

Council Meeting – 2 October 2012

Report of Councillor John Williams – Leader of the Council

1 Peer Challenge

- 1.1 At the invitation of our Council we have just been through a Peer Challenge of how effectively we are working as a Council and preparing for the inevitable difficult decisions in respect of funding for the future. I believe it was an incredibly good process for our Council to go through as it was a snapshot of how others viewed the Council.
- 1.2 We had a very strong team of Peers and it was strongly emphasised it was not an inspection, only a challenge to test our policies and strategies and most of all our plans to meet the challenges of the future.
- 1.3 Some strong points were identified as were weaknesses mostly in how we go forward in such an uncertain time of poor economic growth and uncertain funding streams but certain in the knowledge that we will be suffering considerable reductions in funding.
- 1.4 We await the formal report but one thing is certain we must not only build on our strengths but redouble our efforts to address any shortcomings, the major one of which is insufficient revenue funding to carry on as we are! We have already made savings in the order of £5m over the last few years in our budget with a further projected £3m over the next five years which becomes progressively more difficult to find. As a Council we will have to accept that we cannot continue as we are, radical change will have to happen which has to mean scrutinizing carefully what services we can deliver and those we just cannot afford. The feedback we received at the end of the week was that we just had to challenge what we are doing and not add anything without something dropping off.
- 1.5 There was also a strong message about the marketing of Taunton, many strong points were identified in the infrastructure development we have invested in over the years particularly Castle Green, Also highlighted was our strong partnership working to deliver these, our assistance to Somerset County Cricket Club to extend their ground, the excellent schools in our area, ease of communications, travel and excellent town centre but that we were not marketing this strongly enough. In defence, we have tried to prepare a strategy but on a shoe string budget, as a Council we will have to accept that the “best” comes at a price, so to succeed I believe we must invest far more than we

have hitherto. This has been recognised and I reported on the need to sell Taunton Deane in my previous report to Full Council, hopefully Members will support an increase in budget to support the work necessary if we are to take this particular advice.

2 Project Taunton

- 2.1 The Viridor building fit out is nearing completion and shortly occupation will commence, Viridor will then begin the process of consolidating this as their headquarters with staff transferring from other locations. This has to be a milestone for the Firepool area and a vote of confidence from a national company investing in Taunton. We must build upon this and make it a catalyst for others.
- 2.2 We are also about to see the opening of Castle Green which has been successfully completed and is a wonderful opportunity for future events, markets and displays, it is a great area set in the historic heart of Taunton and complementary to the new Somerset Museum which is proving so popular.
- 2.3 The High Street has been the subject of a recent news update to all Members but in essence street works are on hold until Wessex Water have renewed the underground water mains in the street. Then, to avoid works in the lead up to the Christmas period, only limited works will be carried out with completion of the first phase resuming post Christmas.
- 2.4 From discussion with Somerset County Council they are anticipating commencement of the NIDR in October, at present they are still awaiting the decision of the S of S on the CPO process but this should be imminent. The lack of this new road is a major impediment to development of Firepool so its commencement is eagerly awaited.
- 2.5 Crest Nicholson have commenced their development of the East Goods Yard which is development of 204 dwellings alongside the canal and river, much needed housing on a brownfield site that is within easy reach of the station and town centre. As part of the original concept of the "Taunton Vision Commission" to regenerate town centre derelict land, this is a major success story.
- 2.6 Members will have seen prior to the Full Council meeting what I think is an exciting presentation on redevelopment of and around Taunton Railway station. This proposed major upgrade of the area and our travelling facilities along with housing and employment space is to be welcomed. We must do all possible to facilitate this development come to fruition and we look forward to working with network rail to ensure it happens.

3 A303/A30/A358 Somerset County Council Initiative

- 3.1 A potential project that is being promoted by Somerset County as the Highway Authority will, I am sure, be of interest to members. Somerset County are in the process of putting together a much needed and ambitious plan to upgrade the A303/A30/A358 roads so they truly serve as an alternative route into the West Country. If successful it will be a major project starting at Stonehenge to Honiton removing the present pinch points and upgrading the A358 from Ilminster to J25 to dual carriageway with improvements to J25. They have involved all of the local authorities adjacent the roads and discussed the proposals with central Government as substantial funding will be required. They are now charged by Government to produce a feasibility study particularly focusing on the potential economic benefits that would accrue from such an investment in the local area and the much wider West Country as a whole. I applaud the effort being made as we are all aware of the major congestion problems particularly on the A358, and poor access to the South West peninsular, any attempt at a solution has to be welcomed.
- 3.2 One point that I raised was what provision was there for an upgrade of J25 and it seems at present there was no certainty about this except the recognition of the necessity of improvement works and working with the Highways Agency to deliver a solution. This is absolutely critical as any upgrade of the A358 would not deliver improvements without capacity at J25 being improved and this was accepted.

4 Core Strategy

- 4.1 I will leave the detail to Cllr Edwards but just to say I am very pleased that recently Taunton Deane BC adopted the Core Strategy for the Borough with virtual unanimous support. This in my view, gives us the greatest protection possible against unwanted and unplanned development. It does not stop any application being made to us, on any piece of land, which as the Local Planning Authority we must consider, but it does provide us with the armoury to refuse it if it is not in compliance with the approved plan.
- 4.2 My thanks to all involved for the tremendous amount of hard work, both officers and Members, in drawing up and evidencing this plan. I accept that even more hard work has yet to come in filling in the detail of what is a high level broad based strategy but thank you and well done so far.

5 Budget setting

- 5.1 The process for this has already commenced with a great number of Members contributing to the survey of spending priorities which was most helpful. The great problem is that it showed that we wished to

extend our services, not reduce them, which if we are to meet the budget reductions being imposed upon us there are hard choices to be made.

- 5.2 We will need to re-visit the comprehensive exercise that was conducted last year to identify year two and three savings as we do need to initiate plans to deal with the known, and then further anticipated, cuts in our income.
- 5.3 It is obvious from our own Medium Term Financial Plan that we have tough times ahead and this was reinforced by the Peer Group during their visit that we should put in place clear and deliverable plans to deal with a growing deficit. I have no illusions this will be easy, it will take us all working together to deliver the savings necessary whilst ensuring we maintain the essential services we have to deliver.

6 Local Enterprise Partnership

- 6.1 This is potentially a great source of help and possible funding and we have been holding meetings with Tim Jones, Chairman and our local representatives on the Board, Nick Engert and Rachel Davies. These meetings have been very positive with considerable support promised for Taunton Deane as it is regarded as a major growth area and our planned targets for economic and housing development are welcomed.
- 6.2 The LEP obviously covers a very large area across Somerset and Devon with limited funds and resources but in recognition of our planned growth we have been told we will get the LEP support where possible through “Growing Places Funding” and “Regional Infrastructure Funding” and other funds as applicable. Project Taunton is working closely with the LEP to identify and submit applications for funding towards suitable projects.
- 6.3 The LEP Chairman also has good contacts with EDF and Hinkley Point so as well as our own efforts to maintain contact with EDF and other Contractors we are also able to make contact through the good offices of the LEP’ which is to be welcomed.

Councillor John Williams
Leader of the Council

Council Meeting – 2 October 2012

Report of Councillor Ken Hayward – Environmental Services and Climate Change

1. Environmental Health

- 1.1 I am delighted to welcome Jo Bliss and Hannah Butcher to the team as well as Lis Kennard who joins as maternity cover for Emily Vining. Jo has recently arrived in the UK from New Zealand, joining the Environmental Protection Team. Hannah has been working in London and recently relocated with her family to the South West. She will be working as part of the Food and Health and Safety Team. Lis joins us from North Somerset and has extensive experience, which she has demonstrated in her short time with the team prior to her formal cover for Emily from the end of October. Finally Emily Vining will be leaving us temporarily on maternity leave. I wish her and her family well.
- 1.2 Officers have visited South Somerset to gain best practice in approved premises. Another member of staff has also been formally trained in approved premises on a two day course. The authority is required to inspect and approve any premises defined as products of animal origin such as meat, dairy, egg or fish product plants under EC derived legislation. Food premises approved under these regulations must meet additional requirements as they usually involve higher risk operations.
- 1.3 As a follow-up to a letter recently sent to all businesses about the new E-coli guidance, further guidance and a Food Standards Agency DVD has been sent to butchers outlining the new requirements and risk of cross-contamination. Our work will now focus on trying to ensure compliance through raised awareness. One of the first butchers to be inspected was at Bishop's Hull and there were significant gaps in understanding and practice. I am pleased to say that the Team has worked well with the business to ensure that they are now operating with less risk and have understood the new requirements placed upon them.
- 1.4 The Strummer of Love festival passed off without significant incident. A debrief session has been arranged for anyone affected by the festival to ensure that any lessons which could be learnt from how it was run are captured for future events here or elsewhere.
- 1.5 The seagull control programme has now finished for 2012 season. The aim for 2012 was to build on the success of previous years and minimise nuisance/noise to the general public within the town centre. A total of 121 eggs were collected/deployed (up from 112 in 2011). The programme was 100% successful in that 52 nests were treated, preventing 52 pairs of gulls from successfully breeding 121 chicks. When comparing the data from 2012 with 2011 (and previous years), the population of breeding gulls within the treated areas has reached a base line and is relatively stable, having reduced over the last five years (natural population levels stabilise after repeated exposure to the same control method). Increased growth in breeding numbers

has occurred due to gulls relocating to the other areas outside the town centre.

- 1.6 The HSE is planning to cut Health and Safety inspections even further and many burdensome regulations are to be scrapped or consolidated. This can only be good news! There have been a number of legislative reviews over the last few years to try to reduce the compensation culture, red tape and the burden on business. In summary, Local Authorities should use a range of intervention techniques – including education and awareness. Proactive inspections should be reserved for Category ‘A’ premises (as well as where there is a Primary Authority agreement). Proactive interventions at premises may also be carried out where there are significant local issues or intelligence received over time for which evidence should be documented in an intervention plan. Inspectors should continue to deal reactively with matters of evident concern e.g. gas safety issues noted at food hygiene inspections. We are currently reviewing our procedures to ensure that we are ready for this change and to be able to react to other changes as they come online.
- 1.7 Finally, the Environmental Protection Team recently worked with the Health Protection Agency and Wessex Water on a gastroenteritis issue to establish any cause through a public water supply distributed through a private network. This cross-agency work is a good example of how flexibly authorities are now able to work to ensure an holistic approach to investigation.

2. Climate Change / Carbon Management

Progress Report on Carbon Management and Energy Resilience Strategy

- 2.1 A meeting with community stakeholders was held in July to progress the production of the Strategy. Next steps include:-
 1. Producing a draft directory and action plan by the end of October – this needs to be picked up within each working group to identify areas of work; experts; contact details for referrals; and stories/case studies to populate the directory;
 2. Working group leads to call a meeting of their groups as soon as possible to identify the projects that they will deliver over the next 12 months. Working group leads to feed back once actions identified;
 3. Taunton Deane Climate Change Officers to progress the framework for the directory (website hosting, structure, headings, access etc);
 4. A series of articles to be produced for the Deane Dispatch. The first of which has appeared in September - a piece about IYRE (Improve Your Resource Efficiency). Wellington Transition Town has provided an article for October.
 5. To consider whether it would be possible to progress an exhibition at the Genesis Centre with providers showcasing their services / support

available to local businesses in liaison with the Chamber of Commerce and when this would be appropriate.

Information Report on Taunton Deane's carbon emissions in 2011/2012

- 2.2 Preliminary data for 2011/2012 shows that the carbon emissions from the sites and vehicles operated by the Council fell by 6%, whilst the sites operated by Tone Leisure increased by 3% compared to the year before. The combined carbon reduction of the Council; and Tone Leisure for 2011/2012 was 88 tonnes or 2%.
- 2.3 Taunton Deane and Tone Leisure's total carbon emissions fell by 12.2% or 584 tonnes between 2006/2007 and 2011/2012, and now stand at 4190 tonnes per year.

Pay-as-you-save (PAYS) schemes for The Deane House and Leisure sites

- 2.4 The Council has commissioned Schneider Electric to undertake detailed energy efficiency surveys of The Deane House, Taunton Pool, Wellington Sports Centre, Blackbrook Pavilion and Wellsprings Leisure Centre. The outcomes of the surveys are expected to be known by Mid October.
- 2.5 Initial high level surveys undertaken by Schneider in June 2012 identified a range of measures that would produce energy savings in the region of 30% at The Deane House and 32% at Wellington Sports Centre. The annual financial savings from the measures would be around £28,000 at The Deane House and £38,000 at Wellington Sports Centre.
- 2.6 The measures would be installed at no upfront cost to the Council. Schneider would recoup the costs through a rental charge. At the end of the seven year rental period the Council would own the equipment. Councillors will be kept informed about the project at all stages.

Biomass boiler proposal by Forest Fuel

- 2.7 The Council has received a proposal from an external company (Forest Fuels) to fund the installation and maintenance of one biomass boiler each at Taunton Pool and/or Wellington Sports Centre over 20 years. In return, the Council would sign a heat supply contract with the company for 20 years.
- 2.8 The main benefits of the projects would be:-
- Lower fuel bills for Tone. Forest Fuel have estimated total fuel cost savings of £2m over 20 years if burning wood fuel instead of gas at both sites;
 - A 10% reduction in the Council's carbon emissions. Each biomass boiler would reduce the Council's carbon emissions by 200 tonnes or 5%. To put

this in perspective: We only achieved a combined reduction of 88 tonnes from all Taunton Deane and Tone Leisure sites last year. So, a 5% reduction per site would be a really big hit. The savings from both sites would be equivalent to the annual emissions produced from heating 130 average households;

- In general, burning wood fuel is about eight times cleaner than burning gas: Wood is 'carbon neutral' as the amount of CO₂ that trees take out of the atmosphere whilst growing is the same that is released when burning it. However, some emissions still arise from producing the pellets, transporting them, and running the plant have to be offset against this.

Performance of solar PV array on Taunton Pool

- 2.9 The array was commissioned on 22 June 2012. Between then and 10 September it generated around 10,000kWh of electricity. This is an average of around 120kWh per day.

3. Waste Management

- 3.1 As part of the Somerset Waste Partnership's service review, Members were recently invited to complete a short survey. With a bit of a dig in the ribs from me, the response from Members has increased, so thank you to those who have responded!
- 3.2 While this review is accountable to the Somerset Waste Board and independent of any one partner authority, the Board believe it is important to capture and understand the range of views and ideas among the partners. Nothing has been decided yet and this survey is purely about understanding the body of opinion – it is not a vote for change.
- 3.3 Any changes that are proposed as a result of the Service Review process will be brought to the Somerset Waste Board and, where necessary, the partner Authorities for discussion and agreement in accordance with the existing democratic processes.
- 3.4 Rather than repeat news here, I would direct Members to the SWP Members' Briefing that I recently circulated to everyone. I trust everyone with an interest has had chance to have a look at it.

4. DLO Update

- 4.1 The arrangement to take our waste directly to Viridor is going well and has saved us over £40,000 by not operating our own waste transfer station.
- 4.2 Incidents of fly tipping remain higher than in historical years but I am pleased to report that the spike that was seen last year appears to have significantly diminished.

- 4.3 We are starting to take delivery of our new hybrid commercial vehicles, there will be 13 of these bought this year as part of our ongoing vehicle replacement schedule, which should lead to fuel savings in excess of 20% on current expenditure.
- 4.4 We are also in the process of replacing the supervisors' vehicles with more fuel efficient ones, powered by the most economical diesel engines you can buy.

5. Crematorium

- 5.1 I am delighted to report that so far both the cremator installation and building works are going to plan. Right at the start of the project two of our cremators were decommissioned, so we have had a period of about five weeks operating with just one of our old cremators.
- 5.2 During this period we have been very busy, particularly for the time of year (from 1 August - today we have had 28 more cremations than last year) hence we have had a number of very late nights and some weekend working. A couple of staff have really put the service first and worked very hard during this period to provide the usual level of service.
- 5.3 The crematorium staff have had to work in noisy and dusty conditions with endless workman turning up but not one person has moaned or complained in any way.
- 5.4 At the beginning of September the first of our new cremators was commissioned and we are now able to use this machine. So for a few weeks we will be running with two cremators, then the last of the old machines will be decommissioned and a fair bit of work will take place until we receive the other two new cremators during December.
- 5.5 The new cremator is sophisticated, clean, quiet and fast. It appears to be frugal with gas and extremely well manufactured, it really is state of the art.
- 5.6 Paul Rayson says he has found all of the Facultatieve Technologies staff to be very professional and helpful, which is very refreshing. The builders too have been very good, there have been a few issues but their work is also running to schedule.
- 5.7 Paul assures me that since the work started we have not lost a single funeral to any other crematoria, nor have we had any complaint from the public or funeral trade, which is remarkable due to the range of work being undertaken.
- 5.8 My sincere thanks are extended to everyone involved.

Councillor Ken Hayward

Council meeting 3rd October 2012

Report of Councillor Mrs Catherine Herbert –

Sports, Parks & Leisure

1. Parks

1.1 Great news for Taunton in Bloom again this year with another Gold being awarded - Vivary Park was given special mention by the judges as being the jewel in the crown of Taunton. It has to be said that we were certainly up against it on judging day as the rain did not let up all day and we all got very wet! As always there are so many people to thank for their hard work, the Taunton in Bloom Committee, the local sponsors for their support, the local police, the schools and groups who help on the lead up to the judging days and of course to our gardeners and nursery staff. Fingers crossed now for the results of the national competition in October.

1.2 It should also be noted that there were other awards won in our area;

“It's Your Neighbourhood Award” for St Georges School, Viridor Green, Victoria Park Action Group and Kingston Road Allotments.

A Discretionary Award for Best Business Park - Blackbrook Business Park. Well done to them all.

1.3 We also look forward to our local Bloom awards which are again being kindly hosted by Monkton Elm Garden Centre. They have been very supportive throughout the whole year and we are very grateful for their on-going support with Taunton in Bloom.

1.4 We have continued to receive comments from the public about the wildflower beds at Chestnut Drive and Victoria Park. We are hoping to find 2 more suitable sites to the north and west of the town to extend the trial next year.

2 Community Leisure & Play

2.1 The tenders for Wellington Rec. were received and the DLO being successful in winning the contract. Work starts shortly and the site will include a national first with a piece of sporting play equipment being supplied to us by the manufacturer being a great centrepiece.

2.2 We received applications for funds from the Capital grants for Village Halls and Sports clubs, and awarded £ 32,500 to the following -

Ash Priors Village Hall £4,500 towards the construction of a porch, Milverton Victoria Rooms £3,000 towards fire retardant curtains to meet with current fire regulations, Taunton Athletics Club £15,000 towards a club house and Wiveliscombe Rugby Club £10,000 towards replacement of 25 year old floodlighting at Plain Pond.

3. TONE LEISURE (TAUNTON DEANE) LIMITED ACTIVITIES

Community, Sports and Health Development

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

Health Development

Hearts and Soles Nordic Walking

Tone has been successful in an application to the British Heart Foundation for just under £2,000 to support a Nordic Walking programme. The project, Hearts and Soles Nordic Walking, will help older adults, particularly heart patients and their family members to lead an active lifestyle. The project, which will start in October, will provide free taster sessions, 'Learn to Nordic Walk' courses, an ongoing programme of adventure walks and training for volunteers to become Nordic Walk Leaders.

Back on the Bike - Cycling Initiative for Older Adults

Tone has secured additional funding from NHS Somerset Public Health Directorate to provide another two courses to help older adults to start cycling again. This follows the success of the courses which ran in July. Tone is continuing to work in partnership with DC Cycleworks to provide the four-session courses, to be held in Taunton on weekend mornings during October.

Weight Management

The Community Pounds project was piloted in Priorswood in 2012 and was a success. As a result another course was launched in Halcon in early September for 12 weeks and the focus is on achieving and maintaining a healthy weight.

NHS Health Checks

Tone has created a partnership with the Clinical Commissioning Group to ensure that NHS Health Checks remain an important part of the agenda across Taunton Deane.

Facility News

Taunton Pool

The Swimathon was a massive success in 2012; with increased participation Tone raised £500 more than last year, improving the total to over £6,500 - the best in Somerset and Dorset.

St. James Street

The Olympic fever has been evident this summer with increased numbers of swimmers enquiring about swimming lessons. Since the start of the Olympics Tone have had 55 free swim assessments and over 200 new swimmers joined the Learn to Swim scheme. The Swimskool programme continues to grow with current numbers stabilising at 1,540; almost 80 swimmers more than this time last year.

Wellington Sports Centre

Wellington is launching the following new courses: Junior Badminton, Ladies Badminton Morning and Ladies Netball.

Wellington Kayak Club - Wellington Sports Centre is launching a new Kayak session in partnership with Wellington Kayak Club.

Taunton Tennis Centre

Taunton Tennis Club has recently developed a partnership with Head UK (one of the major tennis manufacturers). This partnership will enable Taunton Tennis Club to trade in goods such as rackets, balls, clothes and shoes. The partnership means that all coaches at the club are sponsored by Head UK and as of September 2012 will have a new Head UK uniform subsidised by Head UK which will carry all the Taunton Tennis Club and Tone branding. The deal has also enabled Tone to offer small sponsorship deals to six of Tone's most promising juniors.

Wellsprings Leisure Centre

The GX Revolution has now started. Tone has invested in developing the first dedicated cycling studio in the area with 24 brand new top of the range Keiser M3 studio bikes. This new addition to the club launched officially on 10th September, with 18 dedicated Studio Cycling classes available on the programme. With a mixture of early morning, midday and evening classes Tone aims to offer a greater availability to this ever popular class.

The young people's Vibe project is in its early stages for a re-launch with an innovative approach to increasing Tone's programme offering. The Centre Manager is currently working with partners to launch a new programme for October.

Vivary Golf Course/High Ropes

From the partial opening of the course on 2nd June to 25th August 4,050 people have accessed the High Ropes facility.

These user groups range from schools, youth groups, walk-in customers, DASH, local care homes, cubs, scouts, brownies and corporate groups. Tone is also due to accommodate the local fire service for a team development session and working at height training.

The future looks promising with many schools interested in multi-activity programmes, school holiday day camps, corporate bookings and a week of induction team development days for Somerset College.

The High Ropes team are starting to introduce new activities to the programme; activities such as: Bush Craft, Ultimate Frisbee, Circus Skills, Orienteering and the possibility of a back to basics fitness regime.

Tone has also submitted a bid to Sport England to access funding to make the facility more inclusive. Specific equipment and extra training will be purchased with this funding to provide access to clients with varying disabilities and impairments. The majority of the funding will be used as revenue to enable Tone to give a 1:2 ratio of staff to clients, optimising their experience.

Overall the feedback so far has been extremely positive. Local people are commenting that the course blends into its surroundings, the staff are professional and approachable and safety is of the utmost importance.

Cllr Catherine Herbert.

Council Meeting – 2 October 2012

Report of Councillor Mrs Jean Adkins - Housing Services

1. Housing Enabling - Regeneration

- 1.1 I recently visited an Extra Care housing scheme run by Knightstone Housing Association and am pleased to say that they have been selected in a competitive tendering process to deliver the long awaited Parmin Close, Taunton regeneration. A letter has been sent to residents and a planning application is anticipated for 94 units at the end of November 2012.
- 1.2 The scheme will have three Care packages designed for those with low, moderate and high care needs. There will be a variety of tenures.
- 1.3 Moor Farm House at Wordsworth Drive, Taunton has won the Local Authority Building Control Award for Social Housing. Congratulations to all involved.
- 1.4 Victoria Gate (now known as Somerset Place), Taunton is well underway and, as I write, a cream tea is being held tomorrow for residents to choose their tiles and other fittings.

2. Halcon Consultation *(written on 20 September 2012)*

- 2.1 I am pleased to report that the consultation has been concluded and having spoken to a number of officers taking part, went off very well. I would like to thank all those who took part, particularly members of the Tenants' Forum who accompanied Officers.
- 2.2 A total of 214 properties were included and the response rate was 82%. At the time of writing I have not been fully briefed, but it appears that just over half of people surveyed were in favour whilst 20% said they did not know.
- 2.3 A report will go to the Tenant Services Management Board on 24 September 2012 and the Community Scrutiny Committee on 9 October.

3. Affordable Housing Target

- 3.1 Having exceeded our target last year, we are hopeful that it will be met or exceeded again this year with 204 homes either completed or in the pipeline.

4. Affordable Housing Partnership

- 4.1 The partnership is going well and a further meeting is planned to discuss the impact of Benefit changes on partners. Meanwhile one to one meetings are being held with the Enabling Officer and a number of schemes with Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) funding are coming forward.
- 4.2 HCA funding for the current round ends in March 2015. Some Registered Social Landlords have unallocated monies in their programme for unnamed sites, others have funds for named projects, such as the £1,000,000 which Knightstone has specifically for regeneration at Halcon. There is no indication yet of funding beyond 2015.
- 4.3 I attended a Stakeholder event at Yarlinton Homes this week. Yarlinton are looking to expand their area of operations and have therefore entered this partnership with Taunton Deane. We look forward to working with them and currently discussions are underway to bring forward a site.

5. Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership

- 5.1 Somerset West Landlord and Tenant Services (SWeLT), is the new name for this new service which was recently approved by the Executive under the working title of Local Lettings Agency.
- 5.2 This initiative is our response to the need for more lets to people on the register coming forward from the private sector in light of the pressure which Hinkley Point is likely to generate.
- 5.3 Some of the incentives to landlords, such as bond schemes and low cost loans, were previously available, but we hope the Agency will increase awareness and take-up.
- 5.4 A Landlords' Forum will be held on Thursday, 18 October 2012 at Bridgwater Albion Rugby Club from 4pm to 7.30pm, at which SWeLT will be launched.

6. Estates Management

- 6.1 From 4 April to 1 July 2012 we advertised 133 void properties on Homefinder Somerset (compared to 179 in Taunton Deane from all landlords) and if this rate continues there will be around 400 more voids this year.
- 6.2 This is consistent with the increase seen in the last financial year and we anticipate a further increase as we are encouraging tenants to downsize in light of the changes to Housing Benefit which will affect those under-occupying their home.
- 6.3 I am therefore very pleased that Taunton Deane has been named by Housemark as the biggest improver in Void turnaround times. The average relet time in the South of England is 23 days. The Q1 scorecard shows our current performance at 21.92 days, against a target of 21 days and is a huge improvement on the corresponding Q1 in 2011/2012, which was 31.76 days.
- 6.4 In view of the increasing number of voids this is a very real achievement and is a credit to all concerned.

7. Self-Financing and HRA Business Plan

- 7.1 Self-financing is allowing us much greater freedom and the interest rates forecast have proved to be higher than the actual. The Business Plan is being reviewed in light of this. A report is being taken to the Tenant Services Management Board.
- 7.2 Work is underway to identify schemes for the Development Fund with six currently under consideration. One site in particular has been identified as suitable for an accredited Passivhaus development. Parish Councils and residents have been notified that schemes are being put forward.
- 7.3 Meanwhile measures to alleviate overcrowding in existing homes, such as building extensions, are being brought forward.
- 7.4 A programme of heating installations is being undertaken, including further Air Source Heat pumps following the successful trial and installations last year. The homes in the new programme will include family homes as a pilot, as well as further bungalows.

Councillor Jean Adkins

Council Meeting - 2 October 2012

Report of Councillor Mrs Vivienne Stock-Williams - Corporate Resources

1. Customer Contact Centre

Customer Contact Award and Accreditation

- 1.1 It was reported in June that the Customer Contact Centre had been awarded “Best Public Sector Contact Centre” in the South West Contact Centre Forum (SWCCF) Awards. This has now been followed up by the service receiving accreditation at the end of August from CCA – the Contact Centre Association. The Assessor spent four days with the staff and assessed them against all eight modules of the CCA Global Standard Version 5.
- 1.2 All Customer Contact teams and functions were assessed over the course of the week. The Assessor was extremely impressed with many areas of the service – no non-conformities were noted but, as with all assessments of this nature, areas for development were noted. The full report will be shared with the Client Team at the next service performance meeting; however, some of the highlights are noted below:-

Training and Development

- 1.3 “The impressive Buddying system takes this commonly adopted approach to a higher level, by providing intensive side-by-side at work coaching before training is signed off. This involvement is logged in the personal development map and has been granted external recognition through the South West Contact Centre Forum.
- 1.4 A key part of the Buddying system is the investment being placed in Buddies through the Training and Development Buddy group. This ensures that they become the coaching and mentoring experts. The aim is to equip staff with the relevant skills through a ‘train the trainer’ approach. This ensures that the mentors are not just chosen because of their service knowledge. They are Buddies because they are both expert in their field and experienced trainers.”

Customer Feedback

- 1.5 “The depth of analysis of customer comments to identify corrective and preventative actions is impressive.”

Staff Engagement

- 1.6 “The Workforce Management Plan and its associated staff focus groups will enshrine Southwest One Customer Contact Centre’s commitment to staff inclusion and engagement.”

Operations

- 1.7 “Observation of customer interaction at the reception areas established clearly the high quality of serviced provided. It was particularly noticeable that a high proportion of customers offered spontaneous verbal appreciation of the help given.”
- 1.8 “Particularly impressive was the ability of Customer Service Advisers to integrate the required rigorous validation and identity checks into a naturally flowing conversational approach. This was confirmed by the representative of one of the Client services where safeguarding is a prime concern.”
- 1.9 “Identification and verification issues were fully and appropriately applied across the service where relevant.”

Website Development

- 1.10 “Part of the Operating Level Agreement (OLA) with Taunton Deane involves development of the Taunton Deane website. The Council are extremely happy with the service provision in this area, noting that work is appropriate, accurate and handled with an extremely rapid turn-around time.”
- 1.11 “The processes you have developed to regularise the web development work you undertake are both fit for purpose and straightforward. They follow closely the good practice recommendations of the Society for IT Management (SocITM).”

Staff Development

- 1.12 The people development programme continues within the service. The Customer Service Excellence refresher starts in September and this will be supplemented by the recently installed new e-learning tool, Knowlagent. This was procured with support from Taunton Deane and training packages are currently being developed for its use by the team.

Service Delivery

- 1.13 During June to August a total of 11,247 enquiries were dealt with at The Deane House Main, housing and Planning Receptions and 5,710 people visited Wellington Community Office – 3,098 to make enquiries including TIC and 2,612 to make a payment through the kiosk. Staff dealt with 852 letter and email enquiries during this time.

Statistical Information – June - August 2012:-

Service Line	Reporting Authority	KPI No	Performance Measure	Frequency of Reporting	2012/2013 Target	Jun-12	Jul-12	Aug-12
Customer Contact	TDBC	1	% of calls answered in 20 secs	Monthly	80%	81%	82%	81.63%
Customer Contact	TDBC	2	% of calls resolved at first point of contact	Monthly	92%	94%	94%	95.82%
Customer Contact	TDBC	3	% of external customers rating the Customer Contact service as Very Good/Good	Annually (monitored quarterly)	75%	95%		
Customer Contact	TDBC	4	Abandoned call rate - less than 5%	Monthly	<5%	4.74%	4.97%	3.89%

There were no complaints about the service.

2. Corporate and Client Services

Staff

- 2.1 The changes made to the team as part of the Theme re-shuffle in June 2012 have now been fully implemented. The Corporate Performance Function and Lead Officer, Dan Webb, has moved to the Strategy Team. The Civil Contingencies and Parking Functions (including the clienting of the new Parking Enforcement Contract) and Lead Officer, John Lewis, has moved into the team.
- 2.2 The Client Lead, Alison North, will shortly be moving on to fill the new Community Leisure Post within Deane DLO. Alison has worked extremely hard in the Client role and has done much to ensure that we are effectively managing the Southwest One (SWO) and Tone Leisure contracts on a day-to-day basis. The Client Lead is a vital role and we are, therefore, currently undertaking a recruitment exercise to fill the Client Lead post.

Client Team

- 2.3 The Client Team continue to monitor closely the performance of SWO and specifically the delivery of key performance indicators (KPI's) and Service Development Plans (SDP's). Any issues with service delivery continue to be promptly identified and raised with SWO.
- 2.4 In general, services within SWO continue to function well. However, the Client Team are continuing to work with SWO to progress service improvements in the ICT, Property and Finance services.

- 2.5 The team continue to work closely with Tone Leisure to monitor service delivery and to progress individual issues. The team are working closely with the Strategy Team in relation to the Swimming Pools project.

Procurement

- 2.6 The shortfall in delivered savings through the Procurement Transformation Project remains a significant concern and issue for the Authority. Taunton Deane does, however, continue to make savings. We are continuing to manage the position closely and ensuring that regular reports are being made to members by the Strategic Procurement Service (SPS).
- 2.7 SWO have recently instigated legal proceeding against Somerset County Council (SCC) in relation to resolving a contractual dispute relating to elements of SCC's procurement contract with SWO. This dispute does not directly affect Taunton Deane.

Retained Finance and Corporate Insurance

- 2.8 The Retained Finance Officer continues to focus both on maintaining the day-to-day delivery of the retained finance functions and in providing support to the S151 Officer.
- 2.9 We are in the process of making changes to the role of the Insurance Officer to enable that post to provide administrative support in respect of the retained parking function and increased support in respect of retained finance. These changes will see SCC continuing to administer our insurance administration functions, which they have been covering over the past year during the Insurance Officer's maternity leave.

Retained HR

- 2.10 The revised lease car and car allowance policy has now been considered by both Scrutiny and the Executive and will shortly go to Full Council for approval.
- 2.11 The proposals for the Local Government Pension Scheme 2014 have been issued and have been recommended for acceptance by the Local Employers and Trade Unions. However, the proposals remain subject to consultation with the Department of Communities and Local Government.
- 2.12 The Retained HR Manager continues to monitor staff sickness levels closely.
- 2.13 The Retained HR Officer continues to provide support to the Client Team in monitoring the SWO contract.

SAP Re-Launch and Patching

- 2.14 The key elements of the system have been launched and are working.
- 2.15 Work is progressing to launch the performance review (PREDS), sickness, e-recruitment and overtime modules.

Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership

- 2.16 From April 2012, the Corporate and Client Services Team took over responsibility from the Strategy Team for the client monitoring of the Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership.
- 2.17 A new performance monitoring dashboard has recently been introduced to assist staff in monitoring the performance of the partnership. This is working well and the intention is to bring a performance update to the Community Scrutiny Committee in December 2012.

Corporate Projects

The Deane House Project

- 2.18 A final report was taken to the Executive on 12 September 2012 recommending that the Council does not proceed with this project due to the cost of doing so.

ICT Infrastructure Upgrade

- 2.19 The initial stage of the infrastructure upgrade has commenced, which has involved the upgrading of network switches in The Deane House.

Welfare Benefits

- 2.20 The Welfare Benefits project is being managed from within the team. Initially, the changes to the welfare benefits system will involve the replacement in 2013 of the existing national Council Tax Benefit scheme with a new local Council Tax Support scheme.
- 2.21 The project to implement our new local scheme is progressing well and regular updates are made to the Members Change Steering Group. Consultation regarding the new scheme has commenced and is scheduled to end on 5 October 2012. Briefing sessions are continuing with welfare groups and Members.

3. Corporate Performance

Corporate Performance

- 3.1 The Quarter 1 (April – June 2012/13) corporate performance report has recently been through the Corporate Scrutiny and Executive cycle. Quarter 2 (July - September) will be reported in November – December 2012. CMT will be reviewing the corporate scorecard in November and recommending new measures / updated targets for implementation in Quarter 3. CMT have implemented a new quarterly half-day corporate performance and risk review as part of their on-going meetings programme.

Corporate Risk Management

- 3.2 An update on Corporate Risk Management was reported to the Corporate Governance Committee on 24 September 2012. This report provided an update on the progress of the Council's approach to Risk Management, a Summary Risk Profile (listing 22 strategic risks) and the Corporate Risk Management Action Plan (areas of focus to improve and embed risk management at Taunton Deane).

South West Audit Partnership

- 3.3 The Performance Lead is liaising with the South West Audit Partnership (SWAP) to develop improved monitoring arrangements for all the Council's audit recommendations and follow-up management actions. Progress will be reported to the S151 Officer's Corporate Governance Group, and to the Corporate Governance Committee (next report due December 2012)

Corporate Change Programme

- 3.4 The Council's Corporate Change Programme is now being overseen by the Strategy and Performance Team. CMT commenced a new approach to formal Programme Management in September – Project Managers for all major corporate projects will report monthly to the 'Results Management Team' (ie the Corporate Projects Board). The objectives of these 'RMT' meetings are to:-
- i. Ensure the right programme of projects is in place to meet the Council's strategic objectives that align to its Corporate Business Plan.
 - ii. Provide support to Project Managers to unblock issues and help them progress
 - iii. Ensure all major projects have appropriate governance and rigour.
 - iv. Ensure there is an agreed process in place to initiate new projects, close down projects and manage major change during a project (such as extending or changing the scope).
 - v. Ensure that CMT and appropriate members have an overview of the programme and are able to challenge its content and progress.

- vi. Understand the impact of the programme on the Council and its service delivery

4. Legal and Democratic Services

Corporate Support Unit (CSU)

- 4.1 Andrew Randall was successfully recruited to the vacant Corporate Support Officer post and joined the team on 3 September 2012.
- 4.2 Amanda Hamley left the team at the end of August, as she decided that the job was not really for her. The opportunity is, therefore, being taken to have a slight change around within the team. Jo Comer has taken over from Amanda, but she will also provide additional support to Richard Bryant to ensure that all the tasks are covered in the CSU.
- 4.3 There will be a need, therefore, to recruit another PA for the Directors.

Standards Regime

- 4.4 All the Register of Interests forms have been returned to the Monitoring Officer. Some guidance for Members has now been issued to assist with the changes in the adopted Code of Conduct.
- 4.5 The Monitoring Officer has offered to come to group meetings to talk to Members if there is still any confusion relating to these changes, but to date there has been no take-up of this offer.
- 4.6 There were six applicants for the new Independent Person, with interviewing taking place on 5 September 2012. Three Members joined Richard Bryant on the interview panel.
- 4.7 There were also five applicants for the Independent Co-optees to the new Standards Committee, with interviewing taking place on 24 September 2012. This time, three Members joined Tonya Meers on the interview panel.

Land Charges

- 4.8 The Public Access Module implementation is being tied in with the changes to the IT infrastructure in The Deane House, as that needs to be upgraded in order for the module to work effectively. It is anticipated that this implementation work will be carried out at the end of the year. Once installed, this module will allow people to apply for a land charges search on-line.

CIL and Governance

- 4.9 The Monitoring Officer and Tim Burton will be working with a small group to set up the new Governance Board. The purpose of the Board

will be to decide how the CIL monies will be spent and to ensure that there are governance arrangements around this expenditure to prevent challenges being mounted.

- 4.10 In addition, an increase in s106 agreements is expected between January and March of next year. It will, therefore, be necessary to recruit a locum in order to assist with this extra workload, as that capacity is not available in-house.
- 4.11 It has been agreed that a tender for locums to take on this work on an ad-hoc basis will be put out, as it is uncertain at this stage what the additional volume of work will be. The work generated by each additional s106 agreement will be fully funded by the appropriate developer. In addition, consultation is taking place with SCC to determine whether they would like to participate in these ad hoc arrangements. This would have the added benefit that both Councils would be working to the same time-lines.

Assets of Community Value

- 4.12 The Monitoring Officer is starting to look at what processes and procedures need to put in place, as this legislation is likely to come into force in October 2012.

5. Revenues and Benefits

Localised Council Tax Support Scheme

- 5.1 Work is underway to prepare for the new Localised Council Tax Support Scheme which takes effect from April 2013. To ensure those most likely to be affected are aware of the changes and to make sure we have up-to-date information when the new scheme is implemented, claims for every Council Tax Benefit recipient of working age are currently being reviewed. Staff will review over 4,500 claims in the next three months, so the service will be exceptionally busy to ensure a smooth implementation of the new scheme.

Council Tax and Business Rates

- 5.2 So far in 2012/2013, the average time to reassess benefit is six days from when the customer tells staff of a change in their circumstances. On average, new claims are worked out within three weeks of the date they are submitted. Council Tax collection remains on target, but recovery of Business Rates is proving more difficult, with collection 3% down on the same time last year.

Customer Forum

- 5.3 In July, the team held a successful and well attended Revenues and Benefits Service Customer Forum. SWO's Customer Contact Team gave a presentation on how the Council deals with complaints, how the needs of disabled customers are accommodated and some of the outreach services provided. There was also a presentation on the new localised Council Tax Support Scheme. The service will receive its annual inspection for Customer Service Excellence on 25 September 2012.
- 5.4 As Members may know, both the Revenues and the Benefits Teams have been selected as finalists for the Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation (IRRV) "Team of the Year" awards. To be shortlisted, the excellent performance and high quality customer service of the Revenues and Benefits Service was recognised by a panel of industry experts. Inspections of the service from leading professionals from the IRRV took place in August and September. Award winners will be announced at the annual IRRV conference on 4 October 2012.

Councillor Vivienne Stock-Williams

Council Meeting – 2 October 2012

Report of Councillor Mark Edwards - Planning, Transportation and Communications

1. Core Strategy

- 1.1 The Core Strategy has now of course been formally adopted by the Council and I was delighted that we managed to get widespread support for this decision. It now takes its finally legal course and will be in place by the 23 October 2012.
- 1.2 There has been a huge amount of work done by many officers over the last six years and I want to once again pay tribute to their hard work and diligence in preparing this document and most importantly the supporting documents that lay below it.
- 1.3 I did make a clear commitment at the last Full Council that the work to find and bring forward sites to assist with the five year supply would start immediately and I can confirm this is the case, please see point 2 and 3 below for detail.

2. Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan

- 2.1 Carrying on from the Core Strategy, officers are, as I promised, aiming to make rapid progress in the production of the next Development Plan.
- 2.2 This work is essential since it is necessary to bring forward strategic allocations at Comeytrove / Trull and Staplegrove as well as supplementing the five year deliverable supply of housing land through a range of other allocations across Taunton Deane.
- 2.3 Officers intend to present an information report outlining the process for the preparation of this next plan at the next Community Scrutiny Committee on 9 October 2012.
- 2.4 Beyond this, there is an intention to commence early Issues and Options consultation on the plan towards the end of the calendar year.

3. Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)

- 3.1 Officers are also updating the SHLAA with a meeting of the independent panel of house builders and developers who assess sites currently being arranged and scheduled for early November.

- 3.2 This work will inform not just the future plan-making work but also identify the five year supply position moving forward.

3. Neighbourhood Planning

Neighbourhood Planning Front Runners Forum

- 3.1 The first meeting (June 2012) was informative, productive and a great help to all around the table. Items discussed included the emerging regulations and new policy for Neighbourhood Planning, the approach different groups were taking in formulating Plans, Content and Scope of Plans, Process and Legal requirements of Plans. It was attended by all three front runners, Somerset Market Towns Forum, Ann Rhodes (Planning Policy Officer) and myself.
- 3.2 It was agreed that the forum was a useful tool for the Front Runners, that it should be quarterly and the second meeting is scheduled for late September 2012.

Neighbourhood Plans Formally Approved

- 3.3 The three Taunton Deane Neighbourhood Planning Front Runners have been formally approved to undertake a Neighbourhood Plan for their areas. After passing tests relating to relevance (for the body undertaking the Plan) and appropriateness (of the proposed designation of the Neighbourhood Area) which are set out in the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations; the proposals were then publicised.
- 3.4 Public Notices in the Somerset County Gazette and Wellington Weekly News as well information on the Council's website invited comments on the applications; but no representations were received within the six week consultation period. As a result of the above, the bodies undertaking the Plans and the areas their Plans will cover are now formally approved.

New National Funding and Support for Local Planning Authorities

- 3.5 The Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has recently announced a small amount of funding to support Local Authorities in their duty to support and advise those in their communities undertaking a Neighbourhood Plan. I have instructed officers to look in to the details, with a view that the Council submits an application for this ring fenced grant to DCLG.
- 3.6 This fund is currently only available for the 2012-2013 financial year, but it is hoped that Taunton Deane will secure something towards administrative costs associated with supporting Neighbourhood Planning.

New National Funding and Support for Neighbourhood Planning Front Runners

- 3.7 DCLG announced an extension to the Supporting Communities in Neighbourhood Planning scheme until the end of the financial year 2012-2013. This is support given by DCLG funded and approved bodies and is free of charge to Front Runners. Trull is talking with Planning Aid about the opportunities and support available. They have also kindly opened this out to include the other two Taunton Deane Front Runners.

4. Community Infrastructure Levy

- 4.1 Consultation has been undertaken on the Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule and officers are now working through the responses liaising with our consultants Three Dragons. We had previously anticipated going to Scrutiny, Executive and Full Council with a view to signing off the Draft Charging Schedule in October for further public representation.
- 4.2 I will hopefully be able to update Full Council at the meeting as at the time of writing the report the exact timetable was not absolutely clear.

5. Planning

- 5.1 Officers have been busy dealing with appeals and the Public Inquiry into the refusal of planning permission for residential development at Fox's Meadow sat for two weeks during the summer. A further four days are required in October so that the Inspector can hear all of the evidence before coming to a decision.
- 5.2 Work has also been carried out preparing Appeal Statements and Proof's of Evidence in order to provide a robust defence against the appeal at Maidenbrook for residential development in the green wedge (which separates Taunton and Monkton Heathfield). That Inquiry will begin on 9 October 2012 and is scheduled to last four days.
- 5.3 An informal hearing took place in August as part of the appeal against the refusal of planning permission for two additional gypsy pitches at Altona Park, Hillfarrance. Despite the Inspector agreeing with the Council that there would be landscape impact, he considered that it would cause modest harm and this was outweighed by the significant need for additional gypsy and traveller sites. He therefore allowed the appeal.
- 5.4 With regard to other planning and enforcement appeals, the Council has successfully defended and won 12 out of 17 appeals in 2012. This is above the national average.

- 5.5 The Government's recent announcement into proposed changes to the planning system included extending the temporary period for the renewal of planning permissions. All permissions which were due to expire over the next 12 months will now be subject to a 'simplified extension of time' application procedure with a reduced application fee.

6. Heritage

- 6.1 Sandhill Park - Works are progressing on site to clear debris from the house and record and store historic fabric, such as fallen decorative plasterwork which was damaged due to the amount of water used to put out the fire. Work by consultants to update the required reports to accompany revised applications are nearing completion, with formal submissions expected in November.
- 6.2 Tone Works - Contracts between the owner and developer are about to be signed. This will enable the redevelopment of the Grease Works to proceed and release the bond to progress the approved alterations to the former Dye Works, to provide a weaving shed for Fox Brothers. In tandem with the latter, essential protection works to the rest of the wet finishing buildings will be undertaken.
- 6.3 Tonedale - The owner continues to be in dialogue with the Environment Agency, re the required flood alleviation scheme.

7. Landscape Team Report

- 7.1 Planning and tree applications work continues to be the main area of demand within the Landscape Team. Consultations for landscape and ecological advice continue to vary in number and significance from month to month but overall the number of consultations is similar to the previous two years at 2010/11: 293; 2011/12: 247 and based on the average so far 2012/13: 274.
- 7.2 There have been 66 tree applications which is within the normal range of applications. The main difference in workload this year has been preparations for two major planning appeals at Fox's Meadow and Maidenbrook Farm which have required significant officer time.
- 7.3 We have continued to work with our key partners at the Blackdown and Quantock Hills Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, with British Waterways and Somerset County Council on the Bridgwater and Taunton Canal and helping the Somerset Wildlife Trust with a grant bid, called Living Landscapes, which could attract £400,000 grant if successful.
- 7.4 The Councils of Somerset and key trusts and organisations in Somerset were successful in attracting £25,000 towards the establishment of a Landscape Nature Partnership. Somerset's Partnership was formally recognised by the Government in July this

year.

- 7.5 The team also continue to manage 14 local nature reserves. Westford, where a community woodland has been established with the help of Somerset County Council using land leased by the Environment Agency at a peppercorn rent, and Longrun Farm are proposed to be designated later this year. The Higher Stewardship grant from Natural England awarded last year is helping to maintain Ash Common in a good ecological condition.

8. Parking Service

- 8.1 Usage in the car parks is running below that of last year. Short term parking is holding up reasonably well but across all tariff bands long term stays are falling. This will be partly due to the effects of the recession and the price of fuel, but also Park and Ride figures have gone up on both Silk Mills and Gateway sites 8% and 12% respectively. In conjunction with Taunton Town Centre Company we are looking at initiatives to encourage people to come into town and stay longer. Soon we will know how well the “Free after 3” promotion has gone. Interestingly Wellington is showing a drop in short term usage but an increase in three hours and longer stays.
- 8.2 The new arrangements with Somerset County Council and NSL for enforcement and notice processing went live on 11 June 2012. For most people in Taunton Deane the only obvious change is a change of uniform colour from green to burgundy for the enforcement team. I am pleased to say transfer of staff from this Council to NSL went smoothly for all concerned. From the off-street car parks angle we are very pleased with the way NSL are delivering what we require of them, and with the working relationship established. It is unfortunate that there have been some problems around issuing of Residents Permits but I understand these have been resolved and the process is now working as it should be.
- 8.3 **Parking Strategy** - The introduction of changes and increases to tariff bands approved as part of the Parking Strategy is being delayed. The general economic situation and the continuing drop off in use of our car parks is not the right backdrop to make such moves. The principles around the Strategy are still correct and will be followed up. The budgetary implication is being considered within the Council’s general financial position and the projected overall underspend quoted in the Quarter 1 Performance Report includes for this. Discussions on the changes to management of Blue Badge parking have started.
- 8.4 **Multi Storey Lifts and Car Park** – We have recently seen reports on both the lifts and the structure at this central car park. It is still performing well after 40 years but now we know it is to remain as part of any retail redevelopment we need to lavish some care and attention on it. We are prioritising this year’s Capital spend on the lifts

themselves with around £180,000 being channelled in their direction. There will be some minor repairs and redecoration to the car park itself at the same time. The bulk of the work on the structure will need a much larger sum and Council will need to consider that during the Budget Setting process.

9. Communications

- 9.1 Communications has worked to support community and voluntary groups and partnerships as well as providing information on the Council's initiatives and achievements.
- 9.2 Work was done to help the Friends of Longrun Meadow promote some of their activities this summer, as well as Taunton Literary Festival.
- 9.3 Taunton Deane's communications is working with other Somerset districts and the County Council on highlighting the Police and Crime Commissioner elections in November. The immediate focus is on ensuring voters complete and return the annual canvass forms.
- 9.4 Changes to welfare benefits have been promoted through the Deane Dispatch and press releases, in particular by encouraging people to express their views through the consultation process.
- 9.5 Taunton Deane continues to lead on communications for the Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership, especially in the run-up to the launch of the Landlord and Tenant Services.
- 9.6 Promotion of Taunton's regeneration and Project Taunton is supported through publicity for Project Taunton's Open Day and the completion of Castle Green's enhancement. The Council has worked closely with the contractors, Britannia, throughout the construction works.
- 9.7 The Deane Dispatch promoted the "Free after 3" parking initiative in the September edition which also saw the launch of regular updates on "green" initiatives.
- 9.8 Internal communications will refresh the Core Brief with a series of articles on recent realignments in various departments, starting with the recently established Corporate Support Unit.

Councillor Mark Edwards

Council Meeting - 2 October 2012

Report of Councillor Jane Warmington - Community Leadership

1. Police and Crime Panel (PCP)

- 1.1 The PCPs are being set up alongside the new Police Commissioners in each of the police forces across the country. Their purpose to hold the Commissioner to account on behalf of the public and act as a monitor. Voting for Police Commissioners is taking place on 15 November 2012. So far four candidates have declared one from each of the political parties plus one independent.
- 1.2 The interim PCP has had its inaugural meeting. Information is being gathered together to present to the new Police Commissioner after their appointment.

2. Safer Somerset Partnership (SSP)

- 2.1 The SSP objective is to help make Somerset a safer place through a core partnership of those with a statutory requirement to do so - the Local Authorities, Police, Fire, Health, Probation and Road Safety with the relevant Voluntary Sector bodies for example, Drug and Alcohol Partnership. The aims are to reduce crime, reduce the fear of crime and reduce re-offending.
- 2.2 All five Districts expect to be formally signed up to the Safer Somerset Partnership for the appointment of the new Commissioner in mid November.
- 2.3 It has met several times over the past three months to discuss the future and how it will be set up to best inform the new Police Commissioner and the Police and Crime Panel.
- 2.4 It was agreed after much discussion that the structure will follow a gold/silver/ bronze style. Gold will be strategic made up of members and the relevant officers to advise and set the priorities for the SSP. This level is expected to liaise with the Police Commissioner.
- 2.5 Silver and Bronze would be the delivery arms of the structure. The relevant officers for the Silver group would be Community Safety Officers, Police, Fire, probation etc. They would effectively mirror the membership of the Gold group but with operational officers.
- 2.6 Bronze are those already established and working at the delivery end, most feeding into the Partnership already.

3. Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Panel

- 3.1 The Grants Panel (made up of both Members and supporting officers - three Portfolio-Holders - Community Leadership, Economic Development and Housing), two shadow Portfolio-Holders and one Labour/Independent) has met three times. A paper is being brought to the Community Scrutiny Committee in October 2012.

4. Health and Wellbeing

- 4.1 The draft Health and Wellbeing Strategy is now out for consultation. The shared vision for health and wellbeing in Somerset is that people live healthy, independent lives, supported by thriving and connected communities with timely and easy access to high-quality and efficient public services when they need them.
- 4.2 This is a well written easily read concise document which makes sense. Feedback to <http://www.somersetconsults.org.uk/consult.ti/HWBStrat/answerQuestionnaire?qid=1719811>
- 4.3 Local districts will agree their health and wellbeing focus for the year using the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) agreed between partners and local providers. The Taunton Deane Partnership is the most sensible way to manage this.
- 4.4 Yesterday Taunton Deane hosted its second Health and Wellbeing Event at the Somerset County Cricket Ground as part of this consultation process.

5. Priority Areas Strategy

- 5.1 This Strategy is the action plan for our priority areas and an ongoing commitment to tackling some tough entrenched problems. Paragraphs 5,6,7, 8, 9 and 10 form part of the action plan within the Strategy.
- 5.2 The multi-agency approach is building on the previous five year plan which the local Police team led on working with the communities to tackle the pockets of deprivation which exist in parts of Taunton Deane.

6. Somerset Village Agents

- 6.1 Village Agents offer a signposting service to support people living in rural areas across Somerset to bridge the gap between the local community and the statutory or voluntary organisations which offer help or support. The aim is to have a team of fifteen across the County recruited from within the cluster of parishes they will work in. Appointments are ongoing. Look out for local advertisements www.somersetccc.org.uk.
Lead - Katherine Armstrong, Community Council for Somerset.

7. Community Clean Up Days

- 7.1 The clean-ups started about fifteen years ago when individual skips were delivered to the properties of tenants who were not managing their homes and gardens. These then became community clean-ups which gave everyone the opportunity to have a clear out. They started in Halcon the worst affected area where not every household had a vehicle to get to the tip and then into areas where the Estates Officers identified a need.
- 7.2 They are run by the Community Development Team with a core of up to six volunteers from Halcon, support truck from one DLO crew and a large skip(s). This year there have been ten - four in the villages, one in Wellington and five in Taunton filling fifteen (or more) very large skips (electrical goods and metal are taken separately). These days are very popular with the local communities.

8. Halcon Breakfast Club

- 8.1 The Baptist Church at Crossway in Halcon kindly provided the well appointed venue for the Breakfast Club from 10.30 am until midday every Monday and Friday throughout the school holidays. These were run by the Community Development Team supported by local volunteers. After a quiet start, they picked up and around 150 breakfasts were served over the six weeks for a small charge.
- 8.2 The children enjoyed puzzles, games and crafts after their healthy breakfast.

9. Community Activity Days

- 9.1 These very successful days organised out of the Link and Priorswood Community Centres continued over this summer. They encouraged both communities to help organise and take part in local activities once a week in each area during the school holidays. Activity days in Halcon were on a Thursday and in Priorswood on a Tuesday. They were well organised and very well supported.

10. Family Futures (Troubled Families)

- 10.1 The High Contact Families pilot in Highbridge which lasted six months showed that the same trained person visiting a family for a few hours a week could make a significant difference to their lives, reducing their overall dependence, increasing confidence and helping them to tackle their problems. The aims were to improve the lot of those families, streamline services supporting them and in doing so reduce the cost to the state.
- 10.2 The Troubled Families Programme across the country is the successor with Somerset County Council as higher tier authority overseeing the Districts expected to deliver results over three years. Some money has been provided to begin with, the remainder paid on results which roughly translates into Back To School, Back To Work and Back Off Crime only is rather more prescriptive.
- 10.3 Statistics indicate that Taunton Deane has 183 troubled families and in the first year the aim is to help 50 of them. As the Districts are able to adopt their own approach, Taunton Deane would like to make a difference lasting beyond the three years of the programme. To this end it is concentrating on improving what is already there. In the first year it is concentrating on our urban priority areas.
- 10.4 So a lead worker for each family is drawn from those practitioners already visiting, all of whom will meet regularly (practitioners group) to produce an action plan to improve that family's outcomes. Above them will be the strategic group to identify learning, look at outcomes, unblock any barriers to joined up working, plug gaps and look at service redesign, monitor and control the budget.
- 10.5 No one doubts that this will be a challenge but it offers the opportunity to develop the best way to help these families improve their lives with a joined up, streamlined, less intrusive approach which should be more effective and cost less.

11. Safeguarding

- 11.1 Taunton Deane has published its internal 'Children and Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding Policy'. Straightforward, informative, necessary and readable. Lead Officer Vikki Hearn.

Councillor Jane Warmington

Council Meeting – 2 October 2012

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

1. Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)

1.1 In June last year, a Board was appointed along with Chairman, Tim Jones, Vice Chairman Frances Brennan and interim Chief Executive, Liz Waugh. Tim and Frances have just been re-elected for a second term of office. A partner Business Forum open to all businesses and business organisations across Devon and Somerset, was set up in the autumn 2011 to act as a 'critical friend' to the LEP, canvassing business opinion on LEP priorities and advising on related issues.

1.2 The LEP and Taunton Deane have been working together on:

- BD:UK bid regarding Superfast Broadband;
- Growing Places Fund. The LEP secured £21.5m of Government funding to support growing businesses and unlock strategic projects. The Fund operates on a rolling, loan basis. 13 bids have been shortlisted for support, the first tranche of which should receive funding later in September. One project has been shortlisted in Taunton Deane...
- Rural Growth Network. Devon and Somerset successfully bid to be one of five pilot areas for this new Government initiative, attracting £2.9m to the area. The initiative will shortly be rolled out across Devon and Somerset.
- Regional Growth Fund. Successful bids were made in Round 3 by Yeo Valley Foods, Augusta Westland, Exeter Growth Point and The Western Morning News / Plymouth University. The last of those will provide an essential capital funding source for businesses requiring gap funding to expand in Taunton Deane.

The LEP has also submitted representation on various consultation exercises, including on the Strategic Rail Network, EU funding post 2014, and the Nuclear New Build programme at Hinkley Point.

The District Councils of Devon and Somerset have advised the LEP that they have a unique ability to engage with and represent their local communities and businesses, and wish to do so to support the LEP.

2. Taunton Town Centre Company (and BID)

2.1 A Briefing note was sent out in September to all Members updating them with regard to the Business Improvement District (BID). A separate report will be going to Corporate Scrutiny Committee in October.

- 2.2 As BID 2 failed in March, the existing BID ceased on 30 September 2012.
- 2.3 Having reviewed the reasons for the failure of BID 2 the TTCC (Taunton Town Centre Company) decided to address the situation prior to any new campaign by the following:-
1. Develop an interim business plan budget and staffing structure for TTCC to ensure the company remains financially viable;
 2. Work with national retailers at head office level, and public sector bodies to establish key contacts, and support for Taunton. A significant number of the 62% of businesses with a RV over £100,000 failed to vote in favour last time;
 3. Revisit the plans for a future BID proposal, which will address national policy guidelines and local business needs.

The termination of the BID programme will have an immediate consequence on:-

- Marketing and events;
- Cleansing and maintenance;
- Policing and security; and
- Promotion of the town centre.

3. The Brewhouse Theatre and Arts Centre

Brewhouse Cinema

The Theatre has joined up with Curzon Cinemas to screen the latest in independent, European and world film, as well as popular classics, on brand new digital equipment in the Main House. The Cinema was launched in September and is an excellent addition to the cultural offer in the town centre.

Finances

The Trust had a deficit last year, and the Auditor has advised the need to cut costs. The company has responded by reducing staffing levels. Management is keeping a very close eye on the finances this year, and whilst expenditure is close to budget there is enough resource to offer assurance that the Theatre will continue for the rest of this financial year at least. Furthermore, the Trust has ambitious plans to remedy the difficulties by making the business model more robust, for example by introducing new services (i.e. the Limelight Cinema); delivering new formats of theatrical events (i.e. As You Like it in Vivary Park, which attracted 450 people last month); and by planning the expansion of the auditorium.

Planned expansion of auditorium

Talks have been held with The Arts Council, who have expressed interest in offering capital funding towards the £10m project to extend the auditorium. This contribution would be dependent upon securing matching funding, including the local authorities, and would be subject to Planning.

Service Level Agreement (SLA)

Taunton Deane's £152,000 annual contribution is conditional upon us having a robust Service Level Agreement with the Brewhouse. That SLA is currently under preparation and will be completed during October.

4. Marketing Strategy

- 4.1 The Economic Development and Regeneration Team is currently carrying out a review of the marketing activities with the intention of producing a plan on inward investment, visitor and events marketing. The review will consider promotional materials as well as the market intelligence, and will review how effectively business investors are dealt with when they contact the Council's different departments.
- 4.2 Following the recent restructuring of the team, including the joining with Project Taunton, it is appropriate now to align activities with available resources.
- 4.3 A new inward investment marketing campaign, which will comprise a new website and printed materials for Project Taunton and the rest of Taunton Deane, will be finalized and launched in October.

5. Floodlighting of the Borough's Churches

- 5.1 To date thirty one churches have agreed the new scheme, five have declined. The two outstanding are the churches at Stoke St Gregory and Staplegrave. We are still in talks with St James' and hope that eventually a reduced scheme may be agreed.

6. Job Clubs

- 6.1 The VISTA organization, under the direction of Catherine Beedell, is continuing to be very successful in the support it is offering job-seekers. Virtually all job applications are made on line. It is interesting to note that with the introduction of universal credit it is becoming essential to have access to and knowledge of IT. The Halcon Centre is now bursting at the seams and there is a need for more space. In the last eight months VISTA has assisted on 1068 occasions; achieving 32 jobs and now supporting 90 plus people in training and volunteering.
- 6.2 Vista is rolling out its Breakthrough programme in the three centres, and take up amongst local unemployed has increased considerably, particularly in Wellington.

7. Business Support and liaison

- 7.1 The team is currently preparing a Business Support Strategy and Action Plan to define the support available to local firms from the Council and its

partners. Once adopted in November the Strategy will be circulated to all Members.

7.2 Over the past three months close contact has been established and work progressed with the following companies in the Borough:

Swallowfield plc
Relyon & Pritex
Ministry of Cake Ltd
Geist Europe Ltd
Hatchers

The Collar Factory
ADK Design Ltd
Tarmac Building Products
Reviva UK / Edwardos
Summerfield Properties

In the past 3 months Business Start up grants have been paid to two local businesses. Sebastian Tipley, Taunton (short videos for businesses), and Matt Dusting (recycles Upvc into bags) and we are working with a further six applicants (including Stoke St Gregory and Bishop's Hull Post Offices).

The team has also worked proactively with one particular potential inward investor to secure its location to a site in Wellington.

8. Hinkley Nuclear New Build

8.1 The team continues to liaise with EDF Energy over Hinkley on two fronts:-

- Firstly to ensure that the structures and relationships are in place so that Taunton Deane residents are aware of the employment opportunities that will be arising.
- Secondly to ensure that Taunton Deane businesses are in a position to secure contracts to supply to the new power station. Officers attend the monthly EDF Hinkley Supplier Forum to that end.

We are presently liaising closely with potential first and second tier suppliers to Hinkley, to encourage them to locate in Taunton Deane should they be successful in their tenders.

A Members' briefing note updating where the NNB project is up to will be circulated in October.

9. Forthcoming events

9.1 Project Taunton Open Day on Tuesday, 4 October at The Brewhouse Theatre. An opportunity to hear about progress in the regeneration of the town centre. The various organizations locally that deliver and input to projects will be in attendance at the exhibition.

9.2 Dare to Dream business support event, 4 October at Somerset College. This event is targeted at pre-start up businesses, offering them advice and

guidance on how to get on the road of starting a business. Economic Development helps sponsor this event and will be present.

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

1. Visitor numbers and spend

Whilst the reopening of the Library in late July helped boost general business, there has unfortunately been a slight decrease in TIC income and throughput during the summer period.

2. Business Liaison

121 discussions have been held with the Canonsgrove Halls of Residence, the Museum of Somerset and the Somerset Life magazine.

3. Office activities

The TIC team have carried out a complete spring clean of the back office creating potential working space for other colleagues and partners.

An online accommodation booking service has been added to the TIC www.heartofsomerset.com website.

4. New activities planned

The Tourist Information Lead continues to work with the Economic Development Manager on a Marketing Action Plan for the new Economic Development and Regeneration Unit.

Work is being planned this autumn to raise the profile of TIC box office facilities. Already over 50 events have sold their tickets through the TIC the year and the TIC team want to increase the use of this valuable service.

The Cards for Good Causes Charity Christmas Card Shop reopens in the TIC on Friday 5 October, over 30 national and local charity cards and goods will be on sale this year.

The TIC team continue to work closely with the Economic Development Unit, Licensing Section, Project Taunton, Somerset Tourism Association, Taunton Town Centre Company and other organisations to raise the profile of Taunton Deane.

11. Asset Management

- 11.1 Mount Street Former nursery site has now obtained its planning permission for 58 units, requiring 25% affordable housing which is a contribution of £862,000. By the time of this Council meeting, the deal should have been finalized and the capital account of the Council enhanced.

- 11.2 Taunton Youth and Community Centre - One final agreement is formally required with the trustees, and then marketing of this site will commence.
- 11.3 Castle Green has had its final snagging assessment and this fantastic project should be finished and open to the public before this Council meeting.
- 11.4 DLO - The site is being prepared for marketing to enable the Council to assess the actual market value that this site could attract in these present times.
- 11.5 Employment land at Hyde, Bathpool, Taunton - Talks are continuing in a positive manner with the agents of this site with respect to Taunton Deane enabling the development.

Councillor Norman Cavill