

Full Council Meeting – 26 February 2013

Report of Councillor John Williams – Leader of the Council

1. Budget Setting

- 1.1 The Executive's budget proposals for 2013/2014 was presented to Members earlier tonight and I hope by now it has been accepted. An enormous amount of work has gone into making the necessary savings, but as far as possible the vital front line services valued by so many in our community have been maintained.
- 1.2 I put on record my thanks to fellow Members for all their input over months of preparation and particularly to our officers for their unfailing patience and commitment to deliver the best result in these very difficult times in the face of seemingly ever changing directives from Government!
- 1.3 Notwithstanding the severe cuts in Government funding of Local Authorities I am proud to say this is a balanced budget that carefully manages our General Fund Revenue Account which should have little impact on front line services. It earmarks substantial sums from our General Fund accounts for that all important planning and investment for the future in support of our ambitious regeneration and development plans.
- 1.4 The budget concludes with our Housing Revenue Account and Capital Account, the amount we propose to invest in new build, major repairs and extensions is truly historic and ground breaking. I say an historic event because in our Housing Capital Budget we have included the huge sum of £11.7 million for new Council Housing and there is a further £4 million available through Knightstone Housing making it potentially a total of 128 new affordable houses being provided across Taunton Deane.
- 1.5 We are also investing in essential repairs to important assets like the multi-storey car park, refurbishment of Station Road Swimming Pool and actively progressing the urgently required replacement facilities for the aging St James Street Pool, so truly planning and investing for the future.

2. Flood Alleviation Scheme

- 2.1 This remains as work in progress at present and I still hope to bring a draft scheme to Members shortly. However, the in depth feasibility

and design studies being carried out to ensure it is both deliverable and affordable are taking longer than first thought. I can assure Members that this is not through any lack of urgency as it is recognised that delivery of a suitable scheme is as vital to existing homes and businesses as it is for some of the large developments planned for the future.

- 2.2 Getting the detail right is important but I am not aware of any major problems that should ultimately prevent a sensible scheme being deliverable and I hope that draft proposals will be brought before Members in March 2013. It is worth noting that we are getting tremendous support from the Environment Agency giving us confidence that any scheme finalized will be deliverable with their help.
- 2.3 The consultants are also working on guidance which will help in assessing the impact of and allowing development in the town centre to come forward in advance of the strategic solution being provided. This work is also expected to be completed in draft form by March. There is no suggestion that key sites such as Firepool will be delayed in their delivery as a result of flood issues.
- 2.4. I could not pass over flooding issues without recognising the desperate situation that is occurring on the Levels and Moors below Taunton. The sheer length of time that land, buildings and roads have been inundated has caused terrible hardship, much more than in previous years when floods have occurred but not to the extent and depth of the latest unprecedented flooding.
- 2.5 This makes the flood alleviation scheme all the more important if it can hold up vast quantities of water and delay arrival down river but I have no illusions for the quantities witnessed there is no easy solution. With all new development upstream we need to ensure Sustainable Urban Drainage designs (SUDs) are adhered to and is there a valid argument for extensive dredging of the waterways? If so we do need to actively press for this as I suspect no one action can prevent flooding but cumulatively it must make a difference.

3. Northern Inner Distributor Road (NIDR)

- 3.1 The good news is that the Minister has signed off the Compulsory Purchase Order and County Council are just waiting for final confirmation that Government funding is now in place. The scheme was approved some time ago and it now requires the Minister's final sign off to release funds. I understand a tentative start date for the Contractor on site has been agreed for 8 April 2013.
- 3.2 Confirmation that this important project can proceed will provide a tremendous and much needed boost to the marketing of the old livestock market site. The NIDR will provide access to the site and

open up extremely prominent sites for new development with great frontage to the new road and railway station.

4. A303 /A358/A30 Somerset County Council Initiative

- 4.1 The economic case is being finalised for presentation to the Government and hopefully they will find it sufficiently compelling to justify much needed investment in our infrastructure locally. This is very much a County initiative and I welcome it as it has enormous implications for our own future development as it will be the catalyst for so much else.
- 4.2 The immediate benefits for us will be an upgraded Junction 25 which in turn will enable the Henlade bypass and all the concurrent benefits that will flow from it.
- 4.3 We are also working with the County Council on the submission of a £3million bid for funding to improve the Creech Castle junction and reduce the congestion which occurs at that location.

5. Infrastructure Costs and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

- 5.1 We await an updated schedule of total costs but as queries were raised at the recent Full Council meeting with figures I did not recognise, I thought it worth revisiting the early Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) report of June 2011. This was our original assessment of projected infrastructure costs and likely developers contributions.
- 5.2 Table 7.1 is the relevant summary showing £348million total cost and £219million projected developer contributions leaving a £129million shortfall but a substantial amount of this is made up from the health sector and not our responsibility. However, it does clearly indicate the scale of the challenge we face and we will have to be creative and committed to securing substantial external funding. In this respect the Government are quite clear in that Councils that embrace growth will be rewarded.
- 5.3 It is important to note that a revised version of the IDP is currently being prepared to take account of the various amendments as a result of responses to the formal consultation that were considered by Full Council recently. I cannot imagine these will have a positive effect on the reduction of the margin, only increase it, as we have reduced the level of CIL to ensure we maintained viability.

6. Orchard Centre and Quantock House

- 6.1 The Orchard Centre has been successfully sold and completion of the sale occurred early January 2013. We have met with the new owners and it is impressive how they have assembled a large professional team to review all aspects of the business, benefits and constraints, on retail trade in Taunton with a view to investing in the centre. They appear committed to taking forward an extension to the centre in conjunction with us and have already prepared sketch plans of how this may look which have been shared with our officers.
- 6.2 They are fully aware of the risks of out of town shopping harming the town centre and I believe will work with us to try and prevent this hence the swift action in assembling the professional team to advise the best way forward.
- 6.3 There is also a recognition that our multi-storey car park is the main access to their centre for a lot of visitors. They are open to discussion about working with us to make the car park far more welcoming and certainly wish to help with changing the method of parking payment from “pay and display” to “pay on exit” to remove the uncertainty for time limited shoppers. This has to be excellent news and one we are pursuing.
- 6.4 Our officers have been in negotiation with the owners of Quantock House. Heads of Terms have been agreed and a report to a special Full Council will follow shortly. If I have further information at the time of presenting this report I will update Members accordingly.

7. West Somerset District Council

- 7.1 This has been the subject of various meetings and a very detailed report to scrutiny recently so I will not reiterate old ground but feel it important to say that if we do not review the possibility of shared services or joint management then we will not have any credibility with the Government.
- 7.2 They are clearly of the opinion that all Councils should be considering this so I would encourage you to accept and let us proceed at a pace and direction in our control. We can then at least make objective decisions based on fact as we have taken the trouble to assess and analyze. Anything less would leave us extremely vulnerable when we reach our own “Fiscal Cliff” as referred to in the report to Scrutiny.

Finally, a great story of personal initiative!

Community Development

A group of 18-25 year olds from Halcon approached Community Development a few months ago because they were unable to continue using the youth club or Street Linkz which are for under 18's. They were keen to set up a space of their own not just for somewhere to hang out but with access to a computer and as a base for some local training as they are keen to work.

They were linked up with Fixers (a voluntary body which aims to help towards solving problems) who have made a DVD with the young men about their environment, what they see is missing and what might be done to help them help themselves. ITV picked up on this and I was interviewed to comment on encouraging self help and how we (through the Community Development Team under the umbrella of the Priority Area Strategy) can offer support.

Community Development would like to set up a pilot project running over six months and I suggested a possible venue in the empty (charity) shop in Halcon. This is being followed up through Housing and Asset Management and will be great if we are able to help these young people help themselves.

Councillor John Williams

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Report of Councillor Jane Warmington - Community Leadership

1. Police and Crime Plan

- 1.1 Sue Mountstevens, the new Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner visited Taunton Deane last month to consult the public on the new Police and Crime Plan and community priorities for policing. The online consultation closes at the end of this month.
- 1.2 The refreshed Somerset Community Safety Strategic Assessment has also fed into this consultation from the Safer Somerset Partnership.
- 1.3 Other local feedback has included more funding for wider community involvement such as Community Justice Panels and Community Speedwatch. There is interest in rolling out the Street Pastor Scheme beyond Taunton Deane; support for the Neighbourhood Policing Teams (which include the PCSOs); continued CCTV coverage; better victim support through one integrated service; and more help with drug rehabilitation.

2. Voluntary and Community Sector Grants and the Youth Fund

- 2.1 Four more projects have been supported in this financial year by the Grants Panel as a result of some underspend.
- 2.2 Applications for small grants in the next financial year closed after a six week period half way through February. The Panel has met to consider both these and the service level agreements starting in April 2013. These will be published in the Weekly Bulletin and should be in time for those projects starting just after Easter which is so early this year.
- 2.3 We are very grateful for the transfer of nearly £30,000 from Somerset County Council (SCC) for 2013/2014 only, which is there to support youth projects.

3. Health and Wellbeing

- 3.1 The new **drop-in GP surgery** at the Acorns in Halcon, Taunton is now open on Tuesdays from 11am until 1.30pm. This is a pilot project set up between the Blackbrook and Victoria Gate Practices whose surgeries are a long walk away. Please encourage residents to use it so that it stays.

4. Community Development

- 4.1 The bid to SCC's Community Enablement Fund by Councillor Brooks (supported by Councillor Jane Warmington) for the **Link Power** Project was unsuccessful. However the project which began in September 2012 is already growing and

funding (mainly for training and equipment) will be looked for by partners from elsewhere.

- 4.2 This project is an initiative from the Police as a way to address two issues - unemployment and a deteriorating local environment in Halcon.
- 4.3 A group of four young men who were already volunteering (on TDBC housing estate community clean-up days every two weeks in the summer) wanted to do more. An inclement summer and reduced local authority spending had meant long grass, weeds and accumulated litter which were causing concern locally. Added to this is a perception of a poor trolley collection service for Asda.
- 4.4 The first work undertaken was to tidy up the grounds of the local church (All Saints) where overgrown pathways were cleared, lawns mowed and litter collected resulting in a dramatic improvement in the appearance of the area and wholehearted community support. This was then extended to include general litter picking and trolley collections across the area (supported by Asda who also provide breakfast for the volunteers in their staff canteen). The volunteers work for three mornings a week.
- 4.5 Training has been provided to enable them to use hand tools and some power tools in public spaces and alongside roads. A programme of work has been identified ahead. The number of volunteers has now grown to thirteen (so more training now required) and the area is really benefitting.
- 4.6 The project is run from the Link Centre and is supported by partner organisations. At the moment the lead for Link Power sits with the local PCSO Linda Ebdon with support from Taunton Deane's Community Development Officer Penny Comley-Ross.
- 4.7 The aim of the project is to get the local community through a group of trained supported volunteers to be responsible for the look and feel of the area they live in. The volunteers would gain work experience (and all that this involves including discipline, reliability, collaborative working, using initiative and developing leadership and communication skills) and recognised training qualifications which would hopefully help them into full time employment.
- 4.8 This work fits into Priority 4 of the Priority Area Strategy (PAS) 'to improve the look and feel of these areas'. The PAS is the action plan of the Taunton Deane Partnership.
- 4.9 Our local MP and Home Office Minister for Crime Prevention Jeremy Browne has recently visited the project, been shown around by and talked to some of the team of volunteers. His visit was much appreciated as is his letter of support.
- 4.10. **Halcon Supported Sports Project** aims to nurture 9-11 year olds within the ward into sports activities and for them to aspire to join clubs such as Taunton Rugby Club, Taunton Town Football club, other youth clubs or local sides.
- 4.11 The Halcon Ward has seen significant investment over recent years, especially in relation to new and upgraded open spaces. Viridor Green was specifically designed to incorporate equipment that would encourage and develop healthier

living. It has a purpose built multi use games area, which offers a protected arena, ensuring safe play.

- 4.12 Local businesses, members of Taunton Rugby Football Club, Taunton Town Football Club, the School and current partners operating within the Halcon Ward would like to deliver a programme of Tag Rugby from both Halcon Primary School and Viridor Green during the summer. Further sporting activities to be considered under the same plan include Football Coaching and Street Hockey.
- 4.13 **Halcon Brunch Club** served up nearly sixty breakfasts over two mornings during half term. Families also enjoyed board games and other activities. The number of local volunteers is growing.
- 4.14 The **Graffiti Art Project** began at the Link Centre this half term for 8-12 year olds with an introductory session on paper to develop technique. This will be followed up with three more sessions over Easter and Whitsuntide working on two local teen shelters and if there is time some panels to brighten up some park fencing. This is a Community Development project (with bought in expertise) to challenge some of the livelier local boys. They have already produced some terrific art work.
- 4.14 The first **community clean up** day of the year has taken place in Priorswood with partners Knightstone Housing Association.
- 4.15 Priorswood Resource Centre is hoping to open a **youth drop in** one evening a week, an idea born of seeing local youngsters hanging about outside with nowhere really for them to meet up. Recognising and responding to a local need.
- 4.16 A new **Youth Cafe** has opened on Friday evenings (and some Saturdays) in the old chapel at the top of Paul Street in Taunton Town Centre. This is a lovely shared space with CICCIC the local business based there. Some Taunton Deane small grants money has helped this to open amongst others not least Asda. It has been set up by Stand Against Violence.
- 4.17 Please refer to the Leaders Report for details of **17-24ers**, the older youngsters who made the film with Fixers and are looking for their own space to look after, use and develop in Halcon.

5. Priority Areas Strategy (PAS)

- 5.1 The Spatial Planning Working Group (SPWG) is a sub group of the Taunton Deane Partnership and was set up under the Local Development Framework. The group is Chaired by Councillor Andy Govier and has developed a rural focus as it is well supported by parishes and rural organisations.
- 5.2 It has now agreed to take on the rural aspects of the PAS which is to be welcomed. Key issues include the difficulties for rural areas to access services, transport and advice. Rural isolation is a problem as is fuel poverty particularly for the elderly and also for teenagers.
- 5.3 The rural areas by their very nature are harder to assess as scattered communities with few local services. Communities tend to be more self reliant.

- 5.4 A very good example of self reliance is the Wiveliscombe Area Partnership (WAP) which pre-dates other resource centres, which set itself up and continues to respond to needs across its wider community. It is a beacon. The Wivey Link, their community transport service is needed, efficient, hugely valued and very well used.
- 5.5 Delivering rural services tends to be more expensive though and something of a challenge. Sadly we are seeing this with West Somerset District Council which we at Taunton Deane are endeavouring to try and help out with.

6. Family Focus (Troubled Families)

- 6.1 The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has visited Somerset and are concerned about the slow progress across the districts in signing up families to the Troubled Families programme. That said, 70% of the sign up to date has been in Taunton Deane where we have 20 families and expect to have signed up many more by the end of March.
- 6.2 The DCLG have seen the best results where family intervention workers were put in place to work closely with the families, show persistency, assertiveness and be challenging with those families by providing support but not creating dependency. We know this is successful from the pilot in Highbridge. This has been shown to be successful elsewhere but there was concern about how sustainable this was.
- 6.3 The Taunton Deane model to date has been based on workers from different agencies taking on a 'key contact' role with families. However progress is slow and available capacity is getting rapidly used up. So there is now a need to recruit some family intervention workers as well to take responsibility for a number of families each if we want to try and turn the lives of these families around.
- 6.4 This investment in capacity will be met from the upfront Central Government funding given to us for the project (£163,000) which is as yet largely unspent.
- 6.5 With increased capacity we have agreed to cover West Somerset's Troubled Families programme (40 families in total) and have received £70,000 to do so.
- 6.6 The Troubled Families project is extremely challenging both in the families we are dealing with and with changing the mindset of agencies who have worked in silos for years. That said the project has the potential to change the way local government and other agencies interact and work in deprived areas. It will not be a quick fix but now we do have the opportunity.
- 6.7 These families lives will be better and with other community development work already underway we can aim to prevent other families in the future ending up being highly dependent and as unhappy as these families are. The numbers will reduce over time as will the enormous associated costs. I really do believe that everyone wins if we tackle this.
- 6.8 For a regular update visit www.tauntondeane.gov.uk/familyfocus

7. Equalities and Diversity

- 7.1 South West Audit Partnership recently undertook an audit of the Borough Council's

approach to equalities and diversity. They scrutinised various Executive reports and undertook interviews with various members of staff. They found some good practice, but ultimately there are short-comings and concerns relating to:-

- lack of awareness regarding responsibilities in relation of legislative requirements;
- the degree of understanding; and
- wide variations in the quality and appropriate use of Equality Impact Analysis (EIA).

7.2 In response, the Strategy and Performance Unit have prepared a Corporate Equalities Action Plan (CEAP). This will be considered by the Corporate Management Team (CMT) during early March. The action plan (if approved) will deliver the following:-

- Effective performance monitoring Executive reports (including quality compliance);
- Improvements to Equality Actions Plans (for inclusion within Service Plans);
- Training for CMT/Leads and all new staff;
- Training for Members every four years; and
- Equality Surgeries for staff on a monthly basis.

7.3 In all there are over 20 actions within the CEAP. The aim is to embed equalities within the organisation, thereby ensuring we deliver inclusive services and ensure that we reduce the risk of legal challenge.

Councillor Jane Warmington

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

We have recruited two new members for the Economic Development and Regeneration Team (ED), and both officers have now started. Anne-Marie Spalding is the new ED Lead, she has worked in Somerset for a considerable number of years, including a period as Head of ED at Sedgemoor. Most recently she was the Programme Manager for the Western Somerset Local Action for Rural Communities. Anne-Marie will be leading on support for inward investors, and our services to assist people into work via Job Clubs, EDF Employment Brokerage and others.

Sally Attfield has been recruited through the Somerset College Apprenticeship Scheme. She will be working across all sections of ED to provide admin and project support.

1. Launch of Taunton Means Business

- 1.1 This was launched in November, as the new inward investment web site for Taunton Deane. In January a media/PR company was appointed – A Head for PR – who will be carrying out a three month programme to raise awareness of the site and the support the Council is able to offer investors.
- 1.2 In February a meeting was held to further plan the following activities:-
 - Production of a 3 minute video, to be made in the last week of February, featuring successful local businesses and the USP's of the area;
 - A Regional Business Breakfast, hosted jointly with Business Insider magazine;
 - Social media activities;
 - PR campaign; and
 - Case studies of local businesses.
- 1.3 In April the Council will rejoin Into Somerset, which will strengthen and be complementary to our own marketing work.

2. Rigid Containers Limited

- 2.1 The Council has been working closely over several months with the new investor at Chelston Park, Rigid Containers. The company is taking the former Cooperative Distribution depot and is currently seeking planning permission on the property. Initially 40 jobs assembling and distributing cardboard boxes will be created, and the site, when fully developed, intends to create in the order of 150 FTE's.

- 2.2 We are pleased to have gained this investment for Wellington against strong competition from other areas, and to have been able to support them in a number of ways. In particular, to be able to offer them funding under our new Investment Grant Scheme which was a major incentive in enabling Rigid Containers' investment in our area.

3. Mid-Summer Festival

- 3.1 This event, to be held on Saturday, 16 June 2013, based around the town centre and Castle Green, is being organized by the Events Group. This Group is part of the legacy of the Olympic Torch Relay Events Group and continues to be chaired by Councillor Mark Edwards.
- 3.2 The Group is made up of many local cultural organizations and supported by the Town Centre Company and the ED Team. The activities will use the town centre's various open spaces, Castle Green, Goodlands Gardens and Somerset Square. It is also hoped that North Street can be closed for sports activities amongst the local schools.

4. Business Start up Grants and Rural Retailer Grants

- 4.1 Recently, awards have been made to the Lamb and Flag Pub in Blagdon Hill, who are setting up a local Post Office, and the Churchinford Village Shop. At the moment two more applications for start-up business grants are under consideration. So far, this year, ten new businesses and five rural retail businesses have been supported.

5. Hinkley Nuclear New Build

- 5.1 We are working closely with EDF Energy to enable Taunton Deane businesses and residents to benefit from the major investment soon to be going into Hinkley Point C. The final investment decision by EDF is expected in the early summer of this year.
- 5.2 *Hinkley Supplier Forum.* EDF commissioned the Somerset Chamber of Commerce to set up the Hinkley Supplier Portal. In excess of 1,000 businesses are now registered on the web portal, setting out the products and services they could offer to the development. In January the Council supported a 'Meet the Buyer' event at the County Ground, hosted by Kier Bam, to which local businesses were invited to meet with the company's procurement team. Our officers attend monthly Supplier Engagement Forum meetings where updates on progress are given, including appointment of contractors.
- 5.3 *Hinkley Employment Brokerage.* MAC is the contractor appointed by EDF to ensure the availability of local employees for EDF and its primary suppliers. We meet on a monthly basis with them and the Employment Brokerage is already actively encouraging local people to

sign up to a Talent Pool. We are also working with MAC and Somerset College, through our Job Clubs and other mechanisms, to ensure that Taunton Deane residents are aware of this resource.

6. Taunton Town Centre Company

- 6.1 The Company has carried out a fundamental review of its structure and its role. This means that all businesses that take up membership will have an opportunity to nominate and elect the Board members.
- 6.2 As a result of this and other initiatives that have been taken, as an outcome of face to face meetings with town centre businesses, I am pleased to say that there has been an increase in Membership and many more positive comments on the benefits of a Town Centre Company. A decision on whether or not to proceed with another BID ballot will be taken by the new company Board later this year.

7. Make it Your Business, Wellington Business Event

- 7.1 The ED Team was pleased to support the Wellington Business Association in delivering the annual business event in Wellington on Wednesday, 13 February 2013. The event was attended by around 50 local businesses seeking advice and support on growing their business. It is good to see that there are companies seeking to expand and that they are choosing Taunton Deane.

8. Asset Management

- 8.1 In Goodlands Gardens work on conversion of the toilets and future lease scheme have been agreed. Redevelopment of the site should commence this month.
- 8.2 Sale of TYCC: Negotiations with the prospective purchasers are continuing in respect of Heads of Terms, planning and liability or not for CIL.
- 8.3 High Street: The lighting project being managed by the Public Arts Panel now has a costed scheme, and with the assistance of Reed Holland, an application will be made to the Arts Council. Some of the funding that the Council would contribute would already be part of the upgrading of power to the High Street.

9. Tourism and the Arts Update

- 9.1 **Visitor numbers and spend**
Whilst visitor throughput and spend has slightly decreased in this quarter (which can be partially blamed on the recent poor weather), the Cards for Good Causes Christmas Card shop bucked national trends and reported an increase in sales year on year.

9.2 Tourism Update and business support

In addition to the general advice offered to new and existing tourism businesses. The Tourist Information Lead continues to work with the trade-led Somerset Tourism Association (STA) in their efforts to promote the county as a tourist destination. Current STA initiatives include a conference in Wells in April to discuss their future priorities and marketing strategy and the launch of the first annual Somerset Tourism Awards taking place in May.

9.3 The TIC Team have assisted the Brewhouse Theatre and Orchard Shopping Centre with their public art project 'Snout and About'.

9.4 Support has also been given to the Museum of Somerset who are organising their first Literature Exchange event at the Museum on Monday, 4 March 2013 (between 10am and 1pm).

9.5 New activities planned

The annual refresh of the office will take place over the next few weeks in preparation for the start of the new season at the end of March.

The TIC Team continues to work to raise the profile of and market Taunton Deane, and does an excellent job.

9.6 Hestercombe Gardens

The Hestercombe Centre for young musicians had its opening concert on Saturday, 16 February 2013. The Guildhall School of Music and Drama has forged a new relationship with both Somerset and Norfolk music education hubs. Talented children will be invited to audition for places at the Hestercombe Centre for Young Musicians (CYM).

9.7 The centre, with 90 rooms available, will be able to offer fantastic support to young musicians, forming part of the South West Music School. It is very much hoped that, in partnership with the Music Hub, the Guildhall School can offer talented young musicians in Somerset the same opportunities it is able to provide in London.

Councillor Norman Cavill

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Report of Councillor Ken Hayward – Environmental Services

1. Environmental Health

1.1 The Council is involved in two significant Health and Safety prosecutions:-

- The first relates to the investigation of the M5 crash in 2011 and is being lead by the Crown Prosecution Service, with the Council's support.
- The second relates to an incident at a farm machinery sale, also in 2011. A telehandler operator and an individual from a local business are answering offences under the Health and Safety at Work Act. This will be the subject of an initial hearing on 1 March 2013.

Both have involved significant officer time to get them to this stage.

1.2 The Council is subject to an objection to the accounts relating to fees and charges levied against the Taxi and Private Hire trade. A local elector has lodged the complaint. The Council has responded to this objection and this is with the Council's Auditors for an initial assessment prior to adjudication being made as to whether a Public Inquiry is necessary. The background to this case was discussed at Corporate Governance Committee on 4 February 2013, where papers can be referenced. The Council has been able to use this process to ensure that the fee setting process remains robust for the coming financial year and has developed a model which will be able to inform fee setting across other areas of Licensing.

1.3 Food inspections are much in the news and the Food Team will be completing all of its highest risk inspections this year. This helps to maintain the standards expected by the public and the authorities and to ensure public health. There is a danger that medium risk inspections will not all be completed this year although the expectation is that the majority of these will be completed by the end of the year. This has been caused by the increased workload in Health and Safety and an increased inspection burden relating to butchers in particular. This increased burden has come about due to new guidance from the Food Standards Agency relating to the specific risk caused by eColi 0157.

This further means that a number of the lowest risk inspections will not be completed. A programme will be put into place to tackle this in 2013/2014.

1.4 Taunton Deane Borough Council will be hosting other Local Authorities from across Somerset on the 12 March 2012 as part of a Partnership Action Day. Items on the agenda include an update from the Health and Safety Executive who are consulting on reforms of the Health and Safety regulations; guidance on asbestos; and our own staff leading on event management following the successful operation of several high profile events last year, not least the Olympic Torch.

2. Climate Change / Carbon Management

2.1 Blackbrook Solar PV project:

A business case has been worked up for installing up to 50kW of solar PV to the roof of the Indoor Tennis Centre at Blackbrook Pavilion. The project would cost £80,000 and create an income of approximately £180,000 over 25 years. The payback is about 9.6 years. The carbon savings are 23 tones per year.

On 10 January 2013, the Carbon Management Steering Group agreed the project in principle and subject to a 'sound' roof has tasked Roger Mitchinson and Torsten Daniels to produce a report for Scrutiny in March.

A structural engineer has been appointed to model whether the roof can take the additional weight of the solar PV installation. The results of his assessment will be known by the end of this month.

2.2 Progress on Schneider project:

We have agreed a final package of energy saving measures for Schneider to be priced up. Schneider will produce a final report for Blackbrook, Wellsprings and Wellington Sport Centre by the end of February. The internal project group will discuss the outcomes of this report and make a recommendation to Scrutiny.

The report will not include Taunton Pool and The Deane House. The proposals for Taunton Pool have been 'parked' due to a pending bid for refurbishing the pool using Sport England funding (outcomes to be known end of March 2013).

Southwest One decided that they are not interested in progressing the project for The Deane House. The returns from implementing the energy efficiency measures proposed for The Deane House – £5,000 per year during the rental period – do not make it viable.

2.3 Taunton Pool Solar PV installation:

The data screen at Taunton Pool is now operational. Additional information about the project – a notice board and leaflets – is available for pool customers.

2.4 Implementation process of Carbon Management and Energy Resilience Plan (CMERP):

Current CMERP for 2012/2013 contains 45 actions of which by Mid January 2013:-

- 25 were either completed or on track of completion;
- 16 actions were off track or have uncertainties with regard to successful delivery by April 2013;
- 4 actions that had been cancelled for technical or other reasons

3. Cremation Services

- 3.1 The installation of three new cremators and mercury filtration equipment is a major project at the crematorium and is progressing extremely well.
- 3.2 The new cremators are very sophisticated enabling close control over the cremation process, which is far quicker, cleaner and more efficient than the previous equipment. The handover date for the new equipment is May 2013.
- 3.3 There is a new private crematorium being built at Pawlett, Bridgwater which is understood will be completed in October, this will consequently reduce the number of cremations received at Taunton crematorium and be reflected in future budgets.

Councillor Ken Hayward

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

1. Parks

- 1.1 Vivary Park, Taunton has continued to struggle with the bad weather and has been closed on various days to protect the park when there has been standing water. Some of the edges of the grass have become quite badly damaged so we are putting protective fencing up in areas to try and let the grass recover once repaired.
- 1.2 We have written to the local secondary schools and various other youth groups in Taunton inviting them to use the bandstand in Vivary Park at weekends from May onwards. I hope that we will get a positive response to this as it would be great to see the bandstand used for more live performances.

2. Community Leisure and Play

Some details on play and outdoor recreation Section 106 Agreement spend over the last year:-

- 2.1 **Wellington Playing Field Pavilion** - Work has commenced on the £355,073.00 refurbishment and extension of the Wellington Playing Field Pavilion, and expected to take 26 weeks. The existing Pavilion facilities did not comply with current regulations or meet National Governing Body Standards. The building was inadequate in size to cater for the number of teams using the site. Furthermore it did not enable women's, men's and children's teams to use the facilities at the same time. The project cost is being met from Section 106 Agreement developer contributions together with a grant of £125,858 from the Sport England Inspired Facilities Grant Scheme.
- 2.2 **Wiveliscombe Lion d'Angers** - After consultation with Wiveliscombe Parish Council the Section 106 funding from the development at Tucker's Meadow has been spent on a climbing frame, which has been installed in Taunton Deane's children's play area at Lion d' Angers.
- 2.3 **Taunton, French Weir Park** – Section 106 children's play contributions have been used to install a climbing wall and sand play equipment in French Weir Park. The equipment was chosen by local children who were consulted on behalf of the Council by the Friends of French Weir Park.
- 2.4 **Taunton, Lyngford Park** - A first for Taunton Deane Borough Council. Outdoor gym equipment requested by the local community at Priorswood has been installed at Lyngford Park, using Section 106 outdoor recreation contributions.

- 2.5 **Taunton, Longrun Meadows** - Cycle jumps and picnic tables have been installed at Longrun Meadows using Section 106 outdoor recreation contributions, at the request of the Friends of Longrun Meadows.
- 2.6 **Taunton, Goodland Gardens** - Section 106 outdoor recreation contributions have provided additional benches in Goodland Gardens.

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 Weight Management

- 3.2.1 The Community Pounds project has finished in Halcon, Taunton with over 20 residents signing up and losing weight. The participants will be continuing their success through attending physical activity classes.

3.3 NHS Health Checks

- 3.3.1 NHS Health Checks created a partnership with the Clinical Commissioning Group to ensure that NHS Health Checks remain an important part of the agenda across Taunton Deane. Health Checks will take place within the community in a number of different locations at Health Promotion events in the coming weeks.

3.4 Volunteering Strategy

- 3.4.1 Since launching the Volunteers' Strategy Tone has recruited approximately ten volunteers to date in various posts such as Health Walk Leaders, Flexercise Leaders and Promotional Assistants. A Volunteer Celebration event will take place in March 2013 to recognise the work Tone's volunteers have been doing.

3.5 Hearts and Soles Nordic Walking

- 3.5.1 Cold and wet weather has certainly not deterred people from trying Nordic Walking! Since 31st October 45 people have done a taster session and 86% of them have gone on to learn the full technique by doing the Learn to Nordic Walk course. Many of the participants are new to Tone Leisure.
- 3.5.2 Instructor-led Adventure walks are now taking place twice weekly from various meeting points across the district including leisure centres, parks and green spaces in the towns, in villages and on the Quantock Hills. Tone are working to convert those who have completed the course into regular walkers.
- 3.5.3 Participations in the programme are expected to grow during 2013 as further tasters and courses are provided and additional Adventure walks are put on.

The next step is recruiting and training volunteer leaders to help lead the Adventure walks. The project, Hearts and Soles Nordic Walking has been part-funded by the British Heart Foundation and will help older adults in Taunton Deane, particularly heart patients and their family members to lead an active lifestyle.

Facility News

3.6 Wellington Sports Centre

3.6.1 With assistance from the Somerset Activity Sports Partnership (SASP) team Wellington has launched two ladies' netball sessions. In just six weeks there are already two regular training sessions held at the centre and lots more ladies interested.

3.6.2 In January Tone held two Pony Club Triathlons - both were very successful and well supported. The Annual Aquathon is taking place on Sunday, 17 February 2013 and again this event has proved very popular.

3.6.3 The Health Suite has been closed since 16 December 2012 due to the Sauna cabin failing a service inspection. Tone has been working closely with Taunton Deane Borough Council to replace the unit and also refurbish the facility. The Health Suite is expected to re-open early in the new financial year.

3.7 Taunton Tennis Centre

3.7.1 Tone has successfully secured funding and recruited a new Tennis Apprentice to add to the staffing at the Tennis Club. The Apprentice is employed on a fixed term contract for 12 months, allowing Tone to expand class sizes when they are used as an assistant and cover coaches' annual leave and sickness seamlessly with consistency of coaching.

3.7.2 Tennis tournaments at Taunton Tennis Club have been very successful to date, mainly due to the personnel involved in running the events and the central location in the South West of England. Over the winter period Tone has expanded the tournament programme to deliver new timed match play events for juniors and 'open' events for adults to compete.

3.8 Wellsprings Leisure Centre

3.8.1 Following the opening of the Wyvern Day Nursery in June Wellsprings has now joined with Wyvern and is offering a crèche facility to the customers, which started in January 2013.

3.9 Vivary Adventure Centre and Vivary Golf Course

3.9.1 The last few months have been a testing time for both the Adventure Centre and the Golf Course - the park has flooded three times since November 2012, causing closure to the whole centre.

3.9.2 The Golf Course has been water logged for a considerable amount of time and has only been open for ten days since 21 November 2012. The Mini Golf

and the Adventure Centre suffered for 2-4 days each time the park flooded due to access.

3.9.3 The High Ropes course has seen over 7,000 visitors since opening in June 2012 with many schools starting to make enquiries, birthday parties being booked and general awareness increasing every day.

3.10 Taunton Pool

3.10.1 Swimfit is a seven week course designed to help improve fitness. It can be quite challenging and is ideal for those wanting to push themselves to new fitness goals. Its popularity last year has meant extra courses being offered this year on Monday and Wednesday evenings.

3.11 St. James Street

3.11.1 A new Water Polo Club started on Sunday, 6 January 2013. Bookings have really taken off for the new venture, working in partnership with Taunton Deane Swimming Club. The sessions led by Rose Younger, an ex - GB goalie and team captain, have proved a great success.

Councillor Catherine Herbert.

Council Meeting – 26 February 2013

Report of Councillor Mrs Jean Adkins – Housing Services

1. Housing Enabling - Regeneration

- 1.1 The Creechbarrow Road, Taunton scheme, which has been brought forward following further consultation with residents and stakeholders has received support from the Tenant Services Management Board, the Community Scrutiny Committee and the Executive. The approval of Full Council will be sought on 4 March 2013.
- 1.2 This scheme is a first for Taunton Deane, as it involves a joint undertaking between Housing Services and a Registered Provider, but will build on experience gained in other “traditional” Regeneration schemes, particularly around decanting tenants.
- 1.3 Decanting is currently underway at Parmin Close, Taunton and a new package of tailored support to assist elderly and vulnerable tenants is about to be introduced. We hope this will help to allay the concerns naturally felt by tenants faced with a move.
- 1.4 Construction on other sites has been delayed by the weather and, at Ruskin Close, Taunton, by a Highways issue.

2. Affordable Housing Target

- 2.1 Due to the problems mentioned above and, as I mentioned in my last report, the fact that a large number of completions were scheduled for Quarter 4, the danger of slippage has been realised. It is now unlikely that the target of 200 units will be reached by year end.
- 2.2 46 units at Ruskin Close have been moved into the 2013/2014 pipeline, although 14 of these could complete earlier if the Highways issue is resolved.
- 2.3 Some of the shortfall may well be made up by Firstbuy sales on the many developments offering this scheme, which is proving very popular. Figures will be provided by the Homes and Communities Agency.
- 2.4 Although this is very disappointing, taking into account that for the last two years the target has been exceeded (by 23 last year and 6 the year

before), we may still achieve the targeted 600 over the three year period. There will also be a healthy start to achieving the target, again 200, for 2013/2014.

3. Sellicks Green, Blagdon Hill

- 3.1 Councillor Jane Warmington, representing the Leader of the Council, and I recently attended the opening of Sellicks Green, where four Affordable Homes, two of which are Shared Ownership, for local people have been built by one of the members of our Affordable Housing Partnership, Raglan. This has been achieved without Government grant.
- 3.2 Although the numbers are not hugely significant in terms of our target, nevertheless a welcome contribution, they are of major significance in the small local community. Built by local builders, Tottle Brothers, on land used previously as their yard, to Code 3 with Air Source Heat Pumps, they meet a local need.
- 3.3 We viewed one of the Shared Ownership homes and were then able to meet the tenant of one of the other properties, who kindly showed us around and was thrilled with her new home.
- 3.4 If such a development were built in every village in Taunton Deane, this would go a long way towards meeting rural housing need.

4. Right to Buy Sales

- 4.1 Sales stood at 23 at Quarter 3, with total receipts of £1,573,693.
- 4.2 The retainable receipts, £831,587 can be used for building more Council Houses or put to Enabling schemes for Affordable Housing. Of these £2,771,957 have to be spent within three years and the Council has to supply match funding under the revised Right to Buy scheme.

5. Council House Building

- 5.1 The four Phase One sites (3 in Taunton and 1 at West Bagborough), which include a scheme for 4 Passiv Haus, are progressing towards planning applications .
- 5.2 These units and those at Creechbarrow Road, will count towards our Affordable Housing targets, with the 30 Knightstone units due to be completed by March 2015.

6. Housing Services

- 6.1 The contract for fascias and soffits has now been awarded to DR Jones with work due to start shortly.
- 6.2 As well as the Council House building programme, the Business Plan is investing heavily in our existing stock. The budget for 2013/2014 includes £7.7 million of work (a similar amount would have been handed over to the Government under the old Subsidy system).

7. Estates Management – Voids

- . The average time to relet empty properties is now 20.85 days, just within the target of 21 days. This is a significant achievement with voids on the increase and we have also seen an improvement in new tenants' satisfaction with the standard of the property, 93% against a target of 86%.

8. Estates Management – Benefit Changes

- 8.1 Work has been under way to try and mitigate the impact of Welfare changes on our tenants. A leaflet entitled "What you need to know about changes to housing benefit" has been distributed to all tenants. There have also been articles in the Deane Housing News.
- 8.2 Welfare Reform visits have been made by the Welfare Reform Project Officer, Michaela Mullen, to those tenants whom we can identify as being affected (around 500, but subject to change).
- 8.3 Appointment letters were sent to 105 tenants. 13 wanting to downsize were seen and of these 3 mutual exchanges have been agreed, one direct match and two have successfully bid on Homefinder Somerset.
- 8.4 All those visited have been offered help to complete application forms, advice on the Homefinder system and also help with financial statements, where required.
- 8.5 We have a pot of money set aside for Transfer Removal Grants to assist those for whom the expense of a move is unaffordable, on a first come first served basis.
- 8.6 The Tenants' Forum are hosting a Tenant Information Day on 20th February at the Cricket Ground at which Michaela will be present and also a team from Revenues and Benefits to offer advice.
- 8.7 In association with Shelter, we are offering three workshop sessions at the The Deane House on 7 March 2013 for tenants wishing to learn about budgeting and money management. The response has been

excellent with a number of places already booked at the time of writing this report. If you know of anyone who might be interested, they can telephone 01823 356319 to book a place.

Councillor Mrs Jean Adkins

Council Meeting - 26 February 2013

Report of Councillor Mrs Vivienne Stock-Williams - Corporate Resources

1. Customer Contact Centre

1.1 Service Delivery

The past quarter, November 2012 – January 2013, proved an interesting challenge for the Contact Centre due to the weather situation, which considerably increased both the number of calls and the challenges staff faced in their determination to come into work. The service did, however, achieve significant success with its performance. The team also managed to continue with their planned annual development programme during this difficult period. For the fourth year running, the Centre operated a telephone service between Christmas and New Year, with approximately 75% of usual call volumes. In January 2013, there was increase in call volumes of about 6% above last year's figure. Despite this increase, there was an improvement in overall performance due to the increase in multi-skilling which has been developed within the service.

1.2 Training

The purchase by Southwest One of the Customer Contact Centre's new e-learning tool – Knowlagent – is now complete and the software is installed. Initial soft skills courses have been rolled out to all advisors in the service. Service specific training courses are currently in the process of being designed and rolled out and these are being well received. The most recent training related to the Garden Waste renewal process.

1.3 Telephony Refresh

All approvals have now been received for the refresh of the Contact Centre's telephony hardware and software systems. Managers are currently working with procurement and the suppliers to reach contract signature. It is expected that implementation of the new call distribution system will take place during the summer 2013 and Members will be updated on progress and performance on a regular basis. The system will be designed to provide a greater level of resilience. It will also enable us to introduce a 24/7 automated payment service, which has been under discussion with the Authority for several years. Additionally, there will be an automated switchboard facility, which will make it easier to transfer people who know to whom they wish to speak, leaving advisers free to deal with customer queries.

1.4 Statistical Information – November 2012 to January 2013:

Service Line	Reporting Authority	KPI No	Performance Measure	Frequency of Reporting	2012/2013 Target	Nov-12	Dec-12	Jan-13	Feb-13	Mar-13
						QUARTER 3			QUARTER 4	
Customer Contact	TDBC	1	% of calls answered in 20 secs	Monthly	80%	86%	87%	80.16%		
Customer Contact	TDBC	2	% of calls resolved at first point of contact	Monthly	92%	96%	97%	98%		
Customer Contact	TDBC	3	% of external customers rating the Customer Contact service as Very Good/Good	Annually (monitored quarterly)	75%		87%			
Customer Contact	TDBC	4	Abandoned call rate - less than 5%	Monthly	<5%	3.49%	2.66%	3.91%		

During the quarter November 2012 - January 2013, a total of 7,903 enquiries were dealt with at The Deane House main, Housing and Planning Receptions. 5,652 people visited Wellington Community Office – 3,527 to make enquiries including TIC and 2,125 to make a payment through the kiosk. Staff dealt with 928 letter and email enquiries during this period.

2. Corporate and Client Services

2.1 Client Team

The current focus for the Client Team is to work with Southwest One to agree the necessary contractual changes and handover arrangements required to bring the Revenues and Benefits service back in-house. This is a complex and detailed project, but it is progressing well and the return of the service remains on target for 1 April 2013.

2.1.1 Performance and Delivery

In addition, the team is currently in the process of finalising agreement with Southwest One on the Key Performance Indicator targets (KPIs) and Service Development Plans (SDPs) for the coming financial year.

2.1.2 Service Monitoring

The team continues to monitor service delivery by the various Southwest One services, which is broadly on track. (For more information, please refer to the detailed six monthly update report which went to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 24 January 2013).

2.2 Procurement

The shortfall in delivered savings through the Procurement Transformation Project remains a significant concern and issue for the Authority. Consequently, we are closely managing the position and a detailed Procurement Transformation update report was presented to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 24 January 2013.

2.2.1 Savings

Savings continue to be delivered, with a further £100,000 having been delivered since July 2012. This brings the total savings delivered to date to more than £1.5million. Current savings initiatives being looking at relate to potential savings in fleet, banking and domestic heating. The work on savings initiatives related to waste removal, disposal and recycling (excluding those items within the scope of the Somerset Waste Partnership) is continuing.

2.3 Retained Finance and Corporate Insurance

The Retained Finance Team continues to manage the finance functions not provided by Southwest One, provide support to the Section 151 Officer, assist the Client Team in monitoring the Finance Service element of the Southwest One contract and provide support for the retained Parking functions.

2.3.1 Revenues and Benefits Contract

A key activity has been to agree with Southwest One the financial aspects of the contract changes to facilitate the return of the Revenues and Benefits service. The necessary price changes to the contract have been agreed.

2.3.2 Procurement of New Contracts

Additionally, work to procure new bank, insurance and treasury management advice contracts is progressing well.

2.3.3 Treasury Management

A Treasury Management Strategy Statement has been produced which will go to Full Council for approval.

2.4 Retained HR

The Retained HR Manager continues to provide strategic HR support to the Authority, manages the HR functions not provided by Southwest One and assists the Client Team in monitoring the HR aspects of the Southwest One contract.

2.4.1 Current Priorities

Current priorities include:

- Managing the HR aspects of the forthcoming return of the Revenues and Benefits service in relation to secondees and any staff who will TUPE transfer to the Council;
- Assisting in the provision of cover for the vacant Health & Safety role and the recruitment of a new Health & Safety Officer;
- Monitoring sickness levels throughout the Authority;
- Ensuring the implementation of the new lease and car allowance policies.

2.5 SAP Re-Launch and Patching

The key elements of the system have been launched and are working.

2.5.1 PREDS Module

The revised staff performance review (PREDS) module has been delivered and tested and is ready for rollout. The original functionality provided within SAP did not work efficiently and we insisted upon revisions before we were prepared to use it. The team is currently planning the rollout and how best to prepare the organisation for its implementation.

2.5.2 Sickness Module

The priority for 2013 will be to launch the sickness module, which should be ready for testing on 4 March 2013. This is the last major outstanding element of SAP.

2.6 Corporate Projects

2.6.1 ICT Infrastructure Upgrade

The initial stage of the infrastructure upgrade has commenced, which has involved the upgrading of network switches in The Deane House. New servers have been delivered and installed. The servers are in the process of being configured and will be brought into live use from February 2013 onwards.

2.7 Welfare Benefits

The new local Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme has been agreed by Members and is in the process of being implemented in time for the annual billing process. The project is on-track.

3. Corporate Performance

3.1 Corporate Performance

The Quarter 3 Corporate Performance report was considered by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 21 February 2013 and will be brought before the Executive on 13 March. Once the new Corporate Business Plan is approved, CMT will commence a review of the Corporate Performance Scorecard and recommend new measures / updated targets for implementation in 2013/2014. Members will also be invited to help develop a refreshed scorecard and suite of performance indicators

3.2 Performance Scorecards

Members are reminded that a full suite of 'Theme / Service' performance scorecards are also now produced quarterly by Theme Managers. These include a wide range of operational performance measures and are a useful tool for Members and Managers when discussing performance issues and progress against objectives

3.3 Monitoring Audit Recommendations

The Performance Lead and South West Audit Partnership (SWAP) have commenced a new process whereby the implementation of all audit recommendations (external and internal audits) is regularly monitored. Managers have been asked to provide an update on the status of all current audit recommendations by the end of February 2013. There are a total of 185 recommendations, with 48 of these (26%) assessed as high priority.

3.4 Risk Management

The Corporate Risk Register was reviewed by CMT as part of the Quarter 3 performance review (4 February 2013). The updated risk register will be reported to the Corporate Governance Committee on 11 March 2013, together with progress of the Council's Risk Management Action Plan.

3.5 Corporate Change Programme

The Council's Corporate Change Programme is now being overseen by the Strategy and Performance Team. Project Managers for all major corporate projects are currently reporting monthly to the 'Programme Management Group'. The major corporate projects currently within the scope of this group are:

- Corporate Business Plan (Simon Lewis / Dan Webb)
- Community Infrastructure Levy (Tim Burton)
- DLO Depot re-location business case (Sue Tomlinson)
- Welfare and Finance Reform (Paul Harding)
- Flood Alleviation Solutions (Mark Green)
- Taunton Retail and Firepool (Ian Franklin)
- New Swimming Pool (Sue Tomlinson / Alison North)

An overview and progress summary of each of the above projects is provided in the 'Key Projects' section of the Quarter 3 corporate performance scorecard.

3.5.1 Corporate Support Requirements

The Programme Management Group is currently focusing on understanding the corporate support requirements (eg Finance, HR, Legal) for the programme, and on ensuring appropriate rigour and good practice are applied to project management.

4. Legal and Democratic Services

4.1 Elections

More information has now come through regarding the implementation of the Individual Registration Process, which will be fully implemented by July 2014. There will be a lot of work to do to get the processes and procedures in place over the coming few months, especially relating to IT.

4.1.1 SCC Elections

The team is currently preparing for the Somerset County Council elections which take place on 2 May 2013.

5. Revenues and Benefits

5.1 Welfare Reform

Whilst annual billing and benefits up-rating is always busy, this year presents an unprecedented level of change. There are major challenges in delivering the new Localised Council Tax Support Scheme, under-occupancy changes in benefit for social sector tenants and reforms in Council Tax discounts and exemptions. This is on top of the usual year-end activities of producing and sending 50,000 Council Tax bills, nearly 4,000 Business Rate bills and up-rating approximately 9,600 benefit claims. To help customers plan for these significant changes, in February the service will send fact sheets to everyone affected. These fact sheets will provide an overview of the potential impact through the various changes in benefits and Council Tax, and will signpost customers to further information and advice.

5.2 Speed of Processing and Collection Rates

Benefit processing is currently up-to-date and Council Tax collection is ahead of target. Businesses are struggling in the ongoing economic climate to meet their business rate obligations and unfortunately collection is not quite on target.

5.3 Fraud

As Members will be aware, we have had several recent successes in prosecuting people committing benefit fraud. At present, we have several cases going through the Court system, one of which involves a fraud of over £25,000 going back to 1993. We will publicise the outcome of these cases in an attempt to deter those who may commit benefit fraud in the future.

6. Wellbeing Initiatives

6.1 Care First

The Council continue to provide an Employee Assistance Programme to all employees through Care First. A recent procurement exercise is drawing to a close which will see a reduction in cost for these services.

6.1.1 Care First Provision

Care First provide an independent service offering confidential help and advice to employees (and managers). In addition to advice services, both telephone and face-to-face counselling are available.

6.1.2 Care First Monitoring

Anonymised usage reports are provided to help the Authority identify trends and concerns.

6.2 Flu Jabs

Due to the fall in cost and as an initiative to support front line services and help reduce sickness levels, 'flu jabs' have been offered to staff in a number of front line services. Over 70 staff in services such as Housing, Deane DLO and the Deane Helpline have taken up the offer.

6.2.2 Flu jabs monitoring

The impacts of this vaccination programme in respect of staff motivation and sickness will be monitored through, for example, discussions and surveys.

6.3 Promotion of Exercise

There is strong evidence that exercise results in immediate psychological improvements, including reduced anxiety, enhanced relaxation and improved mood. The Council, therefore, continues to support a range of exercise-related initiatives designed to help staff. Schemes such as the Cycle Saver Scheme also support the Staff Travel Plan.

Councillor Vivienne Stock-Williams

Council Meeting – 26 February 2013

Report of Councillor Mark Edwards - Planning, Transportation and Communications

1. Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan

- 1.1 The Planning Policy Department is currently engaged in initial consultation with local communities and statutory undertakers on the first stage of preparing this Plan.
- 1.2 This includes consulting on a range of issues and options for allocating a range of sites to accommodate the growth targets set in the Core Strategy and also a review of development management policies required when considering planning applications.
- 1.3 The consultation runs until 7 March 2013 when responses will then be considered to inform a 'Preferred Option' document for further consultation during summer 2013.

2. Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLA)

- 2.1 The Council published its annual SHLA report in December following a 'call for sites' over the summer of 2012.
- 2.2 The SHLA is used as an evidence base, used in Plan making and appeals.

3. Planning appeals

- 3.1 The Policy Team have recently been involved in providing evidence at Inquiry on two major housing appeals (Milverton Road, Wellington and Maidenbrook, Taunton). Both appeals were dismissed.
- 3.2 We will robustly defend the decisions made by the Planning Committee at appeal and I see these decisions as an indication of the quality of advice and interpretation of policy by our officers and supports the final decision making process of the Planning Committee.
- 3.3 I have allocated a further £45,000 from Planning income to the Planning Reserve in case it is required for any further planning appeals that come forward.

4. Core Strategy

- 4.1 With the recent dismissal of their appeal into the refusal of planning permission for land at Maidenbrook Farm, Tarker Limited have now notified the Council of their intention to withdraw their legal challenge to the Core Strategy.
- 4.2 To this end, the Plan remains, as adopted and with no further challenges made within the statutory challenge period, will continue to carry full weight in the decision-making process.

5. Authorities Monitoring Report

- 5.1 The Council is required to publish an annual report on progress in meeting statutory plan targets and issues through a regular monitoring exercise. The report covers areas such as housing, employment, retail and environmental matters.
- 5.2 It is available to view on the Council's website.

6. Neighbourhood Planning

- 6.1 Plans are progressing in the three designated Neighbourhood Plan Area's (Trull, Wellington and Wiveliscombe). Four other communities have had discussions with the Council's Planning Policy Team about Neighbourhood Planning, with Bishops Lydeard preparing an application to the Council for designation of Bishops Lydeard Parish as a Neighbourhood Plan Area.
- 6.2 All three Neighbourhood Planning Areas have been gathering quantitative information on their area - statistics on demographics, services, landscape character, flood risk, etc. This will be complimented with qualitative information - perceptions of an area from residents, businesses and organisations. Wellington held workshops with schools, residential homes, residents and businesses. Trull held an exhibition at the Memorial Hall. Wiveliscombe is getting information via a questionnaire.
- 6.3 With the help of Trull Neighbourhood Plan Group, funds were secured for Planning Aid to support the Council and the Neighbourhood Plan Groups in this financial year. A Plan Preparation workshop was held in October. It brought focus and clarity to the groups and more importantly enthusiasm and confidence. A second workshop on Policy Writing is being held in March. There is immense benefit to the Authority and the Communities with continued professional input from and discussions with Planning Aid. To this end the Council is doing what it can to help them in their bid for funding into 2013/2014.
- 6.4 The Government has announced a fund for Local Authorities to help with the administrative and regulation costs associated with designation and examination. These payments, made in arrears, are

welcome but may not cover the full costs incurred by the Council as there is a cap on the funds available and number of claims which can be made.

- 6.5 As the Council's Site Allocation and Development Management Plan (SADMP) progresses and adopts site allocations, revises settlement boundaries and development management polices the ability of Neighbourhood Plans to influence that process diminishes. However, Neighbourhood Plans can still allocate land in addition to that in the SADMP and provide policy guidance.

7. Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

- 7.1 The Council is publishing its draft charging schedule for consultation over the period 1 February to 15 March, 2013 with a proposed Examination in May/June. Adoption of CIL is estimated for late summer 2013.

8. Heritage

- 8.1 Sandhill Park – A new Listed Building application and revised plans for the enabling development to the rear is expected to be lodged shortly.
- 8.2 Tone Works – The viability of approved schemes are in question and more information is awaited.
- 8.3 Tonedale - Implementation of the approved scheme, is due to progress by June.

9. Parking

- 9.1 Potholes are an everyday occurrence in our car parks but the recent bad weather has exacerbated the problem. We now have within Deane DLO an officer dedicated to 'hard surface maintenance' across the Council's property portfolio. He is able to carry out immediate temporary repairs and then to organise permanent works as appropriate.
- 9.2 Last month all surface car parks were inspected as a special exercise and a number of issues identified. The worst of these have already been dealt with. The Parking Manager and Deane DLO have agreed an inspection and response regime going forward but if Members do come across serious potholes I would encourage them to report them by email.
- 9.3 The Car Parking Strategy approved in 2011 included proposals to change the way we manage Blue Badge parking. These include restricting the time badge holders can stay for free in designated bays to three hours (in line with on-street practice) and requiring badge holders to pay in normal bays.

- 9.4 The number of designated bays will be re-examined in line with Department of Transport guidelines with the expectation that we will be increasing the number of dedicated disabled spaces. The proposals will be published very shortly as a draft Traffic Regulation Order to give everyone the chance to comment.

10. Communications

- 10.1 The recent bad weather – flooding, snow and more flooding – made for a busy December and January but thankfully Taunton Deane was not as badly affected as in November.
- 10.2 The press office led on publicity for the joint scrutiny exercise on flooding and will continue to support initiatives that might arise from discussions.
- 10.3 The year to date has been exceptionally busy with press releases ranging from planning consultations and economic development news to the marketing of the Deane DLO depot and benefit fraud.
- 10.4 A successful media budget briefing was held to explain the proposals for the coming financial year. This provides a valuable opportunity to meet the local media face to face.
- 10.5 Taunton Deane's Press Office is working with other Somerset local authorities on the new youth housing project, Pathway to Independence – P2I – and on the annual Council Tax booklet.
- 10.6 We are also providing support to West Somerset District Council on the project towards forming a Business Plan, supporting the Taunton Means Business initiative and Project Taunton

Councillor Mark Edwards