

Part II – Reports from the Executive

COUNCIL MEETING 17APRIL 2007

Report of Councillor Williams – Leader of the Council

I am pleased to submit this final report of the quadrennium for our Conservative administration. In this period we have achieved the status of an “Excellent Council” only one of four Council’s in the SW Region to aspire to this position which has been maintained in subsequent reviews. The tangible benefits of this have been much lighter inspection regimes with consequently reduced audit costs but the intangible benefits are the enhanced reputation of the Council because of the status it bestows upon us.

During this period we have worked hard on maintaining our efficient front line services but delivering with it the necessary financial savings which were essential to ensure Council Tax increases were held in check. I believe during this period our financial management has been impressive and it is a credit to the hard work of officers and members that we have been able to deliver more for less. We have established clear priorities and invested wisely, Council Tax increases have dropped to 2% only for this year and will remain low if our administration continues. We have also ensured that our annual budgets balanced without the need to contribute from our reserves to support ongoing revenue costs which, regrettably, had become an all too common feature of budgets pre our administration. Of the savings we have implemented these exceed those required by the Gershon Efficiency statement by 150%, £289K specified, £723K achieved, thereby allowing much needed savings from our base budget and targeting our identified priorities for the benefit of the communities in Taunton Deane.

The prudent use of our financial resources has also meant considerable investment in assets and other benefits for our community. From realization of capital from poor performing asset we have invested in major development of employment buildings in Wellington and further substantial sums set aside for investment in Wiveliscombe and Taunton. We have also now secured an economical alternative site for a nursery for plant production which in turn will release a very valuable town centre site for housing or similar. We are presently awaiting a marketing appraisal of the options available to us before a final decision is made.

Huge investment has also been made in recycling with amounts recycled rising from the low point of 17% in 2003 to the remarkable amount of virtually 50% in 2006/07, well above the Governments prescribed target and one of the highest rates of recycling in England at this time.

We have also invested substantially in sports facilities, affordable housing and supported many good causes in an attempt to encourage new initiatives for our communities in the form of Westival, the ice rink and Project Taunton. All

this achieved and a Council Tax increase of only 2%, definitely a case of delivering more for less.

Local Government Reorganisation

Since our last meeting in February the Government has announced that Somerset County Council bid to establish a single Unitary Council for Somerset meets the set criteria sufficiently to go forward for further consultation. I have not changed my opinion that the whole idea is flawed and should be utterly and convincingly rejected by the communities of Somerset who will ultimately end up suffering from lack of meaningful representation at a local level. This "super-size" council would be one of the largest local authorities in England with the greatest "sparsity factor" and thousands and thousands of citizens for each councillor. The County Council's proposals would in my view be inefficient, be bad for local democracy, bad for local services and bad for the local economy.

What is the alternative as I totally agree that Local Government generally must work smarter and thus more efficiently. All District Councils in Somerset have been working together on the "Team Somerset" approach, this was approved at Full Council last December and has been accepted by all other District Councils in Somerset as a first choice, or in South Somerset DC's case, a fall back position after their two unitary for Somerset bid.

An outline business case has now been agreed showing savings of £22.2 million can be achieved by collaborative working whilst still maintaining the dedicated and committed local representation and avoiding the high risk strategy of huge disruption, financial risk and loss of dedicated resources that are inevitable with reorganisation on the scale proposed. Team Somerset is partnership working at its best and something we can be proud of as we have always been willing to work in partnership for the benefit of our community.

It is the view of all District Councils that the communities of Somerset must be allowed a voice in such a momentous change as is now proposed. Nothing short of a referendum can achieve this level of community involvement and as such I exhort the Government and County Council to join with the Somerset District Councils and fully support this way forward to ensure the voice of the people is heard.

Project Taunton

I reported at the last meeting that we were moving forward apace and I am pleased to report that the momentum has been maintained. A total of five major developers are enthusiastically on board to produce masterplan schemes and appraisals for the firepool site. These plans will be submitted by late June with consideration of each by early July and a short listing down to two developers. Final schemes and best offers will then be sought with a view to agreeing the exchange of Contracts with the chosen developer in September. In parallel with this the legal agreements will be drawn up in

consultation with the developers so that it is ready and available when the scheme and offers have been agreed.

Before the end of March we also secured the necessary funding from SWRDA to purchase flood alleviation land at Longrun Farm, properties to facilitate the development of Firepool and funding to assist site assembly for the cricket ground development. Particularly the securing of land at Longrun Farm for flood alleviation means we can move forward in the most timely and effective manner with regeneration of the Firepool and Tangier areas that would otherwise have required localised flood alleviation methods. This also guarantees we can enhance the riverside areas without massive flood prevention walls preventing views over or access to the river side. This greatly assists the stated aim to bring the river back into the heart of Taunton, not turn our backs on it.

Proposed Upgrading of the A358

The Highways Agency finally published proposals for the route and joining with the M5 motorway 1 March 2007 when, like other Members, I first became aware of the “loop” proposals that would, if constructed, use virtually all of the open playing field area attached to Blackbrook. We are in the process of exhorting the Highways Agency to find a suitable alternative means of linking with the M5 to minimize impact on the adjacent community and our sports facilities. We must also not forget the potential impact on homes adjacent the proposed new alignment of the road as it bypasses Henlade, the ultimate requirement is for the design and construction to be to the highest standards to mitigate any impact so that it does not cure one problem and create a worse one for others.

It is disappointing that Somerset County Council as the Highways Authority for the area have seemingly abdicated all responsibility for any liaison with the Highways Agency in order to try and secure the best solution for the community nearby. This despite their stated policies in the adopted Somerset Structure Plan

POLICY 53

“Cls 7.38; Whilst the Department of Transport is responsible for improvements to the trunk road network, the County Council is consulted on overall trunk road strategy and any proposed improvements to individual trunk roads and their programming. The Council’s involvement is essential if the county is to gain the greatest benefit from Central Government’s investment in roads. The County Council also has a key role in ensuring that Trunk Road improvements have minimal impact on the environment.”

POLICY 54

“Cls 7.39; The County Council as Highway Authority is particularly aware of the possible adverse impact of new road schemes on surrounding areas. For this reason it attaches considerable importance to reducing the impact of new roads and highway improvement schemes on local communities and to integrate them within the local environment. This needs to be addressed in

relation to Outstanding Heritage Settlements and Conservation Areas. In many cases the construction of a new bypass has created a far more pleasant environment for the local community. Consequently, such developments will be the subject of critical examination, and environmental assessment where appropriate, in order to ensure that the requirements of this policy are satisfied.”

These are fine words but totally bereft of any action when the local community needs support to find the best solution with minimum impact on their environment.

Norton Fitzwarren Dam Construction

I am pleased to report this finally commenced in earnest as of the 1 March 2007 which will provide much needed flood protection to existing properties in Norton Fitzwarren and at long last this will release the old cider factory site for redevelopment providing much needed housing and regeneration of this unsightly derelict centre of the village.

And Finally

My last report for this period, it has been a great experience working with all Members and Officers, we have achieved much but there is still much to be done. I have the greatest of respect for the dedication and commitment shown by officers and thank you sincerely for your hard work and help over the last four years. We hope to be able to continue this over the next four years which should see Project Taunton and many of our other plans come to fruition.

Cllr John Williams,
Leader, Taunton Deane Borough Council

COUNCIL MEETING 17 APRIL 2007

Report of Councillor Bishop – Planning Policy and Transportation

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Statements of Community Involvement – Adoption

The Council will be aware that the Statement of Community Involvement is a Local Development Framework document that explains:

How we shall consult on the preparation of the LDF.

An applicants requirements to consult in advance of the submission of significant planning applications.

The Borough Council's requirements to consult following the registration of a planning application..

The SCI has been through three rounds of public consultation. A Government appointed planning Inspector recently considered all objections to the SCI, and concluded that the SCI was "sound" subject to a few minor changes. These changes are "binding" on the Council and relate mainly to matters of fact. There are no changes to the overall strategy or to the proposed actions. Having viewed the binding changes, I now approve the adoption of the SCI. The adopted version is due for publication during late April / early May 2007.

Local Development Scheme – Joint Working

The Council has been fully supportive of joint working with other Somerset Districts, the County Council, the Regional Planning Body and Government Office South West in the early stages of preparing the Local Development Framework, including bi-monthly meetings to progress similar working practices including approaches towards preparing the LDS.

It is not proposed to prepare any joint Development Plan Documents requiring adoption with adjoining districts. However, joint working towards developing a compatible set of "generic" development control policies across the Somerset districts and joint working on information gathering for future proposed Supplementary Planning Documents such as Affordable Housing is proposed.

Local Development Scheme – Monitoring and Review

Following the January meeting of the Somerset LDF working party, and a later meeting with GOSW and an officer of the Planning Inspectorate it was made clear that that the one way of adding value to the **Core Strategy** was for it to be used as a delivery document in itself rather than simply a document that sets the strategic framework within which other Development Plan Documents would be delivered.

Consequently it is proposed to identify specific allocations of a strategic nature within the Core strategy. This would remain on a schematic rather than Ordnance Survey base in the Core Strategy but would contain sufficient description, including policies, to give a developer and the public certainty as to where development would occur. As a result additional time is required to accommodate extra front loading of information to guide the strategy, including further consultation on site opportunities and an assessment of responses prior to progressing to Preferred Options stage. Any specific allocations will need to be tested, including traffic modelling in some instances.

Although the Core Strategy submission to the Secretary of State is delayed from March / April 2008 to June / July 2009 the actual delivery of sites is brought forward by at least a year. The delay in the Core Strategy will also provide greater certainty of conformity with the Regional Spatial Strategy (Examination in Public now in process).

Planning Gain Supplement

The Treasury has announced, amongst the budget papers, that 70% of the revenue from any **PGS** would be paid directly to the local authority granting permission and the rest would be put into a fund for spending in support of regional infrastructure priorities identified in the Regional Spatial Strategies.

The **DCLG** has stated that Communities England will help decide spending priorities for the regions' share of **PGS**. Communities England which is set to replace English Partnerships and the Housing Corporation, will also assume some of the DCLG's responsibilities..

Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) Actions for housing growth : Creating a legacy of great places

At the end of March I was sent a copy of the above document produced by CABE with Natural England, Environment Agency, English Heritage and the Academy for Sustainable Communities.

The letter enclosed with the document stated :

“Planning for and delivering housing growth offers a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to create places where people want to live, work and visit, It provides the potential to improve the quality and economic performance of existing places as well as creating new ones; and it offers the chance to create places that help people live and work in a more environmentally sustainable way. Ahead lies the prospect of achieving well designed cities, towns and neighbourhoods – places that are sustainable, functional and distinctive, and consequently more attractive to investors and home-buyers alike”

“Actions for Housing growth contains 10 actions for local government and delivery vehicles that are seeking to make this happen. From putting in place

the right design processes to building teams with the right skills to deliver the vision, this guide explores what is needed to make places where people want to invest, live and work. It includes case studies that demonstrate the results of effectively putting the actions into practice to create successful places”

I am endeavouring to obtain further copies of this excellent document and will place a copy in the Members Room when received.

Cliff Bishop

COUNCIL MEETING – 17th April 2007.

REPORT OF COUNCILLOR DOROTHEA BRADLEY–ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

1.0 ENVIRONMENTAL OR GREEN AGENDA.

Over the years as a Council we have developed a range of green initiatives across the whole organisation. In recognition of this and our commitment to action on Climate Change we have signed the Nottingham Declaration. In practice we are well into green actions:

- we are negotiating on a waste contract which includes plastic and cardboard recycling
- in planning/building we are looking to 20% reduction in carbon emissions
- our DLO acquired LPG vehicles years ago of which 27 remain. We now purchase more economic and efficient diesel ones which can also be run on bio-diesel
- our staff re-structuring means that we now employ an officer dedicated to promoting fuel efficiency and drawing down funds for this.

2.0 ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH.

2.1 Smokefree Preparations

Preparations continue for Smokefree England from 1st July this year. A large successful seminar was recently held at SCAT for businesses and a range of other stakeholders to brief them on what they need to do to prepare for Smokefree. The Somerset District Councils have also jointly commissioned radio advertising on three local commercial stations to raise awareness of Smokefree and signpost people to us for more information. In addition a range of leaflets and guides are being produced, to be distributed to local businesses. We are currently planning a programme of further seminars and roadshows to target as many businesses as possible before July again to assist them in getting ready for Smokefree.

2.2 Licensing

The Gambling Act is nearly upon us, applications can be made from 21st of May 07. In short gaming licences previously issued by the Courts will now be issued by the Licensing Authority, (TDBC) this includes betting shops, trackside betting bingos and fruit machines.

The Animal Welfare Act 2006 has from the 4 April made it a legal requirement that pet shops can only now sell pets to 16 year olds and above, this Act will introduce a range of other new provisions over the coming months.

2.3 Health and Safety & Food Safety teams

The Health and Safety and Food Safety Teams have been very busy ensuring that they met their Government set targets for inspections by the end of March. Both teams

managed to inspect 100% of businesses they were due to inspect by the end of the year.

2.4 Environmental Protection Team

Pigeon Control

Network Rail have sought to address the problem of pigeons roosting under the Kingston Road rail bridge by installing a sonic device to deter the birds. This device is a trial project to establish if such deterrents are effective in the circumstances of a road and rail bridge. Clearly if the results are positive there are major benefits to Network Rail who encounter this problem at many sites across their estate.

Officers from Environmental Health have been assisting Network Rail in the local arrangements for the works to install the device, and we have taken the opportunity during a recent road closure to remove the old pigeon netting from the bridge that was installed by TDBC many years ago, but has since fallen into disrepair. We will be closely monitoring its effectiveness in the coming weeks. If the device does not result in a substantial reduction in bird numbers at this site, the issue will be referred back to Network Rail for solution.

Flytipping

The Team has been very busy investigating cases of flytipping. To date, four people have been formally Cautioned for this anti-social offence.

Gull Control

This year, we will be using plastic gull eggs instead of oiling and replacing the real ones. This should result in one fewer visit to each nest site and an increase in the success rate for preventing hatching. Gloucester City Council has used the technique very successfully. Control measures will begin as soon as nesting starts in earnest and, as in past years, the exercise will be limited to flat-roofed buildings in Taunton Town Centre for reasons of cost. This is the area of the greatest concentration of nesting and we reached more than 130 eggs last year.

2.5 Looking Ahead

The Environmental Health Department as a whole looks forward to a challenging year. Many legislative changes will come into effect this year and other changes will have an impact on how enforcement and other duties are undertaken in respect of:

- Smoking in work premises and enclosed public places
- Gambling
- Closer Partnership working with the Health and Safety Executive, the Fire Service, and Trading Standards
- Air Quality and Integrated Pollution Control
- Control of Stray Dogs
- Noise Monitoring

- Animal Welfare
- Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing
- Maintaining the quality of drinking water from mains and from private supplies.

3.0 WASTE COLLECTION AND RECYCLING

3.1 Somerset Waste Partnership.

On 29th March the Executives of each of the 6 Somerset Waste Partnership authorities agreed to endorse the decision to invite ECT to become the preferred Bidder for the Somerset Waste Collection Contract subject to consideration of key issues at the negotiation stage, which is expected to take 3 months. The ECT bid was best in quality and costs and provides potential to deliver savings and increase service levels. The reserve bidder is SITA.

This is an historic achievement and has been in gestation for 15 years. The SWP was set up in 1992 looking at waste options across the country and into Europe. In 1999 a Memorandum of Understanding was signed. The Best Value Review took place in 2002 and recommended contract integration. This was followed in 2004 with the business case which identified savings of £700K -£1.5million of £3-£6.50 per household. In the event the size of the joint contract has attracted serious bidders with the capital resources to implement the developments necessary to meet recycling targets and developments in the waste industry.

I would pay a special tribute to our Lead Officer Bruce Carpenter who has been with the project since its inception. It has been in part the continuity in officers and members and good working relationships that have made this partnership so successful. The trust developed by the SWP has contributed to the successful inception of ISiS. It is part of the business case for Team Somerset.

3.2 Chewing Gum Removal

During March a firm of specialists was employed to remove all chewing gum and deep clean the brick paved areas of Taunton town centre, this was the first time these bricks had been cleaned since their installation in 1997. This work was carried out in close cooperation with Somerset County Councils Highways group as the cleaning operation removes the jointing sand and it has been necessary for Deane DLO to re-sand the complete area.

3.3 Green Machine (Applied Sweeper).

This machine is an important part of the town centre cleaning regime and works six days a week, the present machine was purchased in 2002 and is becoming very unreliable consequently a replacement is arriving during the first week in April.

4.0 NET-WORKING

4.1 Renewable Solutions – Delivery Across Local Government

This conference in Bristol run by Regen SW and attended by a number of councillors, was devoted mainly to practical solutions and the experience of those councils who had tried them.

4.2 Recycle for Somerset – Sharing the Somerset Experience

This was a free conference funded by DEFRA in which the joint approach of the Somerset Waste Partnership was promoted to councillors from other authorities.

4.3 LGA Rural Commission

The main event was an address by Cllr Paul Bettison on the work of the LGA Environment Board whose priorities for 2007 are: greening communities and sustainable communities. I attended a workshop on "Meeting the needs of rural areas through Local Area Agreements". The point was made that the LAA does not engage local district councillors as there are too many activities and so communication breaks down. In Shropshire they had focussed on a small number of priorities to get partnership working together on delivery. What was clear was that different communities require different solutions.

4.4 IDeA Effective Democracy for Sustainable Communities

This event was intensive and instructive. What emerged was the need for us as councillors to develop a collective over-view and coherent grasp of what we are about and where we are going under this new constitution of executive and backbenchers. By this I mean not just within the council but also outside it. It is all about aligning our Corporate Strategy with the LSP Sustainable Community Strategy and keeping the latter in gear with the SSP and Local Area Agreement, under the over-arching strategies of the Regional Assembly. The message from the government is that future funding will be channelled through the LAA.

The basic fact is that the way the system is set up means that if we do not have the right word or idea included in the right place for a particular course of action in any one of these plans then we are stuck. It cannot be done. Ideas are important as it is shared, ideas that hold people together but even more important is a common sense of identity. We have work to do. I would quote something I recently read: "The spirit and identity of the British has been broken by endless propaganda traducing their history ...Loss of national identity, with increased individualism, has led to loss of community spirit throughout what is left of "society". We as councillors are now being charged with Community Leadership and place-making in order to retrieve a situation created in part by central government.

In such circumstances we have a lot of work to do on developing both effective discussion and communication with and also "buy-in" and involvement from all councillors. I believe working groups of officers could more often include members. There could be more joint training sessions of officers and members. My regret is that on this occasion given the breadth of the topic, that officer attendance was confined to planners. The buzz word is lateral, joined-up thinking!

FINALLY

I am standing down after 20 years of extensive change both within and without the Council. I would just pick out a few highlights apart from the LGA Rural Commission and Policy Review Group and other conferences which are always interesting; new ideas and the stimulus of councillor colleagues and how they tackle the problems that face us all.

The extensive travels and visits of the SWP in particular the waste tips of Northern Europe during Holy week were not only informative but a source of bonding between councillors and officers. To be Portfolio holder at the point of choosing ETC as preferred bidder has been a suitable culmination. I would add that my daughter insists that composting at Priorswood was her idea.

The Portfolio for Leisure Arts and Culture was most enjoyable. The real achievement there was the birth (thanks to the proactive midwifery of officers), from a Vision for Taunton working party of the Taunton Cultural Consortium. This is in effect a grassroots community of arts interests whose report on the Cultural Quarter has been adopted by this Council; an excellent example of effective community involvement.

My deepest regret is not to have seen the implementation of the Tree Town Policy. My bid in 2000 for £12,000 was never expended on that consultant's advice and planning on which to develop a unique and coherent street scene through Taunton and in the long term an urban arboretum and so upping the offer of Taunton.

Apart from that it has been a most interesting and stimulating time and I would like to thank all those of my colleagues and officers who have been supportive to me over the years. I would especially pay tribute to the very focussed leadership of Councillor John Williams without which we would not be where we are with Project Taunton. Thank you all and I wish Taunton Deane Borough Council well for the exciting times that lie ahead.

Cllr Dilly Bradley

COUNCIL MEETING 17TH APRIL 2007

REPORT OF COUNCILLOR CAVILL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSET MANAGEMENT AND TOURISM

Economic Development

Somerset Inward Investment Company

The first meeting of the Shadow Board of the Company was due to be held on 2 April 2007. However, additional comments were received from key representatives of the Private Sector, this has led to a wider discussion over the remit of the Agency and that of the Local Authority EDU's. Further information was requested, and this will be discussed at the Somerset Economic Leaders Group meeting on 24 April 2007. This should enable the project to be progressed.

Wellington Economic Partnership (WEP)

The Partnership, which has been established since 1994, is now seeking to change it's Terms of Reference. This will allow it to become an 'unconstituted partnership' with powers to hold and manage finance and to take a full leadership and management role in developing a wide range of initiatives in Wellington. A number of sub groups have been formed by WEP to manage the process of Food Town and a wider community-based Market & Coastal Towns programme

This is a direct result of the successful Wellington Food Town event in December last year. The successful bid for Market & Coastal Towns Initiative Funding, from 1 April 2007, also required a change to the operation of the Partnership.

Work is underway to re-draw the current constitution with a view to WEP becoming a Community Development Trust later in 2007/08.

This Councils' support has seen more than £100,000 worth of public sector grants for WEP agreed for the next 12-18 months, and the Partnership is keen to further develop this aspect of its work, as well as to deliver a two day food festival in September 2007.

Business Development Grant

This last round has been one of our most successful, with 14 applicants for 5 grants. Such was the exceptional quality of the applicants, that 6 grants have been awarded. The award of £2000 for each of them will make a significant impact on their business.

Waterlinks

The WonderTree feasibility study is now being undertaken on the site adjacent to SCAT, that has recently been acquired for flood alleviation work. The full study will investigate public access, planning, project viability and the final report should be due late May/early June.

Waterlinks was officially launched 5th April 2007, at Bridgwater Docks. This marks the start of a much larger publicity campaign. Both press and radio were very interested in the WonderTree scheme, particularly the potential for the first UK green cathedral.

Rural & Community Development

Wiveliscombe

'Wivey Link' continues to be a flagship social enterprise, and a model for such

developments in the Deane. Further development of the service through improved IT usage and additional technical resources has been proposed through a new Lottery 'Reaching Communities' Bid. If successful this will also allow for greater promotion of the service and move the organisation significantly in the direction of self sufficiency.

A local group has been working on proposals to refurbish and regenerate the Former Town Hall in Wiveliscombe as a quality venue and a focus for a number of identified quality arts, media, cultural and heritage groups operated by a charitable organisation. The Council has supported the group to employ consultants to advise on the technical and practical aspects of the proposal, and their report is due to be received by the end of April.

Agricultural Development

Despite the closing down of traditional avenues of funding from Defra, Business Link and other related 'subsidiaries' for skills development in the agricultural sector, demand remains strong for those courses and events organised by this Council's Agricultural Development Officer. A total of 109 farming representatives have been assisted and supported by this programme over the past 4 years, and this will be built on in the future.

Bio –Energy Developments

The Rural Team continue to investigate the potential for the Council to lead in work towards establishing the Deane as a centre of excellence in environmentally friendly energy use on both the urban and rural industrial setting. Recently a Rural Hub was set up in Warwickshire to provide practical and effective business development and farm diversification for rural businesses in areas such as food supply chains, bioenergy, non-food crops, waste management and resource efficiency. This has proved popular and attractive to Advantage West Midlands (The Regional Development Agency). Work to assess the lessons and messages to be learnt will take place in the months to come.

Tourism Development

Somerset Destination Management Organisation

Meetings of the key Stakeholders Group of local authorities and business organisations continue. Work towards a more co-ordinated and effective Destination Management System is largely complete, and this aspect of the Group's work is looking at ways in which the marketing and business support and development within the sector can be further improved.

At recent meetings of the DMO and the Somerset Inward Investment Company the need was recognised for close and continuing liaison as the two initiatives move forward, to ensure that where possible duplication of marketing effort and cost could be reduced and particularly so that a single selling image for Somerset should be used.

Tourist Information Services

During the 2006/07 the TIC has placed in excess of £45,000's worth of accommodation bookings with local establishments, and work to maintain the Centre's pre-eminent position in coach and other local ticketing facilities continues. This contributes significantly to the running costs of the Centres in Taunton and Wellington, and places our TIC's in the top rank of regional facilities.

Work to 'refresh' the Wellington TIC has also been carried out in time for the emerging season, and includes new displays, services and publicity,

Creative Services

Creative Business BOOST

This County-wide, European Funded initiative to support and develop the Creative Industries sector in the County has established its main base in the Brewhouse Theatre in Taunton. It has been operating for almost 12 months, and is actively working with 56 businesses based in Taunton Deane. This represents almost 36% of all business support delivered by BOOST. The 'agency' is working with the Council to develop Creative Business Hubs within the Deane, particularly in rural areas; as such it is actively pursuing a number of locations for such developments.

The Council continues to work towards a wider Creative Industries Development Agency for Somerset in partnership with the County Council and other Districts, recent moves by the County Council to appoint staff to lead this work has provided a further impetus to the programme.

Asset Management

The resale of Highfields has been completed and preparatory work has started on tidying up the site for the new nursery. Initial assessment has been done with respect to a bore hole site, further costings are to be obtained. Tender lists are being drawn up for the provision of infrastructure, poly tunnels and glass house.

The Old Municipal Building: This Council has completed the required work to fire doors, asbestos and other improvements that it was required to do before the County Council would commence its work. It is now available for the County to start work on their required improvements, which will enable them to take on the lease from 1st September 2007.

Tenders have been received for the proposed new business units at Frobisher Way, and work is now underway to complete the contract with the successful tenderer. When completed, this project will provide 7 business units, 4 of which will be owned by the Council; adding to our 7 new units at Blackdown Business Park.

Finally, may I welcome a new member of staff to the EDU: Matthew Parr, who is taking over from Nick Coleman as Regeneration Officer.

Cllr Norman Cavill
Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Property

April 2007.

Council Meeting 17 April 2007

Report of Councillor John Clark – Leisure, Arts and Culture

PARKS DEVELOPMENTS

Victoria Park

Work in Victoria Park is underway to complete the planting schemes, improve the entrances and plant the environmental area. The relocation of the original play equipment alongside the new play area has freed up the site planned for a community garden in the park. The community is responding enthusiastically to this work with far greater numbers of people using the park than in the past.

Holway

Consultation with the community in Holway about the development of plans to improve the Higher Holway open space continues with a visit planned to the youth group meeting at the YMCA in April. This complements work done with Holway Primary School. The consultation will direct the work of the landscape architect who will bring some more detailed design ideas back to the children and young people later in the spring.

Events in Parks

Vivary Park Sunday bandstand concerts commence on June 3 and continue until September 9. Sunday afternoon events in Wellington Park begin in May and continue until the end of August.

Play Strategy

The second meeting of the multiagency Taunton Deane Play Partnership was held last month and plans agreed to complete the audit of play and consultation with children, young people and parents approved. The Partnership is overseeing the production of a Strategy for Play in the district which will be delivered by the partners and a bid will be submitted to BIG Lottery for funding this in September.

Deano

The Easter edition of the Deano has been sent to all primary school aged children in Taunton Deane and the summer edition will be issued at the beginning of June. This publication gives details of activities for children in the main school holidays.

Grants to Community Groups

Langford Budville Village Hall Management Committee has been successful in its application to the Somerset Joint Committee for Voluntary Village Halls and Community Centres for grant aid assistance towards a village hall for the parish. Grants from the Committee are jointly funded by both Taunton Deane Borough Council and Somerset County Council.

Sport

Sports Strategy

The TDBC Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2000 -2012 has now been finalised and printed and will be circulated to partners in due course. The Strategy outlines a thematic approach to working in partnership with a range of providers to maximise opportunities for participation.

The published strategy is deliberately succinct but a longer version will shortly be placed on the Councils website.

The Facilities Needs Assessment is an important document is an audit of all TDBC built sports facilities and will enable the Council to prioritise future investment and to seek developer contributions towards built sports facilities for the new residents. It is intended as a reference document as it is 123 pages long but copies are available from the Sports Services Manager.

Community Sports Network

TDBC has organised the inaugural meeting of the Community Sports Network for the Borough. Representatives from Health Services, Sports Development, National Governing Bodies, Tone School Partnership, local clubs and the Somerset Activity & Sports Partnership met in March at the Taunton Rugby Club. The network has an aim to work in partnership to increase opportunities for all. The next meeting is now planned for May 2007.

Hamilton Skate Park

The designers have circulated the first draft of the plans for the proposed skate park and the local skate group have commented on the initial thoughts. A revised set of plans (with costs) is anticipated before the end of the month after which the Council will seek planning permission. It is hoped that the facility will be completed in 2007

TONE LEISURE (TAUNTON DEANE) LIMITED ACTIVITIES

Facility News

- **Quest and National Pool Safety Award**
During the Spring two more of Tone Leisure's facilities will be assessed against best practice models. Blackbrook Pavilion will be assessed against the Quest criteria and Station Road Pool will be undergoing assessment against the Institute of Sport and Recreation Management Pool Safety award. Both assessments include a rigorous two-day assessment and a mystery visit. The assessment criteria covers all aspects of facility operation including programming, health and safety, maintenance, cleanliness, customer research, customer relations, marketing and staff and people management.

Blackbrook Pavilion and Tennis Club

Works to refurbish the toilets at Blackbrook Pavilion are being carried out over the Easter period. The refurbishment will lift the quality of the

finishes to the same level as the changing areas, which were refurbished last June.

The Young Persons' Activity Zone

The Zone at Blackbrook Pavilion has enjoyed a very successful launch and first quarter. One of the main aims of the project is to encourage groups that would not normally choose to be active or have access to this type of facility to become more active and to increase activity levels. There has already been some success with this, with the following groups making use of the Zone:

- One-to-one sessions with young people from Priory School, who fall into the category of 'at risk of offending'.
- Small referral groups from New Horizons and Bridgwater referral unit.
- Inclusion sessions for Taunton Inclusion Community. The young people attending have a range of disabilities.
- Tone Schools Partnership are providing the Zone on a regular basis for disaffected girls from secondary schools to encourage them to take part in structured exercise and to improve concentration and focus at school.
- Vibe Sport diversionary programme makes use of the Zone on a weekly basis.

Vivary Golf Course

In partnership with Golf Coach Richard Coffin, part of the Golf Professional Shop has been converted into an excellent retail area. The shop now offers a full range of golf clothing and equipment, as well as offering a custom fit club service.

Somerset's Champions of Learning Awards 2007

Val Lambert, Swimskool Manager at Wellington Sports Centre, has won a prestigious award for inspiring others to learn. Val has been recognised for her support, mentoring and guidance of aspiring Swimming Teachers. She was presented with her award at the Learning and Skills Council Champions of Learning event, by former national tennis professional and TV presenter Andrew Castle.

Forthcoming Events

The Counterfeit Stones will be appearing at Wellsprings on 20th April.

Jethro will be back at Wellsprings for his third, fully booked visit on 28th April.

Freddie Starr makes his first appearance at Wellsprings on 27th July.

Sports and Health Development

Wellsprings Leisure Centre has undertaken the assessment process for re-accreditation of its ProActive Physical Activity Referral Scheme this week. The assessment process seemed to go well and the result of the assessment is expected in April.

The Swimathon took place at Taunton Pool on 23rd and 24th March with 24 adults taking part and raising money for Marie Curie Cancer Care. The event is one of several that Tone Leisure are going to use over the next 3 years as a way of increasing participation in physical activity, to contribute towards LAA targets.

Walk in the Park - Tone Leisure are currently working in partnership with Diabetes UK (South West) to stage its Walk in the Park event at Vivary Park on Saturday, 16th June. Walk in the Park is a sponsored walk and events are being held across the country; this is the only one to be held in Somerset. As well as the sponsored walk, there will be fun physical activities for families to do and refreshments available, making it a great day out for everyone. This is the next mass-participation event of the year that Tone Leisure is using as a way of increasing participation in physical activity, to contribute towards LAA targets.

Somerset PCT's Phase III Community Cardiac Rehabilitation Programme (a partnership with Tone Leisure) that takes place at Wellsprings Leisure Centre, has seen success in the number of patients completing the course and maintaining a more active lifestyle beyond the programme. 60% of those completing their Phase III course were referred on to Tone Leisure's ProActive Phase IV Programme.

Arts

There was a meeting of the on the 19th March. The Arts Alliance hadn't met for a couple of years and theoretically the Cultural Forum should have replaced it at an earlier date. After a brief discussion there was a vote and by a unanimous decision the Somerset Arts Alliance was wound up.

The Brewhouse

Following the success of the Snow Queen, The Brewhouse has had a very encouraging start to the year achieving higher levels of advanced bookings. Currently there is a program to introduce a new financial management system which will enable close monitoring of all aspects of the theatre's activities. At the same time a feasibility study is proposed to look at the best way ahead in terms of size of theatre and the kinds of associated events which could enhance the cultural provision for Taunton. It is hoped that this will be closely linked to Project Taunton and the developments to the Somerset County Cricket Club.

Westival

Plans for this years Westival are at an advanced stage and it is hoped to build on the success of last years launch.

Cllr John Clark

COUNCIL MEETING 17th April 2007

Report of Councillor Mark J Edwards

Housing Services

I have entered the Housing Service world at a particularly difficult and challenging time however I am determined to focus on achieving the best I can with the resources available.

Following the ballot on large scale voluntary transfer and the resultant vote by tenants to retain the Council as their landlord cuts of £1.85m per annum had to be made to ensure we meet the Government's "Decent Homes" standard by 2010/11. Members will be aware that this meant the loss of 16 posts, many hundreds of years of valuable experience, plus reductions and alterations to services. Staff have been reorganising the service and most of the redundancies, all voluntary, will take place from the end of March to July. The reorganisation is starting to take effect and I wish to thank all those that have been involved it has been a difficult period for everyone in housing and it is with great regret that we have had to make these changes but they are very necessary.

Ironically if the ruling group at County Hall are successful with their unitary bid the tenants will see Taunton Deane Borough Council, the very Council which the tenants were encouraged to keep as their landlord by that group, abolished. It makes me wonder how the tenants might have voted with this present scenario, very differently I suspect.

In addition to the job losses and to meet the "Decent Homes" requirements we have reduced to 723 from 1100 the number of homes having planned exterior painting / maintenance. This reflects the move from 5 yearly to 8 yearly contracts. The programme includes homes in Taunton, Wellington, Pitminster, Churchstanton and North Curry. Additionally we will be carrying out similar work on 184 leased flats sold under the "Right to Buy" and 58 homes in the Musgrove/Galmington/Wellington Roads area will be re-roofed for which I have recently authorised the firms able to tender.

There are a large number of government reports and consultations currently affecting the Housing Services e.g. Hills, Lyons, Cave and Communities England (the amalgamation of the Housing Corporation and English Partnerships). The "Respect Agenda", anti-social behaviour initiatives, supporting people and "Decent Homes" which are all being driven by central government. These all create additional work and pressure and whilst many initiatives are welcome we have to be careful that centrally driven policy and regulation don't put too much pressure on the Housing services team.

I recently met with a Senior Director of the Housing Corporation and after our discussions they are very keen to forge closer links with Taunton Deane and they have considerable funds to invest so we will be progressing our conversations to make sure the District of Taunton Deane benefits from this opportunity.

Housing must also play its full part in ISIS, new scrutiny arrangements and the CMT reorganisation. During this time the service to our tenants and many other customers must continue as normal.

Officers are approaching all of the above professionally. I am confident that Housing, in time, will emerge with all of the challenges met and a structure which is able to continue to provide excellent services.

Cllr Mark J Edwards

COUNCIL MEETING 17 APRIL 2007

REPRT OF COUNCILLOR TERRY HALL CORPORATE RESOURCES

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

Member Charter

The first meeting of the Member Charter Steering Group has recently taken place. The Council believes that development of its entire people, whatever their role, is essential in ensuring that its Community aspirations are met. As well as being a visible commitment, The Charter will form a sound framework to support and measure member development. Work will now commence on developing an Action Plan on which the Charter will be based.

It is also pleasing to report that a bid for funding of this work has been successful. An application to the South West Regional Assembly for funding (one of the first to be submitted) has been judged to meet the required criteria and a grant of £5,000 has been received.

Civic Visit from Konigslutter

We have just said goodbye to 36 friends from Taunton Deane's German twin town of Konigslutter after another hugely successful civic visit led by its Burgermeister, Herr Ottomar Lippelt. Apart from the usual programme of events, it has been a fascinating experience to listen to Herr Lippelt on his role as Konigslutter's first directly elected executive Mayor. He is, in effect, both the Mayor and the Chief Executive. The town of Konigslutter is also currently undergoing a major town centre refurbishment so he was equally interested to learn of the plans for Project Taunton.

Herr Lippelt has invited the Mayor to lead a civic party to Konigslutter in 2008.

Electoral Services

Members will all be very well aware of the hard work currently being carried out by our small but diligent Electoral Services team as it prepares for the forthcoming Borough and Parish elections.

PERSONNEL

Job Evaluation

Much progress has been made with the implementation of the new Job Evaluation scheme. Almost all jobs have now been evaluated and a new pay and grading structure is being worked on. Consultations with Unison and Staff side are progressing and it is intended to advise all staff of their new grades and how it will affect them during the first week of June. Management

briefings, staff information sessions and a booklet about the scheme are all planned for early May.

Smoking

The new legislation regarding non- smoking comes into effect on the 1st July 2007 and the results of the staff survey on this are have been distributed. A draft policy has been circulated to UNISON, Staff Side and members of the Smoking Working Group and is now being updated in line with feedback. We have now visited all external sites to check compliance and managers understanding. Smoking in company vehicles will no longer be permitted so this will also need to be managed and communicated.

Payroll

The payroll function has now moved across to SCC. We have uncovered some issues around tax and NI relating to car payment schemes and these are now being looked into with the Inland Revenue. There have also been some queries raised by SCC staff over the completion of payroll forms, which they are inputting. We are therefore planning a reminder email to staff as to what they need to complete and how, in order to assist with this process. HR Staff from Taunton Deane have this week met with the key SCC contacts to further encourage this partnership working.

Professional Support

We continue to provide professional support to ISiS and Waste Partnership activities. We are also dealing with other restructures as well as a number of staffing matters and disciplinaries that have also been raised.

FINANCIAL SERVICES

April sees the Financial Services Unit concentrating on the closedown of the accounts ready for their submission to the Corporate Governance Committee in June. June will also see the final outturn position for 2006/07 being reported to the Executive along with our final Treasury Management position for last financial year. Work is also progressing on the financial impact of the ISIS project and staff will be working closely with the preferred bidder to ensure that all of the proposals that come out of the negotiation period are understood in terms of their impact on the Council's budget. The Unit is also developing proposals to ensure that we are able to maintain our overall "3 out of 4" score for the Audit Commission's Use of Resources assessment which contributes towards our overall CPA ranking

REVENUES AND BENEFITS

March 2007 saw the merger of the Revenue & Benefit Services in preparation for entry into the Joint Venture from 1 July 2007. We hope that by bringing the

services together we will be able to provide more seamless service delivery for our customers as well as giving us greater resilience in staffing.

Year end went extremely well, especially when this is viewed in the context of it being our first year end with new Revenue & Benefit software. Annual billing and benefit notification took place within the allotted timescale and system "downtime" was minimal. As a consequence, the impact on day-to-day work processing was contained.

Council Tax administration is generally turning work around within 3 weeks, although staff absence has affected our ability in processing valuation listings. However, the start of home working in the Council Tax Team has already seen increases in productivity and we are confident we will start the new financial year in a healthy work position.

In Business Rates we continue to do well and are able to process the relevant schedules regularly. Our Debtors Team have had a challenging time through 500 accounts accruing over just 4 weeks as the result of billing for garden waste bins. Plans are in place to gradually catch up in this area. Both Council Tax & Business Rate collection suffered from the system conversions. Recovery action has now re-started in earnest, and again we expect to be back on track with all our processes as we start the new financial year

Speed of processing In Benefits Administration goes from strength to strength as we saw yet another improvement on our performance in comparison with previous months

During March 2007:

- The average time for processing new claims was 26.27 days
- The average time for dealing with changes in our customers' circumstances was 9.51 days
- 85% of new claims were worked out within 14 days of receiving all the information we needed to assess the claim

As we went into April, the number of claims outstanding fell below 500 - the lowest level of outstanding work since system conversion in July 2006. In general, we are turning work around in less than 2 weeks.

Our Benefit Advice Team received over 28,000 calls in 2006/2007 with only 3.3% of customers abandoning their enquiry. The average for waiting time for customers calling the service was just 18 seconds.

We are analysing results from the survey we carried out in 2006/2007. Overall satisfaction with the Benefit Service was 77%. As this survey coincided with system conversion, and at a time when our customers were experiencing a reduced level of service from that which they had come to expect, it is not surprising satisfaction levels have decreased from previous years. We will look to identify future improvements as well as re-surveying our customers in 2007/2008 to check on our progress now we have recovered from system conversion.

CORPORATE SUPPORT SERVICES

Work on the ISiS project still continues and meetings with preferred bidder IBM have now started.

Customer Services

The new Corporate Complaints System and the Customer Contact Standards have now gone live and training for Complaints has taken place. Sessions within Service team meetings have started to pinpoint highlights of the Customer Contact Standards and posters and leaflets have been put up in public areas in Deane House and Wellington Community Office.

Almost 176,000 calls were managed through the contact centre last year with 61.47% being dealt with entirely within Customer Services. The average abandonment rate for the year was 5.88%.

48,490 people passed through the Main Reception desk and Planning Reception either as an internal visitor or to have a general enquiry dealt with at Deane House. Throughput in Wellington Community Office was 30,803, which included people making payments via the kiosk or by cheque, TDBC general enquiries, SCC general enquiries and TIC/travel enquiries.

Design and Print

Partnership discussions have started with SCC Design and Print ahead of preferred bidder meetings to ensure we make best use of our services.

A total of 4,826 jobs were carried out by Design and Print in the year to March 2007 with a total value of £276, 823.47 with an additional £20,311.22 worth of jobs invoiced to Tone Leisure. It was necessary to outsource £48,754.75 but the new printing equipment provided an additional £37,571.48 saving to the authority.

Corporate Administration Facilities

During the year Facilities was moved to the remit of Corporate Support Services and this move has proved extremely productive. The team facilitated in the setting up, catering and clearing away for an average of 5 meetings a day (almost 1200 in the year) in addition to working with services to provide access to the building as necessary during weekends etc.

Word Processing carried out 3,241 WP jobs in addition to administrative roles such as scanning, job-line requests, filing, stuffing envelopes and assisting other departments with advice etc.

Corporate Administration successfully delivered the new security system for the building that included the programming and distribution of approximately 400 new staff, member and visitor passes. Just over £102,000 was spent on postal charges with 83% being sent second class (an increase of 1% on last year).

Member's Entrance Door Keeper

It is with regret that I have to report to members that Nigel, the almost always-cheerful doorkeeper, has decided to leave us for pastures new. I will miss his banter and wish him well in what he chooses to do.

CORPORATE PROPERTY SERVICES

Stewart Rutledge retired from the Authority on Friday 30th March 2007
George Stark has taken over the post of Corporate Property Manager. This is on a secondment basis.

Toby Taylor left TDBC (GIS Section) on the 21st March 2007. The intention is not to replace him at the moment, but as and when required we will employ outside consultants/companies on a task by task basis.

Registration of Land - Documentation for registration of part of the Council's land holdings is now 99% complete and has been sent to the Land Registry Office. We now await the Land Registry response to our submissions.

The OMB - The tenants of the OMB have now been successfully installed in 57 East Reach.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY UNIT

Year End

We have now finished running year-end processes for all our systems, and everything happened successfully and on time. Thanks to all involved, especially as this year was the first time a number of new systems had been through the process, and many new interfaces and processes were run for the first time.

Student Placements

We are interviewing 6 students shortly to fill our 2 placement posts for the 07/08 academic year. We continue to be impressed with the calibre of the students we take on and hope that we will be able to continue this practice within ISIS.

Housing Academy System Implementation

Work continues apace as the scheduled live date approaches. There is still much to do, especially around the DLO operation, but we remain confident that the schedule live date will be met.

Development Management Planning System Replacement

The project to replace the existing planning system with an off the shelf package is now entering the formal procurement phase, and we hope to invite potential suppliers to demonstrate their systems to us in the near future.

Service Performance

Our performance against our KPI's remains strong, with help desk performance in particular exceeding our targets. Our recent customer satisfaction survey showed that overall satisfaction of the service remains very high, so thank you to all the staff within the ICT service for maintaining such a high performance during what has been a very challenging year.

Terry Hall

Council Meeting 17 April 2007

Report of Councillor Gwyneth Leighton - Communications

Public Relations

The spring edition of **Deane Dispatch** has now been distributed and featured a variety of stories from each service area.

We have been involved working across the districts on press releases to encourage the community to get involved in **Team Somerset**. The PR generated from the trip to London has been very effective in terms of coverage generated.

The public announcement of the Preferred Bidder for the **ISiS Programme** was successfully coordinated between all organisations involved. The announcement received some media coverage.

We are currently developing the Communications Plan for the transition stage of the ISiS Programme. This has involved undertaking a comprehensive stakeholder analysis which will be used to inform the Plan. Communications on the Programme are now being managed through the Communications Workstream involving representatives from TDBC, SCC and the Police as well as IBM.

Waterlinks - the Member briefing I mentioned in my last report was put on hold as all councillors were invited to the launch at Bridgwater. Several members attended to experience first hand what the project is all about. The public response was tremendous and we had good media coverage.

Web Content and Marketing

Members who visit our website regularly will have noticed that the homepage has changed – giving better presentation of our news stories and events in Taunton Deane. It now looks less cluttered and is more user-friendly. The pages across the site are being updated and revised to improve the information that we are providing to our customers and to improve the consistency of presentation. A web strategy and a style guide are being prepared to support staff when adding information to the site.

Consultation & Information

Our annual survey 'Your Council Your Views 2007' will be sent out to a random sample of 5000 residents in May. To publicise the survey and encourage a good response we are planning Roadshows in Taunton and Wellington. We will use these to encourage people to feedback their thoughts on specific aspects of the survey. The results from this survey will inform the budget setting for 2008/09.

We have successfully launched a new Corporate Complaints System following a thorough review of how we dealt with complaints. We have simplified the process following feedback from users and customers. Our focus has been on creating a more effective and efficient process which enables a more consistent approach to dealing with complaints. We have also tried to strengthen how we embed organisational learning as a result of complaints. A new Customer Feedback leaflet has been produced and is available on request.

Finally, when I first took on the Communications Portfolio I asked Stephen Fletcher (the then Chief Exec) what was involved and was handed an almost empty sheet of paper. It would be hard if writing this up now to stop short of a book! We have developed a great Communications Team and have worked on all the major projects and events the Council has been involved with. Furthermore we have developed excellent working relationships with the PR teams in our neighbouring councils and external partners.

I would like to thank Councillors and Officers alike for their contributions, and for all the support and encouragement they have given. It has truly been a team effort.

Gwyneth Leighton
Executive Councillor Communications

COUNCILMEETING 17 APRIL 2007

**REPORT OF COUNCILLOR MRS JOANNA LEWIN-HARRIS
COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP**

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

The 10 year document has been agreed by the LSP and work now continues on the first Action Plan. Both documents will be published by the end of the month.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

The Team Somerset prospectus contains a clear commitment to establish Community Partnerships as part of the drive to work at a more local level.

The Community Leadership panel recently debated a discussion paper on the possible functions and form of Community Partnerships within Taunton Deane.

Possible functions of Community partnerships could be:

- To monitor the delivery of the Local Area Agreement and Sustainable Community Strategy at the local level.
- To identify issues/actions for the next Local Area Agreement and Sustainable Community Strategy Action Plan
- To contribute to TDBC's overview and scrutiny role.

The starting point for deciding on the appropriate geographical area could be the four community planning areas proposed in the recent restructure of the Corporate Management Team. However, many partners are also planning to work at a neighbourhood level and there would be considerable advantages to working together on this. Early discussions with the police have shown support for this approach.

The panel supported the recommendation that the Executive continue to develop and implement locality working within Taunton Deane.

EFFECTIVE DEMOCRACY FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

The IDEA recently invited Taunton Deane to participate in a pilot seminar on Effective Democracy for Sustainable Communities.

Both members and officers attended this event at the Cleeve Hotel in Wellington last month. Topics included the Growth Agenda, Creating Sustainable Communities and Securing the Benefits of Growth for Local Communities. A range of highly qualified speakers gave a most interesting

perspective from both the public and private sector point of view and all those attending seemed to agree that it was a very worthwhile event.

The bonus for those attending was full board at the Cleeve Hotel funded by the IDEA, so at no cost to TDBC!

HALCON CLEAN UP AND COMMUNITY CLEAN UP PARTNERSHIP

Residents, councillors, representatives from Taunton Deane Borough Council, Government Office South West and the Avon & Somerset Constabulary joined together for the Halcon & Lambrook Community Clean-Up Day and to mark the launch of the Community Clean-Up Partnership.

The Community Clean-up Partnership is a joint effort by Taunton Deane Borough Council, Avon and Somerset Constabulary and The Probation Service to work together to make our communities cleaner, brighter and feeling safer.

The Partnership will run a group of unpaid workers subject to Community Punishment Orders to work in the community cleaning up the effects of anti-social behaviour. The type of work carried out includes litter picking, refurbishment of benches and other street furniture, removal of graffiti, painting and repairing vandalised areas. The Clean-Up Partnership will work closely with Local Action Teams (LATs) and other community groups on both small scale and larger scale projects and in neighbourhoods or at sites across Taunton Deane.

The Community Clean-Up Partnership was involved with the Clean-Up Day clearing fly tipping, dealing with graffiti as well assisting people clearing refuse from their gardens. They joined many local residents, of all ages, cleaning up the neighbourhood and making a real difference to the Halcon and Lambrook Estates.

SWRA MEETING

Climate Change was the main topic of debate on Friday 16 March 2007, when the full membership of the South West Regional Assembly met at County Hall in Exeter.

The Assembly supported a recommendation to sign the South West Regional Declaration on Climate Change (the Nottingham Declaration) and also to encourage local Authorities and other organisations in the South West to do the same.

I am glad to say that, once again, Taunton Deane is ahead of the game, having already signed the Nottingham Declaration.

The Assembly also voted to to give in principle support to the use of Severn tidal power as a source of energy.

AND FINALLY ...

I would like to take the opportunity of my last report to Full Council of this quadrennium to offer my most sincere thanks to the officers of the Council with whom I have worked over the past four years.

It has been a pleasure to work with them. I have learnt a huge amount from them and I thank them all for their professionalism, commitment, hard work and support.

Joanna Lewin-Harris