

Council Meeting – 4 October 2011

Report of Councillor John Williams – Leader of the Council

1. Breach of Confidentiality

- 1.1 Reference the release of the financial savings proposals pack to the local media. I must comment on the serious breach of confidentiality that has occurred recently.
- 1.2 It is disappointing to think that somebody amongst us should be so untrustworthy and lack integrity that they are unable to be entrusted with confidential information and worse, are unable to honour a “confidentiality agreement” signed by them.
- 1.3 As a result of this, and at least until investigations into the leak are completed, as a Council we are having to take measures to restrict and protect the circulation of future confidential information on a “need to know” basis. This is a complete culture change for our Council and one I personally sincerely regret but I am fully supportive whilst the pall of suspicion hangs over all of us because somebody has chosen to treat the confidentiality rules with contempt.
- 1.4 Whoever is responsible I urge to consider their position. I wish to continue the policy of openness and trust of this Council, I am sure virtually all will agree anybody that breaches that trust is not a fit and proper person and is not welcome amongst us.

2. Notable Events

- 2.1 Looking forward when writing this, we have the opening of the Third Way on 27 September 2011 which I am sure will be a welcome improvement to the road system of Taunton. It is designed to remove a tremendous amount of traffic from North Street so hopefully providing a much improved environment for the shoppers using this street.
- 2.2 The Roads Minister, Norman Baker MP, is officiating at the opening ceremony and this will be his third visit to the project which is good that so much interest has been shown. Hopefully, this will extend to the Northern Inner Distributor Road when scheduled to start in spring of next year
- 2.3 I am delighted to see this is being turned into such a public event by the County Council with pupils from local schools attending and St Margaret’s Hospice being allowed to organise a sponsored walk as the first “public access”. A fitting opening for the first new main route to be opened in Taunton for decades and its obvious contribution towards much needed easing of congestion through the town centre.

- 2.4 Later in the same day (27 Sept) we see the official opening of the new Somerset Museum. For those of us that have had a preview it can only be described as a remarkable transformation of what was previously a building in poor condition and badly laid out. The very substantial refurbishment work has created a Somerset Museum we can all be proud of and is a wonderful addition to our visitor attraction appeal.
- 2.5 A further notable milestone is the removal of scaffolding from around the 108 affordable homes in a joint partnership between the Homes and Communities Agency, Knightstone Housing and Taunton Deane. The importance of this is that it is on target for completion at the latest in March 2012 when we will have access to 108 new affordable homes for the benefit of our community.
- 2.6 A popular event occurred on Friday, 16 September 2011 when the Tour of Britain Cycle Race started from the centre of Taunton. It was great to see what a huge attraction it was with so many visitors and events happening so early in the morning. A great attraction for the town.

3. Long Term Budget Strategy

- 3.1 We have now all had the opportunity to consider the confidential budget packs and make our comments known either individually or as Groups, to officers. The choices offered reinforce the difficult decisions that will be facing Members when it comes to budget setting and deciding priorities over the next four years.
- 3.2 I take this opportunity of thanking all officers involved in the preparation of the financial packs as it required hard work and commitment to prepare such a vast amount of, often complex, information. I reiterate my thanks for the dedication of all those involved and for the wide ranging menu of options provided.
- 3.3 Let us not have any illusions, the relatively easy bit is the decisions on what to, or not to, accept. The really hard part will be in implementation because none of us wish to cut services or facilities. However, it is a sign of the very difficult times we face and at least we are being given excellent tools to work with in the form of comprehensive information to consider and make decisions.

4. Taunton Regional Fire Centre

- 4.1 I have followed this up with the Minister, Bob Neill, MP, reinforcing the point it needed dealing with to allay public concerns and linked it with the need to create employment opportunities for our economic development potential.
- 4.2 The Minister reaffirmed the case that allowing the project for the amalgamation of Fire and Rescue Services to continue was not a viable option. Reluctantly the decision was taken to discontinue the programme and alternative uses for the building were being actively sought. We have now

obtained the contact details of those handling the future of the building so we can actively promote to business or an investor requiring employment premises, if thought suitable.

- 4.3 In addition to the above we have met with the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service to further understand their views about the redundant regional fire centre and their proposals to relocate the remaining call centre staff from Hestercombe to Exeter, announced some months ago.
- 4.4 I made strong representation that Taunton Deane could ill afford to lose employment in these difficult times but was advised it was only a relatively small number who were presently working in unsuitable, outdated premises for which only a very limited time remained on their lease. The control centre in Exeter was designed for purpose and would provide an excellent working environment whilst delivering economies for the service thus our community.
- 4.5 We were reassured that operations at Chelston would not be affected, in fact the opposite. The Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service is presently in negotiations with a private sector partner to enhance their service delivery but also provide training and expertise to the private sector that should generate substantial income for the service. Chelston has been identified as one of the depots that will benefit from additional employment and investment to fulfil the requirements of this public/private partnership.
- 4.5 We have agreed with the service that a visit to the Exeter Control Centre will be arranged in the next few months to reassure us as community representatives that the relocation will not be detrimental to service. It will be an opportunity for Members to see the latest equipment and facilities and by then it should be possible to share full details of their proposed partnership with a private sector company and the benefits for us all. An invitation will be extended to all Members shortly.

5. Castle Green Enhancement and High Street, Taunton

- 5.1 As Members will have noted from the recent publication in the Weekly Bulletin, works to the enhancement of the Castle Green area and car park are at last taking a positive step towards implementation. Because of the historic nature of this site and the need to maintain access for businesses and the buses there have been many complications. The works will take place in two phases to address these issues and to allow work to commence.
- 5.2 I am also pleased to report that preparatory works have started on the High Street as part of the planned upgrade and refurbishment. I believe we can all agree an enhancement of this area is long overdue. Preliminary plans for the proposed works have been shared with Members and I look forward to firm proposals coming forward for further discussion and agreement.

6. EDF Contacts

- 6.1 We are continuing our contact with EDF and have established they are seeking to identify offices in reasonable proximity to Hinkley Point but do not appear to be looking as close as Taunton. We are working with them to sell the benefits of Taunton with our excellent communications, schools, medical and leisure facilities with a ready supply of employment land and housing and of course, great environment.
- 6.2 We have also held a constructive meeting with what is termed a "Tier 2" Contractor who are also likely to have an enormous involvement at Hinkley Point on the mechanical engineering side as opposed to the civil engineering works. We are equally promoting to them the benefits of Taunton as an excellent place in which to base themselves. Contact continues.
- 6.3 We must continue to promote Taunton Deane so that the decision makers are aware of what we have to offer. We are aware that no firm decisions are likely to be made until such time as planning permission is granted for the power station construction. Then, I suspect, decisions will be made quickly so we have to be prepared.

7. Meeting with Business Leaders

- 7.1 Penny James, David Evans and myself met with prominent business leaders from around Taunton Deane as part of our programme of economic development and interacting with the business world. It was an opportunity to speak on a one to one basis to inform business of our future plans to help them and to hear any problems business may have that we in turn could assist with.
- 7.2 It was an extremely informative and constructive evening from which we gathered various issues that we will be following up. All attendees expressed appreciation for the meeting being arranged, for the opportunity to hear about Taunton Deane's Regeneration Plans, about the Core Strategy and to be able to raise their own issues direct with management.
- 7.3 I must express my appreciation to David Evans for all his hard work in getting this event off the ground and also for Penny's support on the evening it was invaluable.

8. Good News for Taunton

- 8.1 A vote of confidence in the future potential for Taunton - Crest Nicholson have exchanged contracts with Abbey Manor, subject to planning, for the East Goods Yard and they are planning to develop around 250 houses on this long time derelict site. This will become a very attractive canal and riverside site whilst also greatly enhancing the entrance to Taunton whether by rail or road as it is prominent from both.

8.2 Crest Nicholson have also just started another site in Taunton of 67 houses planned at Silk Meadows which is the site adjacent the Silk Mills roundabout. Roadworks to access the site have recently commenced. I welcome their confidence and investment in Taunton.

8.3 In my last report to Full Council on 19 July 2011, I reported the anticipated commencement of the new Viridor Headquarters Building. As is clearly visible, it did commence and what progress has been made! The structural steel frame has already risen six stories high with completion scheduled around spring 2012.

9.0 **Finally**

9.1 I was delighted to attend the Somerset College Gala Fashion Show on 24 September 2011 which was not only a showcase of what is best from the BA (Hons) Fashion and Textile students of the College but also the support received from the Media makeup students. This was a recreation of their Graduation Fashion Show that was put on in London's Brick Lane earlier in the year.

9.2 What was also great to see was the co-operation and input from local businesses and particularly the Orchard Centre for hosting such an event. It was great to see so many contributing to an extremely enjoyable and successful event.

Councillor John Williams

Council Meeting - 4 October 2011

Report of Councillor Mrs Jane Warmington – Community Leadership

1. The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill

- 1.1 This has now become an Act and Police Authorities will be abolished and replaced by directly elected Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC). The public will go to the polls on Thursday, 15 November 2012 to vote for a Commissioner for Avon and Somerset to serve a four year term.
- 1.2 The Act also includes the appointment of Police and Crime Panels (PCPs) to hold the Commissioner to account on behalf of the public and provide a check and a balance.
- 1.3 In Avon and Somerset, this will mean establishing a joint committee made up of ten Council Members, one drawn from each Unitary, District and County Council within the Force area, plus two Members co-opted by the Panel. There will be a requirement for political balance amongst the elected Members of the PCP.
- 1.4 The local authorities within the Force area are responsible for establishing and maintaining the PCP whose powers and responsibilities will include the following:-
 - Reviewing the draft Policing and Crime Plan and make recommendations;
 - Requiring the Commissioner to attend a public hearing to respond to concerns;
 - Reviewing expenditure proposals and making recommendations;
 - Making reports and recommendations about the Annual Plan;
 - Dealing with complaints about the conduct of a Commissioner; and
 - Appointing an acting Commissioner from the Commissioner's staff if a Commissioner is incapacitated or resigns.
- 1.5 Avon and Somerset Police Authority have established a Transition Board to oversee implementation of changes arising from the Bill and to enable the smooth and effective transition to new arrangements.
- 1.6 Please refer to www.aspola.org.uk/index.aspx?p=214 for more details.

2. Safer Somerset Partnership

- 2.1 The five district Community Safety Partnerships (Taunton Deane Crime and Disorder Panel) have merged to form the Safer Somerset Partnership with Somerset County Council (SCC).
- 2.2 Consideration is being given to the new relationship with the Police Transition Board (see 1.5 above), how SCC governance would work, the appointment of a chairman/woman, any unintended consequences from merging the district Community Safety Partnerships and impact of funding changes on community safety. (Dorset has undergone such a change and has been consulted).
- 2.3 CCTV is under review led by Sedgemoor District Council. Avon and Somerset Police are also undertaking a review across the force area.
- 2.4 A tabled update may follow as the Safer Somerset Partnership's next meeting leaves only two working days before Full Council meet.

3. Community Policing Awards

- 3.1 Avon and Somerset Police Authority are inviting nominations in several categories from the community where they feel Officers have served them especially well. Forms are available either on line from www.communitypolicingawards.org.uk or by telephoning 01275 816386 or from the Authority's HQ at Portishead, BS20 8JJ.

4. Health and Wellbeing Boards

- 4.1 The Health and Social Care Bill 2011 sets out a requirement for the establishment of a Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) in every upper tier local authority in England (Somerset County Council here).
- 4.2 Their purpose is to promote better health within their catchment by aligning commissioning and forging partnerships between (mainly) public sector providers.
- 4.3 The Boards are to be established from 2013 running in shadow form prior to this from October 2011. In two tier local authorities, the districts are to be represented.
- 4.4 In order to take best advantage of this opportunity, a Health and Wellbeing Task and Finish Group was set up under the SCC's Scrutiny Committee.
- 4.5 Their findings and recommendations have just been to the County's Scrutiny Committee (6 September 2011) and Cabinet (14 September 2011) and were presented to partners and other organisations involved in health on 26 September 2011.

- 4.6 Recommendations for the make up of the new Board include SCC elected Members, officers with statutory responsibilities, elected Members/officers of district councils and representatives of GP consortia and other elements of the NHS.
- 4.7 The interim board (October 2011 to December 2012) is likely to have more members on it so as to accommodate all interested parties. However, that number might need to reduce later to ensure the final board is of a size that is effective. The five districts may have two representatives on the final board though possibly more in the interim.

5. Taunton Deane Partnership

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

6. Priority Areas

- 6.1 The Visioning Event held in July 2011 generated over 300 thoughts and ideas relating to the two urban priority areas (North Taunton and Taunton East) from partners and key members in the communities.
- 6.2 Further informal consultations have taken place within the two areas (to check and balance). Three workshops held to list suggestions (post-it note exercise), for facilitators to add their comments and best placed partner organisations to look at these in a priorities exercise.
- 6.3 Preliminary analysis of the data (priorities wheel and spider diagram) has been undertaken to help these processes.
- 6.4 A further workshop will follow to develop the draft action plan for the two areas before the end of the winter which will then be offered for public consultation.
- 6.5 Information has now been gathered from the rural priority areas (benchmarking) and is being assessed.

7. Total Somerset – customer access

- 7.1 The Total Somerset Programme is a partnership between public and voluntary sector organisations working across the county. The aim is to change the way of delivering services to the public by working together, making them more efficient, accessible and innovative.

- 7.2 TELL US ONCE : the simplified death and birth notification system is due to launch across the County on 18 October 2011 when all deaths registered with the registrar will automatically send the information on to other organisations who need to know. This will be extended to the registration of births from 31 October 2011.
- 7.3 ASSET MAPPING: Those assets in public ownership have now been mapped across the County. Work has also started mapping those owned by the voluntary sector. Recent receipt of Capital Asset Pathfinder Status (a bid between Somerset, Taunton Deane Borough and Mendip District Councils) lends weight to this project nationally and an ability to draw on free expertise and resources from central Government.
- 7.4 COMMUNITY BUDGET BID: Following the successful six month pilot project in Highbridge with high contact families (chaotic families reliant on the input of many agencies), Somerset County Council has invited Taunton Deane to put a joint bid in to Government to extend this to Halcon, Taunton East. Our interest has been registered (first step) and we can expect to hear near Christmas.
- 7.5 The Community budget gives local public service partners the freedom to work together to redesign services around the needs of people, improving outcomes and reducing duplication and waste.

8. Community Development Team

- 8.1 The Community Development Team at Taunton Deane brings together staff with a wide range of expertise and backgrounds. These include youth work, leisure and play developments, housing and estates management, community safety and anti social behaviour, restorative justice and fund raising.
- 8.2 This summer Priorswood Community Centre ran Pride in Priorswood with the support of the Team. The activity days are held once a week (on Tuesday) for youngsters and their families throughout the school holidays and are very popular.
- 8.3 East Taunton Activity Days (on Wednesdays) are run by the Link Centre in Halcon, again supported by the team and other partners. Several hundred children and their parents enjoyed these days over the summer.
- 8.4 Other events are supported across Taunton Deane, either by way of co- ordination or financial support. These include Friends of Wellington Park Summer Programme, Friends of French Weir Family Fun Day, Friends of Vivary Park Annual Carols and the team organise the summer Sunday bandstand concerts in Vivary Park.

- 8.5 The popular Community Clean-up Days are supported by Housing and Police colleagues. This helps tenants clean up their properties and encourages them to keep the properties tidy, building a sense of pride across the estates.

9. Youth Initiatives Fund (YIF)

- 9.1 There have been nine applications for this round which closed on 9 September 2011. These are being considered by both the Shadow and the Portfolio Holder. Decisions will be published in the Weekly Bulletin at the end of the month.
- 9.2 A reminder to Members that the review of grants is coming before Scrutiny in October.

10. Weekly Bulletin

- 10.1 Members are encouraged to contribute to this if they find they have interesting information to share. Perhaps something relevant from a conference or an update from representation on an outside body.
- 10.2 Please send submissions to Richard Bryant in Democratic Services. Thank you.
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Councillor Jane Warmington

Council Meeting – 4 October 2011

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

1. Keeping Members informed

1.1 Economic Development Delivery Plan

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

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

1.2 Taunton Deane Economy Bulletin

The first Quarterly Economic Bulletin was circulated at the end of July 2011, informing Members of recent trends in the local economy and labour market issues. Feedback from Members on the usefulness of this Bulletin would be welcomed. The next edition is due at the end of September.

Also, a Job Seeker Allowance (JSA) update giving details of changes to claimant rates locally is now circulated monthly.

1.3 Staffing Issues

The team now comprises 4.5 staff members. However, following an extended period of sick leave Stephanie Payne has now resigned from her post of Economic Development Lead.

2. Theme 1 Stimulating Business Growth and Investment

2.1 Business Liaison

A proactive programme of visits to larger local businesses is being undertaken with the aim of assisting businesses to realise their growth and investment plans. The team intends to visit 50 businesses per year.

Organisations met on a one:one basis during the past quarter and currently being supported include:-

- PCUK Ltd, Culmhead
- Connect South West
- Pearsalls (Angiotech)
- GSI Exotec
- J&K Aquatics, Bathpool
- Oake Manor Golf Club
- Performance Driven, Priorswood
- Devon and Somerset Fire Service

2.2 Rural Post Offices

Hattie Winter is undertaking a programme of visits to Taunton Deane Post Offices to better understand the issues they face, and to come up with a programme of support. In the past two months she has visited Post Offices in Stawley, Station Road, Rockwell Green, Trull, North Curry, Milverton, Blagdon, and Henlade.

She also has been working with Councillors Bishop and Morrell to lend support to Oake and Bishops Hull Post Offices respectively.

2.3 Business Events

During the past Quarter the Economic Development Team has delivered two events for local businesses:-

- **Leader's Evening**
The first Leader's Evening on 20 September 2011 was hosted by the Castle Hotel when the Leader and the Chief Executive were joined by seven local business leaders. The event was very successful and constructive, which was appreciated by those attending, as it provided an opportunity to update them on plans and projects in Taunton Deane. It gave attendees an opportunity to raise issues and items that they were concerned with: all in all a very worthwhile event. It is intended to organise the next event in 6 months' time, inviting different businesses.
- **Tour of Britain Business Breakfast**
Fifty five local businesses and organisations were invited to a breakfast held before the start of the Taunton Stage of the Tour on 16 September 2011. The event was very well received by the businesses as it provided an opportunity for informal networking.

Wellington Business Event

We are working with local organizations in Wellington, including the Chamber of Commerce, on a business event, planned for 10 November 2011 at Wellington

Rugby Club, to highlight the range of support available to businesses, as well as the local supply opportunities.

2.4 Support for Rural Business Projects

A small grant fund is available from Taunton Deane for rural projects and innovative Renewable Energy projects. To date this year the Council has contributed £1,000 towards the 10 Parishes Arts Festival (brochure and web site), £500 to Wellington Chamber towards a town centre leaflet and interactive web site.

3. Theme 2 Ensuring a Skilled and Entrepreneurial workforce

3.1 Job Clubs for long term unemployed people

The Economic Development Team continues to work with Job Centre Plus to encourage Job Centre Advisors to refer their job seekers to the Job Clubs. Both Job Clubs (Halcon and Wellington) continue to make good progress, and the Service Level Agreements for 2011/2012 have been renegotiated with a view to setting up further provision in Priorswood. Tenders have been invited from suitably qualified organizations to enhance the three job clubs, particularly by raising awareness locally of the services available.

3.2 Client Based Approach to Construction Skills

A proposal is being progressed for the Council to take on Approved Client status in securing apprenticeships and other learning opportunities in major construction projects. This represents a great opportunity to improve the skills base of the local work force.

4. Theme 3 Creating an Attractive Business Environment

4.1 Employment Sites Leaflet

A two page guide of available employment sites in Taunton Deane has recently been produced. The guide focuses on larger sites with planning permission or allocation in the Draft Core Strategy, and is already being used by officers in discussion with local businesses and inward investors to point out investment opportunities.

4.2 Business Case Studies

In July the first Taunton Deane Business Case Studies was published, focusing on two local businesses (Metron Technologies and IDN) in the IT industry. The Case Studies will be produced bi-monthly, each one focussing on a different business sector and highlighting Taunton Deane's success in hosting growing, dynamic and innovative businesses.

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

Since receiving Ministerial endorsement of the Heart of the South West LEP in April, a Board has been appointed led by business. In August Lead Members and Senior Officers met with the LEP's Chairman, Tim Jones, one of its local business Board Members, Nick Engert from Clarke Wilmott, and the representative of Further Education on the Board, Rachel Davies from Somerset College. The LEP Board is still at a formative stage, so the meeting was a good opportunity to forge a link and share Economic Development plans and ambitions.

Our Economic Development Specialist, David Evans, proactively pulled together Economic Development Officers within District Councils from across the two Counties to co-ordinate District engagement with the LEP.

4.4 Cycling Tour of Britain

The 16 September 2011 saw the 6th Stage of the Tour of Britain starting in Taunton. The Economic Development Team worked closely with the Tour Company, the Taunton Town Centre Company and Somerset County Council to put on a high quality sporting event in the town centre. The event went extremely well - approximately 2,000 people attended the start, a significant increase on the usual footfall in the town at the start of the day and Taunton received international TV and media coverage.

4.5 Hinkley Point Nuclear New Build

EDF Energy has recently issued a proposal on its investment in local transport infrastructure around the Hinkley Point site. Following a consultation period, EDF will shortly be submitting its planning and infrastructure application.

The Economic Development Team is engaging with the Somerset Chamber of Commerce (who are acting on behalf of EDF Energy) to encourage local businesses to sign up to the Hinkley Point Supply Portal. We are considering events that can be held in Taunton Deane to raise awareness of the Portal.

We will be joining with Into Somerset to attend the EDF event in London in December, which will be highlighting the inward investment opportunities presented by this development.

During the Summer, Lead Members and officers met a company that is a potential main supplier to the New Build proposal, which will be looking to invest in the vicinity of Hinkley Point should the project proceed and their tender is successful.

4.6 Taunton Town Centre Company and BID Programme

The Council is an active member of the Town Centre Company, working on specific events (such as the Tour of Britain and the Olympic Torch Relay) as well as co-ordinating and improving the provision of town centre services

Planning and preparations are currently underway for the next BID ballot in February 2012. If successful it would enable a second five-year BID term from September 2012. To inform the draft BID Business Plan the company has completed a consultation exercise amongst 150 town centre businesses. A consultation meeting was also held with Taunton Deane Members at the end of August.

The Town Centre Manager will be attending the meeting of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee in October to present an update of the company's activities and will be seeking financial support to assist the BID process.

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

5.1 Visitor Numbers and Spend

It has been another busy quarter for the TIC Team with the number of people coming through the doors holding up compared to this time last year, but there has been a slight decrease in 'visitor spend' year on year.

Nevertheless the TIC Ticket Centre has been very busy with its best ever year for Taunton Flower Show ticket sales. The Netherlands National Circus recently made their first successful visit to Vivary Park. The Circus was very complimentary about the professional box office service provided by the staff at the TIC, and wanted to pass on their thanks.

5.2 Promotional Activities

The TIC welcomed new Councillors on a tour around the centre during their induction tour in July and also hosted an Open Afternoon for other Members the following week.

In conjunction with Deane DLO, the TIC and the area was promoted to visitors at the Taunton Flower Show.

Guests of the Friends of Konigsluter were each provided by the TIC with a promotional 'Welcome Pack' during their recent visit.

An updated version of the Welcome to Taunton mini-guide has been produced and is now available for visitors.

Andrew Hopkins, the TIC manager, has refreshed the look and content of the TIC website (www.heartofsomerset.com) and is working with colleagues in Taunton Deane and SWOne to increase the traffic to these pages. He has also been helping revise the content of the Visit Somerset website which is now being run by the trade-led Somerset Tourism Association.

5.3 New Services Offered

The Travel Centre is now selling travel passes for both First and Stagecoach Southwest Bus Services.

For the third year, the 'Cards for Good Causes' Charity Christmas Card Shop returns to the TIC. It will be open from Monday, 3 October until 23 December 2011.

The office is also hosting a National Trust representative who is promoting the work of the organisation and membership to visitors each Monday up until the end of October.

6. Asset Management

The Mount Street Nursery site has conditional contracts exchanged but is awaiting planning clarification.

Chedzoy Motors on Greenbrook Terrace, Taunton has been granted an additional two year licence, to be reconsidered again as the Third Way becomes established.

Taunton Youth and Community Centre (TYCC) site - The valuer has been requested by the Scrutiny Committee to revisit the percentage share arrangements and is in consultation with the trustees.

Chestnut Tree - The reallocation of County Council funds now means that the proposed plans for the Youth Club Drop-in Centre are unable to proceed. Further consideration will have to be given for the best use of the site.

Expressions of interest are now being sought for the redevelopment of the Goodlands Gardens public conveniences.

Mrs Coombes has relocated from 92 Priory Bridge Road, Taunton.

There is a vacant unit at Blackdown Business Park, Wellington which is being marketed.

Interest in the old Hamilton Gault Pavilion has been expressed by a boxing club.

Councillor Norman Cavill

Council Meeting – 4 October 2011

Report of Councillor Ken Hayward – Environmental Services and Climate Change

1. Crematorium

- 1.1 Two Saturday services are being held in remembrance to those who have died. The first service is on the 5 November 2011 at 11.00 am. This is an interdenominational service between local church groups. The second service is the annual Catholic Mass held at the Crematorium on 12 November at 10.00 am.
- 1.2 The programme to install three new cremators and mercury filtration equipment is progressing. The installation will begin during early 2012. This is a legal requirement providing cleaner emissions to the atmosphere.
- 1.3 Work has begun to prepare future burial ground at Taunton Deane Cemetery. New fencing has been erected around the border of the land concerned and future grounds works will take place in due course.

2. Climate Change / Carbon Management

The team have been extremely busy. Achievements include:-

- 2.1 **Installation of new lighting in corridors of Kilkenny Court** (April 2011): Project costs £12,500. Funded by Housing. Old lights were on for 24/7 and too dim. The new lights are brighter and on movement sensors. The installation is estimated to save 10 tonnes CO₂ and £2,400 per year.
- 2.2 **Receipt of Performance Reward Grant** (PRG): A Performance Reward Grant (PRG) of £17,100 for further carbon reduction projects has been received from County Council.
- 2.3 **Taunton Deane Housing Asset Management Strategy** : We have provided input into the draft Housing Asset Management Strategy from a climate change / energy efficiency angle. The Strategy will steer the investment to the Council's stock of more than 6,000 council houses over the next 20 years.
- 2.4 **2010/2011 CO₂ emissions monitoring report** (July 2011): Monitoring report on emissions from Taunton Deane's operations (corporate buildings and fleet) completed in July 2011.

In 2010/2011, 176 tonnes or 4% less CO₂ was emitted by Taunton Deane and Tone Leisure than the year before. The Taunton Deane sites contributed savings of 133 tonnes CO₂ and the Tone Leisure sites savings of 43 tonnes CO₂ to this. The carbon reductions were 5.4% at the Taunton Deane sites and

2.2% at the Tone Leisure sites. Overall, emissions from these sites have been reduced by 496 tonnes CO₂ or 10.4% since 2006/2007. This equates to the annual emissions of about 83 average UK households.

- 2.5 **Greenhouse gas emissions report** (July 2011): Taunton Deane has produced annual greenhouse gas emissions report for DECC (Department for Energy and Climate Change). The report covers the Carbon Dioxide (CO₂), Methane (CH₄) and Nitrous Oxide (N₂O) emissions from the Council's corporate buildings and fleet.
- 2.6 **2011/2012 Carbon Management Plan** (CMP) (July 2011): Taunton Deane's CMP for 2011/2012 was approved by the Executive in August. The CMP is accompanied by an action plan with 46 carbon reduction actions across the Taunton Deane / Tone Leisure sites and activities. The actions from this Plan for which we were able to quantify potential savings would result in a year-on-year saving of 5.2% or 225 tonnes of CO₂, if fully implemented. These actions have been developed by the joint Member / Officer Carbon Management Steering Group. The focus of this year's Plan is on energy generation, reduction of transport emissions and upgrading of lighting and insulation.
- 2.7 **Staff electric bicycles** (September 2011): The Council is trialling two electric bicycles in a bid to reduce both journey times and congestion from the end of September. One bike will be kept at The Deane House, the other at the Deane DLO Depot. The aim is to encourage staff to use these bikes instead of cars where suitable when doing business travel. The advantage over a standard push bike is the range extension and the greater ease of use. Each bike has three power support modes and a traditional eight gear system. There is still a need to pedal the bike but this will be assisted by a small electric engine. A full charge on the electric bike only costs about 5p and lasts for 44 – 50 miles in the lowest speed mode. This is enough to be used for site visits by Environmental Health or Planning officers. It is hoped that these bikes will not only reduce carbon emissions, provide healthy exercise but also reduce travel times for instance when used between the DLO Depot and The Deane House.
- 2.8 **Solar PV installation on Taunton Pool** (Corporate Scrutiny Committee - 22 September): An action in the Council's approved CMP is to "generate Taunton Deane electricity". Over the past months officers have assessed the suitability of several buildings and sites as locations for a medium sized solar PV installation. The result of the assessments so far is in favour of the roof of the Station Road Swimming Pool. Initial assessment from a consultant has indicated that an installation of 36kW would provide the best return on investment (11.59% pa) to the Council. Such an installation would cost around £100,000. It would be fully or largely funded from the Climate Change budget. In order to maximise on the Government's subsidy for generating electricity from Solar PV, the installation would need to be completed by 31 March 2012. This presents a tight timeframe. A project plan has been produced and a project team been set up to try to achieve this target.

Members' approval is currently sought for the project in principle and the Station Road Swimming Pool as the preferred location for it to enable a tendering process to take place.

- 2.9 **Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) bid** (September 2011): The Council has put in a bid for installing 37 Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHPs) to Council owned properties. These properties are one and two bedroom bungalows that are off-gas and currently heated with electrical storage heaters that are costly to run. If the bid is successful, Taunton Deane will combine the installation of the ASHPs with Solar PV to reduce the electricity needed to run the ASHPs. The total project costs £240,000 of which £175,000 would be grant funded if the bid is successful. The winning bids will be announced in October 2011.
- 2.10 **Electric vehicle charging posts** (ongoing): Scoping of feasibility for installing electric vehicle charging posts at The Deane House and Cannon Street Car Park is continuing. The main difficulty at the moment is finding locations at which we can provide sufficient power cost effectively. The project is being progressed by John Lewis (Car Parks Manager), Richard Eastman (DLO Electrical Supervisor), Rob Erskine (SWOne Building Surveyor) and Torsten Daniel.
- 2.11 **Green Deal Conference** (Bristol, 13 October 2011): Roger Mitchinson, Kevin Toller and Torsten Daniel to attend. The Green Deal is a flagship project of the Coalition Government. Under the Green Deal householders and businesses will be able to install energy efficiency measures without having to pay for them upfront. The costs of the measures will be recouped from later savings on energy bills. The Green Deal is due to start in autumn 2012. Local authorities are said to have a key role to play in delivering the Green Deal. This is an opportunity to significantly improve the energy efficiency of houses and businesses in Taunton Deane.

Waste Management

- 2.12 I attended that first meeting of the Severe Weather Sub-Group of the Somerset Waste Board (SWB) on Friday, 23 September 2011. However, with a warning of cold weather on its way for October, I worry that we may have left it too late to be of much use this winter.
- 2.13 Despite that, the meeting was productive, with some useful ideas being aired. Mainly around the importance of good communication during a severe weather event. Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP) Officers will be working up these ideas over the next few weeks.
- 2.14 A review of the changes made at our Household Waste Recycling Centre's was among many things on the SWB meeting that same afternoon. We now have 5 months data. We were told that:-
- Usage levels continue to be considerably lower than in previous years;
 - The level of tonnage collected at the sites is also down;
 - and fly-tipping continues to be an issue, although this issue was starting to show a downwards trend.

- 2.15 The motion passed at our last Full Council meeting formed part of the report presented to the meeting, but I did not feel that much notice was given to it. Particularly as later in the same paper *“A further report [on the opening hours] will be brought to the next meeting of the Board with the view of implementing any changes in 2012.”* A verbal indication on the timing of this was that it would be at least April before any changes might (or might not) be implemented.
- 2.16 This was despite the fact that a customer survey had given clear indication to a preference to changed hours from 8 to 4 on weekdays to 10 to 6. There was also a majority preference for Sunday afternoon openings rather than extended evening opening on Monday.
- 2.17 Upon consultation with my colleague on the Board, Councillor Steve Ross, I therefore pushed for an amendment to the proposed recommendations. The amendment stating *“That Negotiations begin immediately with Viridor, in the light of the survey results, to review possible savings and to review opening hours from 8am - 4pm to 10am – 6pm during the week and to extend Sunday opening hours. The Board requested that the Managing Director report back to the next meeting regarding the progress of these negotiations.”* The amendment was passed by the Board.
- 2.18 In an exciting development, the Board approved the draft Heads of Terms for the deal to deliver an **Anaerobic Digester** at Walpole, adding a further recommendation that all efforts be made to maximise the use of outputs from the plant.

3. Deane DLO

- 2.19 I am delighted to report that Chris Hall has been appointed as Deane DLO Manager. I think he has impressed us all with his work so far and I am supremely confident that he is absolutely the right person for this challenging role. He has my very best wishes.
- 2.20 The DLO structure is being filled and all internal applicants have been exhausted with the exception of a Buildings Services Area Supervisor post which we hope to advertise this week. From this process we are left with two vacancies that will be advertised externally this week. There are the posts of Building Services Manager and Business and Finance Manager.
- 2.21 We are working with finance to confirm the savings achieved from this and will have a final figure once all posts have been filled.
- 2.22 I have been actively supporting Chris with the acquisition of vehicle tracking, and I am pleased to report that it has now been installed to the majority of the fleet (109) with a few vehicles remaining as they are due to be replaced. We are now in the process of installing the software for users and training them. We have agreed that there will be a period of grace whilst staff get used to the system. It is hoped that the installation will be completed by 17 October 2011.

5. Environmental Health (EH) Teams

- 5.1 I reported last time to Full Council that formal action was pending against a fly tipper. The court heard that several sacks of household waste had been dumped in North Street Car Park in Wiveliscombe in March this year. I am pleased to tell you that the offender was ordered to pay £264 in fines and costs after admitting the offence at Taunton Magistrates' Court on 1 September 2011. This sends out a very strong message. We will prosecute anyone caught fly tipping. I applaud the EH Team for their diligence in getting the necessary evidence together to secure a prosecution.
- 5.2 Charlotte Dale has been reviewing Pest Control income - specifically how we collect the money from our customers. Currently we take payment at the time, by cheque or by card payment. This means that if we arrive and we are unable to treat the pest - for example the customer wants wasps treated - we get there and it is honey bees, we have had a wasted journey, and do not charge for the visit and could have taken a job that paid us instead.
- 5.3 To overcome this we have introduced a payment up front system. Where we genuinely are unable to offer a service – for example we cancel an appointment and they choose to go elsewhere we will refund – but it is anticipated that this will be a rare event.
- 5.4 We have also introduced a call out fee as part of the charge - so that if we get called unnecessarily or the customer does not show up for the appointment, or when we get there they just want advice we get paid for the service we have provided.
- 5.5 The overall cost of the pest treatment will remain the same, but it will mean we are recompensed for visits that currently do not result in a pest treatment.
- 5.6 Charlotte has estimated that by introducing this system we will increase our income to get much closer to the amount currently in the budget (£38,000). At present we are falling behind (estimated £25,000).
- 5.7 This has not gone through the fee setting process as we are not increasing our fees and charges, just making sure we get paid for the work we do.

Councillor Ken Hayward

Council Meeting - 4 October 2011

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

1. Parks

- 1.1 A marvellous result at Taunton Flower Show with the Deane DLO show garden winning best in show. Vivary Park was absolutely packed on both days, but Friday was perhaps one of the busiest days ever witnessed.
- 1.2 Congratulations to everyone who has helped Taunton win Gold in South West in Bloom. The judges were again very impressed by the standard of our displays and community involvement.
- 1.3 I was pleased to be asked to judge the entries for the 'Best Front Garden' as part of the Taunton in Bloom competitions, and the winners for all the categories received their awards from the Deputy Mayor on Wednesday, 21 September 2011, kindly hosted by Monkton Elm Garden Centre.
- 1.4 Vivary Play area has exceeded all expectations throughout the summer, so much so that the water pump has again unfortunately been broken. We are awaiting the manufacturer to replace the broken parts.
- 1.5 Longrun Meadows – A very positive meeting took place between the newly established Friends of Longrun, landscape architects Swan Paul, the Parks Team and Somerset Wildlife Trust. Together (and including Somerset College) there is great support for working together to care for, protect and develop Longrun. Again I was impressed by the commitment shown by our local communities to spare time to look after their local area.

2. Community Leisure and Play

- 2.1 The ASDA play site is at last underway and if the weather is kind is due to be finished in early 2012. This will be a great facility for the area.
- 2.2 COACH - (Centre for Outdoor Activities and Community Hub), is an interesting idea that is being developed by a group of people representing a variety of sports and activities. From canoeing, rowing, cycling and orienteering the early concept is to build a boat house/community building in French Weir Park, allowing easy access to the River Tone and Longrun Meadows. The idea is in its very early stages so we will be hearing more about it soon.

- 2.3 Swimming Pool Strategy – the draft business case and project plan is being developed.

3. Tone Leisure (Taunton Deane) Limited Activities

- 3.1 On Saturday, 24 September 2011, I took part in the first Taunton “Alzheimer’s Society Memory Walk” facilitated by Tone and their Walking for Health Team. The sun shone on us as we made our way around the route, starting and finishing at the bandstand in Vivary Park.

Community, Sports and Health Development

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

Health Development

- 3.3 Walking for Health - Wellington

- 3.3.1 In August the new Walk Well in Wellington health walks programme gained the accolade of being an “accredited scheme” under the Walking for Health initiative. The scheme started in July with around 20 people attending the health walks on a regular basis.

- 3.4 Children’s Centres

- 3.4.1 Acorns Children’s Centre and Hillside Children’s Centre have completed a 12 week Sports Skills course designed to help improve perceptions of health and physical activity, and encourage family cohesion with participation in physical activity. The Hollies Children’s Centre started the same course in September 2011.

- 3.5 Older People

- 3.5.1 The football season started with a seated football tournament at Staplegrove Active Living Centre (ALC) on Friday, 9 September 2011. Currently Tone has 10 ALCs taking part in a range of physical activity sessions including: seated football; seated badminton; tai chi; Flexercise; singing and active movement; and seated hockey.

- 3.6 Active Somerset

- 3.6.1 Since January 2011 Tone have set up 15 Active Somerset courses and Tone will have another 6 to set up before the end of March 2012. Tone have attracted a more diverse activity this time, with activities including kayaking, ladies’ road cycling, beginner’s triathlon training, karate and line dancing. All sessions receive pump prime funding for 12 weeks with a view to remaining sustainable after the funding ends.

3.7 Funding News

3.7.1 Tone Leisure have been successful in their application to Somerset County Council short breaks team, and were awarded funding prior to the summer holidays for children with disabilities to have additional support to enable them to be fully included in the holiday activity programme.

3.7.2 Tone are currently working on a number of funding applications to increase physical activity opportunities for local residents, including a targeted substance misuse programme for 11-19 year olds.

Facility News

3.8 Taunton Pool

3.8.1 The summer holiday's timetable has proved to be very popular. Float fun sessions attracted 90-100 people every weekday throughout the holidays.

3.8.2 The new Aqua Bike classes have now started, with sessions taking place on Wednesday mornings and Thursday evenings. There have been 99 visits in 5 weeks, with some excellent customer feedback.

3.9 Wellington Sports Centre

3.9.1 Sea Scooter sessions continue to gain momentum, especially during the summer holidays. On some occasions Tone had to put on additional sessions as the demand has been fantastic. Tone had 142 Sea Scooter participants over the six weeks of the summer holidays.

3.10 Wellsprings Leisure Centre

3.10.1 At the beginning of July the well known comedian, Jimmy Carr, performed at Wellsprings to a packed house of 900 people. It was so successful that he is coming back again in October, followed by Ed Byrne and Jethro.

3.11 Blackbrook Pavilion

3.11.1 The GOgx gym was re-fitted at the end of August and now has 41 pieces of brand new Precor cardio-vascular equipment and Concept 2 rowing machines. In addition to this, the resistance kit was all re-upholstered and new dumb-bells were purchased to increase both the amount and size of weights available, in line with customer demand.

3.11.2 On Sunday, 28 August 2011, Blackbrook hosted the Amy Hofmeister fundraising day, consisting of a one mile Run4Amy and two master classes run by master trainer Ann-See Yeoh.

3.11.3 Throughout the day over 400 people took part in the events and over £2,500 was collected through entry money, sponsorship and by the sale of merchandise. The total figure, including pre-registrations and post event sponsorship, is expected to be over £4,000. This will be split between Road Peace, Somerset Sight and the Think Amy campaign, which Amy's mother

Jane (one of the Reception Team at Blackbrook) has established in partnership with Somerset Road Safety.

3.12 Taunton Tennis Centre

3.12.1 During August Taunton held its first LTA Grade 3 sanctioned tournament. This attracted 287 entries from players all over the country.

3.12.2 The summer holiday tennis courses attracted over 50 new mini-tennis red players, aged between 5 and 8 years old.

Councillor Catherine Herbert

Council Meeting – 4 October 2011

Report of Councillor Mrs Jean Adkins – Housing Services

1. Empty Homes and New Homes Bonus

- 1.1 I attended a conference in Plymouth on 23 September 2011, accompanied by Chris Trevelyan from Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership (SWPSHP) and the Empty Homes Officer. This was supported by the South West Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership and hosted by the City Council.
- 1.2 The first speaker, David Gibbens from the Empty Homes Network, clearly illustrated the full impact of empty homes on the New Homes Bonus, since this is paid on net additions to housing stock. Every empty property counts against us and so, apart from the obvious social benefits of bringing empty homes back into use, there is a financial incentive to Councils as well.
- 1.3 A snapshot of the number of dwellings in Taunton Deane is taken at this time of year from the Council Tax Register and a CTB (Council Tax Base) return is completed. This shows the number of chargeable dwellings and also those which have been empty for more than six months and are therefore being charged the discounted rate of Council Tax (up to six months properties are exempt) and is used as the base to calculate New Homes Bonus.
- 1.4 The next speaker was from Kent County Council, which works in partnership with local Councils and takes a very proactive approach to tackling empty homes, based on a “carrot and stick” type approach to encourage and enable first, but enforce when that fails. It was a very illuminating talk.
- 1.5 A great deal of work has been carried out in Taunton Deane recently to reduce the number of empty homes on the Register. The current return will show 439 properties, so there is room for improvement.
- 1.6 Loans are available to landlords via the Wessex Reinvestment Trust to enable them to carry out works to bring properties up to a lettable condition.

2. “Rogue” Landlords and the Landlord Accreditation Scheme

- 2.1 Members may have seen an email recently from Shelter asking what this Council does to tackle the problem of rogue landlords. This is an important issue, which is even more relevant now that it is the Coalition Government’s policy to encourage rented housing to be provided by the private sector.
- 2.2 In Taunton Deane, 20% of private housing is now rented and landlords are regulated through our Housing Partnership. Help and advice is available to landlords, but we can and do take enforcement action where necessary.
- 2.3 Relationships with landlords are good on the whole. Inspections are carried out and notices can be served under the provisions of the Housing Act 2004, requiring works to be carried out. If there is sufficient hazard, works in default can be carried out and recharged.
- 2.4 Our partners in the SWPSHP have a Landlord Accreditation Scheme, which we will look into introducing next year, now that the Partnership has bedded down a little.

3. Stakeholder Event and the HRA 30 Year Business Plan

- 3.1 This event was held recently, facilitated by Cathy Austin from Savills, the consultants. It was well attended by tenants, representatives of partner organisations such as Housing Associations, Asad Butt from the Homes and Communities Agency, Councillors and officers who attended two sessions. One attendee from another organisation commented on the openness of Taunton Deane’s approach to the planning.
- 3.2 The Business Plan is needed because of the reform of Housing finance which is about to be enacted under the Localism Bill, with the Council becoming self-financing from April 2012. It is hoped that the freedoms gained will benefit this Council – and more importantly our current and prospective tenants – as it should be a better deal than the Subsidy system, which has such a negative impact on us.
- 3.3 Decisions need to be made around financing the debt of circa £87million which we will incur and how quickly we should repay this, but also how best to use the finances freed up to improve our stock and, hopefully, to build new homes in the future. Tenants will be fully engaged in this plan via the Tenant Services Management Board.
- 3.4 Savills are currently carrying out a validation exercise to assess the condition of our current stock. One key issue will be houses of non-

traditional construction, which comprise 20% of our stock and work to deal with this will be built into the plan.

4. Estates Team and Anti-social Behaviour

- 4.1 A recent exercise was undertaken with the Police to tackle “crack houses”. One nasty aspect of drug dealing is the targeting of vulnerable tenants to take over their home to use for drug dealing and one such situation had come to light and has been dealt with.
- 4.2 Tomorrow morning (as I write) Dustyn Etherington, Chairman of the Tenant Services Management Board, and I will sign up to the Respect Charter, which sets the standard for dealing with Anti-Social Behaviour.

5. Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership

- 5.1 A Member Briefing was held in September to cover aspects of the Partnership’s work (see above also). The presentations were later emailed to all Councillors.
- 5.2 A leaflet concerning the Wessex Reinvestment Trust was also placed in Member’s pigeon-holes for information. Low cost loans are available to those on low incomes to carry out home improvements and members may know of constituents who could benefit.

6. Halcon Regeneration Project

- 6.1 The special meeting of the Community Scrutiny Committee at All Saints’ Church Hall to consider the outcome of the viability report from our consultants, Savills will have been held on Monday, 3 October 2011.
- 6.2 Their assessment concludes that the scheme as originally envisaged before the recession overtook us all may not be viable, but suggests a modified scheme could be. I look forward to hearing the views of the Scrutiny Committee and the public.

Councillor Mrs Jean Adkins

Council Meeting – 4 October 2011

Report of Councillor Mrs Vivienne Stock-Williams – Corporate Resources

1. Customer Contact Centre

- 1.1 SWOne Customer Contact Centre continued to provide excellent service for Taunton Deane in July, meeting and exceeding contractual performance indicators. Performance in August was hindered by a number of ICT-related system problems, which caused the service to miss two Key Performance Indicators (the first time it has done so in 12 months) – Abandonment Rate and Grade of Service.
- 1.2 The service was included in the recent SWOne ISO 9001 Certification process and the feedback from the examiner was extremely positive. The Document Control Process that has been developed was assessed as a significant area of best practice. In addition, the Customer Contact Centre has now shared its Quality Monitoring Process both with SWOne and Taunton Deane, thus assisting other services to improve their customer contact interactions.
- 1.3 The review of the management structure is almost complete and, in the meantime, Claire Olohan-Bramley continues as Acting Head of Service.
- 1.4 Service delivery is provided in the following management information:-

Statistical Information:

Service Line	Reporting Authority	KPI No	Performance Measure	Frequency of Reporting	2011/2012 Target	Jul-11	Aug-11
						QUARTER 2	
Customer Contact	TDBC	1	% of calls answered in 20 secs	Monthly	80%	81%	74%
Customer Contact	TDBC	2	% of calls resolved at first point of contact	Monthly	91%	98%	95%
Customer Contact	TDBC	3	% of external customers rating the Customer Contact service as Very Good/Good	Annually (monitored quarterly)	73.5%		
Customer Contact	TDBC	4	Abandoned call rate - less than 5%	Monthly	<5%	4.90%	7.47%

- 1.5 A total of 5,367 enquiries have been dealt with at The Deane House Main, Housing and Planning Receptions over the past two months. In addition, there have been more than 3,200 requests for signposting and visitors for meetings. 4,514 people visited Wellington Community Office – 2,737 to make

enquiries including the Tourist Information Centre and 1,777 to make a payment through the kiosk. Staff have dealt with 674 letter and email enquiries during this time.

- 1.6 The service has an agreed Business Plan with the Authority and is continuing to work with ICT to understand how the delivery requirements for the years ahead - including self serve, automation for payments and switchboard plus enhanced reporting and quality monitoring - will be achieved.

2. Legal and Democratic Services

Boundary Review Changes

- 2.1 As Members are aware, consultation has now started on changes resulting from the Parliamentary Boundary Review. It is proposed that Members initially feed back their comments to the Group Leaders.
- 2.2 These comments can then be fed back into a corporate response rather than the issue being raised at a Full Council meeting. The deadline for the Authority's response is 5 December 2011.

Bribery Act 2010

- 2.3 This Act has now come into force and a report went before the Corporate Governance Committee on 26 September 2011. The report sets out the criminal offences that Members and officers need to be aware of. It also states what the Council has to do in order to demonstrate that it has the necessary controls in place to try to prevent bribery.
- 2.4 The four offences under the Act are:-
 - Bribery of another person (section 1);
 - Accepting a bribe (section 2);
 - Bribing a foreign official (section 6); and
 - Failing to prevent bribery (section 7).

Budget Review Project

- 2.5 Sadly, there was a leak of this confidential pack to the press, which was very disappointing. This leak has created a huge workload for the Monitoring Officer and other officers in the organisation, but an investigation is on-going to try to establish the identity of the culprit, so that person can be dealt with accordingly.
- 2.6 This has resulted in a need to tighten up our processes and procedures in order to minimise further risk. The Standards Committee has, therefore, approved a Protocol for Disclosure of Confidential Information, which has

been sent to all Members. This is necessary because, if any claim was to be made against the Authority, the Information Commissioner's Office would have expected us to have taken remedial action.

Elected Police Commissioners

- 2.7 The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill has now been given Royal Assent and elections for Elected Police Commissioners will take place in November 2012.
- 2.8 This will involve officers at Taunton Deane working to ensure both the smooth and effective running of these elections and that everything is in place to set up the new Crime Panels. A Member Briefing is being prepared to update Members further on this issue.

Land Charges

- 2.9 There have been several claims made against this Authority to re-pay the search fees of personal search agents. None of the claimants at this stage is known to us, however, and so we shall be challenging the amounts claimed. On the advice of our legal representatives, we shall be entering into standstill agreements with the claimants. This means that, when the quantum is known, all claims will be dealt with simultaneously. Taunton Deane has paid into a fighting fund through the Local Government Association (LGA) and is being represented by Bevan Brittan.
- 2.10 A new Burdens Bonus of £35,000 was given to the Authority by the Government to cover these claims, but this will be woefully inadequate if we eventually need to re-pay the search fees. This has been flagged up to Finance as a potential liability for the future.
- 2.11 The LGA has been successful in talking to the Government and informing Ministers that the amount of the new Burdens Bonus may not fully cover claims being brought against some Authorities. The Government has now said that it will review the situation.

Legal and Democratic Shared Services

- 2.12 As part of the Budget Review Project, Tonya Meers has looked at various options for service re-modelling. The most sustainable option is believed to be the shared service model.
- 2.13 Following a County-wide meeting of Chief Executives in July 2011, it was agreed to pursue a shared legal service. An away day was held in September between officers from the Legal Services teams within the five Districts, which enabled officers to get to know each other and to discuss the best way forward.
- 2.14 Land Charges was also identified in the business case as an area that would lend itself well to a shared service. A separate project will, therefore, run alongside the legal shared service and a project group of officers will be meeting shortly to begin work.

Legal Services Prosecution

- 2.15 On 1 September 2011, Legal Services, using evidence collected by Environmental Health Officers, successfully prosecuted someone for fly tipping in a local car park. He pleaded guilty at the initial hearing. Although in receipt of Job Seeker's Allowance, the culprit was fined £100 and ordered to pay costs of £50, clean up costs of £99.60 and £15 victim's surcharge.
- 2.16 A press release was issued in the hope that publicity will have a deterrent effect.

Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA)

- 2.17 In August 2011, an inspector from the Office of Surveillance Commissioners undertook a three-yearly inspection at Taunton Deane. This is a legislative requirement to ensure that the Authority's policies and procedures are up-to-date. The investigation went well and only a few minor recommendations were made. These are being dealt with by the Monitoring Officer.

3. Performance and Client Team

General

- 3.1 The Performance and Client Team are continuing to provide project management support to key corporate projects including the Budget Review Programme and the Halcon Project. Over the summer members of the team have met with Members to provide clarification and further detail in respect of various elements of the Budget Review report pack.

Client Team

- 3.2 The Client Team have continued to monitor closely the performance of the SW One and Tone Leisure partnerships. No significant issues have been reported in relation to Tone Leisure, but there have been KPI failures within the Finance and ICT services within SWOne. The Client Team are working with SWOne to understand the reasons for these failures and to agree action plans to improve performance.
- 3.3 A six-monthly performance update report was taken to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 21 July 2011 in respect of SWOne. A new-style performance update report for Tone Leisure will go to the November Community Scrutiny Committee. This will contain more detailed performance information than previous reports.

Corporate Performance

- 3.4 The corporate performance processes had been delayed to a certain extent due to the heavy involvement of the Lead Officer in the Budget Review Programme. However, these processes are now largely back on-track.

- 3.5 The Quarter 1 performance and budget monitoring report went through the Corporate Management Team (CMT)-Scrutiny-Executive reporting and review cycle during August and September. (The running order has now been changed so that the reports go to Scrutiny first and then the Executive).
- 3.6 The Corporate Risk Register has recently been reviewed by CMT and the Corporate Governance Committee. The Corporate Governance Action Plan is in the process of being reviewed and updated. The revised version will be reported to the December Corporate Governance Committee.

Retained Finance and Corporate Insurance

- 3.7 The Retained Finance Officer continues to provide support to the S151 Officer, the Budget Review Programme, the day-to-day management of the retained finance functions and to the Client Team in monitoring the SWOne Finance Service. In addition work has been undertaken in progressing the treasury management borrowing requirements for the forthcoming HRA reform.
- 3.7 The Corporate Insurance Officer commenced maternity leave in early July 2011. Cover for the insurance function is being provided by the Insurance Team at Somerset County Council. To date this arrangement is working well.

Retained HR

- 3.8 The Retained HR Manager continues to provide high level support to the DLO Review and Theme 5 Review. Support for the Budget Strategy Project has been provided at the Employee Engagement Sessions, the first Budget Strategy Consultation Forum and through the completion of reports for the Budget Strategy Project. Consultation with UNISON on the Car User Allowance Review has seen the proposals approved by Executive on 14 September 2011.

4. Revenues and Benefits

Performance

- 4.1 Processing performance for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit continues to improve. The average time from date of receipt to final calculation on new claims and changes of circumstances is currently 10 calendar days. Similarly, there have also been improvements in the speed of administering correspondence on Council Tax and Business Rates. The current levels of recovery are in line with predicted targets at the end of August 2011.
- 4.2 The Revenues and Benefits Service is engaged in its annual customer satisfaction survey. Results so far are encouraging and this should stand the service in good stead for the planned Customer Service Excellence (formerly Charter Mark) accreditation visit in October.

- 4.3 The Investigation Team had notable success this month in the battle to safeguard public funds. They won their case against a customer who forgot to declare more than £30,000 in savings in his benefit claim. This customer has since repaid benefit of nearly £11,000, as well as paying an administrative penalty (fine) of more than £3,000.

Council Tax Benefit

- 4.4 As Members know, there are currently plans to abolish national Council Tax Benefit from April 2013 and to replace it with a local scheme. The funding available for local schemes is proposed to be 10% less than the amount now paid for Council Tax Benefit.
- 4.5 The Government has recently provided some indication that local schemes must protect pensioners to ensure they receive no less benefit than they are currently offered. The Government also expects localised schemes to support positive work incentives to be introduced through Universal Credit for people of working age.
- 4.6 Developing a localised scheme to support people in paying Council Tax will pose significant challenges. Over 50% of Council Tax Benefit claimants are over pensionable age and the remaining caseload has substantial numbers of people in employment. This will mean the 10% saving from the overall cost of Council Tax Benefit will need to be made from customers falling outside of protected groups. Inevitably, that will result in cuts in support for Council Tax currently received by those customers. I would stress this information is given on current Government proposals and may change.

5. SWOne (Southwest One)

Procurement Savings Progress

- 5.1 The Procurement Savings Project continues to be an area of concern because the savings delivered to date are behind the original forecast. Clearly this is due in part to the current economic climate and the fact that we are simply spending less.
- 5.2 The Strategic Procurement Service has produced a revised forecast, which has been fed into the Budget Review Programme. This indicates that we should be able to achieve savings totalling £6.8m. Whilst this is significantly lower than the £10m originally forecast this will still allow us to repay the amounts we have borrowed to fund the SWOne transformation projects and leave a surplus.

SAP Re-launch and Patching

- 5.3 The SAP re-launch has been largely put on hold over the summer months to allow SW One to test and load a number of backdated system patches. This is the first significant patching process that has been undertaken on the system and, in view of previous problems with the system, it was felt prudent

to allow sufficient time to allow for robust testing of the patches before loading them into the live system.

- 5.4 This exercise was completed during the weekend of 10 and 11 September 2011 and the re-launch has now recommenced. Work has commenced on setting up a pilot for the performance appraisal module of SAP. Initial testing has resulted in a fundamental defect being found, the fix for which should be in place on 21 September 2011, which will then allow further progress to be made.

Councillor Vivienne Stock-Williams

Council Meeting – 4 October 2011

Report of Councillor Mark Edwards - Planning, Transportation and Communications

1. Planning Appeal

- 1.1 We were successful in defending an appeal decision preventing the relaxation of the range of goods that can be sold at Hankridge Farm, Taunton which the Planning Inspectorate found would be damaging to the vitality and viability of the town centre if approved.
- 1.2 It is vital that nothing is done that can impact on the viability of the town centre and all efforts are going into ensuring that the County Town of Somerset is a vibrant and interesting place to visit. This was therefore an extremely reassuring verdict that our policy is supported by a higher independent body.

2. Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA)

- 2.1 A 'call' for housing and employment sites' has now finished. Officers are now collating the information received prior to formal consideration by a panel.
- 2.2 The SHELAA does not confer that sites identified would necessarily be granted permission. Rather it is used for land supply calculations and to inform future Plan preparation.

3. Core Strategy

- 3.1 The end of the Regulation 27 period of the Core Strategy occurred in August 2011. This is the period where the Core Strategy is published for formal responses from developers, the public and statutory bodies.
- 3.2 Responses are now being assessed prior to submitting to the Secretary of State and anticipated 'Examination' of the Strategy in early 2012.

4. National Planning Framework (NPF)

- 4.1 The Government has produced a draft NPF to replace the current 1000

pages of planning policy advice. This has received a great deal of headlines in the national press. A report is to go to Scrutiny in October 2011 raising the implications for Taunton Deane.

- 4.2 I have already met with Greg Clark MP and had communications with Bob Neill MP over this issue and in particular concerns over the possibility that the five year housing supply might include an additional 20%. I have already challenged this and will hope that the Community Scrutiny Committee supports my stance on this at the meeting next week.
- 4.3 In advance of the Community Scrutiny meeting I am also attending a meeting in London to discuss the implications in more detail and will report back any relevant points.
- 4.4 The consultation process finishes on the 16 October 2011.

5. Neighbourhood Plans

- 5.1 Further queries have been made to the Council from Parish Councils regarding assistance in preparing Neighbourhood Plans. The Strategy Unit is reviewing the implications of Neighbourhood Plans and what support will be required from the Council moving forward.
- 5.2 I have had a meeting with one Parish Council and am happy to meet and discuss with others the opportunities of developing such a plan.

6. Planning Review

- 6.1 The levels of growth proposed for the Taunton area in the Core Strategy are such that will inevitably lead to an increase in the number of very large planning applications being submitted.
- 6.2 Both developers and the local communities have high expectations in terms of the level of service provided. We are all aware of some of the recent issues surrounding development and the Planning and Enforcement service and it is critically important that the Council is able to respond to these expectations in an effective way.
- 6.3 I have therefore recently conducted a review and the paper and its recommendations were agreed by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee last week with some of the changes implemented and others to be phased in the coming months.

7. Deregulation of Planning Fees

- 7.1 The Government is devolving responsibility for planning fees to local

government, which will mean developers are no longer subsidised by taxpayers. However, this does not make planning entirely self-financing – community costs remain for plan making, enforcement and appeals.

- 7.2 Each Council must set its own fees to recover their costs within parameters of “no profit” or “no cross-subsidy”. This is not an option - we must have local fees or do the work for free.
- 7.3 I have been concerned about the time this has been taken but am assured by Greg Clark MP that this will be coming in front of Parliament shortly and should be introduced by the 1 April 2012.
- 7.4 This clearly has an impact on the Planning Service we have for the future and I believe is an opportunity to focus our efforts on making sure the service is as user friendly and resilient as possible.

8. Heritage and Landscape

- 8.1 The Landscape Team has been successful in attracting £28,000 of grant funding for the future management of Ash Common Local Nature Reserve.
- 8.2 The ten year Higher Level Stewardship Grant is provided by Natural England for areas of important wildlife interest. The grant will help maintain and enhance biodiversity by cutting back encroaching scrub and controlling the spread of bracken. The areas of open grassland are particularly good for several species of orchid and numerous butterflies.
- 8.3 Nynehead Park – Thanks to a generous grant from Natural England, the following Grade II Listed Buildings, are in the process of being repaired: Carriageway Walls; Aquaduct; Three Arch Bridge and the Canal Lift.
- 8.3 Tonedale, Wellington - The large complex of Grade II and II* Listed Buildings, has been bought from the Receiver. A positive, initial meeting, has been had with the new owner and progress on the approved conversion scheme, should recommence soon. It is hoped that the eastern end roof of Block A (the large 4 storey building on the north boundary), will be reinstated before the end of the year.

9. Economic Development and Planning

- 9.1 There is a huge correlation between encouraging economic development and making sure the planning system works well to encourage and more importantly, deliver this aspiration for the whole District’s future.

- 9.2 The Planning and Planning Strategy Teams are working much closer with Economic Development and this will continue to be encouraged.
- 9.3 With economic development and employment at the heart of the Coalition Government's plans this is our greatest opportunity to deliver what is required.

10. Parking Strategy Review

- 10.1 The present parking strategy originates from the late 1990s with the main aims of reducing short vehicle movements in the town, encouraging those parking for the day to park on the outskirts leaving central car parks for shoppers and visitors, providing Park and Ride facilities to the West and the East of Taunton and to introduce decriminalized parking enforcement. The strategy was reviewed in 2005 and 2007 but now I believe it is time to review the strategy again.
- 10.2 The discussions with Members about the future strategy was brought to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee with an excellent report prepared by Nell Cruse from Somerset County Council. We had a detailed debate and careful consideration will now be given to how we progress the broad recommendations whilst giving careful thought to some of the concerns raised.

11. Communications

The Diamond Jubilee and Olympic Torch Relay

- 11.1 These will be major events – work is starting on producing Public Relations (PR) plans for both. Publicity on the Torch Relay is, to a great extent, governed by the London Olympics Games Organising Committee, but we are preparing to “localise” coverage as much as possible. A PR group has been set up and includes partners such as Somerset College and BBC Somerset.

Deane Despatch

- 11.2 Deane Dispatch has featured the Olympics regularly – the visit of the Torch to Taunton in August and Get Set, the initiative to involve schools.

Project Taunton

- 11.3 The start of work on Firepool attracted good coverage. On Castle Green, we worked with Somerset County Council to brief media outlets individually and provide a ‘questions and answers’ sheet. This approach was well received and resulted in balanced coverage. Further work on Castle Green and Firepool is in progress.

Budget Review

- 11.4 The leaking of the Budget Pack to the Gazette was countered by a statement issued by the party Group Leaders which after discussion with the Gazette they agreed to publish in full.
- 11.5 This leak was a most unsatisfactory occurrence and has as a result created a great deal of unnecessary work in the Communications Team fielding questions from the media.

Internal Communications

- 11.6 Core Brief and the Budget and Priorities Review newsletter continue to be issued monthly. Footprint, an e-newsletter on the climate change agenda, was published, along with "Involve" which covers strategic planning. A newsletter for the Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership is planned for the end of the calendar year.

Councillor Mark Edwards