed and Taunton Deane is in the process of awarding to the successful supplier who is very confident in their ability to deliver a modern cloud based solution by 1 December 2016. In respect of communications, the one risk we have is the delivery of the fibre optic telephone line to the new depot. The order has been placed but at this stage we do not have a confirmation of the installation date. A worst case scenario is a 60 day delivery which would take us to the end of December. As a consequence we are looking at contingency plans in case the line is not delivered.









Councillor Mark Edwards

# **Council Meeting – 4 October 2016**

## **Report of Councillor Roger Habgood – Planning Policy and Transportation**

### **1. Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (SADMP)**

- 1.1 The SADMP sets out policies for the allocation of land for housing, employment and other development proposals across Taunton Deane excluding the allocations in the Taunton Town Centre, up to 2028. It also contains detailed development management policies against which planning applications will be considered. The SADMP document will form part of the Council's suite of statutory plans, which comprise the basis for determining planning applications across the Deane.
- 1.2 The Council awaits the Inspectors report which we anticipate receiving during October and plan its adoption at the end of the year.

### **2. Specific Site Activity**

#### **Staplegrove**

- 2.1 Both applications have been received and are currently going through the planning process. Taunton Deane intends to hear both applications together at the end of the year. It is planned to utilise an external venue to accommodate the Planning Committee.

#### **Comeytrowe / Trull**

- 2.2 Section 106 Agreement negotiations continue in relation to this development and are now at an advanced stage.

#### **Monkton Heathfield**

- 2.3 Master Planning is now near completion. Public consultation will be commencing shortly.

#### **Firepool**

- 2.4 As Members are no doubt aware the application for the major redevelopment of Firepool was refused when considered by the Planning Committee recently. The major concerns expressed centred on the design and layout.



- 2.5 The Council's partners St Modwen and their Architects have taken this on board and are taking steps to address the issues raised.
- 2.6 As the Leader has stated all parties are aware of the need to get this resolved soonest so that this important strategic, mixed use development can be brought forward at the earliest opportunity.

### **Quantock House**

- 2.7 An application has now been received and is being processed in readiness for Planning Committee consideration.

## **3. M5 Junction 25**

- 3.1 The consultation for this much needed development is currently underway. This scheme is very important for Taunton Deane residents and for all road users.
- 3.2 This scheme is also imperative as it will provide access to and for the development of the Strategic Employment Site.

## **4. Strategic Employment site Local Development Order (LDO)**

- 4.1 The LDO for the Strategic Employment site continues to be developed. The Member Briefing on 29 September 2016 will cover all aspects of the LDO. It is anticipated that the LDO will be in place by mid-2017.

## **5. Neighbourhood Planning**

- 5.1 Trull and Staplehay – We expect to receive the independent examiner's report on the draft Neighbourhood Plan soon. The examination determines if the Neighbourhood Plan polices meet the legal requirements to be adopted as Local Planning Policy and whether the plan should go forward to a referendum of local people.
- 5.2 Bishops Lydeard - The Neighbourhood Plan from Bishops Lydeard and Cothelstone was adopted by Full Council on 12<sup>t</sup> July 2016. It will now be used in the decisions on planning applications for the Parish.

## **6. Transportation**

### **Schemes**



- 6.1 Taunton Deane continues to work with partners on a range of Transport Schemes related to the growth prospects for Taunton.

**Variable Message Signage (VMS) and Pay on Foot (POF)**

- 6.2 The VMS / POF project is making good progress and is now in the procurement phase. Completion of this project is planned for end of 2017.

**Northern Inner Distributor Road**

- 6.3 Work continues to progress towards completion with the refurbished bridge across Station Road being reinstalled.

**Car Parking Operations**

- 6.4 Car park utilisation numbers have held or increased across the Council's Car Park Portfolio year to date with a few exceptions.
- 6.5 Whilst this may seem at odds with retail anecdotal feedback, it does fit with the changing shape of retail experienced across the County and country. It is important that Taunton Deane continues to observe and react to the changing retail and leisure needs of our residents and visitors.

Councillor Roger Habgood

# **Council Meeting – 4 October 2016**

## **Report of Councillor Mrs Catherine Herbert - Sports, Parks and Leisure**

### **1. Parks**

- 1.1 The department has said goodbye to Cyril Rowe and I was pleased to have been present on his last day with us and heard the staff remembering Cyril's career and saying their best wishes for his future. We have welcomed on board Richard Burge as Open Spaces Manager. Richard will be known to many as a successful Manager of the Deane Helpline. His management and interpersonal skills will I am sure prove invaluable in this new role.
- 1.2 Grass cutting this year has been very challenging with sunshine and showers providing optimum growing conditions for both grass and weeds! Despite this, the Open Spaces Team have managed to keep the Taunton Deane and the 150 schools we maintain looking well cared for and with all sports pitches marked up ready for numerous sports days.
- 1.3 The Parks Department has been busy, along with all at Priory Depot, in sorting out and cleaning up in preparation for the Depot move to Westpark. Wellington. I would like to thank everyone for their efforts in this.
- 1.4 Five of our parks and open spaces have earned Green Flags this year and we look forward to the results of Britain in Bloom and are proud to be hosting the South West Award Ceremony at the County Cricket Ground this October.

### **2. Play and Leisure**

- 2.1 Hamilton Gault Park has successfully been dedicated with Fields in Trust as a Centenary Field in Trust. The programme, launched in 2014 by Fields in Trust President HRH The Duke of Cambridge, in partnership with The Royal British Legion is providing a unique way to commemorate the centenary of World War 1 and remember those who lost their lives during the conflict, by protecting outdoor recreational space in perpetuity for the benefit of future generations.
- 2.2 The Centenary Fields programme also fulfils the Armed Forces Community Covenant which the Council has signed up to. Work is currently underway for the dedication of Frieze Hill Community Orchard as a Centenary Field and I very much look forward to this.

- 2.3 Applications have been received for awards under the Council's Capital Grant Scheme for Village Halls and Community Centres and Sports Clubs which are currently being assessed. We are also inviting applications to the Parish Play Area Grant Scheme.
- 2.4 A new community hall has been completed at Monkton Heathfield as part of the continuing development there. It will be known as the Brittons Ash Community Hall and is due to be opening at the end of October 2016.
- 2.5 Work is continuing with West Monkton Parish Council who will take initial responsibility for the hall on kitting out the facility. I would like to thank West Monkton Parish Council for their invaluable support, help and enthusiasm in helping with the hall project and with their input I am sure it will go on to be a successful community asset.
- 2.6 Play equipment improvements have included:-
- An over 8's climbing unit at Glamington Park;
  - a rota wheel at The Shoulders;
  - Amazon jungle climbing unit at Priorswood Park;
  - A cone climber at Greenway Recreation Ground;
  - Climbing unit at Wilton Lands;
  - A tango swing at French Weir Park;
  - Outdoor gym equipment at Dobree Park, Wellington;and
  - Outdoor gym equipment and musical play equipment at Wellington Recreation Ground.
- 2.7 Construction of the Wellington Petanque pitch have been carried out and benches, scoreboards and signs have been ordered to make it fully operational. I very much look forward to seeing this in action.

### **3. Tone Leisure**

- 3.1 As we have only just had a Tone's report through the Community Scrutiny Committee I have not asked for a further update for Full Council this time.

Councillor Catherine Herbert

# **Council Meeting – 4 October 2016**

## **Report of Councillor Richard Parrish – Corporate Resources**

### **1. Corporate Services**

#### **Corporate Strategy and Performance**

- 1.1 Quarter 2 performance data is currently being collected and will be brought to the October Corporate Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.2 Complaints process training is underway for the Housing and Communities Team which will assist in handling complaints and improve customer experience.
- 1.3 Work is also underway to refresh the online Transparency Data. Corporate Services is also supporting the implementation planning for Joint Management and Shared Services Phase 2 and the engagement exercise. This is a significant piece of work including a review of the governance arrangements.

### **2. Customer Contact Service**

- 2.1 A Service Level Agreement (SLA) has now been agreed with Somerset County Council for the provision of an ongoing shared Customer Contact Service for 12 months from 1 December 2016 to 30 November 2017. Members will be aware of the importance of obtaining this SLA to enable our ability to move forward with the Councils plan.
- 2.2 Planning and preparation for the return of the Customer Contact Service from Southwest One (SWO) is now underway. Further information will be available in due course as matters progress.

### **3. Facilities Management**

- 3.1 Preparation for the roll-out of the new and increased Pool Car Scheme is underway and due to launch on 1 October 2016.
- 3.2 Planning and preparation for the accommodation moves required to enable the return of SWO staff to The Deane House on 1 December 2016 is progressing within the anticipated time frame.

### **4. HR and Organisational Development**

- 4.1 Changes to the Essential User Allowance and Lease Car Schemes launches

from 30 September 2016.

- 4.2 'My Staff Shop' has also been launched.
- 4.3 HR is currently supporting the staffing elements of the SWO service transition on 1 December 2016. Understandably this is of significant importance for the welfare of our staff.
- 4.4 Members will be aware that a new HR and Payroll system implementation is required to replace SAP. This is a very complicated and time consuming task however, officers are dedicating time and effort to produce a system fit for purpose.

## **5. ICT and Information**

- 5.1 A preferred supplier (8 x 8) has been appointed to provide new telephony, initially for Deane DLO and then for the wider organisation. Planning for the ICT elements of the DLO move continues to progress.
- 5.2 Detailed planning and preparation for the return of the ICT service from SWO and implementation of replacements for the SAP system as reported in 4.4 above.

## **6. SWO Exit and SAP Replacement**

- 6.1 As previously reported, this is on track for service return on 1 December 2016. Service Transition Plans and Transition Managers are in place. Agreement has been reached with Somerset County Council for the joint Customer Contact Service to continue for a temporary period.
- 6.2 Briefing sessions are to be undertaken with returning and affected staff in early October 2016.
- 6.3 We are on track at this time for replacement of SAP by 1 April 2016. Members must remain aware of the significance of producing the replacement on time.
- 6.4 Suppliers have been identified for the new Finance/Procurement system, the Website and the HR/Payroll system. Project teams are in place for each system.

## **7. Electoral, Electoral Review, Democratic Services and Legal Services**

### **Electoral Services**

- 7.1 The team are now focussed on the Annual Canvass which is keeping them busy particularly after the heightened public interest in voting after the recent

Referendum. I believe it is fair to say that most Electoral Teams are in a recovery state following the very busy months of April, May and June. The Association of Electoral Administrators has recently produced a report headed 'Pushed to the Absolute Limit. 2016 – the Electoral Year never to forget'. The title says it all! A link to the document has been forwarded to all Group Leaders and makes interesting reading.

## Electoral Review

- 7.2 Since my last report, both Taunton Deane and West Somerset Councils have agreed to proceed towards forming a new authority covering the existing areas of the two Councils. The Boundary Commission for England have been kept informed of developments and have confirmed that they will suspend work on the existing Taunton Deane Electoral Review until it is clear what the way forward is.

## Democratic Services

- 7.3 There is one staff change to report in that Emma Hill has been successful in applying for and obtaining a new job at Deane DLO as a Works Planning Officer. We wish Emma well in her new role that will start later this month and are in the process of recruiting for a replacement in the Democratic Services Team.

## Legal Services

- 7.4 The latest figures for the use of Law and Governance SHAPE Partnership Services for Quarter 2 of 2016/17 are set out below:-

Commercial , Contract and Procurement • Advice on New Contracts	4
Enforcement/Prosecutions • Benefits • Housing • Statutory nuisance	1 1 1
Governance • Constitution • Corporate/Policy Advice •	2 1
Housing • General Advice	2
Litigation • Commercial Litigation • Debt Recovery • Housing/Property repossessions • Statutory appeals	1 1 7 1 2

• Trespass	
Planning	
• General Advice – TCPA	5
• CLUED/CLOPUD	5
• Compulsory Purchase	1
• S106 Agreements, Enforcement Notices and Stop Notices	7
Property	
• Agreements	5
• Leases	3
• Licences	1
• Advice on Property Law	11
• RTB	19
• Sales	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>85</b>

## 8. SWO Customer Services

### Highlight Report

#### 8.1

- KPIs achieved – No fails for 2016-2017;
- SPIs achieved – No fails for 2016-2017;
- Client CSAT results – 75% of client responses rated our services as good or very good – Only four responses;
- 95% of external customers rated the service they received to be good or very Good;
- 98% contacts received resolved at first point of contact;
- Year 2016 to date - 10 complaints received;
- Business Controls – continued SWO compliance;
- Working with Client Team on SWO End of Contract planning;
- Staff briefings undertaken for identified staff TUPE to Taunton Deane. It is hoped all will move over to Taunton Deane Terms and Conditions
- Agreement signed for Taunton Deane to work in partnership with Somerset County Council

### Performance indicators

- 8.2 The service has continued to perform exceptionally well in line with its contractual performance indicators with no failures since the last update, and consistently exceeding targets.

### SWO Succession Planning

- 8.3 The formal arrangements are now in place; Customer Contact is assisting Taunton Deane in their SWO succession planning. Further updates to be provided as progress made during the year.

### **Customer Contact Association Accreditation**

- 8.4 The preparation work around the CCA standard version 6, accreditation has now halted due to the contract end.

### **New Telephony Technology**

- 8.5 The implementation of the Siemens Open Scape Contact Centre remains extremely positive news with no interruptions to service caused by system problems. This is specifically important because one of the primary drivers for implementing a new contact centre system was to reduce the amount of operational downtime which was regularly a problem with the old MacFarlane system.
- 8.6 Automated payments are still proving a popular channel for our customers. Over 60% of callers wanting to make a payment to Taunton Deane now choose to use the automated system. Between 1500 and 2000 payments are now made each month through the Council's automated payments line.

## **9. Revenues and Benefits Service**

- 9.1 Consultation on options for our Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme in 2017/2018 ended on 11 September 2016. Members were asked to obtain views from 10 constituents within their respective Wards meaning we would consult with 560 residents across the entirety of the Taunton Deane area.
- 9.2 Unfortunately, we only received 78 responses and while this is still valid consultation for CTS purposes, it will mean we have a more difficult job in deciding the scheme for 2017/2018. A report will be presented to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 20 October 2016. This will reflect the views we have received as well as considering the financial implications and equality impact of each of the proposed options.
- 9.3 Council Tax collection at the end of August 2015 was 53.12% - slightly under our target of 53.25%. Business Rate Collection at 51.8% is ahead of our target of 51.46%. We are performing well in speed of benefit processing for 2016/2017 with the average time to reassess benefit under eight days from when the customer tells us of a change in their circumstances. We are working out new claims on average within 22 days of the date they are submitted.
- 9.4 For people of working age that are not in employment, the benefit cap restricts the amount in certain benefits that a household can receive. We must reduce Housing Benefit for any household receiving more than the cap to bring them back within the limit. Currently, 15 households are affected by the Benefit Cap



of £26,000. From November, the Benefit Cap will be cut to £20,000 and we estimate up to 150 households will be affected. While we can assist some households with Discretionary Housing Payments to help meet their rent, it is unlikely we will be able to help everyone affected by the reduced Benefit Cap.

## **10. Finance and Procurement**

### **Procurement**

- 10.1 As at 1 June 2016, the strategic and operational aspects of the function will be delivered by the new Procurement Team within the ONE Team. This follows the return of this service area from SWO, with two people returning from SWO to the Team. For Taunton Deane, the transactional elements of the function will continue to be delivered by SWO.
- 10.2 An early priority for the Procurement Team will be to review and align strategic and operational procurement arrangements across both Taunton Deane and West Somerset, to provide the benefit of consistent specialist advice and support across the ONE Team. Although the function consists of a small team, it will focus on strategically important procurement activity, as well as corporate processes and compliance work.
- 10.3 The Assistant Director - Resources provided a briefing note to all Councillors in early June setting out the main responsibilities and activities for the Procurement Team in more detail. The return of the service means that long-standing procurement savings targets are no longer the responsibility of SWO to deliver. The new team will continue to progress existing opportunities and it is proposed to develop new procurement savings targets during 2016.

### **Finance**

- 10.4 The Finance Service has been working through the financial year end period – always a particularly busy time of year.
- 10.5 The financial outturn position against budget has been confirmed for the last financial year, with details of performance against budget reported to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 30 June 2016 and to the Executive on 7 July 2016.
- 10.6 Overall, financial performance is positive with net spending remaining within budget and adequate reserves maintained.
- 10.7 The General Fund (GF) Revenue Outturn position for 2015/2016 was a net underspend of £280,000, with the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Outturn position reporting a net underspend of £476,000.
- 10.8 In respect of the Capital Outturn positions, the GF Capital Programme reported a net underspend of £125,000 against the overall programme, with the HRA Capital Programme reporting a net underspend of £2,154,000 against the overall programme. The future HRA capital requirements are being reviewed as part of the work on the new HRA Business Plan.

- 10.9 The GF Reserves Balance as at 31 March 2016 stands at £2,113,000, therefore £513,000 above the Council's recommended minimum reserves balance.
- 10.10 The HRA Reserves Balance as at 31 March 2016 stands at £2,675,000, therefore £875,000 above the Council's recommended minimum reserves balance.
- 10.11 As well as monitoring the position against the budget the Authority has produced the Annual Statement of Accounts for 2015/2016 and these were approved by the Director of Operations by 30 June 2015 in line with the statutory deadline. These accounts are now subject to examination by the external auditor, with the audited accounts then scheduled to be presented to and approved by the Corporate Governance Committee in September 2016.
- 10.12 Going forward, the year-end process will be even more challenging with the statutory deadline for completing the unaudited accounts being brought forward to 31 May, and audited accounts approved by 31 July, from the 2017/2018 financial year onwards.
- 10.13 The Assistant Director – Resources has reviewed and updated the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). Hopefully all Councillors have kept up to date with the latest forecasts – with the five-year MTFP being reported to Corporate Scrutiny on 30 June 2016, supplemented with a briefing note to all Councillors setting out a lot of supporting information behind our projections. It is important that all Councillors appreciated the financial position when considering important decisions such as our future Transformation Business Case.

### **Finance Systems Replacement Project**

- 10.14 As part of the wider exit arrangements for SWO, the Council has approved the replacement of the SAP system. This project includes the replacement of the main accounting, purchasing and income systems that are currently part of the SAP solution. The project team have been busy preparing for this, and the procurement process is underway with bids invited on possible solutions to meet the Council's requirements. The plan is to secure the preferred solution in July/August with the replacement system planned for launch in April 2017.
- 10.15 This project will inevitably require significant support from the Finance Service. One of our team is seconded into the Project Manager role, and the change in system will mean we will need to review and update all of our main business processes affecting all parts of the service. This will also impact more widely with the new system and processes to be embedded in all services across the Council.

Councillor Richard Parrish



# Council Meeting – 4 October 2016

## Report of Councillor Mrs Jane Warmington - Community Leadership

*The strategic vision for Taunton Deane's most disadvantaged areas, is that residents lives will improve significantly and that these priority areas will look better, feel safer and in the future place a more proportionate demand on public services. These services will be delivered in urban areas through co-ordinated, frontline, problem-solving, multi-agency teams of individuals, already working in the areas, providing early help and based together. Rural parishes with more scattered communities will be helped to access services through community centres and local village agents identifying, signposting and supporting isolated residents to get the help they need. Urban priority areas need excellent education and health facilities on the doorstep which are then accessible to all, if we are to build independence, resilience and raise aspirations in individual people, families and communities, to sustain improvements and continue to reduce the need for and costs of intervention in the future.*

### 1. Summer Activities

- 1.1 There have been lots of community activities and initiatives throughout Taunton Deane over the summer many focusing on children and families, helping to bring people in local communities regularly together to help make the best of the school holidays. Increasingly these are collaborative events as different groups come together for the benefit of all.
- 1.2 There have also been many small Parish, school and church fetes with some larger one-off events in our towns of Wellington, Wiveliscombe and Taunton. We are blessed to have so much on offer locally and would like to thank all those involved in organising so many good things to go along to.

### 2. Minerva Primary School

- 2.1 We have a new primary school and nursery serving young families in East Taunton off Outer Circle in Halcon where there have been lots of changes over the summer. Minerva Primary School pupils, Head and teachers welcomed us to their official opening two weeks after term started when our local Member of Parliament, Rebecca Pow, cut the ribbon.
- 2.2 The investment in the school is hugely welcomed and their supportive, inclusive approach to education in its widest sense. The school is now one of four Redstart Academies and includes the previously separate nursery provision and has plans to welcome parents to stay with a cafe and their own classroom.
- 2.3 The grounds and classrooms have been upgraded and rearranged, pupils have been provided with a very smart new uniform and there are new teaching staff. The school is bigger because the Community Association has kindly agreed for their hall to be used as a new classroom which has made a huge difference and we are delighted that they were able to do this.

- 2.4 Many of our tenants' children living locally begin their education here and we want to help them get the best start in life. Taunton Deane has contributed to the improved school security and to the school Safeguarding Officer who regularly attends One Team and other related meetings, removing the need for teaching staff to do this.

### **3. Holway Litter Pickers**

- 3.1 Councillor Hazel Prior-Sankey and the Holway Local Action Team have set up a monthly family litter pick in the Ward which is proving increasingly popular. Families meet on the last Saturday of the month at ten o'clock at the YMCA where they are invited to have lunch afterwards. This initiative which follows the model set up in the neighbouring Halcon Ward is to be applauded.

### **4. Education Programme on 'Legal Highs'**

- 4.1 Stand Against Violence are delivering this programme with sessions already confirmed at Bishop Fox's, Castle and Heathfield Schools with others expected to follow including the Pupil Referral Unit. The response from the secondary schools has been really positive.
- 4.2 The story book for the primary school sessions is almost complete and local schools are being contacted to arrange dates to deliver these during the new school year.
- 4.3 Addressing this issue alongside other related issues in schools should be informative for pupils, parents and the school particularly in areas with a One Team in place where more holistic support is already being undertaken and is ongoing.

### **5. ManKind**

- 5.1 We are delighted that ManKind in partnership with Taunton Women's Aid has launched a drop-in service for male victims of domestic abuse in Taunton. This will be every Monday (except Bank Holidays) from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. (and no appointment is necessary) at Flook House, Belvedere Road, Taunton, TA1 1BT where their national telephone help-line is based.  
[www.mankind.org.uk/somersetdropin](http://www.mankind.org.uk/somersetdropin).

### **6. Improving Tenant and Leaseholder Satisfaction**

- 6.1 The Tenant Services Management Board (TSMB) complimented Community Development Officer, Martha Dudman, on the thoroughness and readability of her report addressing the various concerns they have. The Action Plan has been accepted and Martha appointed as a Project Manager for six months to oversee its implementation and service improvements.

## **7. Syrian Refugees Resettlement**

- 7.1 The Somerset Syrian Resettlement Group continues to cover matters at a strategic level across the County with regard to resettlement and expansion in existing and new areas. Having met every two months or thereabouts for the last year (the PfH has attended from the outset), it now expects to meet six monthly with discussions in each of the areas inbetween when properties and family profiles are available.
- 7.2 In Taunton Deane a third family is due to arrive in October 2016 and there is a further offer of a property from a church group enabling another family to resettle probably in November. Private properties, school places and volunteer support can be limiting factors but our wonderful local volunteer group Taunton Welcomes Refugees has further capacity to support more families.
- 7.3 This should enable uptake of another offer of a larger house to rent which might take two linked families. School capacity will be checked in the specific vicinity of any properties offered but there is a general lack of secondary capacity in Taunton Deane and limited special school capacity. It is hoped that between two and four additional Syrian families will be resettled locally over the next six months.
- 7.4 In addition to the six families already resettled in the County, Somerset would like to resettle a further thirty Syrian Refugee families over the next three years.

## **8. Taunton Deane and West Somerset**

- 8.1 The difficult decision of whether the two Councils covering the most westerly part of Somerset should merge to form one new Council was made when West Somerset agreed to this in early September following the same decision made by Taunton Deane in July.
- 8.2 Neither wished to lose their autonomy but faced with ever increasing budgetary pressures across a predominantly rural area, it made sense for both to do so and join forces to better serve residents across the wider area.
- 8.3 Ever the optimist, I believe that this alongside the transformation needed to move from a traditional to a really modern Council in order to deliver services we all want, will also protect our innovative support for our most vulnerable. Most of the changes will be felt in house by officers and Councillors but not by the wider public who should benefit from a simpler, more responsive service. This is the right decision to have been made both practically, and certainly financially, to fit us for the future.

Councillor Jane Warmington

# **Council Meeting – 4 October 2016**

## **Report of Councillor Terry Beale – Housing Services**

### **1. Deane Housing Service**

#### **Creechbarrow Road, Taunton**

- 1.1 This site remains a frustration with regards to the project delays. Building work is still underway on site and detailed discussions on going with contractor regarding site progression.

#### **Weavers Arms, Rockwell Green, Wellington**

- 1.2 The site is still on schedule and progressing. We are currently communicating with residents as the building work has temporally ceased. This is to allow Western Power to undertake major utility work to enable the site. We are currently waiting on road closure details from Highways to allow the work to commence.
- 1.3 We recently undertook a project with Rockwell Green Primary School funded by the Tenants Forum to produce piece of artwork. This has now been completed and displayed on site.

#### **Extensions**

- 1.4 We currently have one family decanted and we are progressing the tender to undertake the extension work

#### **Scooter storage**

- 1.5 We currently have 38 scooter stores delivered and we have further installations in the pipeline.
- 1.6 With regards to Kilkenny Court, a planning application is being prepared for the scooter store project. Resident consultation is currently underway.

#### **Car parking**

- 1.7 The planning application for the proposed additional parking at Bulford, Wellington has been approved and work is underway to procure a contractor.
- 1.8 Parking solutions for Polkesfield, Stoke St Gregory have been agreed and a work quotation is being obtained.

## **Parmin Close, Taunton**

- 1.9 Despite continued uncertainty over funding and policy we are delighted that a new project at Parmin Close being delivered by Knightstone Housing is underway.
- 1.10 Rebecca Pow MP and Councillor Williams joined the celebration event as work started on site for the 66 unit extra care and 12 unit learning difficulties scheme with an anticipated completion date of mid-2018.

## **Housing Enabling**

- 1.11 The affordable housing development pipeline is showing another successful year for delivery with in excess of 200 new homes predicted. This includes 100% affordable housing sites being brought forward by local housing association partners with the support of the housing enabling service.
- 1.12 I commend the team for their hard work and dedication!

## **2. Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Service**

### **Performance**

- 2.1 I am delighted to report that satisfaction with the work of the ASB Service remains high. At the end of Quarter 3, 97% of tenants who reported ASB in the year to date rated the help and advice they received as good or excellent as set against a target figure of 66%!
- 2.2 This represents an improvement on the last update and I congratulate the team on their success.

### **Casework**

- 2.3 The numbers of cases of recorded ASB are still high and there is a lot of work to be done but I am pleased to report that in the 12 months to the 29 September 2016, the total number of opened cases fell by 14 to 70.
- 2.4 These cases include:- 8 Alcohol, 1 Communal Areas, 1 Domestic Abuse, 8 Drugs, 5 Garden Nuisance, 17 Harassment, 2 Hate Crime, 14 Noise, 1 Other Crime, 1 Pets 8 Physical Violence, 1 Rubbish/Fly Tipping and 3 Vehicles.

### **Closed cases**

- 2.5 44 cases were closed during the period, all cases were resolved.

### **High Profile/Risk Cases**

- Noise, assault on neighbour. County Court on 26 August 2016 SPO granted.
- Injunction with power of arrest granted by Magistrates Court – Mental Health.
- Victim family now moved to alternative address as a supportive measure.
- Relationship breakdown, resulting in community tension – All One Team partners involved in particular Social Services.



- Mental Health, perpetrator now in permanent long term supported accommodation.

### **3. Homefinder**

#### **Homefinder Somerset Policy Changes October 2016**

- 3.1 Following a consultation earlier this year the five partner Local Authorities have agreed changes to the Homefinder Somerset Policy. The new policy comes into effect on Monday, 10 October 2016. Two of the key changes include the removal of banding criteria as detailed below:-

Gold Band for under-occupation: Where the applicant is a tenant of a Homefinder Somerset partner who resides within the Homefinder Somerset area and under-occupies their existing property and is looking to move to a smaller, more suitable property.

Silver Band for children in flats: Where the applicant is pregnant or has a child/children under 10 years of age and lives in a first floor flat or above and has no access to a lift.

- 3.2 Applicants affected by the changes have been contacted and their new banding has been reconsidered based on the information held on their existing application. Applicants have been urged to access their Homefinder Somerset account and check the information held is correct and up to date.

## Homefinder Register as of 26th September.

	Emerg -ency	% in Emerg -ency	Gold	% Gold	Silver	% Silver	Bronze	% Bronze	Total	% of Total
Mendip District Council	1	0.07	151	10.54	651	45.43	630	43.96	1433	16.86
Sedgemoor District Council	4	0.16	221	8.89	646	26.00	1614	64.95	2485	29.24
South Somerset District Council	2	0.10	280	13.80	708	34.89	1039	51.21	2029	23.87
Taunton Deane Borough Council	0	0.00	282	14.54	470	24.24	1187	61.22	1939	22.81
West Somerset Council	1	0.16	75	12.23	158	25.77	379	61.83	613	7.21
Total	8	0.09	1009	11.87	26.33	30.98	4849	57.05	8499	100

## 4. Welfare Reform

### Welfare Reform Visits

- 4.1 The number of tenants affected this month are 311, however as always this is subject to change on a daily basis due to tenants moving in and out of employment and any changes in their family makeup.
- 4.2 Tenants are still downsizing to more suitable accommodation however the pace of this has now slowed and people are choosing to amend their budgeting to stay in their current accommodation. We continue to work closely with families and resolve the issue.

### Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)

- 4.3 All affected tenants are being offered advice on DHP's and assistance to help them complete the application form.

4.4 The DHP budget for 2016/2017 is £150,984 and so far this year 43 tenants have had a successful award.

### **Universal Credit (UC)**

4.5 Currently only single newly unemployed people are able to make claims for UC. This accounts for the small number of affected council tenants at this time.

4.6 We have now received formal notification from the Department of Works and Pensions that the roll out of the full Universal Credit Services will start in Taunton Deane on the **26 October 2016** and in West Somerset on the **12 October 2016**.

4.7 This will mean anyone making a new claim for any of the following benefits will have to make a Universal Credit claim online and then manage their claim online:-

- Housing Benefit;
- Working Tax Credit;
- Child Tax Credit;
- Job Seekers Allowance (income based);
- Employment and Support Allowance (income related); and
- Income Support.

4.8 Also anyone currently receiving any of these benefits, who report certain changes in circumstances, will also have to re-apply for Universal Credit online.

Councillor Terry Beale