

# **Council Meeting – 14 December 2010**

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

### **1. 40 Commando Homecoming Parade**

- 1.1 What a proud celebration this was. I was equally proud to be a Tauntonian seeing the huge support from our citizens despite the atrocious weather. It was a truly stirring sight seeing all those Marines exercising their right to march through Taunton.
- 1.2 To add to the occasion we were graced by the presence of many dignitaries including the Secretary of State for Defence, Dr Liam Fox, who considered it so important to welcome 40 Commando home that he had excluded all else from his diary, to ensure availability on the day to greet the Marines on their return.
- 1.3 Talking to Marines afterwards at the reception, kindly hosted by Somerset County Cricket Club, it was amazing how modest they were, having just gone through all that they had on their recent tour of duty. They talked of “being humbled” by the size and appreciation of the crowds.
- 1.4 This was an incredible event and I believe the greatest event I have seen enacted through Taunton’s streets, albeit tinged with sadness for those that did not return or were seriously wounded.

### **2. Northern Inner Distributor Road (NIDR)**

- 2.1 This is a huge success story for Taunton and a credit to the partnership working that helped bring it about. It was cross party and cross Council with great assistance from our MP in helping to facilitate what I feel was the vital meeting with the Minister to allow us to present first hand the enormous benefit that will be derived from a relatively small investment.
- 2.2 For about £15 million investment it releases total development of around £270 million which is estimated to create employment for about 4,500 people. This has to be good for Taunton Deane and Somerset.
- 2.3 It now rests with the County Council to submit further details to the Government confirming the value for money of the project and then funding should be confirmed in January 2011 with funds available in early 2012. This fits well with the programme for Firepool with the procurement process taking place in 2011/2012 and works on the road commencing as soon as funding is released.

### **3. Firepool Development, Taunton**

- 3.1 The 108 flats on the East Goods Yard are now well under construction and are scheduled for completion by March 2012 when they will be a valuable addition to our stock of affordable housing in Taunton.
- 3.2 At the time of writing this report we are waiting to hear from St Modwen about the exchange of contract for the lease of a large office building on Priory Bridge Road Car Park which I reported at last Full Council as just having gained planning consent. I will update Members at the meeting if progress has been made. I cannot overestimate the importance of this as it will be the first truly Firepool development which should become a catalyst for others to follow.
- 3.3 Now with funding for the NIDR allocated this will open up this very important site and marketing for the Old Livestock Market site and the East Goods Yard can start in earnest. Whereas, previously, the existing road infrastructure was inadequate to allow development of these particular sites to proceed.

### **4. Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP)**

- 4.1 Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly have been given the green light by Government to proceed but Somerset and Devon have been asked to work together to produce a joint LEP that also embraces the Plymouth and Torbay Unitaries. Agreement in principle has been reached between the parties and final details of a re-submission are being discussed and agreed for an anticipated submission to Government in January 2011.
- 4.2 On a more local level we are still working with Sedgemoor and West Somerset to establish a "Local Delivery Partnership" to ensure that we can fully engage with our local private sector and convey their requirements and priorities back to the main LEP. This is still work in progress and Members will be informed further as and when there are issues to report.

### **5. Regeneration of Taunton**

- 5.1 I have seen two very interesting presentations which have great promise for the regeneration of Taunton as follows.
- 5.2 Plans to extend the Orchard Centre - very interesting proposals were presented showing the complete redevelopment of the area behind the Orchard Centre, encompassing the car parking and Quantock House. The present proposals contain about 250,000 sq ft of retail space and replacement car parking equivalent to that removed. The retail mix proposed is different to that previously suggested but the development is thought to be viable in the short to medium term and absolutely vital to

reinvigorate Taunton Town Centre and maintain it as a pre-eminent shopping destination in the region.

- 5.3 Failure to move this forward could result in applications for out of town shopping centres which would certainly be hugely detrimental to our town centre. For information our recent "Retail Shopping Needs " study indicated a requirement of around 500,000 sq ft of extra shopping space by 2027, this development would make a substantial contribution to that figure.
- 5.4 Hotel development, Somerset County Cricket Ground - Members were invited to a joint presentation by Richard Gould and Kevin McCarthy to show us proposals for a brand new hotel containing modern press facilities on the St James Street side of the ground. Members were given a potted history of the ground and how, by selling a portion of the Coal Orchard Car Park, we had not only secured the future of the County Ground remaining in Taunton but had allowed the club, along with land from St James Church, to create the size of ground with boundaries to suit international cricket.
- 5.5 It is hoped the hotel will be a joint venture with the Castle Hotel who see great prospects ahead linking with the cricket fixtures and the excellent conferencing and banqueting facilities already in place at the Cricket Club. The feasibility of this project is now being tested in the market and it will be an excellent addition to enhance the visitor experience to Taunton.

## **6. The Council Budget Situation**

- 6.1 We are now well into budget setting exercise for the year 2011/2012 and as reports recently submitted to Scrutiny and then to Executive, which predicted a budget gap of £1.151 million rising to £5.4 million by 2015/2016. These are seriously high numbers that have to be dealt with and show there is no room for complacency. We must be constantly seeking ways to find efficiencies to reduce costs or increase income.
- 6.2 At the recent Executive meeting we approved a Savings Plan that nearly balances the budget and I am confident that we will achieve a balanced budget and maintain vital front line services. This with the caveat that we are, as yet, unaware of our settlement from Central Government and although we have had the much trumpeted "Comprehensive Spending Review" (in October) we do not yet know what our final settlement for the year will be. Latest intelligence is to expect this announcement on 13 December 2010 but if it is announced earlier I will inform Members at the meeting.
- 6.3 The problem with budget setting is that until the final figures are known and officially confirmed it remains a very fluid situation and we must always be ready for the untoward happening. For instance we have received warning that payment of £462K in respect of Private Sector Renewal Grant will not be made to us this year. We await formal advice

but this is serious if correct. We are also advised of a potential issue with the pension funds, the Actuary reporting a deficit in the scheme. We await final details before we are able to determine the way forward that is both affordable but meets our obligations. It is a case of watch this space. Much work remains to be done as we receive firm information on the settlement.

## **7. Castle Green Car Park, Taunton**

- 7.1 Much has been said and written about the planned loss of car parking and enhancement of Castle Green but I am still confident that we can offer the greatest assistance to business and our community by creating the planned high quality public amenity space in this area.
- 7.2 If proof of the benefits of town centre attractions is required then I refer to the festivities surrounding the switching on of the lights. It was fantastic to see the huge crowds which if replicated by first class events in an upgraded Castle Green will, I am sure, far outweigh the benefits of retaining the status quo.
- 7.3 As a matter of interest Castle Green Car Park was closed for the town centre festivities to allow siting of a large fun fair as part of the events. Other than one report of not being able to access the car park and when explained why, it was accepted, no other complaints about lack of parking or access to the town were received.
- 7.4 The enhancement of the Castle Green is an essential part of the external works coupled with the County Council's refurbishment of the Castle Museum. It enjoys majority cross party and cross Council support for the proposals and I believe it is an essential part of planning and investing for the future to ensure Taunton continues to be a popular place for residents, shoppers and visitors alike.

## **8. Sharing Services and Management with other Councils**

- 8.1 A Leaders and Chief Executives meeting between West Somerset, Sedgemoor and Taunton Deane was held recently, hosted by Taunton Deane, to discuss the feasibility and possibilities of sharing senior officers or expanding shared services. It was good to examine the possibilities but the general conclusion was that a dedicated senior management team was needed to meet the aspirations of the Council as generally we had ambitious plans. In Taunton's case a huge regeneration programme for Taunton, which would not be driven through without clear focus and dedicated senior management.
- 8.2 It was agreed however that considerable scope still existed to build on the very successful partnership working that already existed and secure the economies of scale that we all needed to achieve. The Chief Executives of each Council were charged with the responsibility of taking this forward to agree sharing further services and how it could be implemented.

As this is our last meeting before Christmas may I offer my thanks to all, officers, staff and Members of Taunton Deane Borough Council as your commitment and dedication throughout the year is appreciated. May you have a happy and restful Christmas followed by a healthy and prosperous New Year.

Councillor John Williams  
Leader of the Council

# **Council Meeting – 14 December 2010**

## **Report of Councillor Mrs Jean Court-Stenning – Housing Services**

### **1. Housing Property Services Review**

- 1.1 The posts created by this review have now been advertised and interviews will be held in January 2011.
- 1.2 The review cannot be fully implemented until these posts are filled. However the transition has commenced with Phil Webb taking over his new responsibilities and relinquishing day to day involvement with the work of the DLO.

### **2. Affordable Housing**

- 2.1 An update will be provided under separate cover prior to the meeting.

### **3. Regeneration of Halcon, Taunton**

- 3.1 An Officer Steering Group has been set up to work out the business case. In the meantime, an update will be provided to the Community Scrutiny Committee on 7 December 2010 and a letter has been sent to tenants updating them on the current situation.
- 3.2 Changes to Government funding for housing provision and the new role of the Homes and Community Agency as enabler will impact on this project and therefore a decision will not be taken until the business case is completed and there is clarity around funding.
- 3.3 A party of officers and Members visited Plymouth recently to see a similar regeneration project there. Alas, I was unable to go due to a bad back and I look forward to further fact-finding trips.

### **4. Estates Team and Anti-social Behaviour**

- 4.1 The Estates Team has been reorganised following the appointment of two new officers with special responsibility for anti-social behaviour. The new structure has been circulated to Members.
- 4.2 Following the recent Court appearance of some tenants for serious assault, I am pleased to inform you that the tenancy has been terminated.

### **5. Sheltered Housing**

- 5.1 Arrangements have been put in place to ascertain Tenants' particular needs over the Christmas holiday period. The Emergency Response Team will, of course, continue to provide 24 hour cover and the office will be staffed from 8am to 2pm.

## **6. Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership**

### **Empty Homes**

- 6.1 At the time of writing it is believed that the Government's New Homes Bonus may apply to existing homes brought back into use.

## **7. Fire Safety in Flats**

- 7.1 Following the recent fire at a block of flats in Dorchester Road, Taunton the Council has been working with Devon and Somerset Fire Brigade to review fire safety and an Action Plan has been produced.
- 7.2 There are some issues around storage of recycling materials in communal areas and these are being addressed with Somerset Waste Partnership.

## **8. Negative Subsidy**

- 8.1 Our Accountants have calculated our liability for the coming financial year, based on the formula set by Government, to be almost £7 million. This figure takes account of the issue which led to a shortfall in the Housing Revenue Account's budget this year of £569,000 as the subsidy was incorrectly forecast.
- 8.2 Against this background, we look forward to the new arrangements under Self-financing which will be included in the Localism Bill. This is likely to mean taking on £90,000 of debt, probably over a 30 year period and this has been included in the Medium Term Financial Plan

Councillor Mrs Jean Court-Stenning

# **Council Meeting – 14 December 2010**

## **Report of Councillor Terry Hall - Corporate Resources**

### **1. Revenues and Benefits**

#### **Customer Satisfaction Survey**

- 1.1 In my report to Council for October, I advised that Customer satisfaction surveys have been distributed not only to those receiving benefit, but also to Council Tax and Business Rate payers.
- 1.2 I am pleased to say that many of the surveys have been returned and are showing an overall customer satisfaction of 90% for the manner in which benefit claims are dealt with by this Council.
- 1.3 This is a remarkable figure and all managers and staff have my thanks and congratulations.

#### **Welfare Reform and the Universal Credit**

- 1.4 The Coalition Government are committed to reforming the welfare system to make it fairer, more affordable and to tackle poverty and welfare dependency, while continuing to support the most vulnerable in society. As a first step, the Government announced some measures in the Budget and Spending Review 2010.
- 1.5 The White Paper "Universal Credit: welfare that works", published on 11 November 2010, sets out the Government's plans to introduce legislation to further reform the welfare system by creating a new Universal Credit. As the proposals still need to pass through Parliament much of the detail is unknown. The Government intends to introduce a Welfare Reform Bill in January 2011.
- 1.6 The scale and scope of the Government's Universal Credit reform is unprecedented in recent times - it is the most significant change to the welfare system since the Beveridge Reforms in 1947.
- 1.7 Members have already been sent a copy of the Benefits Manager's briefing paper on Welfare Reform and the Universal Credit, and she will be giving further details at the scheduled Members' Briefing on 18 January 2011.

### **2. Southwest One (SW1)**

- 2.1 Members who attended the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 18 November 2010 will have heard a Performance Report from South West One for the period April-September and also a Procurement Transformation Presentation.



- 2.2 The contract arrangement with SW1 ensures the Council receives 2.5% cashable discounts each year on the value of the services transferred to the control of SW1.
- 2.3 After 10 years of the contract charges made by SW1 will have reduced to 25% amounting to a saving of £5.7m over the life of the contract.

### **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)**

- 2.4 The report showed that the KPI targets in the areas SW1 deliver for the Council have generally been achieved over the six month period.
- 2.5 The exception was, as I reported at last Council, the speed of answer of the Customer Contact Centre during August and September which fell well below target. This was due to the success of the Revenues service in driving up the collection of Council Tax creating many more enquiry calls.
- 2.6 During October service returned to an excellent level with 85.4% (target 80%) of calls being answered in 20 seconds.

### **Procurement**

- 2.7 SW1 procurement savings of Council's spending is behind target. Only £556k of savings have so far been delivered against the expected £782k.
- 2.8 A detailed review has identified that 60% of the Council's addressable spend is generated by the DLO and Housing Property Services. It is in this area that SW1 Strategic Procurement Service are currently looking for "Quick Wins".
- 2.9 Members may recall that SW1 are required to save £10m over the 10 years of the contract. Early savings are required to repay the cost of the SAP computer system.

## **3. Legal and Democratic Services**

- 3.1 I reported to last Council that discussions were in progress with the other Somerset Councils to establish a Legal and Democratic Services Partnership on similar lines to the SW Audit Partnership.
- 3.2 The business case is being put together and the project has been given greater priority by the Chief Executives and Leaders Group. Kerry Rickards, Sedgemoor's Chief Executive will be leading on this as project sponsor. Cathy Daly from Mendip is managing the project. It is expected that completion will occur in mid 2011.

### **Ethical Governance**

- 3.3 At the time of writing we are still awaiting receipt of the "Localism Bill" which will have a significant impact on the manner in which the Council operates

and is governed. Indications are that the complete Standards regime including local Standards Committees will be abolished.

- 3.4 It has been announced that the rules on pre-determination are also to be abolished. If this happens there will need to be legislation as there are common law principles set down by the courts.

### **Leadership Model**

- 3.5 A proposal that this Council continues with the Leader and Executive model, will be put to Full Council for approval at the special meeting which takes place, after the scheduled meeting concludes.

## **4. Performance and Client Team**

- 4.1 The Client Team has continued to closely monitor performance of the authorities key partnerships (Southwest One, Tone Leisure and the Waste Partnership) with no significant issues being reported. We are developing a suite of KPIs for measuring Tone Leisure's performance.
- 4.2 The full procure-to-pay process was launched in August 2010 and is now embedded. Consequently we are in the process of moving the support arrangements to a business as usual basis.
- 4.3 We are also discussing with SW1 and the other partners moving the processes and structures for management of SAP changes to a business as usual footing.
- 4.4 Corporate Aims Delivery (CAD) Plans are in the process of development. The service plan template and process has been reviewed with Theme Managers and will be issued in time for next year's service planning process. Training for managers will be provided in December and January.
- 4.5 The SAP re-launch is progressing well and is largely keeping to timetable. The finance elements of the system are launched and now working. Elements of the HR package are delayed because we need to make changes to the design of the system to make it usable for us.

Councillor Terry Hall

# **Council Meeting – 14 December 2010**

## **Report of Councillor Mark Edwards - Planning and Transportation**

The Localism and Decentralisation Bill should have been published since writing this report with expected Royal Assent by next Summer. This will hopefully, at last, give us detail and direction with regards the changes that are being made to Local Government and should shed some light on the real future of true local planning. There are however a number of items from this bill for which we have been receiving some guidance and the Localism White Paper was issued in November 2010. The Strategy Team will be coordinating the Councils response to this Bill in due course.

### **1. Localism White Paper**

1.1 The Localism White Paper was published in November and at its heart has two main aims:-

- To tackle barriers and bottlenecks that 'inhibit' growth such as reforming the planning system; encouraging competition; ensuring tax and regulatory frameworks are stable, facilitate and encourage investment; engage internationally to promote stability and enable UK business to thrive in international markets; increasing the skills base.
- Invest where it 'makes sense' to do so – for example in high quality transport links that underpin successful economies and enable innovation where places have a comparative advantage or 'where the market will not step in'.

1.2 The drive for devolution of power to appropriate levels is central to the Localism White Paper. For the Government this means principally the development of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs).

1.3 In regards to plan-making, the Act will give 'every neighbourhood the chance to shape its own development through the creation of neighbourhood plans.' which allows the:- 'freedom to bring forward more development than set out in the local authority plan.'

1.4 In addition to 'neighbourhood plans', the 'Right-to-Build' powers are alluded to (if not outlined in any further detail than we've already had), these will enable the delivery of: 'small-scale development without the need for a separate planning application.'

- 1.5 Local Development Frameworks (LDFs)/local plans will: ‘establish the key strategic on infrastructure, deal with issues such as economic growth requirements, will be drawn up so they have regard for national policy, and will provide a basis for local planning decisions and planning by local communities.’ The system will be simplified and streamlined allowing for the documents to be easier to understand (something which should definitely be welcomed given the over-complexity of LDFs).
- 1.6 National planning policy will be significantly streamlined into a simple ‘national planning policy framework’. This will presumably be substantially shorter and less prescriptive. This may lead to something of a policy void where Local Planning Authorities have hitherto relied upon national guidance to avoid Core Strategies being over long. For Taunton Deane this perhaps does not present too much of a challenge although in the future an unintended consequence of this could be that plans get a lot longer with lengthier justification.
- 1.7 The Government asserts that there will be a ‘new’ presumption in favour of sustainable development and that the framework will provide greater certainty to the development industry. What this means in practice will be fundamental to the Localism Bill and all Local Planning Authorities in the determination of planning applications and formulating policy. The interpretation of what is meant by sustainable in these terms will also be vital to this policy direction.
- 1.8 The need for collaborative working on planning is expressed in much stronger terms than has previously been the case by either this Government or previous governments: ‘We propose, through the Localism Bill, to place a new statutory duty to cooperate on local authorities, public bodies involved in plan-making and on private bodies that are critical to plan-making, such as infrastructure providers.’

## **2. Consultation on overhaul of planning application fees**

- 2.1 Local authorities are to be given the power to set their own planning fees in order to cover their costs, under new proposals, which have gone out to consultation. Fees are currently set nationally giving local planning authorities no discretion in terms of what they charge.
- 2.2 Councils will not be able to make a profit on fees but they will be able to recover the actual cost of submitting an application. Like authorities throughout the country the planning application service at Taunton Deane is currently subsidised by the Council Tax payer.
- 2.3 Decentralisation Minister Greg Clark has said: “Having a system where Whitehall dictates to local councils what planning fees they can charge is very unfair for local taxpayers around the country who are left paying for the shortfall where fees do not cover costs.”

- 2.4 Work currently underway which is looking at improving efficiency of the Taunton Deane Planning application service will be invaluable in terms of identifying necessary costs in order to set fees appropriately.
- 2.5 The consultation is also seeking views on the ability to charge for applications such as listed building consent and works to trees, which do not currently attract a fee. The consultation runs until 7 January 2011 with new arrangements being introduced from April next year.

### **3. New Homes Bonus**

- 3.1 The New Homes Bonus Scheme is the scheme to incentivise new housing development, which in recent years has slumped, to the lowest levels since the 1920s.
- 3.2 National House Builders will make a payment on each additional property delivered for the following six years in the form of an un-ringfenced grant with an increased level of payment for affordable housing as well as monies for Gypsy and Traveller provision and empty homes being brought back into occupation.
- 3.3 The Government is consulting on the scheme with responses sought up to 24 December 2010.

### **4. Core Strategy**

- 4.1 The priority for a large section of the Strategy Unit is still the delivery of the Core Strategy which will provide the planning framework for the sustainable delivery of 16,000 homes and 11,000 jobs between now and 2027.
- 4.2 Despite big changes in national policy, which has led to some delays, the Core Strategy has made good progress and is on track to be discussed at Scrutiny, Executive and Full Council in February 2011. Other milestones include Examination in October 2011 and Adoption in March 2012.
- 4.3 Some of the key messages and achievements from the past few months include:-
  - Published a review of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment which identifies our housing supply;
  - Compiled a detailed evidence base including evidence for housing numbers, employment and retail requirements, climate change and strategic flood risk;

- Worked with partners to make good progress on developing an Infrastructure Delivery Plan, detailing requirements, phasing and costs for Taunton Deane; and
- Undertaken statutory monitoring work on retail and leisure and housing.

## **5. Heritage**

- 5.1 Talks are on-going with the Tone Mill Trust, in an endeavour to find a viable future for the Grade 2\* Listed Buildings, north of the River Tone, Wellington, which are on the English Heritage National List of Buildings at Risk.
- 5.2 Renewed interest has recently been made, in the Tonedale site, Wellington (Grade 2 and 2\*), which is currently in receivership and on the English Heritage National List of Buildings at Risk. Interest has also been made recently, in the Sandhill Park site, another Grade 2\* Listed Building, on the National Register of Buildings at Risk.
- 5.3 Following a change of ownership, Coursley Farmhouse, Lydeard St Lawrence, a Grade 2 Listed Building at Risk, is undergoing sympathetic restoration.
- 5.4 An application is expected soon, which will see the restoration of Lydeard Down, Lydeard St Lawrence, which was severely damaged by a fire, in April this year.
- 5.5 Conservation Area Character Appraisals, for Ashbrittle, Bathealton, Combe Florey, Fitzhead, Lydeard St Lawrence and Park Street/ Wellington Road, Taunton, were formally adopted this year.

I do wish to pay tribute to all Directors, Managers and officers involved with my portfolio. It is a daily challenge with the Coalition Government bringing forward so many new initiatives, White Papers and bills along with the pressures of the Comprehensive Spending Review. These are challenging times but I believe we are well positioned to continue our ambitious plans for our area and the team is very focused on achieving the best for our community.

Councillor Mark Edwards

# **Council Meeting – 14 December 2010**

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

### **1. Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)**

- 1.1 Steve Rose, the consultant employed to help the LSP establish its key priorities and an effective structure, is currently working on his final report. He is due to report to the LSP on 9 December 2010 and will bring his findings to the Community Scrutiny Committee in the New Year. There is no doubt that the partners see benefit in partnership working and want the LSP to add value to what they are able to do individually. This means the LSP needs to have more focus on a smaller number of priorities.
- 1.2 Work continues on the Priority Area Strategy with the focus now on a programme of community engagement in the New Year. This will be launched by the Mayor in Taunton North and Taunton East on 25 January 2011.
- 1.3 Community engagement will be based on a questionnaire. Public and voluntary sector front line staff who are already working in the area will encourage and help people to complete the questionnaire on a one-to-one basis. Using front line staff already known to residents should help to ensure a good response to the questionnaire. Engagement will also occur with community groups, school and others providing direct services to these communities.
- 1.4 The LSP will be asked for a grant of £6,000 to fund this consultation. The process of developing the Priority Areas Strategy has already seen benefits, with a number of project ideas being developed by Strategy Unit and Community Development and partner organisations. These include, among others, coordination of service delivery and social and community enterprises. We expect new projects to be developed throughout the course of 2011.
- 1.5 A first meeting has been held to begin work on the Rural Deprivation Strategy. It was agreed that the first phase of the project would be data collection – to pull together as much information as possible from all partners about the rural areas of the Deane (to initially include everywhere beyond Taunton's unparished area). When this is done, decisions will need to be made about the focus of the Strategy. This could mean a focus on certain geographical areas, or possibly a focus on particular topics, for example rural transport or fuel poverty or an ageing population.
- 1.6 Total Somerset is a Total Place programme for Somerset that was approved by the Somerset Strategic Partnership. Total Place seeks to improve community outcomes, transform service delivery and deliver efficiencies. One element of this work, the Transforming Customer Contact project, is focussed

on Priorswood and is looking at how residents access services and whether this can be achieved both more efficiently and more conveniently for residents.

## **2. Youth Initiatives Fund (£30,000)**

- 2.1 We had a total of 11 bids to this fund with a total value of £69,000.
- 2.2 As this was more than double the value of the fund, Councillor Fran Smith (representing the Unparished Areas) and Councillor Meikle (representing the Youth Liaison Group) and I met with officers to discuss allocation of the funding. There was broad agreement over which bids to support.
- 2.3 Cllr Meikle then suggested that, as some of the bids would be of great benefit to Taunton Deane tenants, he would approach the Tenants Forum to see if they would be prepared to fund some of the projects. I have therefore held off making a final decision on the allocation of the Youth Initiatives Fund until this idea has been explored further.

## **3. Rural Deprivation Fund (£5,000)**

- 3.1 The closing date for this fund was the end of November and five bids have been received which are currently being evaluated by officers. I hope to be able to make decisions on the allocation of this fund shortly.

## **4. Community Development Team**

- 4.1 This is a new team, set up as part of the Core Council Review, whose remit is to build communities and develop sustainable community projects.
- 4.2 The team was active during the summer holidays, working with partners to arrange a summer Fete in Halcon and six Activity Days in Priorswood. Approximately 800 young people attended the latter over the six days. The 'Pride in Priorswood' brand has been strengthened by this success, and people are already excited about next summer's activities.
- 4.3 One key improvement that was noted in comparison to last year was the number of families in attendance. On previous events, both in Priorswood and elsewhere, there has been a tendency for parents to drop their children at events and leave. However, this year most children and young people who attended were with their parents and even extended families, creating a real sense of family and community throughout the events.
- 4.4 The team supported other events across the Deane, either by way of coordination or finance support. These events included the Friends of Wellington Park Summer Activity Day, Friends of French Weir Family Fun Day, the Moscow State Circus, and a succession of summer Sunday bandstand concerts in Vivary Park.



- 4.5 The team organised an Activity Day at Halcon during the October half term aimed at families with young children. The day was largely themed around healthy eating and learning some basic cooking skills.
- 4.6 There have been seven Community Clean-Up Days between July and November in different estates across the Deane. These days allow people of all ages and abilities to get rid of unwanted items and show clear commitment from Taunton Deane to ensure that neighbourhoods are kept clean and tidy. This in turn leads to boosted morale and heightened pride among residents.
- 4.7 The days also positively promote the activity of recycling. Whilst it allows people to get rid of their waste, there have also been occasions where residents have taken someone else's unwanted items away. For example, one lady took home a wooden bench for her allotments after one of her neighbours bought it out to put in the skip.
- 4.8 These achievements firstly show the success of this element of the Core Council Review, in creating a team focussed on community development. It also reflects great credit on the team themselves on what has been achieved. They know there is much more they can do to continue to build positive relationships with residents and plan more activities particularly around half term and the school holidays.

## **5. Crime and Disorder Partnership**

- 5.1 There is currently a county-wide Safer Communities Group, which was a sub-group of the Somerset Strategic Partnership. It is unclear whether this group will continue. There is also a Safer Somerset West Community Safety Partnership, covering Taunton Deane, Sedgemoor and West Somerset. The way forward for this partnership is also unclear.
- 5.2 I will be attending a meeting of the Safer Somerset West Community Safety Partnership on 17 December 2010 and hope to have a better idea after that on how Community Safety can best be handled across a number of local authorities. My current instinct is that there is considerable merit in having a Community Safety Partnership covering the same area as a Police District. In our case Somerset West.

## **6. Member Briefings**

- 6.1 I chaired a Member Briefing on 25 November 2011 in the absence of the Leader and Deputy Leader. We had an interesting introduction to next year's census from Darren Chesters, the Census Area Manager covering North Devon, Taunton Deane, Sedgemoor and West Somerset. He flagged up the importance of making sure census figures truly represent the make-up of communities and numbers of people within them and asked that Councillors encourage people to participate. The census date is 27 March 2011. Further information is available from Simon Lewis or Debbie Rundle or Darren Chesters himself ([K107@census.gov.uk](mailto:K107@census.gov.uk)).

- 6.2 We also had a very good briefing from Simon Lewis on the work of the Strategy Unit, describing how important this work is for all Taunton Deane residents, and also how much money the Unit brings to the Council. Simon was supported by his four lead officers for this briefing.
- 6.3 I mention this particularly because only 10 Members were present. This is not a criticism – merely a statement of fact. I am well aware of the meetings overload from which Members can suffer. But I have to question whether it is value for money for five officers to be present at a briefing for 10 Members?
- 6.4 It was suggested on the night that more could be done to “sell” the Member Briefings and this is certainly something we could try. I also think we need to watch the number of Briefings and their timing to make sure they deliver what Members want.

## **7. Communications**

- 7.1 Thanks to Debbie (and Chris) Rundle for running the Media Training session on 16 November 2010. Debbie has long experience of working in the media and her Do's and Dont's gave some very useful tips on how to make the most of interviews with the media and avoid the pitfalls.
- 7.2 Press releases over the last couple of months have covered, among others, topics such as Deane Dragons, the Sensory Garden in Vivary Park, Government funding for the Northern Inner Distributor Road, Superfast Broadband for Taunton, Project Taunton's Open Day at the Brewhouse, the Mayor's long distance sponsored cycle ride and, of course, the memorable Homecoming Parade for the Royal Marines.
- 7.3 Members Portal: A couple of Members joined me in a session with Sue Catterick, the Council's IT trainer and Donna Durham to look at ways of improving the Members Portal. Following that session changes designed to make it easier to navigate round the site have been made. These changes are clearly flagged up on the home page and I think are definite improvements. Comments welcome.

Councillor Joanna Lewin-Harris

# **Council Meeting – 14 December 2010**

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

### **1. Economic Development Delivery Plan**

- 1.1 The team has now finalised its Delivery Plan for the current financial year. Copies will be circulated directly to all Members.
- 1.2 The Delivery Plan sets out how the Council will support the economy, with activities falling into three areas:-
  - Stimulating Business Growth and Investment;
  - Ensuring a Skilled and Entrepreneurial workforce; and
  - Creating an attractive business environment.
- 1.3 The following update is set out according to those three priority areas.

### **2. Stimulating Business Growth and Investment**

#### **Business Liaison**

- 2.1 The team has started a proactive programme of visits to local businesses, investors and their agents, with the aim of assisting businesses to realise their growth and investment plans. The team intends to visit 100 businesses per year.
- 2.2 Organisations visited to date and currently being assisted include:-
  - Cotleigh Brewery, Wiveliscombe;
  - GE Technologies, Taunton;
  - Exmoor Plastics, Taunton;
  - Somerset County Cricket Club, Taunton;
  - Forward Space Ltd, Taunton;
  - Castle Hotel, Taunton;
  - Silver Street Autos, Taunton;
  - Somerfield Distribution, Wellington;
  - EDF Energy, re Hinkley Point;
  - Musgrove Park Hospital;
  - Summerfield Developments, Taunton and Wellington.

2.3 In addition the team maintains good contact with commercial property agents, planning agents and property developers.

### **Local Action for Rural Communities (LARC)**

2.4 10 local projects supported in Taunton Deane's rural areas so far. The Economic Development Team inputs to the three LARC Strategy Boards and project appraisal.

2.5 Projects funded in Western Somerset this year:-

- Farmers Cleeve - now Abbots Coombe - Wiveliscombe - feasibility study;
- Learning from the Land - Milverton - sustainable building skills courses;
- Promoting Bishops Lydeard - visitor leaflet;
- Hestercombe - Mill buildings interpretation centre;
- Lean Games - small business grant to develop website;
- Brendon Energy Group - 10 Parishes - feasibility study for community renewable energy project;
- 10 Radio - 10 Parishes - Outside mobile broadcast unit, utilising wind and solar power;
- Wiveliscombe Community Swimming Pool - solar panels to heat showers;
- Reaction Electric - feasibility study for network of electric vehicle recharging points.

2.6 The Levels and Moors Scheme has funded:-

- The Taunton and Bridgwater Canal Pictorial Guide - a grant of £3,750 for the Canal Wardens Trust to produce a pictorial guide showing walks, businesses, and services along the canal between Taunton and Bridgwater.

### **Making the Links**

2.7 Working with West Somerset District Council, Taunton Deane has appointed a consultant, North Devon Plus, to network with small rural businesses in the Wiveliscombe area, to improve their marketing and strengthen local supply and procurement opportunities.

### **Shop Front Grants for Wellington and Wiveliscombe**

2.8 Retailers in Wellington and Wiveliscombe can take advantage of a Taunton scheme designed to make the towns an even more attractive place to shop. The Shop Front Enhancement Scheme aims to encourage new and existing retail businesses to refurbish or re-instate traditional shop fronts or replace unsympathetic shop fronts improving the look of the

town for both residents and visitors while encouraging economic development. Businesses can apply for a grant of up to £500, or 50% - whichever is the lower figure - for the cost of eligible works to enhance their shop fronts.

### **Support for Rural Business Projects**

- 2.9 A small grant fund is available from Taunton Deane for rural projects and innovative Renewable Energy projects. Application forms and terms and conditions have been finalised to enable local businesses to apply for funding for Economic projects. Grants will be made available to match fund Western Somerset and Levels and Moors LARC schemes, and for innovative Renewable Energy projects.

### **Inward Investment**

- 2.10 Taunton Deane has now agreed to extend our involvement in the Into Somerset Partnership to Mar 2012. The Economic Development Specialist is strengthening operational links with the Into Somerset Team, and starting to work closer on inward investment enquiries.
- 2.11 In August 2010 Ridgeway Care and Repair, who are providing Care and Repair support services to the Council, approached the unit about premises in Taunton, asking for assistance with their search. The team forwarded details of various properties, and the company is now finalizing the purchase of one. Initially this will bring a small number of new jobs to Taunton, around 8-10, but they plan to recruit further in the near future.
- 2.12 The team is also talking directly with other potential investors, including Montpellier Estates, which is proposing to develop a secure mental health unit at Chelston, near Wellington.

## **3. Ensuring a Skilled and Entrepreneurial workforce**

### **Halcon Project Management**

- 3.1 Stephanie Payne has taken on the role of Corporate Project Manager to put together the business case for the regeneration of Halcon, Taunton. Whichever delivery mechanism is chosen this is a major project for this Council and it is therefore vitally important that the project is founded upon strong project management principles.
- 3.2 Whilst Stephanie's role in this project is corporate, the Halcon Regeneration Project includes an important element to enable residents to

get into training and into employment, and to stimulate business creation and growth opportunities.

### **Job Clubs in Halcon and Wellington**

- 3.3 The overarching aim in the first year has been to enrol at least 12 long-term unemployed 'members' at each centre, and provide a range of support tailored to the needs of each member.
- 3.4 This includes help with CVs and application forms, preparation for interviews, referrals to local training courses and, ultimately, securing job offers. The longer-term aim is that, if successful, the project will act as a catalyst for further targeted investment in Employment and Skills as Taunton Deane increases its measures to tackle deprivation locally.
- 3.5 The Economic Development Unit also represents Taunton Deane on the Somerset Employment and Skills Board (ESB), working with the private sector and funding agencies to influence employment and skills initiatives locally.

### **Business Initiative for Schools (BIS) visit to the House of Lords**

- 3.6 Taunton Deane and BIS were invited to the House of Lords on Monday 15 November 2010 to collect the Enterprising Britain South West Award. The award was presented by:-

Peter Jones CBE – BBC Dragons' Den;  
Stephen Alambritis - Head of Public Affairs at the Federation of Small Businesses;  
Miles Templeman - Director General of the Institute of Directors (IoD);  
Mark Prisk - Minister for Business and Enterprise;  
Tom Bewick -Chief Executive of Creative and Cultural Skills.

### **Green Business Initiative for Schools**

- 3.7 The Economic Development Team organised the first Green Business Initiative for Schools on Monday, 29 November 2010. The evening – a first in Taunton Deane – saw a wide range of young people taking part and 50 people attending to fill the lecture theater in the Genesis Centre at Somerset College – all hoping to secure a share in the Dragons' £500 pot of cash, sponsored by GE Technologies in Taunton. Four ideas reached the finals and were presented at the event – and the whole £500 was invested.

- 3.8 The panellists – Dragons - for the night were: David Tolman, GE Technologies; Councillor Mrs Fran Smith; Julia Green, Foot Anstey; Andrew Knutt, ADK; Giles Adams, What's On Somerset.
- 3.9 Andy Knutt emailed this to Economic Development section, and I think it's worthy of inclusion.

"I just wanted to write and say that I think the recent involvement of Taunton Deane regarding the Business Initiative for Schools and the recent Green event was very encouraging and what a super job Taunton Deane have done in allowing officers to be involved in such schemes. So often we see economic development being related to growth companies and not aimed at young entrepreneurs, not forgetting people such as yourselves who can channel things between such schemes and the council itself".

- 3.10 The Business Initiative for Schools is a community interest company that develops business awareness and encourages the development of business ideas amongst young people, via Dragons' Den style activities. BIS has linked with businesses and business owners to provide a real pitching process and may include financial investment and mentoring.
- 3.11 Received from Milverton Primary School: "Thank you once again for such a fantastic evening. The children are still buzzing from the whole experience. I hope you were pleased with the response".

### **Café Paramo**

- 3.12 The Economic Development Team is working with Heathfield School to develop and promote their coffee business. Coffee is imported from Ecuador and packaged, the students then design the packaging and sell the coffee on, £1 from every bag sold goes back to a school in Ecuador. The school would like for the students to run the scheme in its entirety with guidance from local businesses and the Council.

### **Redundancy Support**

- 3.13 A handful of businesses have announced in recent months in Taunton Deane that they will close resulting in the redundancy of large numbers of people – these have included The Cooperative Distribution Depot at Chelston, ROK Construction on Blackbrook Business Park, and Connaught. The Economic Development Team has responded proactively, offering support where requested.

- 3.14 The Council is part of the Somerset Area Action Force, alongside Job Centre Plus and other support agencies, which coordinates intervention and support with organisations that are making major redundancies.

## **4. Creating an Attractive Business Environment**

### **Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)**

- 4.1 A submission in early September 2010 on the basis of Somerset and Devon was rejected by the Government. Since November work has been underway to design an alternative, covering Somerset, Devon, Plymouth and Torbay with the aim of submitting it in the New Year.
- 4.2 The drafting is being led by the County and Unitary Authorities covering that patch and business representative organisations (including the Somerset Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses). For the Districts it is important that we ensure that:-
- District Councils across the two Counties are fully engaged in the drafting in order to give the LEP a local flavour and local relevance;
  - The LEP is dynamic, ambitious and innovative, and is led by business;
  - The LEP is encouraging and welcoming of business engagement; and
  - Businesses of whatever size and type are able to engage directly in the LEP.

### **Regional Growth Fund (RGF)**

- 4.3 Guidance on the RGF was issued in October along with an invitation for businesses and private/public collaborations to submit bids for suitable projects in January 2011. Briefing note circulated separately for Members.
- 4.4 The Council has an important role to work with bidders to provide a strategic context to bids, to avoid duplications and to present a coordinated front to the Government

### **Assured Deliverables**

- 4.5 Work is continuing between Somerset County Council (SCC), Taunton Deane and IBM to review the assured deliverables that form part of the South West One contract. The projects have been identified, predominantly around business support and employment. The updated proposal will be reviewed by our legal teams in December before negotiations begin with IBM.



## **Hinkley Point Nuclear Proposal**

- 4.6 As a result of consistent lobbying by senior officers at the Council since November 2010, Taunton Deane has been invited to the Hinkley Planning Forum.
- 4.7 This comprises numerous workstreams and groups, intended to ensure that Somerset benefits environmentally, economically and socially from the EDF proposal. Input to the groups will have a significant draw on staff resources.
- 4.8 The **Somerset Nuclear Energy Group (SNEG)** is the main body, comprising Local Authority Elected members, EDF, SWRDA, the Environment Agency, and others. SNEG oversees all the statutory planning issues and spin off workstreams, such as environmental and wildlife impacts, economic benefits, social impacts.
- 4.9 **Socio-Economic Group** - Comprising EDF and local authority officers, this group will look at the socio-economic impacts of the proposed development, which will be enormous.
- 4.10 **Low Carbon and Nuclear Cluster** – Taunton Deane is working closely with SCC and EDF to develop a Low Carbon and Nuclear Cluster in Somerset.
- 4.11 **Hinkley Supply Chain** – EDF has appointed the Somerset Chamber of Commerce to pull together a list of local businesses that might be in a position to supply to the power station. The Chamber is delivering a series of workshops and events around the County in partnership with local authorities, Business Link and others, to raise awareness of the supply opportunities, to enable businesses to improve to meet EDF standards, to enhance the technical capability of local businesses and to arrange Meet the Buyer events with Tier 1 and 2 suppliers. It is essential that Taunton Deane businesses are aware of the supply opportunities.

## **Taunton Academy Community Hub**

- 4.11 Matt Parr has been working extensively with Mark Trusson, Principal of Taunton Academy, to offer a redundant Art Building to voluntary and community organisations in Taunton Deane.
- 4.12 Working with the Strategy Team, the four groups have been identified, space has been allocated, and a Hire Agreement completed. The Hire Agreement is the key document to agree with the School, and we are

awaiting their input and sign off, along with a timetable for inspecting and clearing the building.

- 4.13 A committee constitution will be agreed between the participating organisations (Taunton Polish Association, Somerset Emerging Artists Network, North Taunton Youth Club, and Somerset Racial Equality Council) and the Council will soon hand over ownership of the project to the organisations themselves.

### **Response to Somerset Economic Assessment**

- 4.14 A briefing on this will be circulated to all Members in the New Year, giving a picture of the state of Somerset's economy.
- 4.15 The Draft Somerset Economic Assessment paints a picture of the local economy, developing our understanding of the distinctive nature of Somerset's economy and the challenges and opportunities for the county. It will provide useful information to shape policy and strategy, helping us to achieve our economic aspirations. The Economic Development Unit will submit a formal response to the draft.

The document is available to download at:

[http://www.somersetconsults.org.uk/consult.ti/Draft\\_SEA/consultationHome](http://www.somersetconsults.org.uk/consult.ti/Draft_SEA/consultationHome)

Councillor Norman Cavill

# Council Meeting – 14 December 2010

## Report of Councillor Ken Hayward – Environmental Services

### 1. Environmental Health Teams

- 1.1. The Environmental Health Teams continue to maintain excellent levels of service despite a string of challenges facing them. Among the work that the teams have been conducting:-
- 1.2. An animal welfare visit to a dog breeding and animal boarding establishment has been made jointly with the RSCPA and the Police. A number of areas of concern have been raised and the responsible authorities are jointly working to improve standards.
- 1.3. Preparation work towards the integration of the Somerset Food Star Rating Scheme with the **National Food Safety Rating Scheme**. The Food Standards Agency has finally released details of the long awaited national scheme. There are a few subtle differences between the two schemes, such as the national scheme is more business friendly as it allows them to request revisits to be re-rated once they have made improvements. There is no scope to charge for the revisits and we are not in a position to predict how much this may impact on our existing workload. Currently revisits are only made where standards fall short and are repeatedly made until the business achieves at least a 2 star standard. The new scheme has similar bandings to our star ratings and it is anticipated that very few businesses will go up or down as a result of implementing the scheme. A launch in Spring 2011 with the other Somerset Authorities is anticipated. It is really good to see this pioneering work launched here in Taunton Deane when I was Mayor in 2007 now being adopted nationally just three years later. Well done Taunton!
- 1.4. Officers have welcomed the opportunity to show members of the Corporate Management Team the variety and complexity of work they do. Visits so far have included a morning with Pest Control and a visit to assess a private water supply which involved negotiating barbed wire and ditches. Further visits are planned.
- 1.5. The first meeting of the Taxi Forum has been held. The forum has been set up to give the trade the opportunity to meet regularly to discuss pertinent issues in an informal way. Feedback on the event has been positive from drivers, operators and the Licensing Officers.

### Rockwell Green Public Conveniences

- 1.6. These toilets have been closed since mid October. This closure was an unfortunate necessity, brought about by repeated acts of vandalism which have brought the facility to a state where a thorough overhaul is now required.

- 1.7. Officers have reviewed the works required to bring the facility to an acceptable condition. The cost involved in overhauling and re-opening the facility is estimated at approximately £15,000.
- 1.8. I am faced with making a decision on whether or not the Council should make the investment required to re-open this facility. To assist in the decision making process, and in the spirit of full consultation, I have asked the relevant Ward Councillors if they could let myself or Brian Gibbs have their views by 31 December 2010, suggesting that they may also wish to canvass local opinion on this issue and/or offer alternative proposals.
- 1.9. In the meantime, while options are being considered, the facility will remain closed until further notice
- 1.10. Please note that this matter is entirely separate from the current budget setting process

## **2. Crematorium**

- 2.1 Preparation work continues with architectural support from SW1 on the new crematoria with the mercury filtration.
- 2.2 We are working our way through a proposal to install a new music system at the crematorium.
- 2.3 There seems to be some concern surrounding how the system caters for last minute changes to service arrangements and what is happening to the organ. Families will still be able to have the organ played if they wish; the Council is still providing and maintaining the organ. The only change is that the funeral directors will independently arrange and pay for an organist, in just the same way as they arrange for a Minister to conduct the service.
- 2.4 Paul Rayson recently held two demonstrations of the music system. The first for the Executive and Shadow Cabinet, the second for funeral directors and funeral officiates. Sad to say, only Cllr Alan Paul and I attended the former, although please note that there will be another demonstration of the system at Taunton Crematorium on Wednesday, 15 December at 3.30pm.
- 2.5 Paul is also arranging further consultation with local clergy.
- 2.6 Without exception the funeral directors are all very keen that we offer this service, and have offered their support.
- 2.7 The Crematorium provides a service for all within our community. There are many religious and non religious services where the organist is not required. I was truly impressed with what the music system can offer. It is far more than just music and will enhance the overall service offering greater choice and a

personalised funeral for the bereaved. Our crematorium here in Taunton Deane is widely regarded as the best in the region

### **3. Waste Management**

- 3.1 The potential closure of four recycling centres – at Coleford, Crewkerne, Dulverton and Middlezoy – by 31 March 2011, subject to consultation with local Councillors, has been agreed by Somerset County Council to make savings. After evaluating the impact of any closures, another four centres could close later in 2011/2012. All recycling centres will have reduced hours and introduce charges for depositing certain types of waste, such as soil, rubble and tyres.
- 3.2 The sites that are potentially in the next tranche of closures have certainly not been named and any speculation that sites within Taunton Deane are being considered is just that - speculation. Decisions on whether, where and when any other sites are closed will only be taken after the full effects of the initial phase of closures has been assessed.

### **4. Climate Change / Carbon Management**

- 4.1 November saw the launch of the first Car Club vehicle in the district, thanks largely to the sterling work carried out by Mark Leeman. The Toyota Yaris five-door car is based at Taunton Deane Borough Council. Anyone can become a member - individuals, small businesses and larger organisations.
- 4.2 The car is provided by Exeter-based Co-Cars, which has set up successful car club schemes in Devon and is now branching out into Somerset thanks to part-funding from Co-Cars and the Development Trust Association and support from Taunton Deane Borough Council and Transition Town Taunton.
- 4.3 The concept is simple – the car is available for use from 30 minutes onwards through a phone or 24/7 internet booking system. It is collected from the dedicated parking space at the The Deane House in Belvedere Road, Taunton, and returned promptly.
- 4.4 At the end of the month members are billed only for their usage and mileage cost, and a small administration fee:-
  - £3.95 per hour
  - 23.5p per mile.
- 4.5 Benefits:
  - Access to a car without all the complications of car ownership – paying tax, insurance, petrol, MoT and repairs costs;
  - Only cars with low carbon emissions used;

- Flexible, comfortable and convenient.
  - Fewer cars on the road. Research has shown an average of 25 private cars are taken off the road for every car club car;
  - Car Club members think more carefully about each trip they make in a car and make greater use of alternative travel options such as cycling, public transport and walking
- 4.6 Access to the car club for Taunton Deane Borough Council staff is being provided on a **cost-neutral basis** by the Council. Finance comes from the authority's Travel Plan which is funded through the money staff pay to park at The Deane House
- 4.7 Schemes of this type are proving popular across the country as a new way of cutting transport costs, reducing carbon footprint and maintaining a level of independence. I think it is great and I am delighted that once again our Council is leading the way in this area. To join the scheme, go to: **[www.tauntoncarclub.co.uk](http://www.tauntoncarclub.co.uk)**.

Councillor Ken Hayward

# **Council Meeting – 14 December 2010**

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

### **1. Parks**

- 1.1 The Parks Team have as usual had a busy autumn. The parks are all looking tidy for the winter with the new winter bedding all planted out ready to cheer us all once spring arrives.
- 1.2 The new Committee for Taunton in Bloom has been formed and it is great to see some new faces signing up to be involved. The Committee had some bulb planting planned but this had to be cancelled due to frozen ground.
- 1.3 This week I was pleased to attend the long awaited official opening of the Sensory Garden in Vivary Park, Taunton. The Mayor kindly braved the weather to officiate; I think his Worship would agree that it certainly pushed all our senses that morning!

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

- 2.1 Longrun Meadows – an additional entrance has been opened adjacent to Castle School to allow easier access for Somerset College students.
- 2.2 Many play areas are moving forward at a pace, some to make sure we utilise some funding streams before they vanish, some with community funding and all being underpinned by Section 106 Agreement monies.
- 2.3 Baldwin Road and Vivary Park Play Areas – moving toward completion.
- 2.4 Cotford St Luke Play Area and Lyngford BMX ramps – work due to start in February for completion by end of March 2011.
- 2.5 Taunton Green Play Area and Pavilion will be revamped to give a more inclusive play experience. Tenders are due in by 15 December 2010. Work will then start on site towards the end of February, with completion by the end of March 2011.
- 2.6 Greenway Recreation – Although this is slightly behind the others, it is hoped to appoint a contractor early in the new year with a completion date similarly towards the end of March.
- 2.7 Finally, the proposed space at ASDA green has been delayed by some ownership issues which our Legal Team are progressing. Once this is resolved, we go back to our landscape architects and finalise plans, which then go to tender and contract. I would hope for completion in the summer of 2011.

### 3. Tone Leisure (Taunton Deane) Limited Activities

#### Community, Sports and Health Development

3.1 Tone Leisure continues to work hard to develop a number of community outreach programmes including:-

- Active Living Centres - Seven Active Living Centres are now participating with a six week activity programme initiative and a further four are taking up the offer in the New Year.
- Children's Centres – Tone Leisure's Active Lifestyle Officer is working in partnership with Halcon and Priorswood Children's Centres to develop and deliver a programme of inclusive activities for the parents and children.
- Flexercise – Continues in 25 elderly care homes across Taunton Deane.
- MEND 7-13s Programme – In November a further five children and their families from Wellington completed the programme. The next MEND 7-13s is due to take place at Wellsprings Leisure Centre starting in late January 2011.

#### Facility News

3.2 **St. James Street Baths** - has had a challenging time with the closure of the learner pool for essential maintenance work which took place at the end of July 2010. The pool re-opened on Monday, 29 November and all swimmers are now back in their original pools/slots. Whilst the pool was closed Tone Leisure took the decision to paint the pool tank and paint the 'dolphin' back in and it looks brilliant.

3.3 A bid has been submitted to the Short Break Group for funding for a new disabled bed in the disabled changing room. Tone Leisure has yet to hear if this bid has been successful.

3.4 **Station Road Pool** - Luke Scott successfully received an award from the ASA (Amateur Swimming Association) for 'Health and Lifelong Participation Coach of the Year in 2010'. Luke attended an award ceremony in Taunton to collect his award through recognition of his work and dedication to Station Road Pool's very successful Swim Fit scheme.

3.5 Focus on - **Wellington Sports Centre** - Keri Parr, Centre Manager, has been working with Badminton England and Court Fields Community School to create a clear pathway for the provision of badminton in Wellington. Although this project is in its early stages, the idea is to set up a Wellington Badminton Network.



- 3.6 The Z3 Project continues to go from strength to strength with its first birthday approaching in the New Year. This financial year has so far seen 3,227 visits from young people in and around the area. We have been informed by the equipment supplier that currently Tone Leisure has the best success rate on visits than any other provider in the country.
- 3.7 Wellington Sports Centre has launched its new fitness craze of Zumba and Aqua Zumba (one of the first in the UK) which saw two sessions of 120 people participate in this salsa fun exercise style.
- 3.8 Also new to the centre, the first Roller Disco party in many years. 60 people attended this first of many one-off events, with fantastic comments and many people wanting this to be a regular feature. Tone Leisure is currently planning a further three Roller Disco events next year with a target of 120 participants on each night.
- 3.9 An innovative programme which was launched for the very first time was the indoor paintball event in partnership with the Wellington PCSOs. This event was fully booked, with 80 young people between the ages of 8 and 16 participating in three activities: paintball, Z3 Zone and swimming. Many of the young people were new to the Centre and there was a fantastic buzz around the centre and definitely one that will add to next year's programme of events.
- 3.10 Thank you to Keri and the whole team at Wellington.

#### **4. Environmental Investment**

- 4.1 The installation of the new lighting project at Wellington Sports Centre has now been completed. The feedback from customers has been amazing with the significant improvement in the projected LUX levels.
- 4.2 The new lighting system operates on a Passive Infra Red (PIR) system that will significantly reduce the annual electricity consumption at the centre. This, coupled with an annual saving of 15 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>, will go a long way to assist the Council in achieving its commitment to 10:10.
- 4.3 The utility usage will be closely monitored for the next three months with a view to similar projects being rolled out across the Taunton Contract.

Seasons greetings to you all.

Councillor Catherine Herbert