

COUNCIL MEETING 20TH JULY 2004

REPORT OF COUNCILLOR CAVILL **ECONOMIC, ASSET MANAGEMENT AND TOURISM**

Vision for Taunton

We have now received the final draft of the UDF Vision reports. The Draft UDF report has a series of technical appendices and two viability reports (retail and UDF). These reports will go through final checking before being presented to the Vision reference group. This should enable the Draft UDF report to be presented to the October meeting of the Executive.

Conjoined with the UDF, is the outcome of the Taunton Transport Strategy of which we should have some decision on the 'third way' this September.

Business Survey

By the end of this month businesses within TD will have received a survey asking questions, about their future employment land and premises needs. I hope you will promote and encourage a full response to this survey, as the results will inform our future employment land requirement.

Taunton Town Centre Partnership

This partnership works very closely with many sections of Taunton Deane. No sooner it seems have we finished the planning and running of the '1100' celebrations, than we are planning for the celebration of Somerset Food, to be held on 10th and 11th September in the centre of Taunton.

You will see a new rotunda supported by Eldridge Pope going up in the centre of town, not far from the former 2SL shop. This rotunda is to support the nighttime economy and like the other two existing ones is an attempt to reduce fly posting. Whilst mentioning the night time economy, it is interesting to report that the Police have been using their ioniser machine at two clubs for one evening and tested positive 15 young people, all but two were cocaine. Resulting from action that night, word rapidly went around the other clubs. The police intend to revisit as and when they can.

Asset Management Plan

The AMP has been re-appraised and updated. DDA assessments of our properties are complete, to meet the October 2004 deadline. It is now a process of prioritising work to comply with the legislation.

Valuation

For many years Taunton Deane has had its property registered on Terrier maps. Whilst these documents are excellent in the detail they keep, they have not been able to give us one comprehensive overview. We have embarked on a process of GIS and whilst producing the first maps is comparatively quick, the checking of them is a very slow and laborious process. The maps have proved to be a tremendous boon, and the checking process will be expedited.

Another project, nearing completion, links in with 'Crisp and Clean', namely the improvement of the Station steps, at Kilkenny car park. This has taken a time due to the protracted negotiations between the various parties. Agreement having been reached, work has started. Within the next couple of weeks you will be able to see a stainless steel handrail fixed on revamped posts, new stair treads. The banks either side will be tended by TDBC Parks department.

Tourism and the TIC

A new Heritage Trail leaflet has been designed, with a launch planned at the Flower Show in August. The new trail has nearly doubled in length.

Having installed Tourist Information points in Taunton, Wellington, Wiveliscombe and Nynhead, there are two left to install, one in Hestercombe, the other at the West Somerset railway. Increasing business is going through TIC, as is shown by the monthly returns. They are dealing with more and more enquiries and bookings.

The 'Towards 2015' strategy and regional tourism delivery plan has been endorsed by SWRDA. The next stage in the process will be to develop the actions outlined in such a fashion as to enable SW Tourism to submit a funding application. All in all this seems to be a lengthy process but it is hoped that such an approach will produce a result that will benefit the region and its business for years to come.

David McGubbin, our Tourism Officer is working on behalf of the Somerset Tourism Partnership with Bristol airport, supporting their Project USA (direct flights out of Bristol to New York).

There are a number of other ongoing projects, particularly the Wellington 'specialist shops' leaflet, put together in conjunction with Wellington Chamber of Commerce as a result of an initiative from Wellington Economic partnership.

I cannot leave this section of tourism without drawing your attention to a recent edition of West Somerset Free Press in which a full page of adverts and editorial with images were written and supplied by our officer. This excellent promotion on local attractions, activities, farmers markets, shopping in Taunton, the surrounding countryside and Taunton TIC was covered by the advertising.

Broadband

As more and more of the Deane becomes ADSL-enabled, the challenge is to get people to take it up. Promotions will take place, organised by a partnership of the County Council, District Council and other bodies. SWRDA has reserved funding for the County to access, once they have co-ordinated the action plan.

Rural Renaissance

A considerable amount of work has been done on the rural web page. I would encourage you to visit it. You will find information there about village population statistics, regeneration schemes, events, community planning, business links, and much more.

TDBC Agricultural Development

Our officer has been very active in promoting awareness and concerns on the Mid Term Review, as reported in the Weekly Bulletin.

Councillor Norman Cavill