

COUNCIL MEETING 16 DECEMBER 2003

REPORT OF COUNCILLOR MRS. BRADLEY - LEISURE, ARTS AND CULTURE

Wellsprings: we expect the handing over of the keys to our new leisure centre at the end of this week. James Curry the manager has been regularly on site dealing with details of fittings and has recruited the majority of staff. It will be open for business on Monday 5th January after an Open Weekend of free activities and taster sessions which will include: health & fitness, aerobic and fitness classes, badminton, childrens' activities, crèche, therapies, sauna and steam room. In Wellsprings we have "a hall to end all halls" with excellent acoustics and seating for around 1,000 people. It will provide a venue for regional events and is already attracting bookings for these.

Leisure Trust: work is continuing on the formation of the Leisure Trust and the target remains that the Trust will be formed at Midnight on 31st December 2003.

Vivary Golf Course: temporary changing accommodation (paid for by our insurers) has been provided whilst options are considered for the replacement of the Old Pavilion which was razed to the ground through arson last year. It is a matter of concern to me that 90 days play were lost through flooding over the last year.

Castle Green Cultural Quarter: following the Recommendation passed at the last Council meeting a Consortium/Working Party has met to agree a common vision. At a subsequent meeting of the Working Group on the Future of the County Museum, the Archives and Record Office and an Arts Gallery for Somerset, it was agreed that the two groups should merge. The immediate task is to feed clear proposals for Castle Green into the Taunton Vision. The further task is that of realising Somerset's "Your World, Your Story, Your Future" which envisages an exposition centre focussed on Taunton Castle, a discovery centre housing public learning and reference facilities including heritage records, and a support centre to house the extensive collections. It is quite clear that it will not be possible to make a case for funding unless both County and District can agree a common agenda and partnership working with the other stakeholders involved.

Hunts Court: the Cultural Quarter Consortium have agreed that Hunts Court and the Old Municipal Buildings are important to retain as part of the Vision for Taunton's Cultural Quarter development. TDBC are leading on a proposal for a Creative Enterprise Centre in Hunts' Court, which could incorporate a contemporary art gallery and artists' studios. A working group including members of Somerset Art Gallery Trust, Somerset Art Week, the Brewhouse, SCAT, TDBC and SCC has been set up to find a practical way to secure at least 2 floors, if not all of the building.

Somerset Cultural Forum: I attended the launch of this on 24th October at Halsway Manor. Its purpose is to provide a body of people to exchange news and ideas across the cultural sectors and organisations and in particular to make sure that the Cultural

Strategy is happening in practice and to keep it moving forward. This is a part of the Somerset Strategic Partnership Vision.

Social Inclusion: we have been awarded £28,330 from Better Play (commencing April04) aimed at providing specialist sessional workers to deliver play opportunities for children with individual needs. The award is for one year only and enables the centres to deliver playschemes which include these children with one-to-one support staff to attend to their needs, plus deliver staff training and a management co-ordination and community liaison role. The scheme will operate out of the sports centres.

Wellington Park: the Green Flag Award recently received, is made by the Civic Trust backed by CABI to encourage high standards in public green space. It recognises parks that are safe, clean, well managed, with heritage status and benefiting from community involvement and marketing. Part of the Heritage Lottery Award required the preparation of a management plan. This Wellington Park Management Plan is to be held up as an example of best practice by CABI space and will be in the new edition of the Green Flag Manual as well. Our thanks are due not only to our Parks Department and officers Chris Mulcahy, Karen Dyson and Steven Cuthill but also and especially the Friends of Wellington Park with all their interest, hard work and community building activity together with Mark Norman. He is the gardener who has a new role with being on site and responsible for not only horticulture but site maintenance.

Councillor Mrs. Dilly Bradley