

# Council Meeting – 21 February 2012

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

### 1. Budget Setting

- 1.1 This will have been considered earlier in this meeting but I take this opportunity to thank all Members for the constructive manner with which this was approached and to officers for their hard work and commitment in producing the mass of information thus enabling Members to make informed and reasoned decisions.
- 1.2 With a budget gap rising to £2,100,000 this has been one of the most difficult budget setting processes that I have been involved with. We have overcome the difficulties - we no doubt will have had differences of opinion on some issues - but hopefully by now a balanced budget has been agreed.

### 2. Taunton's Retail and Parking

- 2.1 I was heartened to see the report below from the Business Guardian of 7 February 2012 which, despite the acknowledged extremely difficult trading conditions shows Taunton's trading conditions to be remaining favourable compared to the national average. This must reflect well on the energy and commitment of traders and all those working so hard to promote the town centre.

*“The national vacancy rate edged down slightly from the 14.5% recorded in the first six months of 2011 to 14.3% in the second half. When broken down, the headline figure is worse for Scotland and Wales, at 15.4% and 17.3% respectively, than England, where it is 14.2%. The shopping parades of the south and west fared best with Taunton, Salisbury and St Albans enjoying a vacancy rate of less than 9%. The most vibrant centre was Cambridge with a rate of 6.4%, although that masked a near 4% deterioration in the second half. There were also "extremes" of performance, with Swansea suffering a 15% jump in vacancies whereas Slough saw a 12% decline.”*

- 2.2 We fully recognise that an absolutely essential ingredient of a successful town centre is ease of access and available parking. At busy times like Christmas we could not hope to accommodate everybody's desire to park as close to their destination as possible but what I am pleased to report is that overall we were never at capacity, with no available parking in the town. On the peak pre-Christmas Saturday the very central car parks, as would be expected, were extremely busy with considerable turnover, but a little further out, Tangier, Belvedere Road and Priory Bridge Road were nowhere near capacity, so affording plentiful parking if required.
- 2.3 If we turn to ease of access we recognise that we do need much better sign posting to identify car parks, electronic information boards to inform drivers in advance where parking is available and “pay on exit” in car parks that can accommodate this. As and when we can, we will be actively pursuing these initiatives but the major regeneration works that could change our parking

provision have to come first. However, I am pleased to say that our Parking strategy supporting park and ride does reduce the car journeys into town thus easing the excessive congestion.

- 2.4 **Priory Bridge Road car park and Firepool.** The lack of use of the Firepool site does, I know, cause Members considerable concern so I feel it worth reporting on this issue. Priory Bridge Road Car Park has a present capacity of about 250 places and excepting cricket days it is rarely more than 10 to 15% occupied. We have laid out ready as an overflow car park capacity for 300 vehicles on the Firepool site for the Cricket Club to use on match days when they feel the existing capacity is insufficient.
- 2.5 In addition to this St Modwen, our development partners for Firepool, have a contractual agreement to provide us with 200 parking spaces on the Firepool site as and when they close the remainder of Priory Bridge Road for development. They are reviewing this at present and the economics of delivering a suitable surface for this interim parking are prohibitive. Therefore, it is not something we as a Council would wish to undertake to provide extra parking that demand does not warrant at this time. The ultimate solution is that St Modwen are also contracted to provide us a 200 space car park within the final scheme which is likely to be a multi storey car park.
- 2.6 At our last meeting some Members did indicate they had received approaches from individuals who may want short term open air storage. I made the offer then, and repeat it, if any Member has such an approach please do pass to me or officers to follow up. I can assure Members if we can find a suitable short term use then we will pursue it.
- 2.7 **Northern Inner Distributor Road.** The latest word on this is that all planning and preparation is in place but a hearing has to be held over objections to the Compulsory Purchase Order. Because of difficulties in scheduling the Inspector, this is unlikely to be in time for commencement in April. This is a disappointment as this road is vital to opening up the major employment site that we have planned for the old livestock market site. Hopefully the delay will not be excessive.

### **3. Broadband Issues**

- 3.1 We had a very interesting and informative presentation from Michael Dunn from BT, recently at a Members' Briefing which confirmed that Taunton is on track for enablement with Superfast Broadband by the end of this financial year. Michael also provided information on new services to the Bishops Lydeard exchange presently planned and new initiatives such as fibre direct to the premises and Ethernet connections for more businesses requiring faster connections.
- 3.2 In respect of the Connecting Devon and Somerset Broadband programme there was a very useful briefing paper issued by that organisation earlier this Month which if any Member has not seen it please let me know and I will forward. The headline figures are:-
- Improved broadband (>2mbps) to every business and community across Somerset by 2015.

- Superfast broadband (>24mbps) to at least 85% of the area by 2015, with 100% by 2020.

Contained in this briefing is also an appeal for the community and businesses to sign up to a campaign “Keep up to Speed: Get Connected”. This is to show potential private sector investors the likely level of support so I urge everybody to sign up and circulate to all your friends and associates. Registration can be on line [www.connectingdevonandsomerset.co.uk](http://www.connectingdevonandsomerset.co.uk) or by telephone 0844 463887. This only runs until 29 February so please do not wait, register your interest now, it is non binding so only an expression of interest.

### 3.3 Key dates for the future;

- National Broadband Suppliers Framework established May 2012.
- Award of Devon and Somerset Broadband Contract September 2012.
- Work to start and schedule of works announced January/February 2013.
- Superfast Broadband to 85% of the area by 2015.

## 4. Town Centre Works

- 4.1 **Goodlands Garden/Riverside Walk** - Works are now complete and feedback is heartening. It is possible now to traverse alongside the River Tone from Firepool to Longrun Meadow without any steps impeding passage. This has been welcomed by wheelchair and buggy users as it provides a pleasant and safe route to traverse the town. The large paved area in Goodland Gardens is also a magnet to skate-boarders. It is great to see them putting it to such good use as again it is a good facility safe from other traffic.
- 4.2 **Castle Green** - This is proceeding well and for those that have not seen it the old Castle Hotel garages have now been removed and what a wonderful view of the old Castle buildings is revealed. This will be a wonderful backdrop just to view along with the other fine buildings within the square or to any event or show that is staged. As works are progressing the whole area is opening up to demonstrate its spaciousness and what a great setting it will be as a high quality open public area.
- 4.3 **High Street, Taunton** - We have successfully awarded a contract for the works and it is on schedule for completion by the end of March which was a condition of the funding gained. Early days, but great that we have managed to kick start this very important project for Taunton. A team is also established to mount a bid for the Mary Portas High Street Revival funding which, if successful, we would be one of 12 pilot bids nationally. So to succeed will be a great achievement.

## 5. Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group

- 5.1 Penny and I attended a meeting of the above with the Taunton GP Federation also present. It was a preliminary meeting to gain a better understanding of the proposed health service changes and the likely involvement of this

Council. One thing is certain, the changes are massive and far reaching with a huge ring fenced budget being held by Somerset County Council and the Clinical Commissioning Group determining priorities.

- 5.2 The opportunity we have to grasp is the recognition that areas of deprivation and poor housing directly impact on the health of our community. It is imperative therefore that we work with the Commissioning Group to include these problems as a priority to be dealt with. A long way to go to get this up and running but the prospects of all working together for the common good are both exciting and challenging.

## **6. Somerset County Council A303/A30/A358 Initiative**

- 6.1 I have for a long time been pressing the Somerset County Council to prioritise the upgrade of the A358 and Junction 25 of the M5 as the top priority for highways improvement in Somerset. I now applaud the initiative of the County Council in getting all Highways Authorities along the route together to reach an agreement that it is a top priority for the West Country. This to include the A303, A30 and A358 with improvements to Junction 25. This is a major step forward and I welcome it as the economic benefit to the Authorities combined will be huge and must certainly create the right circumstances for Government funding being made available.
- 6.2 I await further developments with interest.

Councillor John Williams

# Council Meeting - 21 February 2012

## Report of Councillor Mrs Vivienne Stock-Williams - Corporate Resources

### 1. Customer Contact Centre

#### Customer Service

- 1.1 Southwest One (SW1) Customer Contact successfully met all KPIs for Taunton Deane during November, December and January – helped in part by slightly milder weather. Customer satisfaction continues to remain high, with levels for the year to date running at 97.2%, as reported in the December service report.
- 1.2 The Service Delivery Manager for Deane House Telephony, Paul Matakitoga, left at the end of December to pursue a career in the private sector – we wish Paul every success. Carrie Minall has been appointed in his place, initially on a three month secondment whilst the management restructure programme is finalised. Carrie is an experienced Team Leader and an SCC secondee. During her time in SW1 so far, she has worked both in the Contact Centre and a short secondment into the People Development (PEM) programme.

#### Service Delivery

##### *Statistical Information:*

Service Line	Reporting Authority	KPI No	Performance Measure	Frequency of Reporting	2011/2012 Target	Nov-11	Dec-11	Jan-12
Customer Contact	TDBC	1	% of calls answered in 20 secs	Monthly	80%	81%	81%	82%
Customer Contact	TDBC	2	% of calls resolved at first point of contact	Monthly	91%	97%	96%	96%
Customer Contact	TDBC	3	% of external customers rating the Customer Contact service as Very Good/Good	Annually (monitored quarterly)	73.5%		97.2%	
Customer Contact	TDBC	4	Abandoned call rate - less than 5%	Monthly	<5%	4.91%	4.90%	4.53%

- 1.3 A total of 8,400 enquiries have been dealt with at The Deane House Main, Housing and Planning Receptions over the past three months, in addition to over 5,500 requests for signposting and visitors for meetings. 5,304 people visited Wellington Community Office – 2,924 to make enquiries including THE Tourist Information Centre and 2,380 to make a payment through the kiosk. The team has dealt with 1,218 letter and email enquiries during this time.
- 1.4 There were no complaints about the service and one formal compliment (other than comments left on the customer satisfaction survey).

- 1.5 The team continues to work with ICT to determine the service's telephony requirements for the future and understand how these will work in line with our Business Continuity Planning. The service is about to undertake a desktop business continuity exercise to ensure all its systems and processes are aligned to deliver in a civil contingencies situation.

### Christmas Opening

- 1.6 As mentioned in the last report, Customer Contact continued to provide a telephone service between Christmas and New Year. In addition, the service remained open until 6pm on Friday, 22 December and 380 calls were answered on that day – 40% after the building closed at 1pm. Call information for the three days between Christmas and New Year is provided below:-

	28-Dec	29-Dec	30-Dec
<b>CALLS OFFERED</b>	<b>426</b>	<b>411</b>	<b>416</b>
<b>CALLS ANSWERED</b>	<b>420</b>	<b>407</b>	<b>410</b>
<b>ABANDONED % [Target less than 5%]</b>	<b>1.41</b>	<b>0.97</b>	<b>1.44</b>
<b>G.O.S.% [ Target 80% within 20 Secs]</b>	<b>94.5</b>	<b>95.8</b>	<b>96.8</b>
<b>% ANSWERED AT 1ST P.O.C.[Target 91%]</b>	<b>98.10</b>	<b>93.12</b>	<b>97.80</b>
<b>AVERAGE ANS CALL TIME</b>	<b>02:43</b>	<b>02:21</b>	<b>02:54</b>

- 1.7 This was a reduced service based on the fact that back offices were closed, but it gave customers the ability to continue to receive an excellent transactional and information service over the holiday week. One customer was extremely unhappy that he was unable to apply for a temporary entertainment licence during this time, otherwise all other customers, whilst some passed comment, were accepting of the fact that the office was closed.
- 1.8 For the first time, Wellington Community Office was also open during Christmas and New Year to provide the customers of Wellington and the surrounding area with a face-to-face service. The service was busy each morning, but visitors tailed off in the afternoon and each day the office closed between 2.30pm – 3pm. The success of this exercise is currently being analysed and results will be fed back to CMT in due course.

## 2. Legal and Democratic Services

### Electoral Services

- 2.1 The Electoral Reform Services recently carried out a survey to assess customer satisfaction with the Council's Electoral Services. If there were no changes to the electoral register, electors could confirm their details either through the ERS automated registration services or return the form by post.
- 2.2 The survey was carried out between 22 August and 21 November 2011 and overall the satisfaction rate with this Council's Electoral Services was 93%.

- 2.3 In terms of those people surveyed as to whether they were confident that elections held in the area were well administered, again the service received a 93% satisfaction rate.
- 2.4 When asked whether they had a good understanding of the way local Councillors and MP's were elected in the Country, 88% of those surveyed said that they did.
- 2.5 In terms of communications and keeping the public informed about the electoral process, including registration and voting in elections, the Council's Electoral Services were given an 83% satisfaction rate.
- 2.6 There is, however, some work to be done with regard to our communications, because 51% of people surveyed said that they did not know how well the money received by the Council for administering elections was used. The team will be looking at this in more detail over the coming months.

### **Localism Act**

- 2.7 A number of sections of the Act have now come into force, although there are still a number of regulations that are awaited before some aspects can finally be implemented.
- 2.8 The Legal and Democratic Services Manager and the Strategy Manager will be providing a series of newsletters for Members to help keep them informed of the changes, because regulations are coming out at different times. If Members would like a Members' Briefing, then please let the Legal and Democratic Services Manager know. Officers have also said that they would be willing to attend Group meetings if this would help understanding of the Act.

### **Standards Regime**

- 2.9 The proposed changes are scheduled for 1 July 2012, but as yet regulations are still awaited. The Legal and Democratic Services Manager has, however, already taken a paper to the Standards Committee and the Constitutional Sub-Committee. The reports can be found on the Council's website and Members Portal.
- 2.10 Reports will also be made to the Corporate Governance Committee on 12 March 2012 and Corporate Scrutiny on 22 March 2012, to enable Members to discuss the changes in more detail. As stated, the Legal and Democratic Services Manager is happy to attend Group meetings, in addition to the newsletters, as it will be important for all Members to be familiar with the changes being proposed. Further updates will follow as soon as they are available.
- 2.11 A summary of the changes are as follows:-
- There is a statutory duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct for its elected and co-opted Members.

- Standards Committees – should the Council continue to have one and, if so, what should its composition be? What should be the role of Parish Councillors?
- All Councils will need to have a Code of Conduct, but there will be a change to the definitions of various interests.
- The Council must put in place arrangements to deal with any complaints alleging a breach of the Code of Conduct.
- There will be no Appeals Procedure, but any decision will be open to Judicial Review.
- The Council must have at least one Independent person to deal with complaints.
- A Register of Interests must be maintained and put on the Council's website. In addition, the Council will also need to hold the Register of all the Parish Councils.
- There are different sanctions for a Breach of the Code of Conduct, including criminal sanctions for failure to declare an interest.
- There are changes to the dispensation process.

### **3. Performance and Client Team**

#### **Client Team**

- 3.1 In general, the services within the SW1 partnership continue to function well. We do, however, have concerns in relation to elements of the Finance and ICT services. In both cases, the Client Team is working closely with these services to identify and implement action plans to remedy the problem areas.
- 3.2 The team is currently working closely with the ICT department to identify and implement solutions to the problems that some Members are experiencing with connecting to the Council's IT network. We intend to start trialling a new way of Members accessing the network within the next couple of months, with a view to offering this facility to all Members early in the new financial year.
- 3.3 A current priority for the team is to agree the key performance indicators (KPI's) for the coming financial year in respect of the SW1 partnership.
- 3.4 Somerset County Council's renegotiation of their contract with SW1 is likely to reach a conclusion in the near future. This is likely to see the Design and Print service, together with elements of their Finance and HR services, return to the County Council. The direct impact of this upon Taunton Deane secondees is minimal. However, the Client Team is working closely with SW1 and the



County Council to ensure that service delivery to Taunton Deane is maintained.

- 3.5 Additional assistance is now being provided to the Client Team to assist in monitoring technical elements of the Property Service (assistance being provided by Mark Green and Ian Franklin) and the ICT Service (by Keith Wiggins). In both cases, this is being provided within existing budgets and will help us to maximise value from our contract with SW1.
- 3.6 We are working closely with Tone Leisure in relation to identifying the feasibility of providing a high ropes facility in Vivary Park. Refurbishment work has now started on the lifts at Station Road Pool. The annual maintenance programme for the coming financial year has been agreed between Tone Leisure and the SW1 Property Services team.

### **Corporate Performance**

- 3.7 The team is currently working with the South West Audit Partnership (SWAP) to ensure that all audit recommendations are incorporated within the Corporate Governance Action Plan. This will improve our ability to monitor progress of all the recommended improvement actions identified.
- 3.8 Data is currently being collected in preparation for submitting the Quarter 3 Performance Report to Corporate Scrutiny on 23 February 2012 and the Executive in March 2012.
- 3.9 A project has now commenced that will provide Value for Money (VFM) analysis of Taunton Deane services. This will involve benchmarking (comparison) of cost and performance data up to 2010/2011, as well as the 'direction of travel'. The findings should be available to Members early in the new financial year.
- 3.10 A Corporate Risk Register refresh exercise has recently been undertaken in conjunction with the Corporate Management Team (CMT). An updated Corporate Risk Register will be taken to the Corporate Governance Committee in March 2012. The team is also looking at ways to improve and strengthen our risk management processes, as effective risk management is increasingly important in the current financial climate.
- 3.11 The Service Planning season is upon us. A refreshed service planning template and process has been issued to Theme Managers to assist them in their service planning. Each Theme Manager will be talking to their respective Portfolio Holders and Shadows during February and March regarding the content of their draft plans for next year.
- 3.12 A new Customer Feedback guidance and policy document has been drafted and will be initially introduced at a Core Council Leads meeting in February 2012. It is hoped that this will further raise the profile and importance of customer feedback (complaints, comments, suggestions and compliments) and introduce a more consistent approach and process. This should consequently provide more opportunity to learn from customer feedback,

deliver on our 'customer charter' and 'core values' and improve our services. A report detailing customer feedback data for 2011 will also be produced for Members by March 2012.

### **Retained Finance and Corporate Insurance**

- 3.13 The insurance function is currently being provided for us by Somerset County Council's Insurance Team, as our Insurance Officer is on maternity leave. This arrangement continues to work well.
- 3.14 The Retained Finance Officer continues to focus on maintaining the day-to-day delivery of the retained finance functions and in providing support to the S151 Officer. Additionally, the Retained Finance Officer is focussing on the Housing Revenue Account Reform (which will require the Council to borrow approximately £85,000,000) and in producing a new Debt Management Policy.

### **Retained HR**

- 3.15 The retained HR function continues to support CMT and Theme Managers with the remaining elements of the Theme 5 restructure, the restructure of the Housing Service and the 2012/2013 Budget proposals.
- 3.16 In addition to the normal workload, support is also being given to the development of a Pay Policy Statement for 2012/2013.

## **4. Revenues and Benefits**

- 4.1 Currently, both Council Tax and Business Rates Collections are ahead of target. Claims for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit continue to rise, with the live caseload now exceeding 9,500. Despite these increases, staff are still improving the speed with which they process these claims.
- 4.2 In January, the service launched an outreach surgery every Tuesday at the Wellington Community Office to assist benefit customers. So far, this has been very well received and appointment bookings are high.
- 4.3 The Revenues and Benefits Customer Forum in December was well attended. Since that event a project group of customers has been established, who are assisting the services to redesign their benefit decision letters.
- 4.4 Preparations for annual billing of Council Tax and Business Rates and uprating all benefit claims are well underway.

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

### **Procurement**

- 5.1 The shortfall in delivered savings by the Strategic Procurement Service in SW1 is still a significant issue for the Authority. However, the team is

monitoring the position closely and ensuring that regular reports are being made to Members by the Strategic Procurement Service.

- 5.2 The Strategic Procurement Team is currently looking at savings opportunities associated with the gas service contract, Solar PV installation and amalgamating some elements of DLO and Housing Property Service spend. At the request of Chris Hall, they have recently begun to look at the DLO Stores to see if efficiencies can be made there. (Of these, the gas servicing contract is likely to deliver the greatest amount of savings, as the contract is worth circa £1,000,000). The Procurement Team is also presently tendering for an Insurance Broker, as well as preparing for a new banking contract.

### **SAP Re-launch and Patching**

- 5.3 The key elements of the system have been launched and are working.
- 5.4 The Performance Review (PRED) functionality within SAP is currently being trialled. There are some issues with this module, but it is hoped to roll it out across the Council toward the end of this financial year / beginning of next.
- 5.5 This leaves the sickness, E-recruitment, overtime, leave and some aspects of Business Intelligence Reporting elements of the system which are not currently in use. Work is ongoing with SW1 and our partners to change the way E-recruitment and sickness functions operate and until these changes are made they will not be launched. Overtime is delayed until Taunton Deane reviews its overtime policy as part of the budget savings project, as our rules will need to be programmed into SAP. The advantages of using the leave functionality within SAP are currently under review.

Councillor Vivienne Stock-Williams

# **Full Council - 21 February 2012**

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

### **Core Strategy Examination**

- 1.1 The Core Strategy Examination ran from Tuesday, 7 February to Friday, 10 February 2012. The independently appointed Planning Inspector identified an agenda for each of the sessions covering: economy and retail; housing; infrastructure and transport; and place-specific issues.
- 1.2 He listened to the Council's evidence and that of objectors before issuing his final report to follow later. This report will make any recommendations for changes that the Council needs to make prior to the adoption of the document.

### **Annual Monitoring Report**

- 2.1 Since the last update, the Council has published its Annual Monitoring Report, Retail Monitor and Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment. This is available in the Members Room.

### **Planning Enforcement**

- 3.1 The Planning Review highlighted that there was a need for a new statement of practice and guidance for the public and this has been produced in leaflet form. It sets out the new process of investigating complaints and gives general advice on what the Council will and will not do.
- 3.2 The new Enforcement Policy ensures that time is not wasted investigating complaints where no planning harm is caused by the breach. It focuses effort where demonstrable harm is being caused by the unauthorised development.
- 3.3 A review of all 300 plus enforcement cases has been carried out by senior officers and almost half have been closed due to them no longer being under active investigation or not causing any planning harm.
- 3.4 The remaining cases all have a defined course of action to ensure resolution. Planning officers will be carrying out assessments on the 50 cases where a breach of planning control has already been established and, where harm is identified, recommendations to take

formal action will be forthcoming.

## **Heritage – Sandhill Park**

- 4.1 Several post fire meetings have been held. The insurance adjusters's report has been submitted and the owners are waiting the insurers “go ahead” for a temporary roof. -Structural engineers have already designed a scaffold for the latter.
- 4.2 Current concerns relate to the fact there is no roof over the most important part of the building/ significant water damage to ceilings and associated important plasterwork/ significant lying water on floors/and potential frost damage to exposed wall heads.

## **Landscape Team**

- 5.1 The Biodiversity Officer, Barbara Collier, is working with the Somerset Environmental Records Centre to trial ‘Bioplan’, a system of checking planning application sites against protected species records. The existing checking systems picks up land based records such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Local Wildlife Sites but does not always pick up records of bats, barn owls or birds. After a few teething problems the weekly wildlife checks are proving to be a valuable tool in picking up the less obvious wildlife interest sites.
- 5.2 David Galley, Landscape Support Officer, is providing Tree Preservation Order support at Mid Devon District Council, one day a week for their officer who is off on maternity leave.
- 5.3 A Somerset-wide partnership of local authorities, trusts and interested groups has been successful in attracting £25,500 of grant towards establishment of a Somerset-wide Local Nature Partnership (LNP). This is a Central Government initiative promoted through the Natural Environment White Paper to set up groups for the natural environment similar to Local Enterprise Partnerships. The LNP is at an early stage of preparing stakeholder meetings but aims to have the partnership up and running by the end of 2012. The LNP is working towards:-
  - A shared vision and priorities for Somerset’s natural environment;
  - Strong environmental leadership for Somerset at the strategic level; and
  - Strong and active connections with other sectors, leading to new environmental gain.

## **Parking County-wide Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) Project**

- 6.1 Tenders for the Somerset county-wide Civil Parking Enforcement scheme were received at the end of January 2012. The County Council is now evaluating these and the preferred bidder is due to be announced at the end of February.
- 6.2 The project team has recently met with HR and Unison representatives from all districts to further discuss TUPE transfer arrangements. The County Council is finalising its client side structure. The programme is on schedule to meet the implementation date of 11 June 2012.

## **Communications**

- 7.1 A media training session was arranged for Councillors including print media (Debbie Rundle); broadcast media (Simon White, formerly of BBC Somerset); Helen Phillips (Twitter) and Carla Modley (social media and the web). Many thanks to all those who attended for their interest and questions – feedback indicated that some role play would be useful in future sessions.
- 7.2 Work on the 2012/2013 Council Tax booklet is almost complete – the first proof has been received from the production company and a new front cover produced with the help of Graphics, featuring Taunton Deane's investment in regeneration.
- 7.3 Communications on the Olympic Torch Relay are gathering pace with LOCOG – the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games – producing new branding guidelines and a communications workshop. Both will be extremely useful. Taunton will welcome the Torch on Day Three of the nationwide tour. We can expect much attention and interest.
- 7.4 Releases in the past month illustrate the wide variety of services provided by the Council from dealing with anti-social behaviour to providing new play equipment, affordable housing, organising a business fair and qualifying for the Britain in Bloom National Finals.
- 7.5 Deane Dispatch in January featured the work of agencies locally that help the frail and vulnerable while the February edition provides more detail on the High Street, Taunton refurbishment.

Councillor Mark Edwards

# **Council Meeting – 21 February 2012**

## **Report of Councillor Mrs Jane Warmington – Community Leadership**

### **1. Police and Crime Panel (PCP)**

- 1.1 There is a requirement to establish a Shadow PCP by this summer which in the first instance can only comprise ten elected Members, one from each local authority in the area. It is this group of ten that will then decide the wider co-opted membership of the PCP up to a maximum of twenty.
- 1.2 The proposal is for the Council Leaders to be invited to form a Joint Select Committee early in 2012 to agree the allocations above and enable the Shadow PCP to be established.
- 1.3 The Select Committee may also advise the Shadow PCP on co-opting further members, the term of office of Members, resignation and removal of Members, any re-appointments and support arrangements for the Panel.

### **2. Community Policing Awards**

- 2.1 Inspector Stuart Bell has announced the Somerset West Policing District winners of the Community Policing Awards. The overall Force winners will be announced next month at the evening Ceremony.
- 2.2 Out of six award categories, Taunton has won five: Neighbourhood Beat Manager PC Claire Griffiths one of the town centre PCs and PCSO Mark Leach (both from Taunton West Area); the Beat Team made up of Sgt Andy Murphy, PCs Andy Beake, Jon O'Connor and PCSOs Khris Roulston, Susanne Murray and Joanne Farrow (Taunton East Area, North Team); Outstanding Customer satisfaction went to PC Phil Bagg and Response Officer to PC David Hughes both of whom work alongside Core Response Team 2, Taunton.

### **3. Health**

- 3.1 NHS Somerset has produced a Somerset Joint Strategic Needs Assessment which provides a very detailed analysis of health and wellbeing issues that affect communities across Somerset.
- 3.2 This highlights issues for Taunton Deane such as high levels of dementia and epilepsy compared to the County and high levels of obesity and diabetes. On the positive side Taunton Deane has the

best rate for smokers giving up. Further details can be found on the SINE website: <http://www.sine.org.uk/isna-2022/>

- 3.3 The Leader of Council, Chief Executive and Strategy Manager have had meetings with the Taunton Deane GP Federation to look at ways of working more closely with GPs on the health agenda in future, especially in areas of deprivation where health issues are particularly prevalent.
- 3.4 The Strategy Manager and the NHS Trust have organised a Health and Wellbeing event which all Councillors and a range of organisations have been invited to on 1 March 2012. This event will update people on the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board, the health issues in Taunton Deane and projects that are currently in place to address these. It will also be an opportunity for people to influence the Somerset Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

## **4. Priority Areas Strategy (PAS)**

### **Taunton East and North Taunton**

- 4.1 The action plan is expected to come before the Community Scrutiny Committee on 6 March 2012. The final phase of consultation will be with the Halcon and North Taunton MAGs (Multi-Agency Groups), the North Taunton Partnership and Link Partnership, various other community groups, residents and key partners (public and voluntary sectors). Their feedback will be used to refine the Action Plan which will then be considered for approval during Spring 2012.
- 4.2 The Community Development Team clean up days have removed over 40 tonnes of scrap with a group of regular volunteers from Halcon.
- 4.3 Link and Resource Centres continue to serve the communities well. Tina Herbert of Vista (outside funding, three days a week for a year) is helping to run the job clubs, community learning and skills for life for both groups and individuals.

### **New Youth Club**

- 4.4 The new Taunton North Youth and Sports Club will be opening in March at the Community Hall in Selworthy Road, Priorswood, Taunton. It has been set up and will be run by a group of local volunteers and is open on Wednesday and Friday evenings, with a boxing club on Tuesday and Thursday evenings.
- 4.5 Other community groups will continue to use the building as well. The refurbishment has been undertaken by the group who have worked hard to make this happen. This has been supported by our Community Development Team, Somerset County Council Youth and Community



Team and the local Policing Team. There are a range of facilities including an Astroturf pitch laid on the old tennis court.

### **Asda Green**

- 4.5 This large play park is nearing completion, has been successfully put to the test by local school groups and is due to open early in March 2012. Future activities include planting, painting, nest boxes, an environmental project as well as play events and sports competitions.
- 4.6 Huge thanks to all those involved in transforming this piece of rough ground into what promises to be a wonderful community asset.

### **Rural Areas**

- 4.7 Under the chairmanship of Katherine Armstrong (Community Council) the Rural PAS Group has produced benchmarking reports and had initial consultation with Members (Community Scrutiny - August 2011) and the Parish and Town Councils. Priorities are likely to be a mix of themes such as access to services (an important issue across the rural areas of Taunton Deane) and geographic focusing on particular settlements.
- 4.8 To help identify draft priorities, Somerset County Council (SCC) and the Taunton Deane Partnership have been consulted. It is important that the various rural initiatives are integrated to provide coordinated action from the partner agencies.
- 4.9 Members will be kept informed through the Community Scrutiny Committee (6 March 2012).

### **Troubled Families**

- 4.10 This has moved on from the initial joint SCC/Taunton Deane bid (under Community Budgets) as the Government wants to roll out a programme across the whole country (40% funded, £448,000 identified). SCC as the top tier authority has been awarded a support grant of £20,000 to design the project and appoint a co-ordinator by April 2012.
- 4.11 We are better placed than most to get on with this having done the preliminary work (the initial bid based on the pilot undertaken with high contact families in Highbridge). Lead Officer Vikki Hearn.

### **Tell Us Once**

- 4.12 This service is already making a difference. In January 270 people within Taunton Deane used the service to register a death (188) and a birth (82). This led to 425 notifications being sent on to Taunton Deane

services plus many others onto SCC, HMRC, DWP, DVLA and the Passport Office representing a significant help to those registering.

- 4.13 Housing is currently being added on to the system and the housing team are getting their staff set up to do this, due to go live within the next few weeks. Customer feedback requested this so adding it is really good news.
- 4.14 As a rule of thumb, the next of kin would ordinarily need to tell seven different public sector organisations about a death. Therefore we can estimate that this reduced the number of contacts by 1316 (188x7). As an average call to local government costs £3.21, this represents a significant cost saving to the public sector.  
[www.somerset.gov.uk/tellusonce](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/tellusonce)

## **5. Grants Panel**

- 5.1 Following the Community Scrutiny Committee and the Executive (December 2011), it was agreed to establish a Grants Panel (comprising a mix of relevant Members and officers) during Spring 2012 to administer and monitor financial support to the Voluntary and Community Sector from across the Council.
- 5.2 The VCS budgets are held by the Strategy Unit, Community Development, Economic Development and Housing. This will be set up over the next few weeks.

Councillor Jane Warmington

# **Council Meeting - 21 February 2012**

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

### **1. Keeping Members informed**

#### **1.1 Taunton Deane Economy Bulletin**

Quarterly Economic Bulletin produced in January 2012. Now circulated to all Members and business contacts and put on Taunton Deane website.

Monthly Job Seeker Allowance (JSA) Update circulated to Members, giving details of changes to claimant rates locally. Due to seasonal recruitment the number of job seekers did not rise at the end of the year to reflect the longer term trend. Numbers are up on previous years, and there is an increase in people unemployed up to six months.

Comments on the content of the Bulletin would be appreciated.

#### **1.2 Staffing Issues**

The team now comprises 3.5 staff members, plus Catrin Brown who joined the team at the start of January 2012 to work only on the Olympic Torch Relay. The team is strengthening links with Project Taunton.

Much of the team's capacity (approx 50%+) is going into the Torch Relay event which takes place on 21 May 2012, but every effort is made to keep Economic Development projects on track. We are planning to review the service in the summer, including new inward investment service, business engagement programme, and small business grants.

### **2. Theme 1 Stimulating Business Growth and Investment**

#### **2.1 Business Liaison**

The Business Team has continued to undertake a proactive programme of visits to larger local businesses with the aim of assisting businesses to realise their growth and investment plans. Whilst many businesses are met regularly, the following organisations have been met on a 1:1 basis during the past two months and currently being supported include:-

- Taunton School
- Tone Dale Workshops

- Superact
- Wasteology, Wellington
- Wim Karen, Jeweller, Wellington
- Simon Davis Wellington
- Helen Hounsell Wellington
- James Johnson Taunton
- Chloe Beehive nursery, Roughmoor
- Joan Lee, Wellington
- Daisy Cottage Tea room, Bishops Lydeard

## 2.2 Rural Post Offices

There has been a slow uptake for for the website for rural retailers but a further letter is being sent out.

The Council also supported a training event in November for rural Post Offices at Dillington House.

## 2.3 Business Events

### Wellington Business Event

Takes place on the 23 February 2012. It is being delivered in conjunction with Wellington Chamber of Commerce and sponsored by Porter Dodson. Twenty five stands have been booked and many more indicating that they will be attending.

### Taunton Deane Tourism Conference

An event is being planned at the Tacchi Morris Arts Centre for the morning of 22 February 2012. Conference, networking and information/brochure exchange.

## 2.4 Support for Rural Business Projects

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

**LARC** - Levels and Moors and Western areas LARC open for new applications for business projects; Blackdown Hills is fully committed. It is hoped that there will be a successor to the LARC programme in 2014 but no information is forthcoming at the moment.

**Making the Links** - We are also working with Somerset County Council (SCC) to see if there is a possibility of obtaining Magnox funding to assist the business mentoring scheme.

www launched for Creative Sector – [www.creativesomerset.com](http://www.creativesomerset.com)

### **Small Business Grant**

One business grant approved for £1,000 - Daisy Cottage Tea Room, Bishops Lydeard for publicity/ promotion of new enterprise.

## **2.5 Into Somerset**

The Executive agreed in January 2012 to withdraw from this partnership. Since then there have been meetings with SCC to discuss a collaborative approach to marketing of Taunton Deane.

## **3. Theme 2 Ensuring a Skilled and Entrepreneurial workforce**

### **3.1 Job Clubs for long term unemployed people**

In December I reported that the Somerset Charity, ViSTA, has been appointed by the team to enhance Taunton Deane's three Job Clubs in Halcon, Priorswood, and Wellington. ViSTA has significant expertise in providing learning and development to charities and community organizations and is experienced in delivering Community Learning and Job Clubs

It is worthy of note that the take up amongst local unemployed has increased considerably, particularly in Wellington.

### **3.2 Fredericks Somerset**

Two applications from the Taunton Deane area will be considered at the February panel. Also there have been a further two enquiries from the area.

## **4. Theme 3 Creating an Attractive Business Environment**

### **4.1 Taunton Town Centre Company and BID programme**

The Council, at Member and officer level through the Economic Development Team, is an active member of the Town Centre Company, working closely on specific events (such as the Tour of Britain and the Olympic Torch Relay) as well as coordinating the provision of town centre services.

The report to the Executive in February 2012 gave authority for Taunton Deane to hold the second BID ballot (probably 30 March 2012) following extensive consultation in the town centre.

The new BID programme (if vote is successful) will put resources into:  
A Better Promoted Taunton. A safer Taunton and a Taunton Better for Business

## **4.2 Floodlighting**

Executive resolved in October 2011 to transfer floodlighting on third party properties, mostly churches, to the property owner. Officers have written to those owners inviting them to take ownership of the installations from 1 April 2012.

At the moment ten churches have signed up for ownership of the lights, a further 8 are discussing transfer and 2 have declined. Further consideration is being given to ideas that could address the cost implications.

## **5. Taunton Tourism Information, Ticket and Travel Centre (TIC)**

The TIC Team continue to work closely with the Economic Development Unit, Project Taunton, Taunton Town Centre Company and other organisations to raise the profile of Taunton Deane.

Compared to previous months there has been a slight decrease in the numbers through the door (which in recent weeks can be explained by the cold weather), however spend by customers has remained stable and is looking encouraging for 2012.

The TIC Team have refreshed the layout of the office to create a larger retail space to increase sales this year. Preparations are also being made for the new tourist season with the hope by mid-March that all 2012 promotional material will be available for customers to collect.

The Tourist Information Lead continues to be involved with the Somerset Tourism Association and has been helping with the distribution and storage of their new brochure and updating the official tourism website [www.visitsomerset.co.uk](http://www.visitsomerset.co.uk)

The Travel Centre Manager is currently analysing the needs and booking patterns of TIC customers to help shape the future direction of the service offered. A closer working relationship with local bus operators and the West Somerset Railway have been forged to encourage the use of green transport options this summer.

The TIC has now joined the world of twitter and can be followed  
@TauntonTIC.

Councillor Norman Cavill

# Council Meeting – 21 February 2012

## Report of Councillor Ken Hayward – Environmental Services

### 1. Waste Management

- 1.1 The Somerset Waste Board met on 16 December 2011. Among its busy agenda, it resolved to approve the Draft Business Plan, the Draft Communications Plan, and the Draft Annual Budget for 2012/2013 (totalling £38,148,364).
- 1.2 The proposed fees for chargeable services the 2012/2013 year from 1 April 2012 were also formally considered as approved at our last Full Council meeting on 13 December 2011.
- 1.3 The first Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel meeting was held on 9 January 2012. During discussion, the following points were made, which I thought would be useful to share with you all:-
  - The Landfill Tax escalator will have significant implications for the partnership over the coming years – especially for the disposal authority. The position post 2014/2015 is not yet clear but it is anticipated that the level of Landfill Tax will continue to rise;
  - The implications of the recession on recycling levels included the reduced amount of newspapers collected;
  - 97% of the Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP) budget is in effect an outsourced budget paid directly to contractors;
  - All costs are apportioned using a complex cost sharing mechanism. The cost sharing mechanism has been recently reviewed and found to be equitable.
  - The Partnership's Constitution does not allow for 'cost shunting'. This means that no single partner can make a decision which adversely affects the other partners. A particular example of this was the implications of the County's decision to reduce services at Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) which has led to an increase in flytipping. Somerset County Council is required to compensate the district authorities for their increased costs.
  - It is for the Board to agree how savings are delivered. Individual partners can specify the level of savings they wish to achieve but the Board will agree how.
  - The contract re-negotiation with May Gurney will represent between 3% and 4% savings annually for partners.
  - In the future, savings can only really be achieved through service reductions.



- 1.4 Fly tipping numbers sadly continue to be unacceptably high:-
- October: 53
  - November: 59
  - December: 29
- 1.5 I strongly believe that the reason behind these higher figures goes much deeper than any changes to the HWRC's operating hours. Just today I saw a dozen or so bags dumped in Wood Street, Taunton. The person who dumped them there clearly had no intention of taking them to the HWRC. In an effort to reduce these figures, I have instigated a task force to look at ways in which we can reduce the incidents of fly tipping within Taunton Deane. I hope to have a verbal update on this for Full Council on the evening.
- 1.6 The SWP is working with Viridor to commence commissioning of a dedicated food waste Anaerobic Digester facility by 30 June 2013. The community will benefit from a share of income from sale of outputs (energy, heat and digestate) above a minimum threshold.
- 1.7 A key aim for the SWP is to seek a non-landfill option for residual waste which, through energy and heat generation offers both environmental and economic benefits in the short term. In accordance with the Waste Core Strategy Development Plan and subject to delivery of the preferred option, the aim is to move away from landfill as the primary disposal method by 2016.

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

### **Feed In Tariffs**

- 2.1 Members who have been following this saga will be aware that the Government was taken to Court in December 2011 by Friends of the Earth (FoE) and two solar companies. Mr Justice Mitting, said that it would be illegal for the Government's proposed cut to have an effective date of 12 December, two weeks before the end of the consultation on the 23 December 2011. The Government appealed to the Supreme Court.
- 2.2 However, the Supreme Court has not yet decided whether the case fits their criteria and has said that the Government's case could take months to reach the court rooms if it is taken on. We await news.
- 2.3 The good news is that on 9 February 2012 the Government announced plans to ensure the future of the Feed-in Tariffs scheme to make it more predictable. Transparency, longevity and certainty are at the heart of the new improved scheme.
- 2.4 The reforms will provide greater confidence to consumers and industry investing in exciting renewable technologies such as solar power, anaerobic digestion, micro-CHP, wind and hydro power.

### **The Deane House**

- 2.5 Cavity wall insulation has now been installed for just under £10,000, which is showing significant energy savings.

### **3. Crematorium**

- 2.6 Southwest One are currently putting together a tender package for the building works required prior to the installation. This tender should go out on the 9 March 2012 for a four week tender period.
- 2.7 Unfortunately, structural engineers have found a problem with the Crematory floor, which will now need to be re-laid and this will impact upon the timetable. I hope to have some more details on this in time for the Full Council meeting.

Councillor Ken Hayward

# **Council meeting - 21 February 2012**

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

### **1. Parks**

- 1.1 We all look forward to the spring flowers in the parks soon, although some have already tried to make an early appearance!
- 1.2 I had a meeting this month with David Evans and Colin Johnson of SASP to discuss an idea for bringing the Olympics alive in the parks. I am hopeful that we will be able to support a series of 'Park Games' starting on Sunday, 20 May 2012 in Victoria Park, Taunton. As soon as plans start coming together I will let you know more detail.

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

- 2.1 Consultation with local children for the improvements to Wellington Recreation Ground play area took place in the park on 14 February 2012. I am sure that the children will have come up with a very long and inspirational list of ideas for what they would like to see! Once the consultation is complete we will be pushing on to get the work done in time for the summer half term.
- 2.2 Lyngford Park, Taunton will shortly see some very exciting adult outdoor gym equipment installed. The pieces will be ready by Easter.
- 2.3 French Weir Park, Taunton is now home to some new play equipment chosen by children at last summer's annual family fun day. If anyone has not seen a modern style roundabout then do pop down and see!
- 2.6 I am very happy to report that Viridor/Adsa Green is close to completion and plans are being made for the grand opening.
- 2.7 The mud-bumps in Wellington will shortly be improved and a plan is being drawn up for the refurbishment of Wellington Pavilion – both from Section 106 Agreement monies.

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

#### **Community, Sports and Health Development**

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

## Health Development

### 3.2 Older People

3.2.1 Postural Stability classes continue to run at Lodge Close, Wellington and Abbeyfield Residential Home, Taunton, with an additional 'beginners' falls class starting in Taunton in April 2012 for three months.

3.2.2 Ten Active Living Centres are involved with a physical activity programme across Taunton Deane including seated football, seated badminton, tai chi, flexercise and seated hockey.

3.2.3 A Flexercise workshop ran in January with 15 participants and high demand for another has led to another course being arranged for April. Refresher Flexercise training for existing leaders has been booked for March 2012.

### 3.3 Weight Management

3.3.1 Tone submitted a bid for the NHS Community Pounds Project and was successful in winning funding for Priorswood Community Group. This initiative currently has over 30 registered participants in the scheme. It is running various activities including badminton at Wellsprings, swimming at St. James Street Baths, Zumba, health walks, a weight management course and healthy cooking classes.

3.3.2 During November 2011 an NHS Weight Management course was run for the staff at NHS East Reach Offices in Taunton as part of the NHS Go For It Challenge that is being run on a countywide basis.

### 3.4 NHS Health Checks

3.4.1 Tone continues to work in partnership with the GP surgeries in Taunton to deliver the NHS Health Checks on an outreach basis to provide an intervention to the number of residents contracting any form of cardiovascular disease in the future.

### 3.5 Sportivate

3.5.1 Tone Leisure have been successful in securing funds from SASP/Sportivate to deliver sports projects for 14-25 year olds that will encourage long term access to physical activity.

3.5.2 Currently Tone is running a ONE membership offer, where young people can purchase one month's membership and get a second month free, enabling young people to have access to a wide range of sports and fitness opportunities, including swimming, golf, fitness classes, gym sessions, climbing and racquet sports.

3.5.3 Starting week commencing 20 February 2012, Tone will be running Indoor Golf Sessions and PING (innovative form of table tennis) at Wellsprings Leisure Centre, all supported by Sportivate funding.

### 3.6 Inclusion

- 3.6.1 Tone have been successful in securing some Short Breaks funding to support children with individual needs and disabilities on their holiday activity programme. The funding will pay for additional support workers to ensure each child's needs are met.

## **Facility News**

### 3.7 Taunton Pool

- 3.7.1 Refurbishment work started on the passenger lift week commencing 6 February 2012. This work will see a complete overhaul on the existing lift and work should be completed by mid-March. Abbey Lifts, who are based in North Somerset, were the successful contractor. Pre-work commencement meetings have already taken place and both the Council and Tone are very happy with the bid and tender process.
- 3.7.2 Taunton Pool is also maximizing the recently purchased fun equipment by offering Sea Scooter and Water Walker birthday parties. These exclusive pool parties will take place outside of the normal pool operating hours in an attempt to minimize disruption for the general public.

### 3.8 Wellington Sports Centre

- 3.8.1 The Bfit (Z3) young person's project has now entered into its third and final year of funding with the Big Lottery project. This successful project still attracts over 300 visits per month from the young people of Wellington and surrounding communities. Plans are progressing to ensure that this project continues once the funding comes to an end and early indication is showing that this project will remain sustainable for the foreseeable future.
- 3.8.2 The group exercise programme continues to grow from strength to strength which has recently seen the addition of a new Box Fit class introduced to the programme.
- 3.8.3 The management of the centre attend regular regional badminton network meetings and have just agreed to enter into the No Strings badminton franchise. These weekly session will encourage those who have a genuine interest in badminton to turn up and play in a casual group environment.

### 3.9 Wellsprings Leisure Centre

- 3.9.1 A new functional fitness zone is soon to be installed as part of a small upgrade to the Wellsprings gym.

### 3.10 Vivary Golf Course

3.10.1 Vivary Junior Golf Club started in January 2012 and Course Pro Richard Coffin will be dedicating Saturday afternoons to getting a strong junior club going once again. So far there are 8 children between the ages of 10 and 15 that have signed up with a view to forming a team by the beginning of the 2012 golf season.

Councillor Catherine Herbert

# **Council Meeting – 21 February 2012**

## **Report of Councillor Mrs Jean Adkins – Housing Services**

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

- 1.1 A good response was received to three tendering exercises recently undertaken. The Annual Servicing and Maintenance (Gas) contract was a full OJEU process, subject to a potential challenge, the period for which expires at the end of day, as I write. The contractor for this contract, and also that for the bathroom fitting, will therefore be announced shortly.
- 1.2 The Air Source Heat Pump contract was awarded to Otter South West Limited and is for installations at 37 properties in Churchinford, Stoke St Gregory and Creech St Michael where there is no mains gas available. This follows a successful pilot scheme.

### **2. Affordable Housing**

- 2.1 Affordable Housing Development Partnership - The Council is currently seeking expressions of interest from Registered Social Landlords to enter into a five year partnering agreement to enable us to meet the aims and objectives of our Housing Strategy. The closing date for submissions is 20 February 2012 and it is hoped to hold interviews towards the end of March.

### **3. Strategic Tenancy Policy**

- 3.1 It is a requirement of the Localism Act that a policy is published by all District and Unitary Authorities.
- 3.2 An interim policy has been developed with our colleagues in the Somerset Strategic Housing Partnership. The final strategy will be drawn up once the various pieces of legislation around changes to tenure come into effect.

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

- 4.1 The Anti-Social Behaviour Officers are continuing to make an impact and report regularly on their cases to the Portfolio Holder and Shadow and the Tenant Services Management Board.
- 4.2 A Lettings Policy for parts of Halcon is being drafted, following the successful policy at Leycroft Grove.
- 4.3 There has been an increase in the number of incidents reported since the team was put in place a year ago, but this is felt to be because of their high profile and confidence that issues will be tackled.

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

- 5.1 An update on the SWPSHP's activities has been received and will be circulated under separate cover as there is much of interest to all Members.

## **6. Consultation**

### **Right to Buy**

- 6.1 We have responded to the Department for Communities and Local Government's consultation on proposed changes to Right to Buy.
- 6.2 The main thrust is around methods of using the receipts to build new homes and whether this would best be done at local or national level.
- 6.3 My own view and that of the Tenant Services Management Board is that the receipts should be retained locally. It was also suggested that newly built Council houses should not be sold under Right to Buy until they were at least 10 years old.

## **7. Self-Financing**

- 7.1 The final settlement figures were issued by the Government on 1 February 2012 and were an improvement on the provisional estimate.
- 7.2 On 26 March 2012 we will be required to take out loans from the Public Works Loan Board amounting to £85,198,000 in order to exit the Negative Subsidy System under which we will pay approximately £7,000,000 this current year. Our Treasury Management specialists, Arlingclose, gave a presentation to Community Scrutiny Committee and the Executive and will be working to secure the best deal for us on the day. The interest rate is currently assumed to be 3.64%.
- 7.3 Our borrowing cap has been set at £115,784,000, leaving headroom of approximately £16,000,000



## **8. Housing Revenue Account 30 Year Business Plan**

- 8.1 This has now been finalised following the settlement figures and will now include provision for a Development Fund to enable the building of new Council housing, albeit on a small scale.
- 8.2 The plan envisages debt being cleared by Year 18 of the plan to optimise interest payments on these loans but, of course, other debt may be taken on in the interim to finance future plans.
- 8.3 The Business Plan is a living document and will be reviewed annually. My thanks go to all who have worked so hard on this. We look forward to an exciting future under self-financing.

Councillor Mrs Jean Adkins