

Full Council Meeting – 29 September 2015

Report of Councillor John Williams – Leader of the Council

1. Congratulations to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth

- 1.1 Our great Queen is a very modest lady and it was indicated she did not wish to have great celebrations for the remarkable achievement of becoming our longest ever reigning Monarch, however remarkable we may regard it and it certainly is a tremendous achievement of longevity.
- 1.2 There was also an element of respect for Queen Victoria and of course a reminder of the loss of her father all those years ago.
- 1.3 So we confined ourselves to flying the Union Flag outside The Deane House and our Mayor sent a letter of thanks and congratulations from the Council and our Community. We also counted our blessings for 63 years reign of a Sovereign who has charted a very steady course through some extremely difficult waters. Long may she continue to reign over us.
- 1.4 I am sure you will all be supportive of the Mayor's representation and join in wholehearted congratulations to our wonderful Queen.

2. Town Centre Vibrancy

- 2.1 It is great to see well established and successful new restaurants opening in Taunton. Four restaurants have opened in the space of almost as many months and are proving extremely popular.
- 2.2 This all adds to the vibrancy of the town centre and helps reduce what is already a low number of empty shops. Our town centre vacancy rate is standing at 3.14% against the national vacancy rate of 10.4%. This stands us in good stead as a popular shopping destination for shoppers and a base attractive to traders and retailers.
- 2.3 It must also be recognised that the excellent range of restaurants also makes an enormous contribution to our night time economy, which is to be welcomed.

3. Northern Inner Distributor Road (NIDR) Progress

- 3.1 The NIDR works are progressing and to update on the Kingston Loop

Bridge (Station Road) instructions have now been issued to the contractor for the construction of the bridge. Information from the contractor on the timescale to complete the works is awaited but it is expected they will have a piling rig on site in October. Once the rig has commenced work on site it should be possible to provide a projected completion date.

- 3.2 Regarding the rest of the works on the NIDR it is anticipated this should be finished well within the timespan of the bridge construction across Station Road. This will include reopening of the access road to the Priory Park housing estate and removal of the temporary access road through the former Priory Bridge Public Car Park. Much to the relief of local residents!

4. Junction 25 (J5) and A358

- 4.1 These two schemes are inextricably linked as the J25 enlargement and modification will take place ahead of the upgrade of the A358 and this will ensure early access to the proposed strategic employment site. County Highways are responsible for the design of J25 and are working closely with Highways England to ensure any future route for the A358 can be joined seamlessly with the upgraded roundabout.
- 4.2 In respect of progress the design of J25 is underway but we are awaiting Highway's England (HE) traffic modelling reports for the junction which is anticipated late this year. The design can then be finalised.
- 4.3 Planning of the A358 upgrade process is currently progressing through the governance in order to proceed to the next stage involving the development of options. During this stage possible options will be reviewed leading to a public consultation exercise early in the subsequent stage, currently anticipated to be in 2016.
- 4.4 Although there have been previous exhibitions on possible routes in the past, it is necessary for HE to review the current constraints to determine what options may now be applicable. It is therefore possible that the previous option as publicised may or may not be appropriate when taking account of changes that have occurred in the interim.
- 4.5 During the options stage they will seek to identify constraints and develop a traffic model to inform the options and selection. To help with developing a traffic model there is a need to obtain traffic data and understand the journeys people make in terms of their origin and destination. Surveys will be undertaken in October of this year to inform future planning work, this will include roadside interviews.

5. Strategic Employment Site Adjacent J25

- 5.1 Very positive meetings have taken place with both the Environment

Agency, HE and Somerset County Council (SCC) with a constructive approach to working. The team is being mobilised to prepare a planning application in the second half of next year to tie in with the Planning Department's single site allocation process. Positive meetings with a number of organisations regarding the site have been held, from both the private and public sector including health and education. There is strong and positive interest in this proposed site.

- 5.2 The usual environmental and ecological surveys are necessary and these have been commissioned and are underway so that when a planning application is made it has all the necessary supporting reports for consideration.

6. Junction 26 – Westpark, Wellington

- 6.1 Demand for sites continues at Westpark. Construction has commenced on the next block of units with one exchanged (SCC Scientific Services) and two more under offer from existing occupiers on the business park.
- 6.2 The secure hospital is well under way and due to complete during the second half of next year. Two others from this block of seven are complete and occupied. Planning is in hand for the next block of industrial units which are scheduled to commence in Spring 2016 and complete by the Autumn. This is evidence of very buoyant demand for employment space.

7. Crown Estate Housing Changes

- 7.1 We have been notified that the Crown Estate have recently exchanged contracts for the sale of an England-wide portfolio of 50 residential properties to Dorrington Residential Limited. The properties are predominantly subject to protected Rent Act 1977 tenancies.
- 7.2 Six of the properties are located in Dunster and seventeen in Taunton. I am assured the tenants are being kept fully informed both in writing and through personal visits with the managing agents and the Dorrington Team providing reassurance. We are not aware of the specific location of these properties but will be making enquiries.
- 7.3 The Crown have offered reassurance that they understand the importance of conducting sales of residential properties responsibly and that they have made absolutely sure that tenants' rights will be protected following the sale.
- 7.4 Furthermore, tenants affected by the sale were offered the opportunity to purchase the property they live in before the property was included within the portfolio sale. It seems they have taken heed of the very strong representation made last time when selling rural properties.

- 7.5 Having discussed this with our Housing Department there is currently a Private Members' Bill - the Crown Tenancies Bill 2015/2016 - that is making its way through Parliament, the next event is the second reading: House of Commons at 6th November 2015. This is a Bill to provide that Crown tenancies will be assured tenancies, subject to certain exceptions. It could, if enacted, lead to Crown tenants having much greater protection than that to which they previously been legally entitled.
- 7.6 We are consulting with the Shared Legal Service which provides legal services to the Council for further information on the Bill going through Parliament versus current rights of tenants. One aspect on which clarity will be sought is the extent to which the tenants' rights which are being proposed by Dorrington reflect the full improvements which will ultimately be enjoyed by tenants generally once the Crown Tenancies Bill becomes law.
- 7.7 As for Dorrington Residential Limited, they are major residential property investors and developers. They obviously have a wide experience with a current portfolio of over 4,000 residential units and a range of tenancy types. Little is known other than this as they have not previously operated in this area. The Crown have assured us that they are committed investors who are in it for the long term and will maintain tenants' rights.

8. Ongoing Major Projects

- 8.1 DLO relocation - We have exchanged contracts with Helston Motors for the sale of the DLO premises and we are in final negotiations for an alternative site. Details should be brought to Members shortly.
- 8.2 Thales site - The developers for this site have now reached agreement in principle with Thales and ourselves and final negotiations are continuing. We hope to bring details to Members shortly to confirm agreement.
- 8.3 The Deane House Accommodation Project – Negotiations are continuing with SCC to agree Heads of Terms and once agreed details will be brought back for consideration by Members.
- 8.4 Firepool - An interesting and very successful recent consultation about proposals based on the "Taunton Town Centre Rethink" with a planning application proposed for late October 2015. This will include full consultation required under the planning requirements.

9. Refugee Crisis

- 9.1 This has been very ably covered by my colleague Cllr Jane

Warmington in her report but I add to this with reassurance as the Leader of the Council that we are very aware of the tragedy unfolding before us and we must do all possible to assist. As a nation we are most generous with the Government committing to accepting a substantial number of refugees and £millions being provided to assist those staying in the temporary camps that barely provides the basic necessities of life but the funding is to improve conditions there.

- 9.2 Nobody can fail to be moved by the tragic scenes we see night after night on our television screens and we are ready and willing to do our bit in Taunton Deane to assist where possible.
- 9.3 I would also like to offer special thanks to all those individuals and groups that have risen to the occasion by collecting vital clothes and foodstuff and shipping it to where most needed. I commend all involved for your commitment and wish to help.

Councillor John Williams

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Report of Councillor Mrs Jane Warmington - Community Leadership

In our most disadvantaged areas, the strategic vision for Taunton Deane is that residents lives will improve significantly and that these priority areas will look better, feel safer and in the future place a more proportionate demand on public services. These services will be delivered in urban areas through integrated, frontline, problem-solving, multi-agency teams based in each area. Rural parishes with more scattered communities will be helped to access services through local village agents identifying, signposting and supporting residents to get the help they need. Urban priority areas need excellent local education and health facilities which are then accessible to all, if we are to build independence, resilience and raise aspirations in individual people, families and communities and sustain these improvements in the future.

1. Response to the Refugee Crisis

- 1.1 We expect to receive refugees direct from the camps set up in adjacent countries from where they are fleeing and it is likely that these refugees will be the most vulnerable (poor, ill, orphaned), who could not or would not attempt the perilous journeys others have undergone to get themselves to Europe.
- 1.2 The Local Government Association is co-ordinating the National Action Plan and its Chief Executives are in discussion with Central Government about the role and responsibilities of local Councils and how this support will be funded (the Prime Minister has told Members of Parliament that the existing Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme, in place since early 2014, would be expanded). The first two hundred refugees have already arrived in Bradford and are being settled in.
- 1.3 Chief Executives of our local authorities have met together in preparation and nominated their lead officers for when those refugees we will be asked to settle arrive here in Somerset. Initially they may be housed in temporary accommodation and emergency banded before finding homes through Homefinder Somerset, our choice based letting system.

(Homefinder Somerset shows housing demand to be high as the most recent figures for Taunton Deane show - 3,067 on the waiting list; three emergency banded; 406 gold banded (166 of these listed homeless); 714 silver banded; 1944 bronze banded; with 532 properties available for rent last year).

- 1.4 Some refugees may be ill though and need to go straight into hospital and others will need additional support from community health services. All refugees will be encouraged to register with local doctors' surgeries and dentists in order to establish and manage their health needs. Foster parents and carers may be sought for orphaned children and school places identified where these are needed.

- 1.5 The education requirement will be much wider though with the need to support adults to learn English and basic lessons in citizenship to help them understand the country they have moved to. Schools, colleges, churches and others in the voluntary sector will no doubt rally to do this with funding we hope will be provided by Central Government, probably through the local authorities.
- 1.6 There are both skilled and unskilled jobs available to apply for in Somerset for those refugees able to work and the Department of Work and Pensions, can try to match the skills of those who settle here with support from local businesses and colleges. However Revenues and Benefits are being kept informed about what to expect in order to best support the refugees.
- 1.7 The simplest thing we as residents can do is be friendly, tolerant, respectful, non-judgemental and understanding to help them settle in and through our communities welcome them and offer support and guidance at a difficult time for people far from home, forced to settle somewhere new and strange.

2. Councillor Federica Smith's Local Initiative to Help Refugees and Migrants in Europe

- 2.1 Local efforts are underway to help provide aid to those migrants and refugees who have reached Europe especially those in Calais who are living in camps awaiting registration and decisions on their futures. Councillor Federica Smith has begun collections of non-perishable food, winter clothing, sleeping bags, shelter, hygiene goods and spare mobile phones working from her garage. She has linked up with others volunteers arranging weekly deliveries to the continent (facebook group Calais - People to People Solidarity - Action from UK). She can be contacted via her facebook page or on her Councillor email cllr.federica.smith@tauntondeane.gov.uk. This is admirable and the huge effort she is putting in is commendable.
- 2.2 Another local scheme is Neroche Communication Action Group which has established a link with Councillor Federica Smith so locally collected items can go off together. Rachel Green is the organiser and she says the Aid charities are struggling to help private groups get donations to the right people in the right way. They are hoping that by the time Full Council meets, the collection and donation system will be more organised and items collected will get to where they are most needed.
- 2.3 There is an official UK government web page (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/syria-refugees-what-you-can-do-to-help--2>) and a British Red Cross helpline (tel:0800 107 8727 open from 9am-7pm) which have been set up to provide advice for any members of the public who want to help.

3. Support for Mental Health

- 3.1 So much underpins health and wellbeing, not least mental health which we know is giving cause for concern and needs to be managed alongside our tackling the underlying issues through One Team working, Village Agents and our adopting a different approach to supporting our tenants and managing our estates.

- 3.2 Simon Lewis has been working with Public Health and the Clinical Commissioning Group who have agreed to a needs assessment across all the One Team areas around the different mental health demands and Public Health are to commission this.
- 3.3 Somerset Partnership Talking Therapies Service is the county-wide service that was commissioned in 2009, as part of the Department of Health's initiative to make talking therapies more widely available to adults of 18 and over, struggling with common mental health problems like anxiety and depression. However at the moment only one in six of those with a known need are able to receive this support.
- 3.4 The previous Housing Portfolio Holder, Councillor Jean Adkins, asked for a dedicated mental health worker to be taken on for a year to support our tenants. This was based on the increasing need identified through the One Teams with insufficient available expertise to refer onto. Mind, the mental health charity have now been grant aided to do this work in North Taunton, Halcon and Wellington, delivering advocacy and support.
- 3.5 One Teams have a caseload to refer to Mind who after an initial triage will follow this with in depth help as required. Mind will attend a One Team meeting in each area a week and monitor outcomes as their work is carried out. This work starts on 1 October 2015 and it is anticipated they will see approximately five new clients a week totalling up to 250 clients over the year.

4. Employability

- 4.1 Taunton Deane is committed to helping those of working age into employment where extra help is needed. The successful voluntary community workforce Link Power is being further developed in Halcon by a new Community Development Officer Suzanne Rea. This successful local scheme was developed with the local community Link Centre three years ago and has attracted some additional funding over this time. The workforce has been based in one of the shops in Roman Road for over a year when the number of volunteers outgrew the Link Centre where they congregated.
- 4.2 Further employment skills and training are planned across the three One Team areas based on learning from Yarlinton Housing Association's Inspire To Achieve, getting people back to work by improving job readiness and employability. The funding for this has already been agreed from underspend (£139,000 spread over three years) and is primarily aimed at tenants of working age in those areas where unemployment is particularly high and will have clearly defined outcomes. This is still under development and experienced Community Development Officer Martha Dudman has been asked to help draw up the specification.

5. One Teams Estate Housing Staff

- 5.1 There are a number of other changes in Housing and Communities staff : an additional Estates Officer, Jack Madge; a replacement Estates Officer following Michelle Garcia's resignation – Amalia Hakim starting on the 13 October 2015; and

Interim Area Community Manager covering Cyndy Simpson's absence – Julie Sabey starting on the 8 October. We welcome each of them to Taunton Deane and wish our leavers well.

6. Community Safety

- 6.1 Local authorities and specified organisations such as schools and colleges are expected to get involved in raising awareness to counter terrorism. The Safer Somerset Partnership is leading on this, embedding Prevent (the first of four elements of CONTEST, the Government's counter-terrorism strategy to prevent, pursue, prepare and protect) which aims to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism.
- 6.2 Our Community Safety Lead, Scott Weetch has already organised ten staff workshops across both authorities (the first districts to do so) to introduce this and explain what we are expected to do. These sessions are an hour long, begin at the end of September and training will cascade to make other staff and interested Councillors aware.
- 6.3 Put simply, it is awareness training and it is about all of us having this on our radar (alongside our awareness around dementia, safeguarding and domestic abuse for example). This is so we are alert and have some idea if we notice someone/ something odd, what to do and who to tell. The nominated single point of contact is Scott Weetch.
- 6.4 The concern would then be raised to a CHANNEL Panel, which is multi-agency and meets on an ad hoc basis when a specified authority (school/ college/ local authority) raises it. Their vulnerability is assessed and an action plan produced. So far there have been three cases in Somerset, all young vulnerable males known to other services and numbers are expected to rise as our awareness increases.

7. Taunton's Experience with 'Legal Highs'

- 7.1 The portfolio holder has been asked to speak at a Westminster Briefing on 23 September 2015 about our experience here in Taunton on tackling the abuse of 'legal highs' in the lead up to a ban with the new Psychoactive Substances Bill. The portfolio holder has consulted in the town centre and is being accompanied by the Community Safety Lead, Scott Weetch.
- 7.2 The total Anti-Social Behaviour statistics (ASB) for the town centre over the last three years provided by the Avon and Somerset Police (ASP) show a marked increase associated with the two shops selling 'legal highs' throughout last year and the dramatic reduction when both shops stopped trading in them towards the end of that year.
- 7.3 One shop voluntarily stopped selling and the other closed after a Community Protection Order was served and then extended using new powers under the recent ASB, Crime and Policing Act, 2014. The Home Secretary then announced her timely intention to ban these and the closed shop has not since reopened.

- 7.4 Under the same legislation Taunton Deane quickly explored a Public Place Protection Order with North East Lincolnshire Council who had already done this, to ban all intoxicating substances and replace the existing no drinking zone. After consultation with the Police, the area covered was extended, the public consulted, found to be in agreement and it was in place in the Summer. Lincoln have also been invited to speak at the Westminster Briefing.
- 7.5 The Summer of 2014 is probably etched on all our minds following increased activity for the Police from the Spring and local and national headlines when the daughter of a Taunton resident Nick Smith was spiked by a discarded needle whilst playing in one of our parks. He set up South West Action Group as a result and highlighted the plight and the blight of 'legal highs' on our town to a much wider audience. Unfortunately it also resulted in Taunton being known as the legal high capital when actually it was one of many market towns nationwide with similar problems.
- 7.6 Last Summer the Taunton Town Centre Police Team were inundated with ASB calls and calls relating to discarded needles and they faced extremely chaotic behaviour from users on an almost daily basis. This Summer they have not. They know the problem has not gone away but it is far less visible and intrusive for most people. They believe their ASB closure of the shop has made a massive difference for the town.
- 7.7 Taunton Deane's Parks and Open Spaces Team are now collecting far fewer discarded needles than they were last year and the number of confrontations the staff had in the past has dropped.
- 7.8 From a CCTV perspective they have seen a noticeable decrease in the levels of ASB associated with New Psychoactive Substances (NPS is the proper name for a 'legal high').
- 7.9 Previously, they were having issues from very early on in the day with users trying to buy the NPS's congregating in and around premises which sell them. This brought with it various issues of ASB amongst themselves, towards other citizens and was generally intimidating to members of the public going about their lawful business.
- 7.10 The effect these substances were having was clear and CCTV operators could tell when a person was under the influence simply by their demeanour. They noticed that users were also gathering throughout the day in the centre of town and being a general nuisance. It was also clear that as these substances were deemed legal, consumption was openly undertaken in public, which in itself is antisocial.
- 7.11 Following the closure of one shop and an agreement from another to stop selling the NPS's, instances of ASB related to the use of the drugs seen on CCTV reduced almost overnight.
- 7.12 However, the problem has not gone away and the views of the Senior Nurse in the Emergency Department and the Assistant Director of Nursing at Musgrove Park Hospital were canvassed. It remains very tricky there and after a sense check across the department, the feeling is that although they understand a lot more about legal highs now, anecdotally they are not yet seeing a decline in numbers.

- 7.13 Recreational use of 'legal highs' is still having impact upon Accident and Emergency (A&E), with a number of admissions every week. They do not officially code for these patients (something they may consider) so cannot compare actual attendances with last year.
- 7.14 Those who attend A&E are often significantly disruptive, requiring Police/security for their/everyone else's safety, as they are unwell and often require admission. 'Legal highs' are frequently cut with other chemicals including amphetamines, so an individual can require a disproportionately high amount of attention. The Emergency Department would welcome moves to reduce the use of 'legal highs'.
- 7.15 Taunton Deane's ASB Officers were asked for their experience on the displacement of problems because anecdotally 'legal highs' are still used on the Estates. It appears a network of suppliers have evolved and many users now travel to Bridgwater to purchase 'legal highs', and some buy in bulk to distribute to users on the Estates.
- 7.16 They do not see as much evidence of 'legal high' usage on the Taunton streets as they used to, perhaps because users take them as soon as they buy them. It might also be that 'legal highs' are being consumed in houses or users are being more discreet because they are buying from street dealers. From an environmental perspective, the situation has improved but from a social and health perspective they believe the problem is still very much as bad as it was [which is reflected in what the hospital feel].
- 7.17 Other traders near to where both shops were have noticed a difference with fewer people hanging around and much less associated litter and unpredictable behaviour. 'Legal highs' are not so readily available locally and although health issues in particular remain a serious concern, the problems are much less visible to the public and less prevalent.

8. Read Easy

- 8.1 Catherine Berry, a new trustee on the North Taunton Partnership has successfully applied to become a Read Easy Pioneer and begin the process of setting up a Read Easy (adult literacy) group in North Taunton. In the meantime, she would like to canvas support for the project, especially from people interested in getting involved as reading coaches. Training and support are provided throughout. Please contact Catherine at northtaunton@readeasy.org.uk.
- 8.2 It would be lovely if some Councillors and members of staff were interested and could commit to the two half-an-hours a week they coach their pupils.

Councillor Jane Warmington

Council Meeting - 29 September 2015

Report of Councillor Terry Beale – Housing Services

1. Deane Housing Development

- 1.1 The Weavers Arms development at Rockwell Green, Wellington was approved through the Planning Committee on the 12 August 2015. The scheme will deliver 26 affordable units and the Council is currently tendering for a contractor. There are two remaining decants which need to be finalised.
- 1.2 With regard to the Creechbarrow Road site in Taunton, The Council is acutely aware of the delays both within the Knightstone element and across the site. I believe that when completed, the units will be an excellent addition to our stock. A revised programme is due imminently and I will be monitoring progress closely.
- 1.3 We are also acutely aware of the current levels of uncertainty within the delivery of affordable housing. We still await the full details and implications of the Budget Statement with regard to rentals and I will be in a better position to report fully once those details are known. The position is still very strong for 2015/2016 with 329 homes in the pipeline and although we must be cautious in light of circumstances I still remain optimistic that we will deliver over 250 homes which would be a record year for the Authority.

2. Photovoltaic (PV) Solar Panels Scheme

- 2.1 The scheme to fit PV to 350 Council owned houses is nearing completion, with the final installation due near the 7 October 2015.
- 2.2 The two appointed installers were Glevum Heating and Prolectric. Glevum have already installed their target of 175 properties and have the final one to fit in October. Prolectric still have approximately 12 properties to install.
- 2.3 Western Power Distribution decide how many properties in an area can be connected to the National Grid, therefore some tenants have not had PV fitted whereas their neighbours have. This has caused some complaints. All we can do is reiterate the fact we need permission from Western Power Distribution to install PV to their home and connect to the Grid.
- 2.4 A recent Government announcement informed us that Feed In Tariffs (FIT) are dropping from 12p per kilowatt hour to 1.63p on the 31 December 2015. The Council's installed properties will be secure on the 12p rate but any future ones will be on the much lower rate.
- 2.5 Therefore it is unlikely future schemes will be financially viable as the cost of panels are unlikely to drop in price to match the drop in FITs.

- 2.6 The investment Taunton Deane has allocated for the PV scheme is £1,500,000. The FITs we receive will go towards paying off the cost of the panels, which is estimated to take 13 years. From year 13 – 20 the Council will have paid off the investment figure and will be in a positive cash flow due to the FIT income.
- 2.7 Over the lifetime of the panels it is anticipated they will save 11,000 tonnes of carbon emissions.

3. External Wall Insulation Scheme to a selection of Cornish type non-traditional properties

- 3.1 Solid External Wall Insulation (EWI) to a selection of Cornish house types is well underway and due to complete in late October. The original cladding from the early 1990s has been removed and a new 150mm fibre board and render system has been applied.
- 3.2 This is to make the homes easier to heat as it will insulate the whole of the lower elevations. The installation has happened over the summer months so tenants will not feel the cold while the original cladding was removed.
- 3.3 There has been a slight delay in completing the project as materials have had to come into the country via Calais, which has encountered problems recently.
- 3.4 Following fitting of the fibre boards, two coats of render are then applied. Window cills are replaced, pipes are extended out to allow for the four inches of insulation and all external fixings are replaced. Tenants are informed not to affix anything to the EWI as it is not a hard material and puncturing it will lower the thermal efficiency.
- 3.5 Both the PV and EWI schemes have been very well received by the residents and will assist with meeting the challenges of fuel poverty.

4. Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan

- 4.1 The 30 year HRA Business Plan was implemented in April 2012 with the introduction of self-financing. It has been reviewed annually in line with the budget setting timetable, but the intention was that there would be a periodical major review. Plans were in place for this to happen, but the impact of the Summer Budget, including social rent reductions and the sale of high value houses, has now made this work essential.
- 4.2 External consultants have been appointed to assist with the work and to give assurances that the Business Plan remains robust and affordable. The first phase of work will include looking at refreshing the priorities of the HRA,

validating the financial position, looking at the data held on our stock and the impact of the Extra Care Housing review. This will be reported to members and tenants late 2015.

- 4.3 The second phase will develop an Asset Management Strategy, a Development Strategy, and will include a review of sheltered housing. This will conclude with a new 30 year Business Plan which will be reported to members and tenants early in the new financial year.

5. Welfare Report

Welfare Reform Visits

- 5.1 The number of tenants affected this month are 329, however this is subject to change on a daily basis due to tenants moving in and out of employment.
- 5.2 The breakdown of tenants that have now downsized are:-
- 2 Direct Match approved and completed;
 - 47 Successful moves on Choice Based Letting (CBL) completed;
 - 2 Successful bids pending a move on CBL;
 - 0 Mutual Exchange's being processed;
 - 23 Mutual Exchanges Completed; and
 - 1 Moved to private sector.

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)

- 5.3 All affected tenants are being offered advice on DHP's and assistance to help them complete the application form. Due to the Revenue and Benefits Team completing end of year reports and gearing up for the introduction of Universal Credit. Since the start of this financial year 62 DHP's have been awarded to Taunton Deane's tenants.

Rent Arrears

5.4

- 1 April 2015 Welfare Reform rent arrears were £41,483.73 with 179 tenants in rent arrears;
- 1 May 2015 Welfare Reform rent arrears were £44,874.09 with 192 tenants in rent arrears. With an increase in rent arrears of £3,390.36 on the previous month;
- 1 June 2015 Welfare Reform rent arrears were £41,762.32 with 184 tenants in rent arrears. With a decrease in rent arrears of £3,111.77 on the previous month;
- 1 July 2015 Welfare Reform rent arrears were £38,152.16 with 162 tenants in rent arrears. With a decrease in rent arrears of £3,610.16 on the previous month;

- 1 August 2015 Welfare Reform rent arrears were £38,765.54 with 164 tenants in rent arrears. With an increase in rent arrears of £613.38 on the previous month;
- 1 September 2015 Welfare Reform rent arrears were £37,920.78 with 167 tenants in rent arrears. With a decrease in rent arrears of £844.76 on the previous month.

Universal Credit (UC)

- 5.5 Universal Credit went live on 20 April 2015. To date Taunton Deane has 15 tenants who have submitted a claim. We have been working closely with these tenants and the level of help and support needed is substantial and needs to be tailored to each of their personal circumstances.
- 5.6 Currently only single newly unemployed people are able to make claims for UC, which accounts for the small number of affected tenants at this time. However, as the roll out of UC becomes wider and involves families the number of our tenants claiming UC will increase significantly.

Councillor Terry Beale

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Report of Councillor Patrick Berry – Environmental Services and Climate Change

1. Licensing / Environmental Health

Licensing

- 1.1 We are disappointed to advise, as most of you already know, that our Licensing Manager, Ian Carter has decided to leave. We wish Ian well in his new position. In the meantime John Rendell has agreed, with immediate effect, to stand-in as acting Manager.
- 1.2 As mentioned previously, the Taxi Forum has been meeting regularly and a full list of areas of concern has been drawn up. Action has already been taken on two of the most concerning issues namely to introduce a filter on applicants and exclude applicants who do not reside in and/or have no connection with Taunton Deane.
- 1.3 A second regulation has been introduced to reinforce the current fit and proper person check. This will include a Taunton Deane 'knowledge' as well as a basic English language check. These two new requirements have already resulted in a reduction in the number of applications well down from the peak we experienced earlier in 2015.
- 1.4 The above have both had an effect on the workload and the resultant backlog in the processing of applications. The departure of Ian Carter will cause a temporary further loss of resource but this is already being addressed. However the backlog and challenge is significant.
- 1.5 It is intended to make one of the two temporary Licensing Officers (covering Taunton Deane and West Somerset) permanent to enable West Somerset to be covered.
- 1.6 Community and Client Services Manager, Scott Weetch, to whom the Licensing Manager reports, has taken the opportunity to start a complete review of the Licensing activities in particular the staffing, the work flow and the backlog. Once this activity is complete the adequacy of the current resources and any need to increase or decrease should be clear.

Environmental Health

- 1.7 Two members of staff have left and this has contributed to a very busy summer period. The team works closely with the Private Sector Housing Partnership to investigate complaints from tenants regarding the standard of their accommodation. These complaints are likely to increase over the winter

period when tenants are more likely to suffer from conditions such as damp and mould.

- 1.8 The team is also working with Economic Development on plans for the Festive period and will be helping to put event management plans together and assist with risk assessments. Meetings are starting this month.
- 1.9 The same applies to Licensing where the team monitored events during the summer, for example Summerfest and the children's festival in Goodlands Gardens, Taunton.
- 1.10 The team continues to investigate complaints regarding nuisance across the district including noise, odour, drainage, overgrown gardens and overflowing bins. The Environmental Health Team are often the first port of call for many residents of Taunton Deane and where it is unable to help, officers signpost people to organisations where they can obtain further help or advice.

Food Hygiene

- 1.11 Food Inspections continue apace. Newly opened premises have added to the workload. Advice on a wide range of issues including staff training and allergies is given as part of the service.

2. Climate Change

- 2.1 Solar Power/ Photovoltaic Panels (PV) is currently being installed on two projects:-

- The Housing Revenue Account project to retrofit panels on 351 existing Council homes across Taunton Deane is now almost complete. The completion date is expected in October 2015.
- With effect from 1 January 2016 the Feed-in Tariff (FIT) has been reduced from 12 p per kWh to 1.63 p per kWh. This will vastly reduce the commercial incentive to install PV.

- 2.2 External Wall Insulation (EWI)

- The installation of EWI on 40 Cornish type non-traditional homes is almost complete. The substandard existing cladding is being replaced with EWI. The aim is to prevent heat loss from the properties, therefore increasing thermal comfort and reducing heating bills for tenants. The completion date is expected in October.

3. Somerset Waste Partnership

3.1 Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP) met on 25 September 2015. This report predates the meeting.

- SWP are now executing a detailed analysis of the Recycle More trials carried out around Somerset for recycling of additional materials. The Recycle More trials helped thousands of families over several months to recycle plastic pots, tubs and trays – such as those for yoghurt, margarine or meat – Tetra Paks and other beverage cartons, small electrical items and household batteries.
- The trials also involved tests of recycling collections every two weeks and three-weekly rubbish collections, which between 82% and 86% of people preferred if they involved additional materials being recycled. Earlier analysis showed that the Recycle More trials led recycling rates to jump by up to 29% while rubbish levels fell by as much as 27%. Separate trials of stickers on rubbish bins to remind families not to throw away food saw a 20% rise in food waste recycling. Combining both the sticker and the Recycle More collection changes led in some areas to food waste recycling rising by 45% or more.
- The commercial analysis, which involves the collection truck configuration as well as the processing and packaging facilities, is continuing.

4. Deane DLO

Street Sweeping and Toilet Cleaning

4.1 The DLO brought in, on a free of cost for a six week trial period, two new solar powered compactor bins which were installed near the Market House at the end of High Street in Taunton and a second one in Wellington. The manufacturers claim that this new type of bin will contribute savings in the cost of collecting refuse. Analysis of the results and their effect on the cost of town centre rubbish collection is continuing.

4.2 It has been realised that despite sharing many resources with West Somerset, the Street and Toilet Cleaning Service is provided differently. In Taunton Deane the service is provided through the DLO whereas in West Somerset the service is provided by contractor. The WSC contract is coming to its end date and the TDBC mechanical equipment is going to need replacement soon. It is logical that there would be savings if the two work scopes were combined. It has therefore been decided to seek Member approval to progress a procurement exercise for a shared service for Street and Toilet cleaning. If it were to proceed, it would be a TUPE contract, therefore no employees would be put at risk of redundancy. During the procurement activity there is no commitment on the Council to agree delivery through a contractor as this would require a further decision by Members.

4.3 A litter bin replacement programme has just been started for Wellington.

5. Crematorium

- 5.1 The Cemeteries Department is currently developing four new burial sections at Taunton Deane Cemetery. Some works have already been completed such as drainage, paths, water supply etc. Planting will be carried out during the autumn and winter period when it is hoped to start using the burial sections.

Councillor Patrick Berry

Council Meeting – 29 September 2015

Report of Councillor Mark Edwards – Growth, Economic Development, Asset Management, Arts, Tourism and Communications

1. Growth Deal Bids

- 1.1 I am pleased to report that three bids to the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) have been submitted to further strengthen Taunton's role as a regional growth destination.
- 1.2 Two of the bids are in relation to transport improvements at Toneway Corridor and Cross Keys, in Taunton. The third bid is for the major upstream flood alleviation project, providing long term flood protection for Taunton and enabling future growth.
- 1.3 It is likely that the overall funding pot available will be smaller this year, so the competition will be tougher. Taunton Deane has fared well in recent funding rounds, with successful bids for the Junction 25 enhancement and Taunton Railway Station, and we hope for similar success when results of latest bids are known, probably in early 2016.

2. Supporting Business Growth

Investor support

- 2.1 The team continues to support investors, be they local or inward investors. I was pleased to hear about recent investment made in the Taunton Deane by Faithorn, Farrel and Timms, a consultancy business in the development and construction industry that took offices at Blackbrook Business Park earlier this year. This national business intends to build a new team in the Taunton office over the next few months, enhancing its services across the South West. The Leader and the Economic Development Manager visited the business in September and I am meeting with them shortly.
- 2.2 Officers have spent significant time in recent months meeting and supporting the owners and developers of employment sites across Taunton Deane. Strong progress is being made by the owner of the new Taunton Vale Business Park at Monkton Heathfield in bringing the site to the market. The application for site roads is currently working through the planning process.
- 2.3 Westpark continues its rapid development, and the new Medium Security Hospital within the park is currently under construction by Montpellier Estates. The Wellington community will benefit not only from the much needed local accommodation it will provide to people with mental health issues, but also from the hundreds of jobs and supplier opportunities that it will create directly

and indirectly. Also on Westpark I was also very pleased to see the completion of a new unit for Prolift, a locally owned equipment and plant hire company that has relocated from elsewhere in Wellington.

Taunton Deane Business Directory

- 2.4 Working with the national publisher, Burrows, the Economic Development Team is currently producing a new business directory, featuring a printed directory of larger employers, and an on-line business directory. Funded by advertising, the directory promotes the advantages of investing in Taunton Deane. The publication has been completed and is due to be published later this Autumn. Copies will be circulated to Members for their information.

Taunton Deane Business Conference

- 2.5 I mentioned in July plans to organise a large conference to be held in November at the Somerset County Cricket Ground. Plans are progressing and further details will be announced later this month, but it will be an opportunity to inform businesses of the major schemes planned and underway to enhance Taunton's connectivity, be they via rail, road or digital routes. We are currently considering an event for around 120 delegates with exhibition space for partner organisations.

Sector Research

- 2.6 Earlier this year the team commissioned Somerset County Council to carry out research in to the growth sectors within the area. The research has now been completed and it contains interesting findings, which will be drawn upon to influence our business support services.
- 2.7 For example, in job numbers where health and social work are currently the largest sector, the sector forecast to grow the most in the period to 2020 is within Arts, Entertainment and Recreation. Other sectors where jobs are forecast to grow at a rate above the regional average are the Scientific and Technical sector, and Professional Industries. In GVA terms (where GVA represents the value rather than the number of jobs) Health and Social Work is strongly represented, as is the Public Sector and administration of the State. Both sectors are forecast to grow to 2020, as are Professional services and the Retail trade.
- 2.8 A copy of the findings of the report can be made available to any Members that are interested.

Small Business grants

- 2.9 One New Business grant has been awarded in recent months to Dan Upshaw in Angersleigh. The Council has offered Dan £500 towards training and chainsaw safety equipment for his business.
- 2.10 The Council has also awarded £2,000 to the 10 Parish Arts Festival towards promotional print in support of local artists and creative businesses. Officers are also working with the West Buckland Stores to support the business to buy equipment.

10 Parishes Business Survey

- 2.11 Earlier this year the Council supported the Wiveliscombe Business Group to carry out a survey amongst businesses of their needs. The survey has produced a useful list of priorities, including the need for better business advice and support, enhanced marketing of the area and the need for affordable business space.
- 2.12 What is apparent is that many of the respondents are not aware of the services already provided by the Council and its partner organisations and that better communication of that support is necessary. Officers are liaising with the 10 Parishes Business Group to raise that awareness and to identify new services that might be introduced.

Client-based Approach

- 2.13 At the Executive's meeting of 9 September 2015 the Council approved the implementation of an initiative to work with the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) to deliver employment, apprenticeships and training through planning obligations linked to major construction projects. Economic Development Officers are now working with the Planning Department and the CITB to embed the approach in all relevant policies and procedures.

3. Supporting inward investment and fulfilment

Into Somerset

- 3.1 Work is continuing with the new Into Somerset service, led by Somerset County Council and comprising all of the Districts in the County. Since it was established in April, two enquiries have been received via the Into Somerset website.
- 3.2 In both instances officers have met the business, explained the advantages of relocating in Taunton Deane, and showed them around various potential properties. The second, a national pub/restaurant chain which visited in August, was very interested in road frontage sites in Taunton.
- 3.3 The marketing carried out by Into Somerset complements the Council's own inward investment activity, which is focussed around www.taunton.uk.com.

Investment Grants

- 3.4 A full audit of the Council's business grants has recently been carried out. The review looked in considerable detail at the New Business Grant and the Investment Grant, and tested the governance and delivery processes of both schemes.
- 3.5 A number of recommendations have been agreed with the auditors which will be addressed in the next few months. These will lead to improvements in the checks placed on grant applicants and improve the robustness of the

processes. While these are being addressed we will place a hold on the approval of any new investment grants.

4. Place Based Regeneration

Coal Orchard Redevelopment

- 4.1 In April MACE was appointed to produce a delivery strategy for this site which is a key element of the Taunton Rethink strategy for the town centre. A short consultation event was carried out during the summer amongst local businesses and stakeholders. The proposals were discussed by the Growth Steering Group on 17 September 2015 and are scheduled to be considered by Scrutiny and the Executive in the early part of October.

Firepool consultation

- 4.2 St. Modwen, Taunton Deane Borough Council's development partner for Firepool, hosted public consultations on 11 and 12 September 2015 to enable the public to view emerging proposals for the Firepool site and to ask questions and comment on the latest Firepool proposals. Exhibitions were held at the Auction House, Canal Road on 11 September and Taunton Visitor Centre, Market House, Fore Street on 12 September.
- 4.3 The consultation events included an exhibition and a promotional video of the The Rethink regeneration plans for the town centre and the proposals for Firepool. The deadline for feedback is 25 September 2015 and responses can be made online or in paper form. The consultation was promoted by an article on the front page of the Taunton Gazette, radio interviews and social media. Details of the public consultation and the video can be found on the web address below:
- www.firepool-taunton.com/public-consultation.htm
- 4.4 The vision for Firepool is a vibrant mixed use development with a waterfront setting, including offices, retail, cinema leisure, restaurants, hotel and new homes together with associated landscaping, public realm, infrastructure and parking. Firepool is a vital link in the chain of Taunton's wider regeneration plans and one of the biggest mixed-use schemes in the region with the potential to create in excess of 1,800 jobs.
- 4.5 In the region of 250 people visited the two day exhibitions. Following the closure of the public consultation, St. Modwen will be reviewing public responses and amending their proposals ahead of submitting a planning application at the end of October.

Town Centre Wi-Fi

- 4.6 The Council has employed an IT consultancy, Broadband Access Strategies LLP, to advise on the design and delivery of several Wi-Fi "Hotspots" throughout Taunton Deane. Following a technical mapping exercise, which looked at existing provision in Taunton, Wellington and Wiveliscombe Town Centres, and a high level costing exercise, the team is currently progressing

the project to tender stage. Once up and running the Wi-fi will be a significant asset for the town, offering free internet access for visitors, and providing a platform for sharing information and disseminating promotional messages.

Market House

- 4.7 After the successful relocation of the Visitor Centre to the Market House in July further work to the soft square outside has been carried out. This has included the repositioning of the street traders outside of the centre and the siting of one of our town centre poster rotunda units outside of the office. The only task outstanding is a replacement seat (around the tree) which is awaiting approval and sign off from Somerset County Highways. There is a continuing discussion with a tenant for the remaining west wing first floor office which will, if successful, complete this phase of the work. A formal launch of the building with its new tenants will take place later this Autumn.

5. Cultural Events

Taunton Events Group

- 5.1 Over the course of this Summer Taunton has witnessed some excellent events that have attracted thousands of visitors and have strengthened our reputation as a first class cultural location. The Taunton Events Group, which I Chair, comprises all of the organisers of events and the cultural establishments in Taunton, and has established itself as a really useful communication medium and coordinating group. At its quarterly meetings we review recent activities, and we hear about events planned over the forthcoming months, offering mutual advice and support to raise the quality and quantity of events.
- 5.2 The following have been tremendously successful events this Summer, and they collectively demonstrate just how busy Taunton has been in hosting community-based arts activities:-
- Dragonboat Race on the River Tone in June;
 - Somerfest, our annual celebration of the County Town, in June;
 - The Sustainability Show and Food Fair at Queens College;
 - Taunton Live, at numerous locations across Taunton during July;
 - The Race for Life at Somerset College in July;
 - Santander family event on Castle Green in July;
 - Taunton Flower Show at Vivary Park in August;
 - Parrot in the Park Concert, organised by the Apple and Parrot Pub in Castle Green;
 - The Brick Wonders Exhibition at the Museum of Somerset;
 - The Steam Fayre and Vintage Vehicle Rally at the West Somerset Railway;
 - The Stand Against Violence 10 year Commemoration, held on Castle Green in September.

Christmas 2015

- 5.3 Planning is currently underway to deliver a month long programme of events and activities during the run up to the Christmas season. Led by Make Taunton Sparkle and TIME4, and supported by the Council and other Taunton Events Group members the Festive season will commence on 20 November 2015, and will continue with a full programme of activities on weekends and late night shopping days through to Christmas Eve.
- 5.4 The Council is doing its part to support a great Christmas, providing £25,000 towards the Christmas lights across Taunton Town Centre and additional funding towards candle lit processions and festive decorations. We will also, once again, be offering free car parking after 3 p.m. on the four Saturdays preceding Christmas.
- 5.5 As per previous years the Council is also offering £10,000 to the festive lights displays in Wellington and Wiveliscombe.
- 5.6 I want to commend the efforts made by a hardcore group of individuals including Councillor Kelly Durdan, they have all proved the rule of doing and not just talking and I for one am looking forward to a wonderful Festive season in our County Town.

The Brewhouse Theatre and Southern Sinfonia

- 5.7 I was particularly pleased at the last Events Group meeting in September to welcome the new Chief Executive of The Brewhouse Theatre, Vanessa Lefrancois. Vanessa is currently recruiting a team of paid staff to run the venue and re- establish it as a regional performance asset, delivering an increasingly diverse and extensive programme of performances. The theatre is playing a greater role in enhancing events in the town centre and is particularly keen to put on activities in Somerset Square to attract visitors to that part of the town.
- 5.8 Vanessa was accompanied at the Events Group meeting by the Managing Director of the Southern Sinfonia Orchestra, which has recently taken up residency in the theatre. The presence of this World-class professional orchestra in Taunton is extremely prestigious and further enhances the town's cultural status. Southern Sinfonia's first season at The Brewhouse will include three main house concerts, as well as a series of chamber performances.

6. Marketing the Borough to Visitors

New Taunton Visitor Centre

- 6.1 The new centre opened for business on the 18 July 2015. In its first six weeks of operation, nearly 12,000 visitors have come through the doors. Customer feedback has been very positive and the team are welcoming far more visitors (especially those from overseas) than before.
- 6.2 New brown tourism signs have been added to direct customers and an

advertising campaign to promote the centre has now begun with Clear Channel on bus shelters throughout the area. The new office has also been used to host a Council Tax and the recent Firepool consultation events, if you have not been in already to visit, I would suggest calling in to have a look.

Town Centre Marketing Contract and social media

- 6.3 Destination CMS continue to work with the Visitor Centre Team to promote offers and events taking place in the town centre. A monthly e-Shot promoting events has been produced and circulated, in addition to the daily content being added to our social media channels. The @moreTaunton account on Twitter now has over 4,000 followers, on Facebook nearly 2,000 likes and Instagram 150, each of these avenues provide a valuable way of promoting the area to visitors and local residents. Opportunities to feature the town to Travel journalists are currently being explored.
- 6.4 The contract with Destination CMS was for one year, commencing 1 October 2014. I intend to extend that contract for a further six month period to enable officers to evaluate the service amongst businesses and to agree a way forward.

Visit Wiveliscombe Leaflet

- 6.5 Working with the Wiveliscombe Business Group and Walkers Welcome, the team have produced an extremely useful promotional leaflet for the town. This leaflet with an initial print run of 5,000 will be circulated in the wider area to encourage greater use of the businesses and walking routes on offer. A new Taunton welcome leaflet will follow this Autumn, with one planned for Wellington in the Spring. The Visit Wiveliscombe leaflet has been distributed to all Members.

7. Asset Management Service General Fund Activities

- 7.1 During the past three months the following projects are particularly worthy of mention:-
- Blackbrook Leisure Centre - Completion of land acquisition necessary for the construction and necessary leasing of the new Blackbrook Pool facility.
 - Former Mike Chedzoy premises off Greenbrook Terrace, Taunton – Marketing of this site which has development potential for circa 20 residential units and with offers sought by 25 September 2015. A report will be taken forward with recommendations as to which offer to accept.
 - Community Asset Transfer Policy – Policy drafted and presented to the Community Scrutiny Committee for support to go out to consultation with Parish Councils and other community groups. Work is taking place to identify and then agree key stakeholders to consult with.

Consultation will take place for a period of eight weeks with a report being taken forward late 2015 / early 2016 in respect of the policy (with or without amendment) being adopted.

- Blackdown Business Park, Wellington – A significant number of vacant units which Greenslade Taylor Hunt Chartered Surveyors are now marketing. There is strong initial interest.
- Former Park Keepers Cottage, 277 Cheddon Road, Taunton - Declared surplus and works now progressing in respect of disposal of open space enabling the site to then be marketed. A report will be taken forward with recommendations of which offer to accept.
- Options Reports prepared for both Blackdown Business Park and land at Frobisher Way, Taunton to determine future uses and strategy. With Frobisher Way outline planning consent has now been granted for development of industrial units.
- Continuing Asset Management support through dedicated Asset Projects Surveyor towards the Firepool redevelopment scheme. Positive progress has been made in respect of due diligence and general land assembly.
- Potential change of use of Vivary Park Toilets to a café / other uses.

Councillor Mark Edwards

Council Meeting – 29 September 2015

Report of Councillor Roger Habgood – Planning Policy and Transportation

1. Planning Policy

Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (SADMP)

- 1.1 The SADMP sets out policies for the allocation of land for housing, employment and other development proposals across Taunton Deane excluding the allocations in the Taunton Town Centre, up to 2028. It also contains detailed development management policies against which planning applications will be considered. The SADMP document will form part of the Council's suite of statutory plans, which comprise the basis for determining planning applications across Taunton Deane.
- 1.2 The SADMP has undergone a number of stages of preparation, starting with an Issues and Options consultation in January/February 2013, a Preferred Option consultation in October/November 2013 and a Draft Plan consultation January-March 2015. The Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State for Examination on 13 July 2015.
- 1.3 The SADMP is now at the Examination stage. No dates have yet been set for hearing sessions. The likely timescale for these sessions is now November. The Council has responded to the Inspectors initial questions and observations. The Plan will probably be ready for adoption in early 2016.
- 1.4 The SADMP is key as it builds on the framework set out in the Core Strategy (adopted 2012), which provides the strategic framework for growth in Taunton Deane over the period to 2028. The Core Strategy defines a hierarchy of settlements ranging from Taunton and Wellington, which will accommodate the significant proportion of the Borough's future growth, through to the major and minor rural centres which will be expected to play a lesser role in meeting requirements and lastly, to the villages, where further formal allocations of land for development will not be made.

Specific Site activity

- 1.5 The Staplegrove Framework Masterplan is currently being finalised by the site promoters and will be presented to Members for consideration and adoption. An outline planning permission is likely to follow the adoption of the framework in autumn 2016.

Local Development Order (LDO)

- 1.6 An LDO can be made by Local Authorities to give a grant of planning permission to specific types of development within a defined area. LDOs streamline the planning process by removing the need for developers to make a planning application to a Local Planning Authority. They create certainty and save time and money for those involved in the planning process.
- 1.7 Officers are currently working up proposals for possible LDOs. A paper will be presented at the end of the year to Members setting out proposals.

Gypsies and Travellers

- 1.8 Taunton Deane is part of a working group with other districts, the County Council and the Homes and Communities Agency to try and identify a five year supply of sites for gypsy traveller and showpeople's accommodation. This is no easy task. The project team aim to present their findings by the end of 2015.

Sport, Recreation and Open Spaces

- 1.9 The Council is currently updating its 2010 Playing Pitch Strategy in partnership with Sport England, National Governing Bodies and the Somerset Sports and Activity Partnership. This will provide valuable evidence and direction to ensure a good supply of playing fields and pitches to meet the needs of local communities across Taunton Deane.

Neighbourhood Planning

- 1.10 West Monkton and Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish Councils have submitted an application to undertake a combined Neighbourhood Plan for their parishes. The Council is hosting consultation on the application, which runs until 30 October 2015. The Councils responsible for designating the geographical area the proposed Neighbourhood Plan covers which will be determined once the consultation closes.
- 1.11 Bishops Lydeard and Cothelstone and Trull and Staplehay have produced final draft Neighbourhood Plans. The hard work in recent times of pulling these plans together will culminate in the next stage - submission of plans to Taunton Deane. Pre-examination consultation is expected soon.

2. Transportation

Schemes

- 2.1 The Council continues to work with partners on a range of transport schemes related to the growth prospects for Taunton.

Funding

- 2.2 Bids have recently been submitted for the Toneway corridor improvements and the A358 Cross keys and Silk Mills junction capacity improvements. It is hoped these schemes will be prioritised and then submitted by the Local Enterprise Partnership to Central Government in November.

Northern Inner Distributor Road

- 2.3 Work continues to progress. The finalised programme for the remaining works is being developed by the contractor and is awaited.

Car Parking Operations

- 2.4. Income to date is up overall by 2%.
- 2.5 There have been incidents of theft in Belvedere Road Car Park and machines have been damaged. The Police are aware of these incidents.
- 2.6 High Street Car Park - A daily clean has been instigated and sustained to overcome issues in this car park. This is having a positive effect.
- 2.7 The swap from Ringo to PnP (Phone and Pay) occurred in April 2015. Some reported issues remain and officers are working with partners to resolve them.

Car Parking Strategy

- 2.8 The signage review work, including Variable Message Signs, with partners has commenced.
- 2.9 Proposals to introduce 'pay at exit' at four major car parks are being considered. This work is linked with the above signage review and is continuing.

Taunton Rethink

- 2.10 The Project Team for the proposed redevelopment of Coal Orchard is now in place.

Councillor Roger Habgood

Council Meeting – 29 September 2015

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

1. Parks

- 1.1 We still await the written reports from Green Flag so I am unable to update you on the Victoria Park, Taunton result at this point.
- 1.2 Britain in Bloom judging in July went very well and we are hopeful of another successful award. A star of the show as far as the judges were concerned was Bath Place where they had put on a sneak preview of the 'yarn bombing' that we saw later in the summer.
- 1.3 The last bandstand concert of the season in Vivary Park, Taunton was at the start of September and the painters will soon be giving it a lick of paint. I ask all Members again this year that if they know of any school, college or community group that would like to use the bandstand and bring music or entertainment to the park that they let Community Leisure know.

2. Community Leisure and Play

Hudson Way

- 2.1 The site is well underway now and a giant hole has been dug for the foundations and fixings required for the pirate ships.

Blackbrook Pool

- 2.2 The Blackbrook Pool project continues on schedule and I hope you have been finding the newsletter helpful.

3. Tone Leisure (Taunton Deane) Limited Activities

Tone continues to develop and support a number of community outreach programmes:

Health Development

North Taunton One Team

- 3.1 The Active Lifestyles Officer has delivered weekly sports sessions for children at North Taunton Youth Centre every Monday and Wednesday throughout the summer. There were consistently 10-20 children attending, who enjoyed trying new sports such as volleyball, hockey, tennis and badminton.

- 3.2 Tone attended the Pride in Priorswood activity days, delivering circuit sessions, sports day races and racquet sports across the weeks. This is a well established event with up to 600 children and parents attending each week.
- 3.3 From September Tone will deliver a free six week Boot Camp Programme in Lyngford Park, Taunton. This project is part of Knightstone's Creating Active Communities Project and is in line with Taunton Deane Borough Council's goal of encouraging local residents to exercise outdoors and use the outdoor gym facility that is available in the park.

Project Wellington

- 3.4 The Active Lifestyles Officer is part of the Project Wellington team in partnership with Taunton Deane Borough Council, Knightstone and GetSet Children's Centre. A summer of events for the Children's Centre's families and the local community was delivered, with weekly outdoor craft and sport activities in Cades Farm, Westford Grange and Wellington Recreation Ground.
- 3.5 Weekly sports sessions for 8-16 year olds were delivered in Howards Road Playing Field. The children enjoyed playing rounders, cricket, volleyball and Ultimate Frisbee.
- 3.6 A Summer Olympics was held on 27 August 2015 in Dobree Park, with the Mayoress starting the children's races. Over 80 children and families attended.
- 3.7 Wellington mums were encouraged to keep active with weekly Buggy Walks throughout the summer. 17 mums joined in and discovered new routes to walk in their local area and two volunteer mums plan to continue these walks throughout the coming months.

Health Walks

- 3.8 687 Health Walks were held in Taunton and 408 in Wellington during July and August.

Play Walks

- 3.9 A programme of Play Walks started in September in conjunction with Knightstone Housing for residents living at Waterside House, Taunton. These consist of a series of short walks for parents and toddlers, stopping half way to play in the local park.

Facility News

- 3.10 Tone Leisure's Net Promoter Score (NPS) for customer satisfaction in Taunton Deane currently averages 42%, which is 16% above the industry standard for Leisure Trusts. This is a very encouraging score and demonstrates many of Tone's customers are satisfied and considered to be Promoters of the facilities.

Blackbrook Pavilion

- 3.11 Blackbrook Pavilion celebrated the 10 year anniversary of Body Step being taught at the centre, with 100 Steppers participating in a Stepathon led by international trainer Ben Grant and raising £750 for the site's charity 'Think Amy'.
- 3.12 Blackbrook participated in the BBC's 'Share Your Skill' week with a live broadcast held at the centre during July. Members of the local community were invited to try various activities put on by the site.
- 3.13 Blackbrook Swimming Pool and Spa is taking shape and Tone Leisure is busy mapping out the new programmes for both this pool and Taunton Pool. Consultation is well under way with clubs, schools and staff to ensure the company is ready for the opening next summer.

Councillor Catherine Herbert

Council Meeting – 29 September 2015

Report of Councillor Richard Parrish – Corporate Resources

1. Corporate Strategy and Performance

- 1.1 JMASS 2 Corporate Visioning and Priorities – the team have been heavily involved in preparing for and delivering the various Taunton Deane and West Somerset Member workshops. Work is currently focussing on turning the output from these sessions into draft Corporate Strategies for both Councils and in arranging additional Member engagement activities.
- 1.2 Quarter 1 Performance Reporting – the report is working its way through the Scrutiny and Executive cycle during September and October.
- 1.3 Risk Management Update – an update report is due to be considered by the Corporate Governance Committee on 28 September 2015. A copy of the draft report will be available in due course.
- 1.4 Corporate Governance Action Plan Update – This is a progress update on the actions identified in the Annual Governance Statement and will also be submitted to the Corporate Governance Committee.
- 1.5 Data Protection – The Council has had a minor breach this quarter, which affected two people, and which has been investigated and dealt with in accordance with our policy.

2. Facilities Management and Business Support

- 2.1 Office Moves – the remaining office moves flowing from the JMASS Phase 1 restructure are scheduled to be completed over the next few months. This will affect elements of Corporate Services and the Finance Team who will move in late September/early October. The only remaining move will then be for the Housing Enabling Team and this is currently being planned.
- 2.2 Procedures for evening meetings – procedures have been implemented in conjunction with Democratic Services to ensure that an evacuation announcement is made by the Chairman at the start of each evening meeting. Work with Democratic Services is continuing to improve the content and scope of the standard announcement. Additionally, we are working in conjunction with the Health and Safety Team to organise a short briefing for Members at a Council meeting regarding evacuation procedures.
- 2.3 First Aid Risk Assessment – We are in the process of reviewing the risk

assessment for both the Taunton and Williton offices to identify any improvements required.

- 2.4 Bomb Evacuation Drill – We are planning a drill and are consulting with the Police on how to best organise and maximise the effectiveness of this exercise.
- 2.5 PAT (Portable Appliance Testing) – The Council was looking to arrange for this to be undertaken in the near future.

3. Human Resources (HR) and Organisational Development

- 3.1 Terms and Conditions Review – The HR Team are heavily involved in supporting the staff consultation process and associated briefings. The team will also coordinate the collection and reply to the consultation responses.
- 3.2 Absence Management – Our absence figures for quarter 1 indicate that we may just miss our target for the year of 8.2 days per employee. Consequently we are continuing to focus on the management of absence and the issue was considered at this month's Leadership Team meeting. However, things are improving and of our recent long term absence cases (nine members of staff), five are now back at work.
- 3.3 Learning Pool rollout – The work to launch the new computer based training module across the organisation has commenced. Managers were briefed on 10 September 2015 and this will now be rolled out to staff via briefings and team meetings.
- 3.4 TUPE Transfer – The transfer of five Deane DLO staff to MITIE has now been completed.

4. ICT and Information

- 4.1 ICT Strategy – Following the recommendations from Alan Evans of iESE we are currently producing a Resourcing and Delivery Plan to accompany the draft strategy. The intention is to take this to Full Council in November 2015 for consideration.
- 4.2 Disaster Recovery Audit – The audit is now finalised and only offers a “partial” assurance. The auditors have made a number of recommendations and we are working with the SWO ICT service to implement these. SWAP drew attention to this audit in their report to the Corporate Governance Committee on 28 September 2015.
- 4.3 VPN and Encryption Software Upgrade – The rollout of the upgrade has commenced and is progressing satisfactorily. This requires all laptop users, including elected Members, to make an appointment to leave their laptop for overnight upgrade. This process is being coordinated.

- 4.4 Intranet Project – This was continuing and remains on target for 31 December to go-live.
- 4.5 WI-FI Extension Project – This will enable us to publish the Taunton Deane corporate WI-FI signal at West Somerset House and vice versa for West Somerset users in The Deane House thereby further enabling ease of cross-site flexible working. The plan is for this to go-live by November 2015.

5. Transformation Programme Management

JMASS Phase 1

- 5.1 Terms and Conditions Review – The staff consultation exercise has started and the draft proposals have been circulated to all staff for comment. The consultation period will last a month and complete on 9 October 2015.
- 5.2 Transition Plan – This continues to be regularly monitored to ensure delivery of the outstanding actions from Phase 1.
- 5.3 Building Control Shared Service – Work continues on this and we aim to finalise the decision within a month.

JMASS Phase 2 (Transformation)

- 5.4 Project 1 Corporate Visioning and Priorities – (See Corporate Strategy update above)
- 5.5 Project 2 Affordability – Officers are currently analysing the results from the review of the Medium Term Financial Plan undertaken by Bill Roots from the Local Government Association and will feedback to Members in due course.
- 5.6 Project Resourcing – The temporary administrative support role has been filled and the communications support role has been advertised. Managers are also working on producing a detailed resourcing plan to support the delivery of the ICT Strategy.

6. Southwest One (SWO) Succession Planning

- 6.1 Succession Project – The options review is continuing and remains on track to report back to Members in the late Autumn. The review is focussing on both future service delivery options for the SWO services and potential alternative computer system options. Currently we are in the process of undertaking a market soundings exercise to understand the availability and potential cost of alternative computer systems.
- 6.2 SAP Migration – This is the project to migrate the existing SAP servers from the Warwick Data Centre to the new Police Data Centre in Bridgwater. The contractual target date for completion is the end of December 2015. The

project is being delivered by the SWO ICT service, but will involve an element of testing by Council services. Monitoring of the delivery of this service continues.

- 6.2.1 Day-to-day service delivery – Officers continue to monitor day-to-day delivery and the ICT service continues to require significant client input.

7. Additional Priorities

Corporate Business Continuity Planning

- 7.1 The aim of this project is to ensure that we improve our current business continuity planning processes and refresh our plans by 31 October 2015. This is being led by a small Corporate Project Team and has identified that we need to introduce new corporate level plans to cover areas such as ICT Disaster Recovery, Premises, Staffing, Communications and Fuel Shortage.
- 7.2 Work has started to develop these plans. Additionally, development of a standard Sharepoint based template for services to use is under development and officers are working with a number of services to develop and trial a new approach.

Budgets/Governance

- 7.3 Budget Savings Options for 2016/2017 – Work will shortly commence to identify potential savings options for next year.
- 7.4 Quarterly Performance Measures – Work is continuing to develop a new quarterly performance scorecard for Corporate Services.
- 7.3 Staff Appraisals – Now completed for nearly all Corporate Services staff.

8. Council Tax Support

- 8.1 Consultation on options for our Council Tax Support (CTS) Scheme in 2016/2017 ended on 9 September 2015. Officers in the Revenues and Benefits Service worked hard to obtain 383 responses from the public, as well as obtaining feedback from other interested groups. A report will be presented to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee in October. This will reflect the views we have received as well as considering the financial implications and equality impact of each of the proposed options.
- 8.2 Council Tax collection at the end of August 2015 was 53.3% - slightly under the target of 53.5%. Business Rate Collection at 50.4% is also below the target of 51.6%. So far this year, we have helped 109 households with awards of Discretionary Council Tax Assistance totalling £13,500.

- 8.3 We continue to perform well in speed of benefit processing for 2015/2016 with the average time to reassess benefit at six days from when the customer tells us of a change in their circumstances. We are working out new claims on average within 18 days of the date they are submitted.
- 8.4 From 1 August 2015 the South West Counter Fraud Partnership (SWCFP) started to deliver a Corporate Anti-Fraud service for Taunton Deane Borough Council as well as two other District Councils. The work of the Counter Fraud Partnership will place greater emphasis on a targeted approach to review key fraud risk areas and areas identified at greatest risk from fraud.

9. Customer Contact

- 9.1 The Customer Contact Restructure (2014) was a cost neutral project which aimed to achieve the following:-
- To become more resilient and more efficient;
 - Shorten Training time for specialist services;
 - Create more motivated, empowered teams;
 - Creation of enhanced career path and development opportunities – leads to increased discretionary effort and more motivated workforce; and
 - More dynamic and highly skilled workforce in order to meet the demands of a changing customer profile.
- 9.2 This has been achieved through the creation of new roles within the operational teams which creates a clear development and career path, making roles more diverse and interesting and increasing job satisfaction. Service types have been separated into Specialist (Higher risk, higher complexity) and Non-Specialist (Lower risk and lower complexity) groups. People new to the organisation will operate in non-specialist areas first and at the same time (in line with a personal development plan) will be training in a chosen specialist area and when a vacancy arises, there is an opportunity to move into a Specialist team.
- 9.3 Since the implementation of the new design, the time taken to fill Specialist vacancies has decreased by 70%. Staff sickness and attrition have also both reduced by 6% and 25% accordingly.

10. Law and Governance, SHAPE Partnership Services

- 10.1 The new partnership continues to operate well and in the months of July and August there have been 21 referrals from Taunton Deane with a breakdown of the subject areas set out below:-

Commercial , Contract and Procurement Advice on New Contracts	12
Enforcement/Prosecutions Advice on enforcement	1
Housing General Advice	1
Litigation Housing/Property repossessions	1
Planning S106 Agreements CIL Advice Lawful Development Certificates	1 1 2
Property Agreements Leases Advice on Property Law Purchases Right To Buy	1 3 3 1 4
Licensing Provision of Legal Adviser for Licensing Committee	1
TOTAL	21

11. Electoral Services

- 11.1 The main focus of the team over the last two and next few months will be on the canvass of the Electoral Register and everything is currently on course to publish an updated register on 1 December, 2015.

12. Democratic Services

- 12.1 The past two months have been busy for the team, dealing with helping new Members to settle in, organising induction sessions and servicing the 'business as usual' meetings during the 'holiday season'.

13. Code of Conduct Training for Town and Parish Councils

- 13.1 After the recent Elections, two training sessions – on 3 and 30 September, 2015 - have been offered to Parish/Town Councillors and Clerks on the Code of Conduct. The sessions are being run by the Monitoring Officer and held at The Deane House. The first session had 25 attendees.

14. Finance and Procurement

- 14.1 Following on from the completion of the end of year financial accounts, the Finance Service has been supporting our external auditor – Grant Thornton LLP – through the audit process. This will culminate in the Statement of Accounts being presented for approval on 28 September 2015 at Corporate Governance Committee, where the auditor will also present findings and opinion in respect of the financial statements and value for money.
- 14.2 As has happened in previous years, Members of the Committee will be supported with training and guidance in advance of the actual meeting to help prepare for the important task of reviewing, understanding and approving the statements.
- 14.3 The service is also working with Managers and budget holders to progress the annual budget process. Members will be aware that the Council faces a significant Budget Gap for next year of approximately £1,300,000 and this is projected to increase significantly in subsequent years as the squeeze on Local Authority funding continues. The updated Medium Term Financial Plan position was reported to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 13 August 2015, setting out our projections for spending and income through to 2021, with the Council needing to find net savings estimated at £3,900,000 over the next five years – through transforming services, identifying savings and efficiencies, and through income generation.
- 14.4 The first budget monitoring report of the year indicates that the financial position in the current year is broadly on track. There is a shortfall of income

identified in Quarter 1 for the General Fund. However officers and portfolio holders will seek to manage this through the remainder of the year.

- 14.4 The staffing position for the service is close to settling down following the JMASS 'Phase 1' process, with the final vacant substantive post being filled on 21 September 2015. The team has utilised a number of interim / agency appointments pending completion of permanent appointments. There will be one temporary change, with a Senior Accountant being seconded to focus on the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan Review, and backfill arrangements are currently being implemented.

Councillor Richard Parrish