

COUNCIL MEETING – 17 DECEMBER 2002.

REPORT OF COUNCILLOR CROAD – TOURISM, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COUNCIL BUILDINGS.

You will recall that when this Council submitted our first Asset Management Plan last year, it was assessed as being ‘poor’ largely due to the fact that our properties condition had not been evaluated.

I am pleased to be able to report that this year our Plan has been placed in the ‘good’ category, which means that future demands on us are likely to be less onerous. In addition, we should receive the sum of £50,000 which I hope can be ring-fenced for future maintenance programmes.

Although we will not be required to make detailed annual submissions, we will still need to demonstrate we are managing our assets well and doubtless the CPA judgement will be influenced by its effectiveness.

The condition of our stock is relatively satisfactory but we must ensure that it does not deteriorate and that the existing categories are maintained. We have to take some hard decisions on those assets which are in the lowest category. We either improve them or dispose of them.

I have asked our officers to come up with some imaginative proposals which may attract the interest of the RDA or County Council.

An up to date Property Asset List is now available for Members on request.

I made reference in my last report to the Urban Design Framework and the master plans for the key areas. We have met with senior members of the SWRDA and they have urged us to move ahead with the minimum of delay. These are the important first steps to implementing the vision.

Tourism

I am most sorry to see Katie Burton, our Tourism Officer, move on to pastures new, but I know you will join me in wishing her well in Cumbria. It will be hard to match her enthusiasm and energy but I am determined that we will maintain the current momentum, particularly in the important areas of Equine and Cycling Tourism, together with the many other initiatives she has been driving forward.

I had the pleasure of addressing “The Way Forward for Tourism in Somerset” meeting held recently at Cricket St Thomas. Local Authorities in Somerset, the RDA and South West Tourism were well represented along with key operators in the County’s tourist industry. The Interim Steering Group reported on the progress made in developing a Tourist Strategy for Somerset. This Group will continue their work and by next April will come up with recommendation for a structure, a detailed strategy, culminating in a business plan. If Somerset is to receive the funding it needs, for example, to exploit the benefits of E Tourism, we must demonstrate it has clear and effective policies and the right structure to deliver a service that is anything approaching world class.

Councillor Colin Croad

