

Council Meeting – 8 April 2014

Report of Councillor John Williams – Leader of the Council

1. Flooding – Recovery Action

- 1.1 Across Somerset we have now officially moved into “Recovery” mode so we now set about helping people through the difficult time ahead and ensure the Somerset Levels and Moors 20 year Action Plan is implemented so mitigating the risk in future years.
- 1.2 Somerset County Council is the lead authority on this and have already set up a “Leaders Implementation Group” with a whole range of relevant partners that will meet monthly to begin with to monitor progress. This will be supported by a “Programme Group” of senior officers of all authorities and partners meeting fortnightly who in turn will direct the “Delivery Group” who will report back fortnightly to officers on progress or any issues affecting workstreams.
- 1.3 As you will be aware from regular newsletters the organisation of dredging is well in hand and by the time of our meeting should have commenced. Also consideration of the design for the proposed alterations to the Sovey/Kings Sedgemoor Drainage System is already in hand with an aim to at least commence works by the end of 2014 and complete by April 2015. A challenging timescale but necessary!
- 1.4 The construction of a tidal barrier or sluice is now also recognised as being a major part of the solution to mitigate long term flooding of the Levels and Moors. Although a longer term project, it is very much part of the planning process to implement by 2024. A major barrier to overcome will be the substantial funding required for whatever design is proposed and this is where we will need Central Government support.
- 1.5 Government Ministers have taken a close interest in the plight of those suffering to date and have made it clear that they will be closely monitoring progress of the agreed 20 year Action Plan. This can only be good as it will allow us to feed back any issues or problems arising that Central Government need to help resolve.
- 1.6 In terms of the recovery to date as a Council we have ensured that all the various financial aid schemes announced by Government have been rolled out locally as soon as possible and the application forms made simple. Our sympathies are with those so badly afflicted by flooding or the affect of it so we have tried to ensure we do not add to the problems by layers of “red tape”!

- 1.7 In this respect I thank our officers for designing and rolling out the forms for the various schemes and then visiting the affected areas to promote and assist with completion of them. This to ensure funding was made available to those in need as soon as possible with the least fuss.

2. The Brewhouse Theatre and Arts Centre

- 2.1 Taunton Theatre Association (TTA) has been busily working on The Brewhouse Theatre and is definitely on track for an April opening.
- 2.2 A plug for the first show booked - The Gang Show 25th Anniversary showing 8-12 April 2014 - tickets available through Taunton Tourist Information Centre. This has always been recognised as a high quality, high energy, production. Do try and attend.
- 2.3 Following this is the Young Musical Theatre Company (YMTC) production of High School Musical on 16-19 April 2014, involving youth groups based in Taunton. Bookings available from web site <http://www.ymtcgroup.com/> and again a high quality production I commend to you.
- 2.4 Without wishing to steal the Mayor's thunder the Mayor's Variety Show is also booked into The Brewhouse for two performances on Saturday 26 April 2014. Details of the programme to follow but I understand it will be headlined by Howard Jones.
- 2.5 The formal opening and full programme is planned for around September 2014 to give time to plan events and secure the future but a series of smaller events are planned over the summer period so please do check on the TTA web site.

3. Taunton Town Centre Rethink

- 3.1 The proposals put forward in the above document have generally been welcomed by many but obviously not universally welcomed by all. Any proposals made are yet to be considered through a planning application and the full consultation process associated with it. One thing is certain that all our studies show that Taunton needs a substantial increase in retail space from now until 2028, this from a Retail Impact Study carried out in 2013.
- 3.2 The risk of not making adequate provision is that applications for "out of town" retail uses would be very difficult to resist and this could impact on us as early as 2016.
- 3.3 The estimated increase in retail space requirements is as follows:-
2013 to 2018 about 41,600 sq ft;

2019 to 2023 about 125,000 sq ft; and

2024 to 2028 about 188,000 sq ft.

- 3.4 This projected requirement is the imperative to allocate provision of suitable, viable and achievable town centre sites by 2016, unless we want to run the risk of some major stores seeking to relocate out of town. The result of this would be an inevitable detrimental impact on our town centre retail trade so all must be done to avoid this.

4. Sale of Taunton Youth and Community Centre (TYCC) Site

- 4.1 LIDL are now fully signed up, subject to planning consent, for the purchase of the redundant Youth Centre site and it has been approved by Executive 12 March which is now the subject of a “call in” to be heard 24 April 2014.
- 4.2 We will need to hear the arguments why the Executive decision should not be supported before we can decide the way forward but in the meantime no further action can be taken to progress this vital regeneration site and bring in substantial income for the TYCC Trustees and this Council.

5. West Somerset Council and Taunton Deane Borough Council Shared Services

- 5.1 This project is proceeding well and on track to deliver the annual net savings of £1,880,000 for both Councils. Our progress is being followed by the Department of Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Association and feedback is very positive about what has already been achieved and our programme for the future. This is very heartening to receive considerable support from these sources.
- 5.2 A brief summary of where we are:-
- Business Case fully approved and Joint Chief Executive in place.
 - Joint Senior Management structure now in place with savings to General Fund of approx 22% per year.
 - Service managers and supervisory structure designed and ready to be implemented by summer 2014.
- 5.3 The changes outlined above and the next steps in joining our officer structures are delivering the initial £1,880,000 savings but for the future we are confident we can achieve further substantial savings by the transformation of delivery of services across both Councils. We are

also actively seeking opportunities to share services on a much wider basis across Somerset and even wider across County boundaries. At present Legal Services and Building Control are being progressed with other authorities.

6. COACH Project

6.1 COACH (Centre for Outdoor Activities and Community Hub) is a new voluntary organisation that certainly supports the aims and aspirations of the Council for healthy living and to promote the River Tone as an important venue for sporting and recreational activities.

6.2 We have already supported the project by agreeing a 125 year lease on land for the proposed club house and centre and £45,000 towards the design and a planning application which has now been granted. The aims of the COACH are:-

- All about establishing and developing a youth, community, activity and education hub;
- Engaging with young people of all abilities and the wider community, in healthy and active lifestyles, outdoor and/or community activities; and
- Engaging with other local providers and partners to meet the needs of the community.

6.3 These aims and aspirations of COACH have been fully supported by the Trustees of the old TYCC who have entrusted us to disburse their capital receipt for the TYCC on youth related projects within Taunton Deane. Once the call in is resolved about the decision to sell the TYCC site we can then determine how we move forward and bring details to Members for consideration.

7. Firepool, Taunton

7.1 The planning application for reserved matters on 49 dwellings at Firepool has now been approved and work on these will commence when Somerset County Council no longer need the car park for the NIDR works. It is estimated that this will be around September 2014 which we welcome. This will take up most of the existing car park so trigger the requirement for our development partner, St Modwen, to provide 200 spaces elsewhere on the market site.

7.2 We are in the process of resolving land ownership problems so we can construct the new access to the site off the NIDR and ensure ownership of land for potential development planned under the Taunton Town Centre Rethink plan.

8. Hinkley Deal

- 8.1 Discussions are still continuing with the Government to finalise a 'deal' to capture wider economic and infrastructure benefits associated with the new nuclear development at Hinkley Point. The deal has been developed in partnership with the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership and was submitted to the Government earlier this year.
- 8.2 Many of the schemes within the Taunton Growth Prospectus and Somerset Growth Plan (such as enhancement of Taunton Railway Station) feature in the Hinkley Deal and will provide an important platform for external funding bids to bring these projects to fruition.
- 8.3 Further details on the Hinkley deal will be reported as discussions with the Government approach a conclusion in the coming weeks.

Councillor John Williams

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Report of Councillor Jane Warmington - Community Leadership

1. I thought it might be interesting to record one of the Community Updates which were coming out daily during the worst of the flooding but now are updated every few days when something changes. General Advice on Recovery is also available and appears very comprehensive.

Taunton Deane Staff are continuing to help and two of our Revenue and Benefits Staff were some of the first visitors to Burrowbridge once they could safely wade there to visit all the residents.

Community Update – Somerset Levels Flooding

Wednesday, 26 March 2014

For the latest version of this update, visit www.somersetnewsroom.com

For latest weather forecasts, visit the Met Office www.metoffice.gov.uk

For flood warnings, visit www.environment-agency.gov.uk or call 0345 988 1188.

*****Latest news*****

Flood drop-in surgery at Canalside

The weekly flood drop-in surgery will take place at the Canalside Conference this evening. The sessions run from 6pm-8pm and are an opportunity for anyone affected by the flooding of the Levels and Moors to get advice and practical support from a variety of organisations.

The Flood Assistance Centre is now also at the Canalside, from 4pm-8pm, providing help with everything from insurance claims to emotional support.

Representatives from BT will be at the meeting this evening to deal with enquiries from residents and businesses.

Environment Agency

Dredging is on target to start at the beginning of next week. It will start near Moorland House Farm and machines are due to start arriving at the site from midweek this week.

A372 will reopen

The A372 at Seven Bends near Othery will reopen after 5pm today. Traffic lights will be used for a few days to allow the final repairs to be completed.

Burrowbridge – Taunton Deane Borough Council presence

Help HQ at the Old School in Burrowbridge is staffed Monday to Saturday from 9am-5pm. A Taunton Deane Borough Council officer will be there on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, this week from 10am-4pm.

Donations centre

The Donations Centre at the old Somerfield distribution centre at Huntworth Business Park, Bridgwater for the victims of the flooding has reduced its opening hours to 10am-3pm Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. The centre is no longer open on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday. If you have been affected by the flooding and need supplies, the Centre has a variety of items that may be useful to you - from food and toiletries, to clothes and bedding. Please bring ID with you just so that we can confirm your address.

2. Family Focus (Troubled Families Programme)

- 2.1 Taunton Deane/West Somerset (TD/WS) Family Focus (FF) continues to exceed the Government target for the number of families attached to the Troubled Families Programme. There are now 290 attached (target 262 by March 2015) with an additional £60,000 of attachment funding to support continuing work.
- 2.2 We know from the work the Halcon One Team are doing that there are many more families in need than were initially identified from the Government statistics.
- 2.3 Two new FF Workers started work on 18 March 2014 and are based at Hillside Children's Centre in Priorswood bringing the total up to eight across TD/WS. This is to develop relationships and encourage referrals from North Taunton.
- 2.4 Project activity has now been extended into the West Deane Area and families have now begun to be attached from Wiveliscombe.
- 2.5 Successful outcomes so far include reducing (and sustaining reduced) anti-social behaviour and truancy, 117 cases in TD (47 in WS). These have been submitted to Government this April to draw down around £144,000 (of success money) to continue to work with more families.
- 2.6 Both FF Leaflets published for Practitioners and Families are proving popular.
- 2.7 Work is continuing in particular to explore and quantify critical gaps in service provision with specialist support services (such as Mental Health) with a combined push from FF Strategic Group, Halcon One Team and West Somerset Council and is now starting to see results; to develop a Family Exit Strategy and to agree a means of capturing and measuring 'soft success' (such as improved self esteem, parenting skills, routines and general well-being).

3. Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Plan 2014-2017 - Be Safe Feel Safe

- 3.1 The Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner has produced one overall Police and Crime Plan and one each for all nine of the Local Authorities across the Force Area. A copy of the Taunton Deane Police and Crime Plan can be found in the Members Room or viewed at:-

<http://www.avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk/Document-Library/Police-and-Crime-Plan-14/TAUNTONDEANE.pdf>

4. Voluntary and Community Sector Grants

- 4.1 Fifty two applications have been received totalling bids for £198,000 with twenty nine of these scoring above average and prioritised for funding. Four awards have been allocated already from the small amount remaining in this years budget.
- 4.2 In order to maximise Taunton Deane's support for the Voluntary Sector, appropriate grant applications are first passed to the Tenants Forum for consideration and the Taunton Unparished Fund Panel (those scoring below average were also shared). The latter now considers all bids for Youth Funds as well.
- 4.3 The few health related bids have been initially directed to the Taunton Deane Partnership's (one off gifted) Health and Wellbeing Fund. Any remaining unfunded (above average scoring) bids are then supported from the Strategy Budget. This enables the most appropriate budget to contribute and more of the bids to be supported.
- 4.4 Announcements will be made in the Weekly Bulletin later in the month after the Taunton Unparished Fund Panel has met again. Last year, the Voluntary Sector received small grants support totalling nearly £90,000.

5. Somerset Health Map

- 5.1 The LINK Legacy Document (March 2013) has in it a rather useful map/tool to find your way around the myriad of organisations that contribute to making up our Health Service:-

www.somersetlink.org.uk; Click on - The Story of Somerset LINK: Our Legacy Document. The Map is on Page 24.

- 5.2 “The LINK legacy is the story and impact of the Local Involvement Network. It is the benefits, learning and achievements that the LINK will pass on when it ceases to exist as a statutory network in April 2013. This legacy will continue the journey of promoting the voice of local people in the future of health and social care. Many of these benefits will have particular relevance for community engagement initiatives going forward but there will also be wider significance to commissioners, service providers and local accountability mechanisms.” Department of Health.
- 5.3 The Somerset LINK Legacy Document is part of the handover to Healthwatch Somerset. This document summarises what the LINK has learnt. It captures the ‘organisational memory’ to be passed on to the new Healthwatch organisation. It helps to ensure a smooth transition from the old organisation – the Somerset LINK – to the new organisation – Healthwatch Somerset. This Legacy Document presents key lessons for the future and captures the knowledge of local people who have been involved in the LINK at all levels. A legacy is important because it captures what we have learnt, celebrates what we have achieved, supports our transition to a new organisation and avoids the feeling of ‘unfinished business’.

6. Children's Centres

- 6.1 Somerset County Council has almost finished consulting across the Children's Centres where locally there were concerns that these might close. Two sessions were arranged at each, morning and evening for anyone to drop into and make their views known.
- 6.2 There is a plan to develop those Children's Centres serving our more disadvantaged areas into Early Help Hubs co-locating a number of different frontline agencies in them to better serve the local communities. Both TD Senior Officers and the Portfolio Holder have had an input into this County Council process.

7. Voluntary and Community Sector Support

- 7.1 **Engage** is pleased to announce that it will be working in partnership with Taunton Deane Borough Council to provide a package of support services to Voluntary and Community Groups in the Taunton Deane area. Engage's support and development services are available now and include:-
- Advice on funding sources and preparing an effective application;
 - Help with business and financial planning;
 - Advice on legal structures and governance;
 - Provision of model policies and templates;
 - Provision of general advice, guidance and information; and
 - Signposting to services and other similar groups for further support
- 7.2 The service is independent and tailored to the particular needs of each group. For more information please call: 01643 707123 or email: jan@engagews.org.uk.
- 7.3 Periodic information will be sent out via email. If you would like to register for updates, please e-mail John on: information@engagews.org.uk with your organisation name and contact details.
- 7.4 Other services that will commence during April are:- Volunteer Centres at both Taunton Library on Tuesdays from 9.30am to 12.30pm and at Careers South West, 3 Mendip House, High Street, Taunton on Tuesdays from 1pm to 4pm to promote volunteering opportunities and processing of applications for the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks.
- 7.5 They are currently setting up these services and will be updating their website. They are also in the process of creating a database of volunteering opportunities. If you would like more information or to register your organisation and volunteering opportunities, please call: 01643 707123 or tauntonvolunteers@engagews.org.uk.

Councillor Jane Warmington

Council Meeting – 8 April 2014

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

1. Business Support and Networking

Investor Forum

- 1.1 On Tuesday, 25 March 2014 the Council hosted a forum for local commercial property agents and employment land developers. 13 businesses attended the event to discuss with the Leader of the Council and the Director for Growth and Development the future development prospects in Taunton Deane, and the obstacles that investors sometimes confront. The event was well received by the businesses present and officers will follow up the meeting with continuing dialogue on a 1:1 basis.

Procurement event

- 1.2 A very successful event promoting local procurement opportunities was held on Wednesday, 26 March 2014 at the Cricket Club. 97 businesses registered for the event which was designed to give local businesses the opportunity to get an insight to public sector procurement.
- 1.3 The audience were told of websites and portals where they need to register their businesses to be in for a chance of winning public sector contracts, were informed about the tender process itself and given some top tips for a successful application. The speakers were Southwest One, Musgrove Park Hospital (re NHS) and Somerset Chamber (re EDF). The 92 businesses that attended were very positive in their comments of the event and of Taunton Deane.

Inward Investment Enquiries

- 1.4 Since 1 January 2014 there have been 13 Inward investment enquiries – two have come to fruition creating four jobs. There are still four continuing enquiries looking for suitable premises, with good potential for larger employment.
- 1.5 In Taunton Town Centre Paddy Power is in the process of opening a new betting shop on North Street, and Warren James, Jewellers, has opened a unit in The Orchard Centre.

Business Grants

New Business Grant and Rural Retailer awards

- 1.6 Applications to the New Business Grant are considered on a quarterly basis. During the most recent round, ending on 28 February 2014, I agreed to support the following applications:-

- £500 to Rah Cattell of Wiveliscombe towards the cost of a laptop and marketing for her dance business;
- £500 to Mrs Lucilia Santos of Bishops Hull towards the cost of vital equipment for a new Portuguese Restaurant being set up in Taunton Town Centre. The equipment to be purchased includes a cash register, dishwasher and a meat slicing machine;
- £500 to the Taunton Theatre Association towards the cost of a new server system to ensure all business areas are fully integrated to enable the necessary future marketing to take place;
- £500 to Florica Tiplea of St Andrew's View, Taunton towards the cost of marketing materials and a website for her Trust Inventory business;
- £500 to Nia Lawrence of Allington Close, Taunton towards the cost of a new studio light, a back-drop and some publicity for her photography business "Fun 'n' fotos";
- £500 to Nicole Kirbyshire of Albemarle Road, Taunton towards the cost of a new sewing machine for her business 'Vintage Happiness';
- £500 to Matthew Mears of Macky Bikes, Milverton towards the cost of some tools to enhance his business offer;
- £500 to Simon Atkinson of Chez Amis Restaurant, Bridge Street, Taunton towards the cost of a new till system and cash Register;
- £243 to Thomas Vick of Ducks Go Quack, Wells Close, Taunton towards the cost of promotional items that will help raise the profile of his new clothing business;
- £350.75 to Liz Hutchin of Busylizzie Art and Literacy Limited, Waterleaze, Taunton towards the cost of a website and promotional materials which will increase the brand awareness of the company;
- £500 to Becky Shaw of Artistrokes, Milton Road, Taunton, towards the cost of a website to launch her new business that offer her clients sensory development to succeed in their lives whilst experiencing learning and physical disabilities; and
- £500 to Emma Rickards-Tilley, Youngs Oak, Wrantage towards the cost of a new treatment couch for her acupuncture business.

At the time of writing the following three businesses await the end of the call-in period:-

- £200 to Jane Birch of Arundells Way, Creech St Michael towards the cost of a bread making machine for her new business;
- £500 to Nicola Everett of Moor Lane, Churchinford, towards the cost of a laptop for her new marketing business; and
- £500 Peter Markiewicz, Massington Park towards the cost of a website for his business 'Buy my Shrimp'.

A grant has also been made from the Council's Rural Retail Fund:-

- £2,000 to Ruth Barclay of The Rock Inn, Waterrow, Nr Wiveliscombe towards the cost of a new website that will deliver savings to the business and enhance their presence on the worldwide web;

- 1.7 These grants bring the year's awards to a total of £16,000 from the Business Grant Fund and £6,000 from the Rural Retail Fund. A contribution of £2,000 has also been made to a business mentoring programme, delivered by Cornerstone Enterprise Support Limited, offering mentoring to businesses across Taunton Deane.

Investment Grant

- 1.8 £72,000 has been committed to businesses to date (£40,000 to Ministry of Cake and £32,000 for Rigid).
- 1.9 The grant is a valuable source of assistance to attract investors to Taunton Deane. One such conversation is currently underway with a potential investor who is hoping to buy property near Taunton with a view to creating 46 jobs in the construction sector.

Flooding Business Support Grant

- 1.10 The Economic Development Team has been busy visiting businesses affected by the recent flooding on the Somerset Levels. In excess of 60 businesses were visited during the first week of March 2014 to promote the new Business Support Grant. The grant is available to all small and medium sized businesses that have been affected by the floods and suffered an adverse effect on their activities/lost a significant amount of trade.
- 1.11 Officers are working closely with colleagues in our Revenues and Benefits Team to ensure Taunton Deane businesses are benefiting from the relevant schemes open to them at this difficult time. To date 34 have been approved, 28 have sent for payment and we are waiting for bank details from six more. Should there be funding left we have applications from another two businesses that fall outside of the priority parishes.

2. Taunton Town Centre Company and BID (Business Improvement District)

- 2.1 Members will be aware that the proposal for a BID in Taunton Town Centre was rejected in the ballot of businesses at the end of February 2014. The Council gave its strong support for the BID, seeing it as an opportunity to deliver an extensive programme of events and marketing activities, with the £1,400,000 that it could have raised. It is therefore disappointing that businesses have rejected the BID proposal.
- 2.2 Subsequent to the BID result the Leader and I met with representatives of the Taunton Town Centre Company (TTCC) Board to discuss the way forward. The onus was on the company to demonstrate a realistic plan to deliver town centre management, drawing upon the Council's financial input, its own earned income, and other sources of finance. The Company was unable to achieve that and took the decision to cease trading. The company will be

formally liquidated in mid April 2014 and is currently disposing of the assets in its ownership.

- 2.3 The Council's HR Team is offering confidential support to those members of the TTCC team who are affected by the closure of the company.
- 2.4 I am discussing with officers in the Economic Development Team and others for the way forward to support events and marketing in the town centre. Councillor David Reed, who was formerly the Council's representative on the TTCC Board, has kindly agreed to continue to play a role in coordinating our involvement in the Taunton Town Centre. Councillor Reed will work with officers' to agree a strategy on how we might continue to support external organisations that plan to deliver events.

3. The Brewhouse Theatre

- 3.1 The Taunton Theatre Trust (TTA) is currently operating under a Tenancy at Will agreement that expires at the end of April 2014 and a Funding Agreement regarding £46,000 start up funding from the 2013/2014 financial year. Officers are liaising with the TTA over a 10 year lease and a longer term funding agreement. Both documents are still to be completely agreed and will be resolved before the end of April.
- 3.2 The TTA has had access to The Brewhouse since mid February, and during that time has undertaken extensive cleaning to the property and renewal of contents and equipment, drawing upon an army of volunteers from Taunton. Three shows are planned in April, namely, The Gang Show, High School Musical and The Mayor's Variety Show (Tone Talent). The Tourist Information Centre is acting as ticket agent for the Gang Show and the Musical.

4. Marketing and Tourist Information, Ticket and Travel Centre (TIC) Update

Marketing activities and business support

- 4.1 A £2,000,000 severe weather response fund was established by Visit England in late February in response to the impact the bad weather and media coverage was having on business and bookings. The fund contained a number of strands including a series of Business Support workshops and a "Book England" campaign in the run up to Easter.
- 4.2 The Marketing and Tourist Information Lead and Economic Development Projects Officer have been working with the Somerset Tourism Association (STA) who is coordinating the activities in the County to ensure our accommodation providers and attractions are represented at both the workshops and promoted in any of the marketing campaigns.
- 4.3 Willows and Wetland Centre – Councillor Slattery and I visited the centre in

early March with officers from the Economic Development team to discuss ways we could help and support their plans for expansion in the future.

- 4.4 Meetings have been held with Apple FM, the 'COOL' Tourism Project, Hestercombe Gardens, Museum of Somerset, Taunton Shakespeare Festival, a possible new cultural festival in Taunton in 2015, Tone FM and "Love Weston" to discuss opportunities and how we can help promote their events and activities taking place in the area and work together.
- 4.5 A new Tourism website for Taunton Deane is planned and will go live before the summer.
- 4.6 Social media continues to be a good way of getting our message out (especially during the flooding and now we are all open for business), the @TauntonBusiness account now has 860 followers, @TauntonTIC 2,080 followers.

TIC Update

- 4.7 The TIC has had its annual refresh in preparation for the new season ahead. New displays and tourism material have arrived and will all be in place before Easter.
- 4.8 The TIC Team hosted a Travel and Tourism Student from Bridgwater College in late March on a two week work placement and are keen to support students looking for work experience.
- 4.8 The re-opening of The Brewhouse Theatre in April 2014 has seen a very positive reaction from customers to the TIC who is acting as the box office for a number of the events taking place since the TTA took over the Theatre. This has included enquiries from people looking to volunteer and help. Tickets for the Mayor's Tone Talent Variety Show on the 26 April 2014 are now on sale in the office.

TIC visitor numbers and spend

- 4.9 Despite the poor weather, the TIC has maintained a steady throughput and income over the last few months. Customer spend is encouraging and initiatives are planned by the TIC Team to try and grow this throughout the year. This will include participating in the Visit England 'Holidays at Home are GREAT' campaign which encourages people to stay and holiday at home.

Councillor Norman Cavill

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Report of Councillor James Hunt – Environmental Services and Climate Change

1. Environmental Health / Licensing

- 1.1 The new Dog Warden Service, which will be operated by Somerset Dog Wardens, part of St Giles Kennels and Cattery based in Wrantage, is due to have gone live on Tuesday, 2 April 2014.
- 1.2 As mentioned in the last report the Food Teams continue to be on course for completing all of the 'High Risk' inspections (those rated A-C) for the 2013-2014 period.
- 1.3 The team is being proactive on food safety and Senior Environmental Health Officer Sarah Khan has visited St. Georges Primary School to provide a talk on food hygiene to the children.

2. Deane DLO / Flooding

- 2.1 The Somerset Levels 'Major Incident' officially moved from the Response phase into Recovery on 14 March 2014. This saw Avon and Somerset Constabulary hand the lead co-ordinator baton to Somerset County Council (SCC).
- 2.2 SCC has established a 'Recovery Working Group' involving all agencies and authorities. Activities are being channelled through four work streams:-
 - Health and Housing;
 - Business Help;
 - Waste and Transport; and
 - Communications

which is underpinned by a Support Group. We are represented on all four, with Ian Timms (Assistant Director Business and Development) leading on our behalf.

- 2.3 In some ways 'Recovery' is more complicated than 'Response' as we try to provide the appropriate continuing assistance communities and individuals need - in an environment which is producing a number of challenges and perceptions. It is a priority for the Council and we must not lose sight of this as we happily lose sight of the floodwaters themselves.
- 2.4 Quite a few of our service teams have been involved on both Response and Recovery. To try and name them all would inevitably mean missing some. However, I would like to highlight all those at Deane DLO who were our

frontline with the community in delivering sandbags, temporary toilets and other items in all winds and weathers and at all times of day and night. They are now dealing with the physical aspects of the clear up, collecting sandbags, road sweeping and litter picking.

- 2.5 I would particularly like to mention John Lewis, Parking and Civil Contingencies Manager, for the many additional hours he has worked and his dedication to his task during this period.

3. Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP)

- 3.1 The Waste Board met last month and considered reports on service reviews, fees and charges and quarterly performance. We examined a very comprehensive Risk Register showing what the main issues for continuing service delivery are, (unsurprisingly) the state of Local Government finance and the commercial environment in which the service provider operates.
- 3.2 The Board approved the extension of the Strategic Partnering agreement between SCC and Viridor to 2021. This gives SWP the ability to discuss with Viridor how the service, particularly the disposal side, will develop over the coming years with the aim of embracing new technologies to reduce our dependence on landfill.
- 3.3 On the ground SWP have resumed all services, full kerbside recycling, refuse, clinical, assisted and paid for garden waste collections. In areas still disrupted by flooding or where there are obstructions, recycling and refuse collections are being rerouted to reach as many houses as possible.
- 3.4 SWP is also arranging the provision of communal waste skips, at central points as directed by the local communities where appropriate to aid with the clean-up, although these are not being provided to individual households.

Councillor James Hunt

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

1. Parks

- 1.1 The parks are looking remarkable considering the wet winter. I think that Spring is perhaps when they look their best with the bright bulbs, blossom and fresh green buds about to burst.
- 1.2 At the recent Friends of Vivary meeting I was pleased to hear of their plans for the Easter Egg Hunt on Easter Sunday. They also agreed to fund the replacement of two trees that have been lost over the winter.
- 1.3 A new group has recently met for the second time – the Vivary Park Partnership has been formed as a forum for the main partners of the park to meet and discuss issues and plan major events that will affect all. The group has agreed to meet quarterly.

2. Community Leisure and Play

- 2.1 Station Road Pool Refurbishment – Work has been progressing very well but has been a little delayed by a couple of leaky valves that required divers to carry out a difficult replacement of the valves affected. All of the water treatment plant and air treatment plant is now complete; the vast filters have been fully refurbished and now contain a lorry load of new sand! And I have never seen such large smart red boilers! Areas taking shape now are the reception area, the steam room & sauna and the changing village. Tiling is also started in the pool hall, but as the ceiling is still being finished this is carrying on around the scaffolding. Tone have been shown work in progress and are very pleased with the quality of finish, the pool manager is excited to get in and looking forward to opening.

3. Tone Leisure (Taunton Deane) Limited Activities

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

Active Lifestyles

321 Running Initiatives

- 3.2 In partnership with Somerset County Council and Run England, Tone has set up routes in Vivary Park to encourage more people to engage in running. These routes are for people to follow individually and at their own convenience. The routes consist of 1 km, 2 km and 3 km and will be live by Easter.

Boccia for Older People

- 3.3 Tone has taken on delivery of Boccia in active living centres and groups across Taunton Deane. Somerset Activity Sports Partnership (SASP) is kindly providing the equipment needed to offer this. This has been rolled out in partnership with Knightstone Housing and Somerset You Can Do.

Children's Centres

- 3.4 Tone is working with Young Parents' groups in three children's centres in Taunton Deane to encourage a healthy lifestyle and increased physical activity levels for the parents and the children; providing Change4life resources to the families and offering nutritional support and advice with follow ups every six months.

Facility News

Wellsprings Leisure Centre

- 3.5 A new three year contract has been agreed with Food4You to continue supplying the catering and bistro service for the Taunton Contract.
- 3.6 The Friday Vibe youth night continues to grow and, through funding, two new table tennis tables have been purchased.
- 3.7 James Quirk celebrated 10 years of his Circuit class which is part of the Pro Active Phase 4 Cardiac Rehabilitation. This made the Somerset County Gazette, which also included Robert Rowling who was the first to sign up 10 years ago and is still attending!

Blackbrook Pavilion

- 3.8 The Sport Relief event took place at Blackbrook Pavilion on Sunday, 23 March 2014. Over 150 people turned up to walk, skip or run the various distances.

Wellington Sports Centre

- 3.9 Handover for the new Health Suite and Reception redevelopment is set for early April. The front-of-house has been significantly revamped, with the introduction of two new Fast Track terminals that will allow customers quick entry into classes and the gym.
- 3.10 The final phase of these works to upgrade the vending area, funded by Section 106 Agreement monies, will commence after the Easter holidays.

Councillor Catherine Herbert

Council Meeting – 8 April 2014

Report of Councillor Mrs Jean Adkins – Housing Services

1. Housing Enabling

1.1 Parmin Close

The decant is almost complete. This scheme is to provide Extra Care Housing for which Government Grant has been awarded. It has been in the pipeline for a number of years and I would like to pay tribute to the tenacity of our Enabling Team and also our partners, Knightstone Housing Association.

1.2 Victoria Gate Phase 2

This is on course for completion in March 2015, providing 48 units.

2. Affordable Housing Target

2.1 Year End completions are likely to be in the region of 170 – 180 Affordable Homes. FirstBuy stopped in June 2013 and Help to Buy is not a qualifying product which has impacted on the figures.

2.2 Around 25 units have been delayed owing to a variety of reasons including the recent poor weather conditions and technical issues.

2.3 This is a little short of the target of 200, but does not represent a loss of homes, merely that they cannot be counted towards the 2013/2014 target as they cannot be handed over in year.

3. Local Authority Housing Review: Call for Evidence

3.1 An independent review that is examining the role that local authorities can play in supporting housing supply has launched a call for evidence and all local housing authorities are invited to participate.

The call for evidence can be accessed through the review's homepage at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/policy-advisory-groups/review-of-local-authorities-role-in-housing-supply>

4. Estates Management – Welfare Reform

- 4.1 The number of tenants affected is 373 as at February 2014, however this is subject to change on a daily basis due to tenants going on or coming off of Benefits. Due to year end we have yet to have an updated list for March although this is due to be produced soon.
- 4.2 100 tenants have now been identified as wanting to downsize:-
- One Direct Match approved and completed;
 - 33 successful moves on Choice Based Lettings completed;
 - One successful bid pending a move on Choice Based Letting;
 - One Mutual Exchange being processed; and
 - 16 Mutual Exchanges completed.
- 4.3 Welfare Reform Support Guidance has now been put in place to assist tenants wishing to mutual exchange. We will be offering help and support to them and in certain cases we may help to reduce/clear any debts owing to the Council which would normally be a barrier to them completing an exchange.

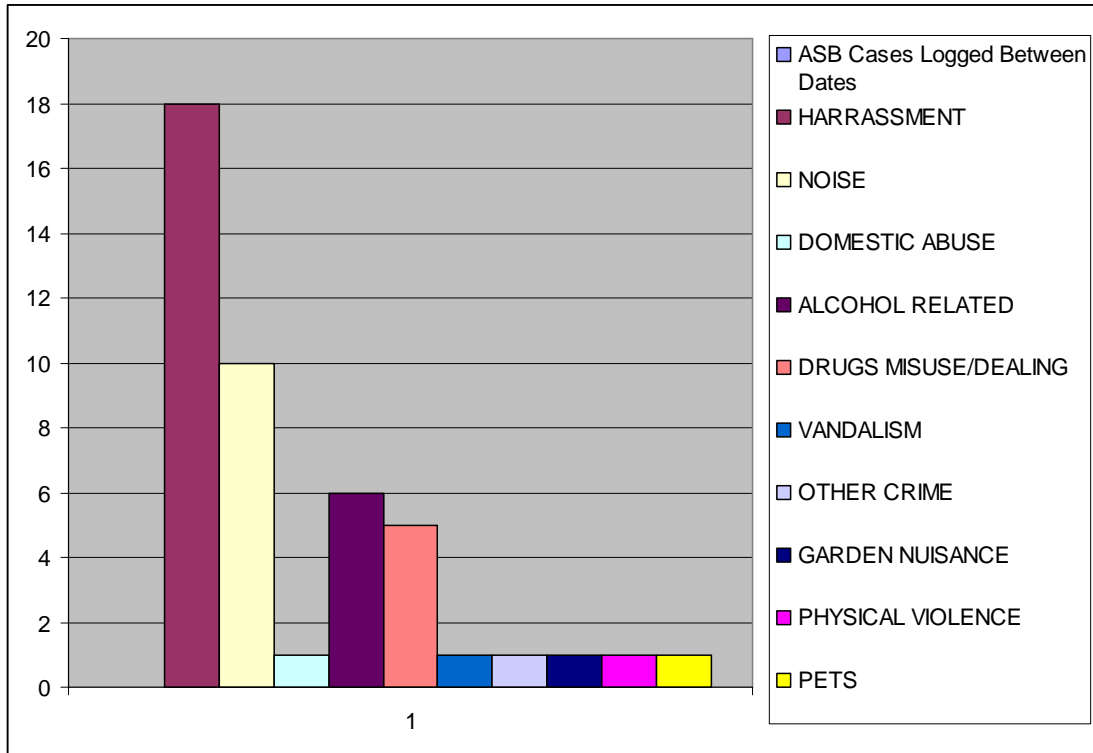
5. Estates Management – Rent Arrears

- 5.1 In previous reports I stated that as anticipated the Welfare Reforms have had an effect on tenant arrears which rose from £32,094 in April 2013 with 94 of the affected tenants already in rent arrears. May, June and July saw arrears rise, as expected, reaching a peak of £51,881.25.
- 5.2 However the next two months saw a reduction and small fluctuations thereafter, standing at £38,960.40 on 1 February 2014. I am hopeful that this will be further reduced by year end.
- 5.3 The fact that our rent arrears have been controlled in this way is due to the hard work put in by the Welfare Reform Officer and the Estates Team.

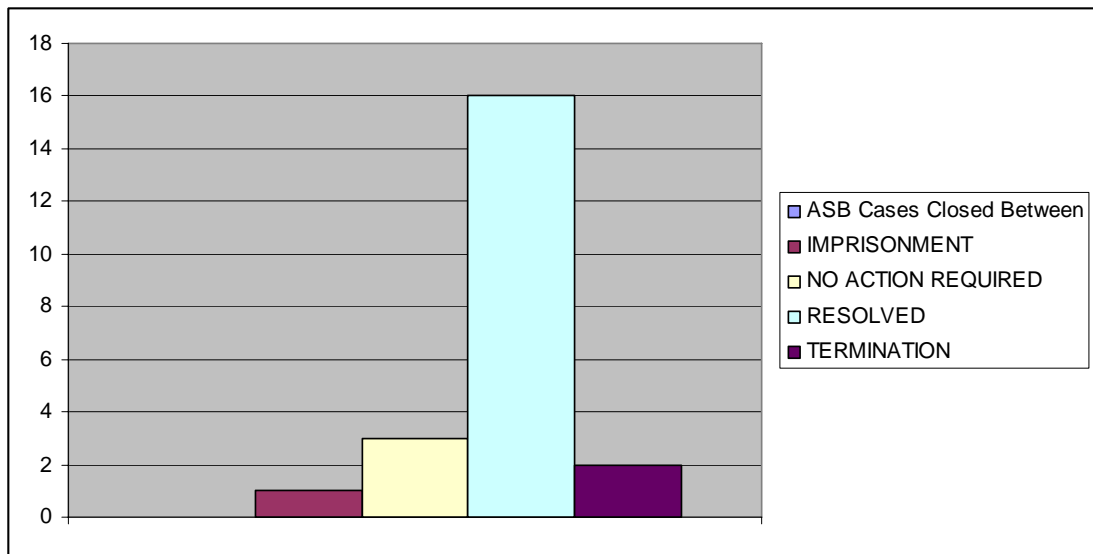
6. Estates Management- Antisocial Behaviour

See next page.

6.1 ASB cases recorded between 01/11/13 – 31/01/14



6.2 ASB Cases Closed between 01/11/13 – 31/01/14



6.3 These graphs tell the story better than I can. I am very happy that the majority of cases are resolved, rather than punitive action being required.

NB "Termination" means ending the tenancy!!

Councillor Mrs Jean Adkins

Council Meeting - 8 April 2014

Report of Councillor Mrs Vivienne Stock-Williams - Corporate Resources

1. Corporate and Client Services

Corporate Services

- 1.1 The focus for the past couple of months has been on continuing to consolidate the functions moving into the new joint Corporate Services theme and on completing the design of the tiers 4/5 structure. The latter has been completed and will be released for consultation in early April 2014.

Client Team

- 1.2 The Client Team continue to monitor day-to-day service delivery of the services remaining in Southwest One. In addition, we are continuing to monitor the potential impact of the IBM/SYNNEX deal. Work is being progressed with all the Southwest One partners to look at succession planning options for the end of the contract in 2017.

Corporate Performance and Risk Management

- 1.3 The Corporate Risk Registers for both Taunton Deane and West Somerset Council have now been amalgamated and agreed with the Joint Management Team (JMT). This joint register was reviewed by the Corporate Governance Committee on 10 March 2014. Work is currently progressing in relation to refreshing the corporate performance reporting processes to take account of the restructure of services.

HR

- 1.4 The key focus for the HR Team has remained the day-to-day provision of the HR service and providing significant HR support for the Joint Management and Shared Services project.

Strategic and Retained ICT

- 1.5 The Retained Strategic ICT Officer continues to provide strategic ICT support to the Authority, manage the ICT functions not provided by Southwest One and to assist in monitoring the ICT element of the Southwest One contract.

- 1.6 Work is progressing in relation to IT support for a number of key projects (Joint Management and Shared Services, the rollout of the Windows 7 upgrade and PSN compliance).

2. Corporate Health and Safety

Corporate Health and Safety Team

- 2.1 The Health and Safety Advice service was brought back into Taunton Deane from Southwest One at the start of 2013. Catrin Brown and Kate Woollard have been providing Health and Safety advice to the organisation since January 2013. The service is now situated within the Environmental Health function.

Corporate Health and Safety Strategy

- 2.2 The Health and Safety Management System has been under review during this period, in order to develop a strategy for the organisation to enable effective monitoring of health and safety performance. The strategy has been approved by Joint Management Team and the Health and Safety Committee, and will be implemented from 1 April 2014.
- 2.3 Key features of the strategy include increasing awareness of accident reporting and learning lessons, a prioritised plan of Health and Safety inspections and increasing accessibility to Health and Safety information.

Key Activities Period 2013-2014

- 2.4 Improving the Corporate Governance Committee reporting format to include a greater analysis of accident data and more detail for Members.
- 2.5 Review of the accident reporting policy, with new procedures to be implemented from 1 April 2014 to ensure all accident data are captured accurately.
- 2.6 Regular Health and Safety tours have been undertaken at the Deane DLO Depot, with housekeeping standards having improved as a result.
- 2.7 All statutory training has been undertaken. In total, four sessions of Health and Safety training for Managers have now been run with 32 Managers attending. All Deane DLO Managers have completed the IOSH Managing Safely course. All relevant Deane DLO employees have received toolbox talks on manual handling operations.
- 2.8 The staff Health and Safety intranet site has been updated enabling employees to access relevant up-to-date Health and Safety information.

- 2.9 In addition, a significant amount of time was spent on ensuring that The Brewhouse Theatre met with essential safety standards in order to open for the Taunton School pre-Christmas performance. The Health and Safety Team compiled the Health and Safety file essential for use of the building. They also ensured that the necessary safety testing and certification for the equipment and services had been carried out.
- 2.10 Time was also spent co-ordinating the refurbishment activities for The Brewhouse Theatre. The team established a safe working environment and facilitated communication channels. They ensured that the appropriate legal and insurance measures were in place. It was also important to ensure that suitable and sufficient risk assessments and safe working practices had been developed by the contractors and the school.

3. Customer Contact Centre

Performance Indicators

- 3.1 The service has continued to perform well in line with its contractual performance indicators, with only one failure since the last update. This failure was for KPI 1 (% calls answered within 20 seconds) for the month of February. The target for this KPI is 80% and February's result was 77.16%. The failure was directly attributed to the increase in unpredicted demand as a result of the adverse weather conditions affecting Somerset.
- 3.2 Whilst this target was not met, the teams worked extremely hard, facing unprecedented challenges and still maintained an excellent level of service to our customers. This is most appropriately illustrated by the fact the not one customer complaint was received throughout January and February and customer satisfaction and resolution at first point of contact results remained significantly above industry average.
- 3.3 I should like to take this opportunity to thank the Customer Contact Centre Team for their commitment and outstanding contribution to helping Somerset residents during the prolonged flooding conditions.

New Telephony Technology

- 3.4 The implementation of the new Siemens Contact Centre continues to be extremely positive news, with no interruptions to service experienced.
- 3.5 March has seen the implementation of a new 24/7 automated telephony payments service for the Council. Customers can now pay for Council Tax, Rent, Business Rates and other invoice payments using an automated voice recognition service. The service was launched on 11 March 2014 and so far there have been around 170

payments made through the automated system. Take-up for this service is about 50%.

Our World at Work

- 3.6 The Our World at Work (OWAW) Team is currently considering options for reward and recognition for exceptional calls. The Training and Quality Team has brought several options forward, including the possibility of a 'Golden Call' scheme - where one call will be recognised each month and rewarded with Southwest One's formal Reward and Recognition scheme. We are currently awaiting feedback from the OWAW team on this suggestion.

Service Development Plan 2014/2015

- 3.7 The Service Development Plan (SDP) for 2014/2015 is currently in draft form and has been distributed to Client Services. The focus of the SDP for 2014/2015 is on channel shift. The Customer Contact Team aim to support Taunton Deane's corporate channel shift and customer access strategies by utilising new automated telephony technology and the Council's website.

Digital Customer Access and Twitter

- 3.8 On the 1 January 2014, the Council launched its new corporate Twitter account. The Customer Contact Team has been supporting Taunton Deane with handling Inbound and Outbound messaging and the account already has 393 followers. Having a Customer Contact presence on Twitter will allow us to help people using the service by signposting them to the right place, helping them complete online services or by answering their questions directly.

4. Health and Wellbeing

Health and Wellbeing Audit

- 4.1 Officers have completed an audit of the Council's services and their impact on health and wellbeing, linking this back to the County Health and Wellbeing Strategy. This audit has been taken through the Community Scrutiny Committee and will be going to the Executive in April 2014. The audit includes a set of actions to help further promote the health and wellbeing agenda in Taunton Deane.

Better Care Fund

- 4.2 Officers from Taunton Deane have ensured that Taunton Deane has a voice within the development of the NHS / Adult Social Care Better Care Fund. This has included direct input, as well as a presentation to the Health and Wellbeing Board on 27 March 2014 outlining the

contribution of Housing Services. A presentation on the importance of the Better Care Fund will be made at a Members Briefing on 10 April 2014.

Prostate Cancer

- 4.3 The Council has committed to raising the issue of Prostate Cancer within Taunton Deane. Prostate Cancer is the leading cause of death through cancer in men. We have displayed posters around the building and last week included an article in the Deane Dispatch promoting awareness

Dementia Friendly Council

- 4.4 The Council has committed to becoming a Dementia Friendly Council and training is being rolled out to front line staff. The training is short and focussed, ensuring that staff recognise the signs of dementia and know how to adjust their customer service to better meet the needs of customers. A training session was provided to Members at the Members Briefing on 25 March 2014.

Mental Health Support

- 4.5 Officers from the Council have met with representatives from the Somerset Partnership, who have committed additional resource to provide social worker and occupational health support to help address mental health and wellbeing issues within the Halcon One Team area, as a pilot scheme.

5. Legal and Democratic Services

Legal Shared Services

- 5.1 Considerable work has been undertaken in exploring the development of a Business Case for a Countywide Legal Shared Service.
- 5.2 The basic principles underpinning such a business case are:-
- Provide savings of 15%;
 - Improve resilience for all partners;
 - The partnership to be flexible / extendable to other partners joining in the future; and
 - Levels of service will be maintained as a minimum.
- 5.3 Information continues to be collected to inform the Business Case including:-
- Resetting staffing structures and potential service structures for a countywide partnership;
 - Existing volumetrics, workloads, service standards and budgets; and

- Current ICT set up and options for a single Case management system
- 5.4 South West Audit Partnership are undertaking work with the partners to develop a risk assessment/register for the Business Case.
- 5.5 The Somerset Monitoring Officers' Group, operating as the Project Board, met in January, February and March with a view to submitting a paper to the Countywide Shared Services Task and Finish Group meeting on 4 April 2014.

In-house Legal Team

- 5.6 The In-house Legal Team continues to be extremely busy. The Legal Services Manager is holding one-to-one meetings with all team members to clarify workloads and introduce appropriate processes to help manage work pressures going forward.

Electoral Services

- 5.7 Since the previous report, Helen Dobson has been appointed as the Electoral Services Officer and Natasha Williams as the Electoral Services Assistant. Thus, the whole team will be in place with effect from 1 April 2014.
- 5.8 Both Taunton Deane and West Somerset now operate on the same Electoral Services computer system, which should greatly assist the ability of the new team to provide an efficient Electoral Service across both Council areas.
- 5.9 Work is now well underway in preparation for the European Elections to be held on 22 May 2014.
- 5.10 The other major project for Electoral Services is the introduction of the Individual Electoral Registration system. All members of the new team have attended formal training relating to this matter. It is also intended to arrange an appropriate Members Briefings in due course.

Possible Joint Independent Panel on Members' Remuneration

- 5.11 All Councils are required to have an Independent Panel to report on Members' remuneration.
- 5.12 Somerset County and West Somerset District Councils already use a Joint Independent Panel for this purpose. Both Councils have agreed to the principle of a possible further expansion of the Panel to include other Somerset District Councils, should they wish to join.

- 5.13 At present, the Joint Independent Panel comprises of five Somerset County Council panel representatives and one West Somerset District Council panel representative.
- 5.14 The membership could be further expanded with an additional panel member per District Council nominated by that Council. Membership rules would be as follows:-
- Members shall serve the maximum of two consecutive three year terms of office;
 - Membership terms of office shall be staggered to ensure both continuity of membership and a regular turnover of members;
 - The panel membership shall always include one member appointed by each District Council according to that Council's own appointment process; and
 - The overall membership shall be agreed by all the constituent Councils.
- 5.15 Each Council would be responsible for agreeing and paying allowances to its nominated panel members to cover attendance at meetings.
- 5.16 Such a Joint Independent Panel would continue to advise each Council on its respective Members Allowances scheme. This arrangement would enable each individual participating Council to retain its independent decision-making sovereignty on the issue.
- 5.17 Taunton Deane Borough Council has expressed an interest in joining the Joint Independent Panel. The Authority would benefit from greater efficiencies of officer time for managing the process.
- 5.17 For this matter ultimately to progress, a report will need to be submitted to Council outlining the potential new arrangements, including the appointment of Taunton Deane's representative on the Joint Independent Panel.

6. Resources

Procurement

- 6.1 The Resources Team continues to monitor delivery of the Procurement Transformation Project and day-to-day Procurement Service by Southwest One.
- 6.2 As reported in the Quarter 3 monitoring report to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee in March 2014, in excess of £1,842,000 savings have been delivered to the Council through the signed-off procurement related initiatives.
- 6.3 A further £1,336,000 of savings are scheduled to be delivered from these signed-off initiatives during the remainder of the Southwest One

contract.

- 6.4 The Strategic Procurement Service is working on a number of additional projects and savings initiatives, which should increase the value of savings delivered. For example, procurement of a new commercial waste contractor for the Council's premises is underway.

Finance Services

- 6.5 The Finance Advisory service transferred back to the Council on 1 February 2014. The transition has gone smoothly, and 'business as usual' finance support to the Council has continued without interruption.
- 6.6 The Strategic Finance Officer and Insurance Officer now report to the Assistant Director Resources, and continue to support the 'client' function to monitor the remaining finance services element of the Southwest One contract.
- 6.7 Following Council's approval of the Budget in February, the service has been gearing up for the financial year end and the start of the new financial year.
- 6.8 The team also provides support to the Assistant Directors and the Joint Management and Shared Services (JMASS) Project Team. They need to ensure financial information and costings for the evolving management and shared services structures are robust.
- 6.9 There have been a number of staff changes in the Advisory Team, but we have been able to recruit successfully to the posts of Interim Financial Services Manager, Principal Accountant and Accounting Technician, thus ensuring the service continues to operate safely in the coming months.

7. Revenues and Benefits

Council Tax and Business Rates

- 7.1 During early March, the team successfully completed annual billing for Council Tax and Business Rates for 2014/2015.
- 7.2 Council Tax bills were accompanied by a consultation booklet seeking views on options and proposals for changing the Council Tax Support scheme in 2015/2016.
- 7.3 Business Rates customers received information on the discounts for retail premises.

- 7.4 In addition to the annual billing for more than 50,000 properties, staff wrote to all Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support recipients telling them of their new entitlement from April 2014.
- 7.5 At the end of February 2014, the Authority had collected 97.23% of Council Tax due for 2013/2014. This is slightly behind our target for in-year collection, but it is not unexpected.
- 7.6 Under the old Council Tax Benefit scheme, support was available at 100% of the Council Tax liability. We provided help of £6,900,000 towards Council Tax payments in 2012/2013.
- 7.7 Our current local Council Tax Support scheme limits the maximum help available for working-age people to 80%. In 2013/2014, it is estimated we will pay support of £5,900,000. This means that in 2013/2014, significant numbers of working-age households are paying Council Tax for the first time. Thus, the Revenues and Benefits Service has to collect an extra £1,000,000 from benefit recipients.

Corporate Fraud Policy

- 7.8 On 10 March 2014, the Corporate Governance Committee recommended the adoption of the Authority's new Corporate Fraud Policy. The policy will provide a framework for staff and Members to allow for effective deterrence, detection and investigation of fraud and corruption.

Flooding Relief

- 7.9 Revenues and Benefits staff have been visiting some of those affected by the severe flooding to offer advice and assistance. The team are doing all they can to support people whose lives have been so disrupted by the terrible weather and are providing much needed relief from Council Tax and Business Rates.
- 7.10 I should like to take this opportunity also to thank the Revenues and Benefits Service Team for their commitment and outstanding contribution to helping Somerset residents during the prolonged flooding conditions.

Councillor Vivienne Stock-Williams

Council Meeting – 8 April 2014

Report of Councillor Mark Edwards - Planning, Transportation and Communications

1. Planning Policy

- 1.1 The Council's Report of Public Consultation on the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (SADMP) Preferred Options has now been published on our website. This summarises the key messages coming back through the consultation period and provides an initial response to the issues raised.
- 1.2 The Policy Team are now starting to work on the Draft Plan stage and anticipate that this will be published in August (subject to all the transport modelling being completed in ample time). There are a number of key pieces of evidence still being progressed and these include the Infrastructure Delivery Plan Review and the Viability Study.

2. St Augustine's School, Taunton

- 2.1 I have written on behalf of the Council to both the Diocese of Bath and Wells / Catholic Church as landowners of the school buildings and the County Council who own the playing fields at St Augustine's School. This follows recent moves by Colliers CRE acting on behalf of the Churches to notify the Council of their intention to demolish the school buildings and market the site as a redevelopment opportunity.
- 2.2 Taunton Deane has been clear that this site should be reserved for educational uses and proposes to safeguard the entire site in the SADMP for such purposes and we felt it important to re-emphasise this to the site's owners.
- 2.3 We know that the infrastructure bill arising from education alone is potentially double the likely receipts from the Community Infrastructure Levy over the period up to 2028 and therefore it is critical that opportunities to reuse the St Augustine's site are maximised.

3. Revised Statement of Community Involvement

- 3.1 The Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has recently been updated and will be adopted shortly. The SCI sets out how Taunton Deane will involve the community and stakeholders in the preparation, alteration and review of local planning policy and the consideration of planning applications.

- 3.2 The SCI was subject to consultation itself recently (at the same time as the SADMP Preferred Options) and the Policy Team has taken on board and responded to the comments made to it.

4. Monkton Delivery Board

- 4.1 The Monkton Heathfield Delivery Board met for the second time on 14 March 2014. Tim Burton updated the Board in respect of the various work streams funded through the Large Sites Capacity Fund and, in particular, the commissions providing legal, valuation and viability advice.
- 4.2 A particular focus of discussion related to the land north of the A3259, where Tim Baker of Strategic Land Partnerships was able to update on progress of the Hartnells Farm planning application.
- 4.3 The developers present also committed to starting a discussion around master planning of the Core Strategy site. The other main area of debate was around the alternative Western Relief Road alignments as well as the applications to vary the Section 106 Agreements on the Consortium land and how these could potentially assist in the early delivery of the road.

5. National Planning Policy Guidance

- 5.1 On 6 March 2014 the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) launched this planning practice guidance web-based resource.
- 5.2 For the first time, planning practice guidance is now available entirely online in a usable and accessible way. Important information for any user of the planning system previously only published in separate documents can now be found quickly and simply. You can link easily between the National Planning Policy Framework and relevant planning practice guidance, as well as between different categories of guidance.
- 5.3 All guidance will also go through a regular review process to ensure it is relevant, usable and up-to-date. Anyone can stay up-to-date on any changes to national planning practice guidance by email alerts.

6. Duty to Cooperate - Mid Devon

- 6.1 The Council has expressed concern at this proposal and the potential impact on Taunton and Wellington Town Centres as well as the development plan strategy for Taunton Deane.

- 6.2 The proposal also does not appear to be justified in relation to the evidence base prepared by Mid Devon District Council.
- 6.3 We have jointly commented our concerns on this proposal along with Exeter City Council and Devon County Council
- 6.4 As the Plan emerges officers will report back to Members on progress in addressing this Council's concerns over these proposals.

7. Taunton Railway Station Enhancement

- 7.1 Members that have attended briefings over the past year or so will be aware of Network Rail's ambitions to enhance Taunton Railway Station. It is very encouraging to see that these plans have gained renewed impetus following their inclusion in the Growth Prospectus for Taunton and the Taunton Rethink.
- 7.2 A memorandum of understanding has now been developed with all partners, including the Council, who are committed to working together to bring these enhancements to fruition. This is much more than just a station improvement. Different phases of the overall masterplan will see new public realm and a public transport interchange on the south side of the station - fronting onto Firepool and the newly created Northern Inner Distributor Road, a new booking hall, hotel, retail and office provision and improved car parking provision.
- 7.3 The station enhancement will create a fantastic new gateway to Taunton for the travelling public, businesses and new investors. The enhancement will create many jobs and economic benefits in its own right, and will also act as a beacon for new investment into Taunton.
- 7.4 The Council is working closely with Network Rail as part of a wider partnership team to facilitate the new development and identify funding opportunities for different phases of this project. I will report back to members as the project moves forward.

8. Communications

- 8.1 Flooding has, inevitably, dominated communications for the past two months. Taunton Deane has been active in the communications group, including shifts in the media centre set up during the rescue phase.
- 8.2 The agencies and authorities continue to keep in daily touch as the recovery gets under way, feeding in to the Community Update. The affected district councils – Taunton Deane, Sedgemoor and South Somerset – are working together on publicising issues such as business support and Council Tax relief.

- 8.3 Communications is now also working actively with West Somerset Council under the Joint Management and Shared Services initiative, preparing press releases and responding the media enquiries.
- 8.4 Internal communications is also busy with the launch of a new, joint newsletter for staff and Members at both councils. This also involves a team of staff volunteers whose help has been invaluable in formulating the One Team publication.
- 8.5 As of mid-March the number of Twitter followers was heading for the 400-mark. We aim to tweet at least twice daily and have generated interest through Throwback Thursday with old pictures. It has been a really useful tool through the flooding as we are able to provide up-to-the-minute information.
- 8.6 Customer Contact and Word Processing are providing vital help in ensuring we can link quickly to news releases and answer queries.

Councillor Mark Edwards