

Part II Reports from the Executive

Council Meeting – 7 October 2008

Report of Councillor Ross Henley – Leader of the Council

1. Britain in Bloom

- 1.1 In the last few weeks we have heard the fantastic news of the success of both Wellington and Taunton in their respective classes in the Britain in Bloom Competition.
- 1.2 In Wellington's case well done to Councillor Vivienne Stock-Williams who led the Bloom Team this year for the first time taking over from Isabel Ward.
- 1.3 For Taunton, the Mayor, Councillor Richard Lees and others attended the award ceremony in Chester - a marvellous award on the national stage. For all those who went to Chester it made getting home at 4am the next morning a worthwhile exercise!
- 1.4 I would in particular like to thank all the Taunton Deane staff involved in both the Wellington and Taunton bids. We can be proud of the efforts of the staff who work for this Council who have more than done their bit to put our two towns on the map in this way.
- 1.5 Of course this was a massive effort of behalf of all branches of our local community. Some people do assume that Britain in Bloom is solely about flowers but of course many aspects of our local environment and also of our community are taken into account. So well done to all involved.

2. Response Bus Services

- 2.1 I am highlighting this as a good example of a Task and Finish idea which has become a Council decision.
- 2.2 I was very pleased to personally sign the decision to invest £25,000 towards improving bus services from several of our villages into Taunton.
- 2.3 We must do more to improve sustainable transport and this is a good idea. What also was nice was to be able to celebrate this idea by having my photograph taken with Councillors John Meikle and John Thorne to promote this Council decision.

- 2.4 This really is an example of how we can make a difference through Task and Finish working and jointly support a new initiative across the political divide without politics getting in the way.

3. Rowbarton Allotments

- 3.1 I was pleased last week to be at the opening of the new toilet which has been provided at Rowbarton Allotments funded from the Taunton Unparished Area Special Expenses Precept Fund, the setting up of which is another example of Task and Finish working.
- 3.2 This was an aspiration of John Cleverdon and the Allotments Association who have long wanted to have a facility on site. I met them on site in April 2008 and was very happy to work with them and ensure that this facility was introduced.

4. Free Swimming

- 4.1 At the Overview and Scrutiny Board this month, this administration will be seeking support to introduce proposals for free swimming for all under 16's and all over 60's in Taunton Deane.
- 4.2 I am proud that this Council has indicated to Central Government that it is interested in participating in this scheme. All councils were asked if they were interested in this and we have confirmed that we are. This could be a very exciting opportunity for Taunton Deane and could be a real bonus to over 60's, young people and families as well.

5. Pioneer Somerset

- 5.1 Meetings of the relevant Chief Executives and Council Leaders across Somerset continue to take place and we will be able to introduce formal ideas for debate to this Council later this year.
- 5.2 I am sure we will want to introduce some of what is likely to be proposed and some we may want to reflect on; but the truth of the matter is that we should embrace the concept of Pioneer. We have an opportunity for closer working and in principle should support that.

6. Greg Dyke

- 6.1 This week we said farewell from this Council to Greg Dyke. Greg will be a great loss to the Council and is someone who I personally have the highest respect for.
- 6.2 Over the years he has given unstinting assistance to countless Mayors and even more countless Members. On a personal note I owe him a huge amount for the help and support he has given me in my role first as a Councillor and especially since I have become Leader. I could not have done this job without his help and advice and support.

6.3 Also to make Civic events run like clockwork has been a hallmark of Greg's work and we must salute him for that. I am sure that we all wish Greg the very best in his role as Clerk to Wellington Town Council where sadly for him he has not escaped all of us just yet!

7. Fuel Poverty Day

7.1 On Monday, 6 October 2008 we are holding our "Warm Homes Without Warming the Planet" event. This event is being organised by the Somerset Fuel Poverty Group of which I am the Member Champion for Somerset.

7.2 This partnership is made up of all Councils in Somerset and the Primary Care Trust. Fuel poverty is a growing issue for so many people these days and this is an attempt to focus on this and come up with some practical ideas.

7.3 Many of our initial aspirations were listed in our press release of 26 September 2008. We are also fortunate to have the South West Minister Ben Bradshaw coming to the event who will be making a speech.

Councillor Ross Henley

Council Meeting – 7 October 2008

Report of Councillor Francesca Smith – Corporate Resources

1. Democratic Services

- 1.1 Although it is well over two months ago, the fantastic spectacle of 40 Commando Royal Marines marching through Taunton Town Centre and the poignancy of the Drumhead Service on the Parade continues to be talked about. Well done to Greg Dyke and the Mayoral Team for co-ordinating this event which received national, as well as local, media coverage.
- 1.2 The Marines were overwhelmed by their welcome home and, as a result are even keener to forge closer links with the local community, initially in connection with the forthcoming Remembrance Commemorations in early November.
- 1.3 By the time you read this, Greg Dyke's career with Taunton Deane Borough Council will have come to an end. He has worked for the Council for almost 25 years and leaves us with all of our thanks for a job well done and best wishes for the future. The Wellington Councillors will still see him on a regular basis as he will continue working part-time as Clerk to Wellington Town Council.
- 1.4 Another significant departure is Alastair Higton, the Scrutiny Officer, who leaves in early October for a new job with North Somerset Council. We wish him well.
- 1.5 I mentioned in my last report that Natasha Williams would soon be going on maternity leave. She has now been replaced temporarily by Helen Mockridge and Donna Hallows who will job-share the post until May next year.
- 1.6 The Standards Committee has now taken on the role of dealing with Complaints about Councillors. Very few complaints have been received to date and these are still going through the formal investigation stages to establish whether there have been any breaches of the Code of Conduct.
- 1.7 It is encouraging to note that no complaints have so far been received about Parish Councillors. It is perhaps no coincidence that this very favourable situation exists following the ethics and probity training delivered to all of our 41 Parish Councils by David Greig (our Parish Liaison Officer) over the past year.
- 1.8 The Member Development Steering Group has recently met. Good progress is being made with the agreed Action Plan towards Taunton Deane achieving Member Charter status. A lot of work has been done towards the development of the member's portal by both Donna Durham and the ICT team. This will provide members with relevant and confidential information on a secure site rather than part of the Taunton Deane website. Councillors will have been sent access links and passwords to this portal. I would

encourage Councillors to look at this site and give feedback to Democratic Services so that the portal can be developed to reflect member's requirements.

- 1.9 Congratulations to Donna Durham who has recently gained a qualification through the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development which will enable her to play a leading part in providing the training opportunities Councillors want to receive to help develop their roles, particularly within the communities they represent.
- 1.10 A number of ICT training courses have been undertaken by various members; amongst the subjects covered were Excel, Word, email and using calendar in Outlook. This improvement of Councillors ICT skills is a very important part of Member development and will help Councillors to move into the 21st century with far greater efficiency and will hopefully in the long term assist in financial savings to the Council as well.

2. Personnel

2.1 Job Evaluation

- 2.1.1. The implementation of the JE scheme is all but complete. There are still ongoing discussions with Unison to achieve a collective agreement. Due to the delay specific legal advice is being sought.

2.2 Sickness Absence

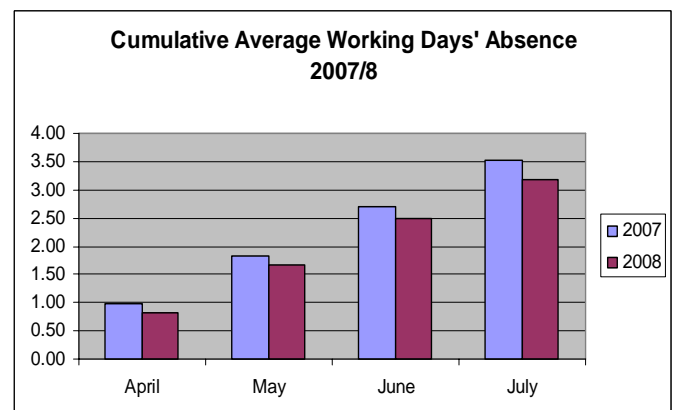
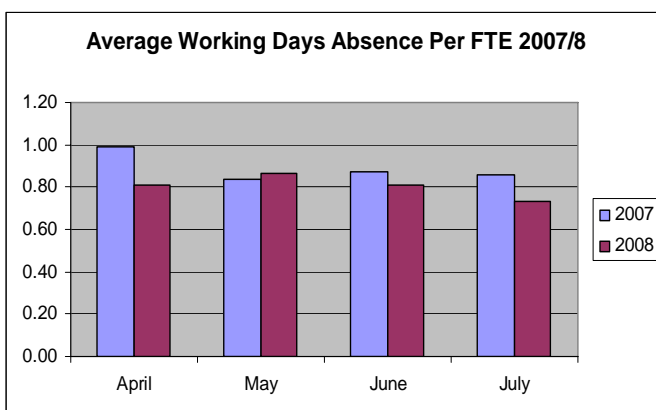
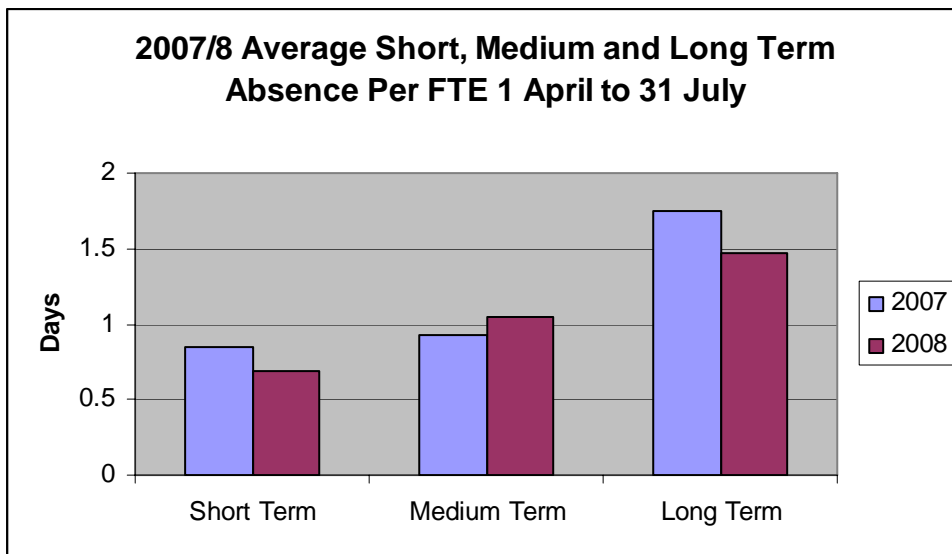
- 2.2.1 The sickness figures to date are still encouraging. The first four months of this financial year compared to the same period last year show an overall 11.4% reduction. Please find below the absence figures, which also show the figures by short, medium and long term.
- 2.2.2. The latest figures currently available relate to July 2008, allowing comparisons for the period April - July.
- 2.2.3. The comparisons for the figures to date for the current financial year are shown below, with comparisons for the same periods last year. These show that the cumulative figures for the current year are remaining lower than last year.

	Average Working Days Sickness Absence Per FTE		Cumulative Working Days Sickness Per FTE	
	2007	2008	2007	2008
April	0.99	0.81	0.99	0.81
May	0.84	0.87	1.83	1.67
June	0.87	0.81	2.70	2.48
July	0.86	0.73	3.53	3.19

Short/Medium/Long Term Absence Comparisons

The figures for short and long term absence per full time equivalent have again shown an improvement for April – July 08 compared to the same period last year, although the medium term figure has increased slightly.

Average Working Days' Sickness Absence Per FTE			
	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term
1 April - 31 July 2007	0.85	0.93	1.75
1 April - 31 July 2008	0.69	1.05	1.47



3. South West One

3.1 The Human Resources (HR) Manager continues to be involved in regular meetings with IBM, Somerset County Council (SCC) and the Police. Part of the transformation is looking at the organisation design of the HR services. Any changes will take places gradually over the next twelve months.

- 3.2 The HR Team are also providing advice and support on the restructuring process to the inscope Taunton Deane service leads, who are also reviewing their organisational design within Southwest One.

4. Corporate Support Services

- 4.1 Further consolidation work has taken place within Southwest One to align services with their SCC (and where applicable Avon and Somerset Police) counterparts. Discussions to complete the final two parts of this for Corporate Support Services – combining the two contact centres and understanding the need for delivery within the Corporate Administration/Postal/Word Processing service – have continued throughout July and August.

5. Customer Services

- 5.1 Work continues to co-locate the service with the County Hall teams within The Deane House with an expected go live date of mid December 2008. The Taunton Deane Contact Centre has temporarily moved into the old Marriage Room in Flook House (beginning of September) to enable services from the second floor of The Deane House to occupy space on the first floor previously used by Finance and Customer Services.
- 5.2 Considerable refurbishment works have started on the second floor of The Deane House with a new, larger Meeting Room A with natural light and ventilation being provided. Work has started on the new climate control system for the Contact Centre and partitions have been removed and/or moved to create one large open plan area for the new joined up service. Electrical and telephony work is also due to start in the next couple of weeks. A new organisational structure for the combined team is in the process of being discussed and finalised.
- 5.3 A number of Customer Service Advisors (CSA) have been seconded to the SAP transformation programmes and two members of the team have been successful in obtaining posts within the new People Excellence Model (PEM) organisation for Southwest One which will look at the overall personal development of staff. As a result Customer Services operate with a small number of agency “temps” but this has reduced dramatically as the department has been able to move more temps into permanent positions. A new Data Protection Act (DPA) training programme has been implemented and Customer Services are in the process of updating the Quality Monitoring process.
- 5.4 Statistical Information - During the months of July and August 2008, 30,246 calls were managed through the contact centre with an overall abandonment rate of 2.2% and 90.1% of calls being answered within 20 seconds. In line with the new method of reporting Resolved at First Point of Contact; that is the inclusion of “switchboard type calls”, CSA’s only had to report 2.1% of calls to service teams which they could not resolve themselves. A total of 6,548 people have been helped at The Deane House main and planning receptions and 2,695 people visited Wellington Community Office. 654 people made enquiries through the Web site.

6. Corporate Administration/Word Processing

- 6.1 It has been agreed that Corporate Administration and Word Processing should align with a new Site Services facility within the Property Group. Work is now underway to understand how this is to be managed and what the new structure (particularly in relation to postal services for both authorities) will look like.
- 6.2 Corporate Administration continue to work with services on providing cost effective solutions for large mail requirements and have been working with services to see how they can assist with new initiatives and working with Southwest One colleagues to understand the plan for moving forward on scanning proposals in the coming year.
- 6.3 Analysis of postal costs for the period April to August 2008 is in the process of being completed but there is a major increase in the percentage of items being sent first class. Discussions are proceeding as to whether the historical guideline of 85% being sent second class is still feasible in light of a number of new legislative requirements. The results of this analysis will be shared with Service Managers when agreed.

7. Revenues and Benefits Service Unit

- 7.1 In my last report I told you of the successful implementation of Local Housing Allowance in April 2008 and our joint benefit take-up exercise with the Pension Service. Staff in the Revenues and Benefits Service have used the Local Housing Allowance as a springboard to identify extra income available to customers as part of their "Make a Difference" initiative. Since the start of July 2008, we have been able to increase Housing Benefit for 19 customers providing extra benefit of £24,700 - on average that's over £1,000 a year for every customer!
- 7.2 Unfortunately, there will always be those who seek to defraud the benefit scheme and in August we were able to successfully prosecute one such offender. However, two of our other customers failed to show up at Court and warrants are out for their arrest.
- 7.3 Recovery of debt, especially against a backdrop of a gloomy economic climate, is a sensitive issue. At the end of August 2008 however, Revenues and Benefits had not only sustained collection on Council Tax and Business Rates, but improved performance in comparison with this time last year, this was achieved through striking a careful balance on the needs of individual debtors against the need to collect revenue needed to support vital services in the future.
- 7.4 The Revenues and Benefits Department are aware that to remain successful in collecting income, it is equally important that the administration is also efficient, the speed of processing for benefit recipients continues to improve (the Department is in the top quartile for these measures). Of the 10,682 customers contacting Revenues and Benefits since April 2008, only 1% abandoned their call; calls were taken, within 20 seconds (an achievement of over 96%). 85% of written enquiries from customers, about their Council Tax liability, were dealt within 10 working days.

7.5 I am pleased to report Southwest One met all the Key Performance Indicators for the Revenues and Benefits Service at the end of August which is very encouraging. Quality is integral to the Revenues and Benefits Service and random checks of work not only ensure accuracy of processing, but look deeper into issues such as Plain English and where we can improve the service by alternative means of delivery are carried out. The survey of customer satisfaction is on-going and some headline results should be ready for my next report.

8. Financial Services

8.1 In recent weeks the Financial Services Unit has been liaising with the Council's external auditors regarding the 2007/2008 Statement of Accounts and has been pulling together evidence to help with their assessment of the Council under the Use of Resources regime. This looks at Value for Money, Financial Management and other corporate health indicators.

8.2 Work within the service is now turning towards the detailed discussions with managers on the 2009/2010 budget and also the Quarter 2 budget monitoring position. Financial Services are also looking at the implications of moving towards a shared service centre with the County Council and the Police as part of the overall vision for Southwest One services. As part of this it is expected that Financial Services will relocate to County Hall sometime over the winter.

8.3 Financial Services are also assisting with a number of other corporate projects among them are the Core Council review and Procurement Transformation.

9. Performance Management

9.1 Adrian Gladstone-Smith has been recruited to Taunton Deane in the past week and is replacing Simon Lewis who has been seconded to Southwest One as a change manager. Adrian's role will be to look after the monitoring of performance and the value for money of the Southwest One contract, CPA/CAA requirements, Data quality and Direction of Travel requirements. As an ex-employee of Taunton Deane I am sure it will not take him long to settle into his new role.

Councillor Fran Smith

Council Meeting – 7 October 2008

Report of Councillor Alan Wedderkopp – Community Leadership

1. Community Partnerships

- 1.1 The last round of Community Partnership meetings went well. As usual the meetings retained their informal style, allowing members of the public to raise the issues of concern to them. However this round of meetings also saw the introduction of a theme session for half the meeting, this time focusing on the development and changes facing Taunton Deane over the coming years.
- 1.2 Following a review of the Community Partnerships it has been decided to investigate splitting the central area into two, in order to gain better separation of the rural and urban areas. Discussions are currently underway as to how this can best be achieved.

2. Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

- 2.1 Taunton and District CAB recently held their annual general meeting, which highlighted the fantastic job they are doing. The bureau and outreach projects dealt with 6703 clients in 2007/2008, a 12% increase on the previous year. 82 volunteers contributed approximately 27,000 hours of work to the bureau during 2007/2008. CAB estimate the value of this help at £390,000.

3. Local Area Agreement

- 3.1 The LAA was signed off by Government Ministers at the end of June 2008. It includes 34 agreed targets, plus 16 mandatory education targets. The focus is now very much on delivery against the targets. For each target a delivery plan is currently being worked up, which will include, where appropriate, the role and actions Taunton Deane Borough Council will contribute.

4. Safer Somerset West Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership

- 4.1 The second meeting of the Safer Somerset West Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership took place in Bridgwater on 17 September 2008. The newly formed partnership is a merger between the old Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships which covered the District Council areas of Sedgemoor, Taunton Deane and West Somerset. It brings together statutory partners from the District and County Councils, Police, Fire, Probation Service and the Primary Care Trust.

- 4.2 As this is a fledgling partnership, new Terms of Reference were discussed and agreed, as well as the Chair of the group. This will be Neil Giddins from Devon and Somerset Fire and has been agreed for a period of two years.
- 4.3 In the main part of the meeting, funding from the Area Based Grant was discussed and agreed, having previously gone through a short-listing process and recommendations being made by a funding sub-group. Key projects to have been supported specifically within Taunton Deane include two new CCTV cameras for the Halcon Area of Taunton and continuation of the successful VIBE programme of sporting activities and youth work at Wellsprings Leisure Centre.
- 4.4 The partnership will now start the process of considering which areas would benefit from further funding in 2009/2010. This will be based on priority areas identified through the Local Area Agreement and the strategic assessment of all crime in the area.

5. The Restorative Justice Project

- 5.1 The Restorative Justice Project in Wellington has exceeded expectations and currently has taken 10 cases in its first couple of months of referrals. More are expected as the success of the scheme is seen and other providers, such as Housing, start making referrals. 14 volunteers have been trained in restorative practices and the first is ready to start hosting panels.
- 5.2 The project has made great strides from the employment of a part time coordinator in late January to today's position, and further progress will be made as the year goes on.

6. Protection from Abuse

- 6.1 The Council's 'Protection from Abuse' Policy written in 2005 has been updated into the new Safeguarding Policy, which is reflective of recent high profile cases and the changing legislative landscape. An information report, to be sent out shortly, will inform members more fully of this work.

7. Phoenix House

- 7.1 A very interesting initiative is the launch of Taunton Deane Borough Council's Phoenix House. This is a seemingly typical 1930s council house that has been equipped with a wide range of renewable energy technology.
- 7.2 The property in Belmont Road, Taunton was seriously damaged by fire and has been rebuilt to become a model of domestic renewable energy thanks to a partnership with Scottish and Southern Energy, parent company of Southern Electric.

- 7.3 The technology includes solar thermal equipment to heat hot water and photovoltaic tiles to generate electricity from daylight. In summer, when daylight hours are long and electricity usage low, enough electricity could be generated to sell back to the energy provider.
- 7.4 The roof and walls are insulated, windows double-glazed and A+ appliances installed. Somerset Waste Partnership is providing compost bins for the property to raise its green credentials. The costs of the renewable technology and appliances, totalling almost £18,000, are being met by Scottish and Southern.
- 7.5 The house will be officially “launched” on 6 October 2008 when visits via a minibus shuttle will be laid on for those who wish to see it.

Councillor Alan Wedderkopp

Council Meeting – 7 October 2008

Report of Councillor Steve Brooks - Communications

1. Public Relations

- 1.1 We were delighted with the local and national newspaper, radio and television coverage for the thanksgiving parade and service for 40 Commando in July 2008. This was a carefully planned event and we had positive feedback from the media who attended.
- 1.2 In August 2008 we held a successful media briefing on the complexities of the Core Strategy which proved useful resulting in balanced coverage in the County Gazette and the Western Daily Press which also ran a full page feature.
- 1.3 October 6 saw the launch of Somerset Fuel Poverty Partnership and Phoenix House, the model of renewable energy undertaken in partnership with Scottish and Southern Energy. The Fuel Poverty Partnership sees all local authorities and the Primary Care Trust (PCT) working together to provide consistent and relevant information on the help available to those struggling to pay for fuel. Communication plays an important role in this initiative and is being led by Taunton Deane with help from the other partners.
- 1.4 We continue to produce and write the content for the successful monthly Deane Dispatch page in the Somerset County Gazette. If any Member is aware of any newsworthy stories they feel should be covered, please contact Debbie Rundle.

2. Website update

- 2.1 Over the last couple of months we have been working very closely with Somerset County Council (SCC) and Southwest One on the development of a new website for the Council, which is part of the Customer Access Transformation Project. We are particularly excited about this project because without the creation of Southwest One we would have struggled to finance the design and development of a new website.
- 2.2 The new website will be clearly branded Taunton Deane Borough Council but will have the same look and feel as the new website for SCC. We will each have our own areas, however, we will be sharing a "services" area where customers will be able to access all services provided by ourselves or SCC. As we know from research, customers often do not know who provides which service, this website development will enable them to access all Council services, regardless of who provides the service, and automatically link the customer to the correct Council.

- 2.3 The foundation for this new website is the customer and there has been a substantial amount of customer research during the development phase for the website. We have developed a comprehensive list of website authors based within each council service. These website authors will be responsible for reviewing their content on the existing website and rewriting their service website pages for the new website.
- 2.4 We want to make the best use of our new website. We want to use it as one of the main ways in which customers access our services and find out more about what we do. As the work on the new website develops, we will make sure that you are aware of the changes.

3. Place Survey

- 3.1 Since my last report we have awarded the contract for the Place Survey to BMG Research and the questionnaires have been sent out to 3,500 randomly selected households in Taunton Deane. We have worked as a Consortium, coming together with the PCT, local Fire and Rescue Service and the other Somerset Councils. This has been a positive experience which has enabled us to share resources and reduce costs.
- 3.2 Whilst working on the project we have seen the potential benefits of gathering information on a county-wide basis and the importance of agreeing at the outset how we will use the information. The final report will use combined results and all the responses will remain confidential and anonymous.
- 3.3 We are expecting the final report in early 2009 and will receive a detailed analysis on a county-wide basis as well as for each Somerset Council. We will be able to identify opinions and themes at ward level and investigate the issues people have at a more local level. The results should enable us to assess the extent to which local priorities are reflected in our corporate priorities and the services we provide. Some of the results will provide information for the new National Indicators.

4. A-Z of services

- 4.1 We are currently reviewing the A-Z of services. The production and distribution of the A-Z is paid for by advertising. The next edition will be distributed to households in January 2009.

Councillor Steve Brooks

Council Meeting – 7 October 2008

Report of Councillor Simon Coles – Planning and Transportation

1. Southwest One

- 1.1 Sir Jay Tidmarsh has recently been appointed as independent Chair of the main Southwest One Board. Sir Jay, who is now involved in many voluntary and community organisations, has had a long and successful career in business and his appointment will be of enormous benefit to Southwest One.
- 1.2 Work is well under way to get the Council ready for implementing SAP, the new electronic system for Human Resources, Payroll, Finance and Procurement. The system, which will be implemented early in 2009, will coincide with implementing the Council's new CRM system.
- 1.3 Work also continues on the procurement project, which to date has identified nearly £2m worth of savings across the two councils.
- 1.4 The plans to combine the customer contact centres for the two Councils are well under way. Work is currently being carried out on the top floor of The Deane House to enable the two teams to be located together in December 2008.
- 1.5 Southwest One's performance reports for Quarter One show that all of the key performance indicators, for each service, have been met.

2. Forward Planning

- 2.1 Mark Leeman is shortly due to leave Forward Plans to become the Council's Corporate Performance Officer on a twelve month secondment due to commence in early November this year.
- 2.2 I am sure fellow Members will join me in congratulating Mark on this career move and we all wish him the very best success. Mark's replacement is yet to be agreed but I hope to have an announcement soon.

3. Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan and the Design Code Supplementary Planning Document

- 3.1 Taunton Deane has been working closely with key partners to ensure the delivery of Project Taunton. The Action Plan explains how the various proposals will be implemented, including the roles and responsibilities of partners in the public, private and voluntary sectors. The Action Plan identifies how the regeneration of the town centre can

deliver important community priorities including opportunities for training and skills, better connections to the town centre from disadvantaged communities and tackling climate change.

- 3.2 The Action Plan helps to deliver Project Taunton and explains the strategy for the regeneration of Taunton Town Centre. It provides the policy framework to guide the redevelopment of a number of important sites. These include Firepool, the Cricket Club, Coal Orchard, Morrisons, Tangier, Wood Street, Tesco, Goodland Gardens, Castle Green, High Street and East Street.
- 3.3 The Action Plan provides the basis for the Taunton Town Centre Design Code Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), which has been prepared in parallel with it. A Design Code is a set of requirements to guide the physical development of an area. The aim is to define acceptable design quality and thereby assist the delivery of good quality new development. The Design Code acts as a tool to guide the implementation of the town centre redevelopment and a point of reference in the development control process.
- 3.4 Both documents are the subject of a separate report seeking their formal adoption by the Council
- 3.5 A Planning Obligations SPD will come back to the Local Development Framework Steering Group at the end of this month (October 2008) and thence on to Executive in November and to Full Council in December.

4. Core Strategy Community Engagement

- 4.1 As members were informed at the Briefing Meeting given in August 2008, the Core Strategy Community Engagement process will take place during October and November, to produce a vision of where the community wants to go in the next 20 years and a map showing the location of types of development needed to deliver the vision.
- 4.2 The Community Engagement will focus on facilitated workshops for those communities that will be impacted by significant development. A toolkit approach will be used to explore issues, prepare a vision and consider delivery. The toolkit will be made available on a DIY basis to other communities that do not face significant development.
- 4.3 As part of the evidence base for the Core Strategy a number of technical studies are progressing. These include:
 - Core Strategy Appropriate Assessment (SAC);
 - Hestercombe Lesser Horseshoe Bat SAC Appropriate Assessment;

- Taunton Deane Green Infrastructure Strategy; and
- Taunton Deane Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment.

4.4 Proposals for the Core Strategy and Site Allocations will be the subject of formal public consultation during six weeks in February and March 2009.

4.5 The aim of the engagement is to articulate a vision for each neighbourhood/community in the context of the locations identified in the Regional Spatial Strategy for growth. The response we get from this engagement with our partners and communities will inform proposals for place shaping, to create sustainable communities.

5. Monkton Heathfield

5.1 The Inspector has now completed his report on Monkton Heathfield and passed it on to the Secretary of State. Her decision is now expected to be with us at the end of this month (October 2008).

6. Staffing Levels

6.1 As you are aware from previous reports in terms of staffing, the Planning Administration Section is now up to their full complement. As a result of this we are now operating at a significantly higher level. This in turn has meant that we are now, I am delighted to say, running at slightly higher than our set targets as follows:-

Our performance against targets for this year is as follows:-

Govt. Target on Major Applications:	= 60%
2007/8 Performance	=60.42%
TDBC Target (end of 2 nd Quarter)	=60% ACTUAL=78%

Govt. Target on Minor Applications:	=65%
2007/8 Performance	=65.23%
TDBC Target (end of 2 nd Quarter)	=65% ACTUAL = 79%

Govt. Target on Other Applications:	=80%
2007/8 Performance	=73.68%
TDBC Target (end of 2 nd Quarter)	= 80% ACTUAL = 86%

6.2 Whilst we must not be complacent, this does represent a major turn around in performance over the past few months. Members will, I am sure, join me in congratulating Tim Burton and his team on this successful performance to date.

7. Residents' Parking

- 7.1 The awaited paper outlining proposals for some changes in the current arrangements for Residents' Parking within Taunton has had the finishing touches put to it. This paper has now gone through the Overview and Scrutiny Board and is now awaiting the approval of the Executive.

And Finally.....

I cannot let the not insignificant matter of Greg Dyke's retirement go without recording my personal, along with I am sure, all other Members both past present and futures' heartfelt thanks and gratitude to an absolutely outstanding servant to our community.

You certainly made my life so much easier with your willingness to tolerate seemingly endless requests for assistance and guidance, which you bore with a ready wit and (sometimes) stoic attitude, never once showing impatience or intolerance no matter what the provocation!

May your retirement bring you the rewards that you so richly deserve.

Councillor Simon Coles

Council Meeting – 7 October 2008

Report of Councillor Jefferson Horsley – Economic Development and the Arts

Part 1

1. Project Taunton

- 1.1 The flood relief works at Longrun Farm, Bishops Hull are progressing well and will be complete by November 2008. This will provide flood alleviation for the town centre and will allow the development of key sites including the construction of the Third Way (due to commence March 2009) and in particular Firepool.
- 1.2 The procurement of a development partner for Firepool is also coming to a conclusion. The final bids have been received and evaluated and the decision will be made at a special Executive meeting on 9 October 2008. The procurement team are very pleased to be able to make a positive recommendation to the Council on this matter, despite the current economic downturn.
- 1.3 The fact that the potential developer partners have remained on board is indicative that despite the credit crunch and its likely impact on employment and economic development and growth, the very nature of our long term planning and care with which we have undertaken this task means our successors will have something to be proud of.
- 1.4 The first phase of the works for Castle Green is now being designed with a view to submitting a planning application in November 2008.
- 1.5 The development at the County Cricket Club is also progressing well and the Pegasus development and the new stand is on programme to be completed by May/June 2009. The Project Taunton team are working with the developers on the final design for the space currently known as Somerset Square.
- 1.6 The Project Taunton team have submitted their bid for the second year of Growth Points funding. We were given an indicative allocation for Year 2 (2009/2010) of £5m which we have had to bid for again. Announcements will be made towards the end of this year about what our actual allocation will be. At present there is no indication that the Government are pulling back from funding infrastructure to facilitate housing growth, despite the current slow down of actual housing delivery.

2. Changing Economic Circumstances

- 2.1 The latest economic review by THE South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA) (*Economics review Issue 13, Third Quarter:August 2008*) has identified that the world economy faces two significant problems:-
- The ramifications of the liquidity crunch; and
 - The resultant credit squeeze for economic growth and the rise in inflation expectations.
- 2.2 The broad economic slowdown is affecting South West England with the usual lags and variability, with some sectors immediately affected by the national picture, notably financial, housing and construction sectors, and other sectors yet to feel any impact.
- 2.3 It is reported that there is evidence that visitor numbers across the South West are holding up but that visitor spend is not. The quality end of the market is still strong but there is evidence of weakness elsewhere.
- 2.4 The Economic Development Unit has begun the process of reviewing its current activity so that resources can be redirected to priority activities in order to achieve maximum economic impact.

3. Inward Investment

- 3.1 A new Head of Inward Investment has been appointed to SWRDA. Ellen Stallins has moved to the South West having previously been Director of Inward Investment for Scottish Enterprise, the enterprise agency for Scotland. Although only recently appointed, Ellen has already met with the officers group of Into Somerset and will work with them to promote Somerset to potential investors in the USA and emerging economies, and provide guidance on developing an effective Aftercare Strategy.
- 3.2 A recent study has identified that Business Services and Creative and Cultural Industries are the most promising targets for Somerset's urban 'growth point' strategy focused on Taunton. This will require marketing campaigns and business relocation support to attract more knowledge-intensive businesses and entrepreneurs into Somerset, which exploits current trends. The necessary marketing strategy to achieve this, including development of a website and promotional materials, is currently at an advanced stage in preparation for the launch of Into Somerset in November 2008.
- 3.3 The target for a separate proactive inward investment strategy for Taunton should be to attract and build a platform of specialist research institutes to

create a local-global knowledge hub for growing local businesses and start-ups. This is likely to require a new strategic employment site in addition to Firepool, and work is underway to identify an appropriate location as part of the Employment Land Review.

- 3.4 The Tourism Officer has been working with Project Taunton, housing developers, and Fresh PR Agency to promote a combined message about Taunton and its offer as a place to live, work and re-locate to. Bookmarks promoting the group's website have been produced and will be sent out with all information from Taunton TIC and Developers once the new website is launched.
- 3.5 The Project Taunton team continue to proactively engage with potential inward investors.

4. Culture

- 4.1 Somerset has a low performance knowledge economy by South West and British standards and if recent trends continue the County will fall further behind in the future. Taunton Deane's economic weakness is masked by a large public sector, and building on the strong and vibrant cultural sector in Taunton is fundamental to attracting and growing knowledge intensive private sector businesses that will increase productivity and earnings within Taunton Deane to underpin the 'growth point' strategy and provide a strong sustainable local economy.
- 4.2 The Somerset Cultural Strategy is taking shape with a draft Terms of Reference (ToR) now produced, and a draft plan including a model on how all the different groups will work together and report into the Somerset Strategic Partnership (SSP) through the Economic Leaders Group (ELG). Taunton Deane will produce a separate cultural strategy to reflect local need and support the County strategy in achieving LAA targets.
- 4.3 Taunton Deane adopted a Public Art and Design Policy last year and the Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan has adopted the main principles and recommendations, which are integrated into the Design Code. The Taunton Deane Public Art and Design Panel is now established, which includes representation from Somerset County Council and Project Taunton, and a brief has been drafted to appoint a consultant to produce a Public Art and Design delivery plan for Taunton Deane.
- 4.4 With the likely adoption of the Prosperous Places paper from the Sub-National Review, the Council will have to rethink its Economic Development Strategy over the next few months. With Somerset County Council assuming the upper tier responsibilities, Taunton Deane will have to ensure that it retains its key features and strengthens its ability to

deliver all aspects of its corporate priorities. The forthcoming Core Review will give us an opportunity to ensure that we embed our own requirements and have in place a seamless service in place for all people who want to see Somerset and Taunton Deane prosper in the future.

|

Part 2

Pioneer Somerset

1. Into Somerset

- 1.1 As previously reported, a review on the type of organisation required to commence delivery of the Into Somerset project has been undertaken and the outcome is that Somerset County Council will form a subsidiary Local Authority Controlled Company.
- 1.2 The launch event will take place on Thursday, 27 November 2008 at the Yeovil Innovation Centre.

2. Somerset Tourism Partnership (Destination Management Organisation (DMO))

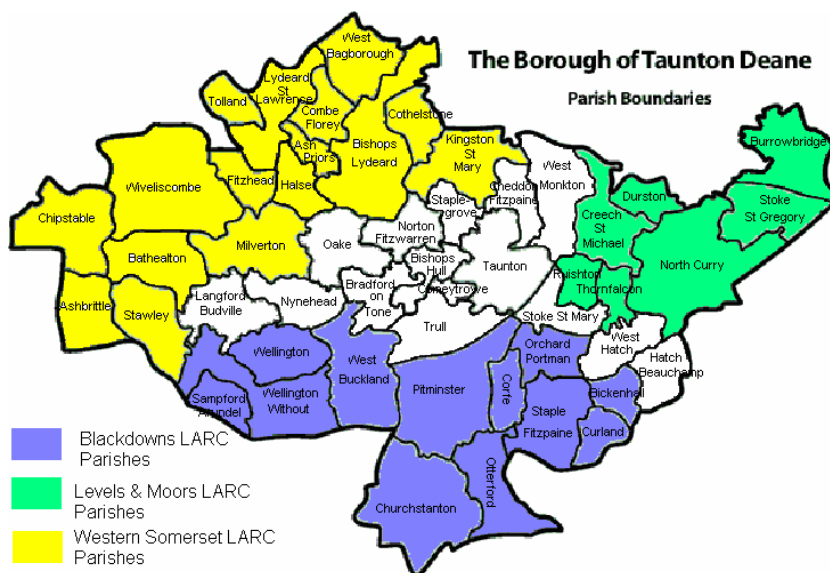
- 2.1 Taunton Deane continues to coordinate the delivery and budget management of the partnership. On 17 July and 15 September 2008 the partnership met with and presented to the Economic Development and Tourism Portfolio Holders. The two presentations updated those present on the work plan, business plan, outputs and evaluation of work undertaken to date.
- 2.2 Into Somerset will work with the partnership to identify possible synergies between the operations of inward investment and the tourism activity.
- 2.3 Key Outputs July – September 2008
 - Independent audit office approved brochure conversion research demonstrates that for the first six months of the joint marketing and brochure campaign the partnership has generated a return of £34.32 for every partnership pound spent (national av. £30.00). 7600 holidays influenced by the campaign with a value of £4.7m.
 - Distribution of 320,000 Somerset Tourism Brochures.
 - Production of 8 Car Free Days-out itineraries to promote sustainable days out in Somerset.
 - 44 items of national press coverage on Somerset tourism generated by 'Fresh' PR Agency.
 - Production of 2008/2009 Training Development Plan to support and up skill tourism businesses in Somerset.
 - Secured £80,000 of SWRDA funding to support partnership activities.
- 2.4 The Visit Somerset Website Project began to look at how the project can be delivered and funded post August 2009 when the initial 3 year project funding ceases.

3. Somerset University Partnership Project (SUPP)

- 3.1 Members are reminded that the Somerset University Partnership Project (SUPP) was established to explore the feasibility of establishing a coordinated university level delivery programme to enhance the Level 4 and above educational provision in Somerset.
- 3.2 The SUPP Executive Group has now commissioned a consultancy group to prepare a report and develop a proposal to establish university level education provision in Somerset.
- 3.3 Third Phase Limited have recently presented their initial conclusions and their recommendation is to develop a proposal that will seek to focus on business orientated skills and knowledge by developing a complementary education offer within existing colleges. This option has received support from among the partners and the next stage is to develop a funding proposal in line with this recommendation.

4. Local Action for Rural Communities (LARC) Funding Bids

- 4.1 Members will recall that three bids were made that would benefit areas within Taunton Deane and all three bids were successful, though with a slightly reduced award than that bid for.



- 4.2 LARC funding is for a 6 year programme of work, though spend will be competitive in terms of influencing programme delivery within the Taunton Deane Parish areas.

- 4.3 The LARC funding ignores administrative boundaries and encourages collaborative and partnership working with other local authorities as follows:

Blackdown Hills and East Devon Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Awarded: £2.4m

Theme:-

To use the outstanding environmental quality and local human potential of this area as a springboard for sustainable economic growth, through connecting market towns with their rural hinterland and supporting the market for local products.

Partners:-

- Devon County Council
- Somerset County Council
- Taunton Deane Borough Council
- South Somerset District Council
- East Devon District Council
- Mid Devon District Council

Western Somerset

Awarded: £2.25m

Theme:-

To provide opportunities that use skills and innovation in work, social enterprise, and volunteering to develop local businesses and community initiatives. There will be a strong economic foundation that will provide growth in high value jobs, connectivity that is an exemplar for remote rural areas and a demonstration of the benefits that can be offered by the special landscape qualities, with the underpinning theme of working towards a low-carbon economy.

Partners:-

- Somerset County Council
- Taunton Deane Borough Council
- West Somerset District Council
- Sedgemoor District Council
- Exmoor National Park Authority

Levels and Moors

Awarded £1.8m

Theme:-

Promoting sustainable development in the Levels and Moors to strengthen the economy, vibrancy, and environmental quality for all residents, businesses and visitors.

Partners:-

- Somerset County Council
- Taunton Deane Borough Council
- Sedgemoor District Council
- Mendip District Council
- South Somerset District Council

- 4.4 Additionally, the LARC partnerships include multiple private, public, and voluntary sector, and community organisation partners that will organise themselves into project teams to deliver economic and community development programmes within a delivery plan agreed by SWRDA.

Economic Development

5. Agricultural Sector Support

- 5.1 The Agricultural Development Officer is developing a delivery plan to meet the local authority requirements contained within the 'Changing Landscapes, Changing Outlooks' South West of England Sustainable Farming and Food Delivery Plan 2008 – 2011.
- 5.2 The Agricultural Development Officer has also supported the local Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF) Project, based in Bridgwater, which aims to reduce diffuse pollution from farms from inaccurate fertiliser use, including informing local farmers about the project and encouraging their commitment.
- 5.3 There has been ongoing support provided to local farm businesses through the 'special interest' groups (that is, dairy, sheep, IT, business development). Support includes organising meetings and workshops covering a wide range of topics including:-
- Livestock disease control
 - Marketing

- PR and Communication
- Best Practice Reviews

5.4 Around 55 unique farm businesses are benefiting from this programme of work and consideration is currently being given to establishing a Taunton Deane organic group.

5.5 The service continues to be reactive to local need, particularly to help farmers with changes to Government legislation. Recent activity has included organising training to equip local farmers with the required Livestock Transport Certificate, from which around 50 farmers have been awarded a Certificate.

6. Wellington Market and Coastal Towns Initiative (MCTI)

6.1 The Vision for Wellington 20 year plan was officially launched on 18 September 2008 and can be viewed at www.visionforwellington.org.uk.

7. Wiveliscombe MCTI (Ten Parishes' Area) Refresh

7.1 The West Deane and Brendons Community Strategy was prepared in 2003 as part of the Market Towns' Initiative. It has been the guide for initiatives and development in the 10 Parishes' area for the last five years. A great deal has been achieved as a result of having an agreed strategy framework and a willingness on the part of so many organisations to work together. There are many excellent examples: Wivey Link Community Transport, the Community Office in Wiveliscombe, the 10 Parishes Festival, the development of new affordable and sheltered housing, the 10 Parishes' Children's Centre, the birth of 10 Radio and the improved recreation ground can all be attributed to the current strategy.

7.2 The strategy has now reached the end of its lifespan so a review and refresh process is underway. Working with representatives from each Parish, community groups and agencies, the Wiveliscombe Area Partnership have commissioned a consultant to carry out a detailed analysis of past achievements as well as producing a new strategy to reflect community needs and aspirations over the coming years.

7.3 The new plan will be produced in November 2008.

8. Tone Mill

8.1 The Economic Development Unit is continuing to monitor the Tone Mill situation, and is liaising with Development Control and the Heritage Team, as well as the Prince's Regeneration Trust, English Heritage and the Tone

Mill Trust. It is planned to produce a Schedule of Works as a step towards protecting this heritage asset.

9. Tourist Information Centre (TIC)

- 9.1 A consultant has been engaged to conduct a review of TIC operations in preparation for a possible relocation to a more prominent town centre location. The report, which is to provide options to increase contribution from trading activities or collaborative working with as yet unidentified partners, will be completed by the end of October 2008.
- 9.2 During this period the TIC staff have promoted their services at the Taunton Flower Show and Freshers Fairs at Richard Huish and Somerset Colleges, have developed an agreement with the Town Centre Company over events that take place in Taunton, agreed a commercial contract for the Community Office in Wellington, and hosted a series of successful craft demonstrations within the TIC premises.

10. Tourism

- 10.1 The Tourism Officer coordinated and promoted the Taunton Deane Heritage Open Days event which took place from 11–14 September 2008. Heritage Open Days celebrate England's fantastic architecture and culture by offering free access to properties that are usually closed to the public or normally charge for admission.
- 10.2 Sustainable rural tourism themes have been discussed and agreed with South West Tourism who will take the lead on behalf of SWRDA for this strand of RDPE funding.

11. Young Enterprise

- 11.1 The Project Officer has scheduled programmes for the 2008/2009 year of the Young Enterprise and Taunton Deane Borough Council Primary Programme Partnership. So far programmes are arranged for 28 primary schools across the Taunton Deane area.
- 11.2 Young Enterprise staff, along with business advisors from local firms, will run most programmes. Advisors who have volunteered in the past have all said they will encourage colleagues to take part. The Human Resources Manager at BSI is interested to volunteer again, and Louisa Sheppy from Sheppy Cider enjoyed the programme and will try and release some of her employees to take part.
- 11.3 Teacher feedback has been very positive from all the schools, with a number already requesting to take part this year, subject to funding.

12. Employment Land

- 12.1 The Economic Development Unit has collaborated with the Forward Planning team to conduct the first part of the Stage 1 Review of Employment Land to inform the Core Strategy and support growth point requirements.
- 12.2 This is an assessment of 'fitness for purpose' of existing allocated employment sites to identify the 'best' employment sites to be protected, and for what type of activity.
- 12.3 An on site and desk top survey was completed in August 2008, and identified site and building definitions in terms of size, location, quality, permitted/acceptable uses, constraints/availability, tenure, ownership, and length of time vacant.
- 12.4 It also established which sites are being actively marketed, by whom, whether employment development would be viable without public funding to resolve infrastructure issues, any known or anticipated pressures for alternative use, and if the site could be allocated today for the acceptable use measured against sustainability criteria (for example location, accessibility, environmental impact), or if it would more appropriately be used for non employment use.
- 12.5 The next part of the Stage 1 Review will identify employment sites to be released.

Community Development, Deprivation, and Regeneration

13. Deprived Areas

- 13.1 The Corporate Strategy aims to reduce deprivation in Taunton Deane by creating prosperity for all communities and taking the most deprived sub-areas out of the 25% national most deprived areas by 2020.
- 13.2 The most deprived sub-areas in Taunton Deane in terms of overall deprivation and within the 25% nationally most deprived areas are:-

Area	National Percentile (2004)	National Percentile (2007)	Somerset Rank (2004)	Somerset Rank (2007)
Taunton Halcon (N)	10.31%	8.33%	2	2
Taunton Halcon (W)	15.17%	13.11%	7	4
Taunton	15.16%	13.55%	6	5

Lyngford (N)				
Taunton Pyrland and Rowbarton (C)	29.64%	22.38%	39	19
Taunton Lyngford (W)	24.14%	24.21%	19	26
Taunton Eastgate (SW)	30.79%	24.81%	46	28

13.3 This table clearly demonstrates that current economic and community development activity is having no impact on levels of deprivation and that the overall situation is worsening rather than improving.

13.4 Discussions have been had with the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), Job Centre Plus, and Somerset College and it has been agreed that a new strategy to tackle the causes of deprivation needs to be developed. To achieve this aim a consultancy project will be commissioned to audit delivery by all statutory, public, and voluntary sector providers within the areas of deprivation identified above, and to develop a strategy focused on skills development and employment opportunities.

13.5 A meeting with IBM has identified that there are opportunities to utilise the IBM Social Responsibility programme to add value to educational initiatives within deprived areas.

14. National Skills Academy for Construction (NSAfC)

14.1 Taunton Deane supported the establishment of the Taunton NSAfC at a meeting of the Executive on 14 November 2007 (refer to Executive agenda for full details of the NSAfC). The delivery of the Taunton NSAfC is awaiting the selection of the Firepool developer (decision expected Autumn 2008). The project is being coordinated by the 'Skills Group' (see below).

14.2 The Taunton NSAfC has a number of key aims. These include:-

- To ensure that an optimum proportion of construction related jobs are sourced from within the local area; and
- To invest in relevant training schemes for construction related skills and learning that provides for individual local workers to achieve industry accreditation and employment.

14.3 Construction related training will be provided on site (Firepool) and provide opportunities to develop construction skills from basic through to advanced. A key target group will be residents of North Taunton and Taunton East.

14.4 The Economic Development Unit shall assist this process by:-

- Capacity building and enabling: Work with community groups in north and east Taunton to develop broker organisations to act as conduits between their communities and the developers, helping to source and recruit a potential workforce pool from within disadvantaged communities.
- Lead the preparation of a draft developer's agreement (Section 106 agreement) that will ensure the delivery of key aims (see above) and the provision of a 'Training and Development Plan' that will establish appropriate targets for community involvement (north and east Taunton). This will necessitate close working arrangements with ConstructionSkills, Project Taunton, Forward Plan Unit and Development Management.
- The Economic Development Unit recently supported Project Taunton in helping to organise their 'Employer's Day' (12 September 2008, Somerset College). This brought together over 120 local businesses within the construction sector. The aim of the day was to inform local businesses of the opportunities presented by Project Taunton and the Taunton NSAfC. Somerset College outlined their current (and planned) construction related training opportunities.

14.5 The Taunton NSAfC presents both an opportunity and a threat to the DLO. The DLO could seek to be involved with Project Taunton, and actively seek contracts within the construction stage of various developments. Similarly, there is a potential threat if the DLO loses its sub-contractors to major construction projects. This needs detailed consideration by the DLO as part of its on-going business planning.

15. East Taunton

15.1 The Taunton East Development Trust (TEDT) is moving toward deregistration as a Company and as a Charity. In its place a new partnership will be formed comprised of local community organisations to better represent the residents of the area. This new partnership will be called the Link Centre Partnership and will continue to provide outreach clinics and drop-in services at the Link Centre in Halcon.

16. North Taunton

16.1 The Priorswood Resource Centre continues to go from strength to strength, with the increase in weekly surgeries, new volunteers and activities and classes, the number of users to the Centre has increased

dramatically. The centre is also delivering a new weekly jobs club for local residents to obtain help, information and support with writing CV's and finding a job or moving up to the next level.

Councillor Jefferson Horsley

Council Meeting – 7 October 2008

Report of Councillor Richard Lees – Sports, Parks and Leisure

My report has to start with the fantastic results in September that Taunton in Bloom and Wellington in Bloom achieved. I was delighted to be at both venues when the South West in Bloom (Plymouth) and the National Britain in Bloom results (Chester) were announced.

In Plymouth for the South West in Bloom competition, Wellington again were up against a very big entry of towns in the category – and amazingly kept up their magnificent standard in gaining a Gold Award. We can be justly proud of the efforts put in by the community of Wellington and their extremely hard working Committee.

Taunton in their Category in the South West in Bloom gained a Silver Gilt Award, but, no other large town/city improved on that, and we were awarded the Tesco Cup once again, effectively winning the category. Yet, more was to come!

On the 24 September 2008, in Chester at the Britain in Bloom Awards, in the category that Taunton was entered for, up against Banbury, Gateshead, Mansfield and Stevenage, we were given a Silver Gilt Award, but not only that, announced the Winners of the Category – and we can now justly and honestly say we are “National Winners of the Britain in Bloom Competition, 2008! Yes, we are “The Champions”.

Again, we must congratulate the hard working In Bloom Committee and the community of the town for playing their part in making this award happen.

1. Community Leisure

- 1.1 The Vivary Park summer season of free bandstand concerts ran successfully from June – September with 10 bandstand concerts.
- 1.2 Capital grant aid has been awarded under the Parish Play Area Grant Scheme to Pitminster and Angersleigh Playing Field for new swings, Ruishton to fence their toddlers’ play area and Stawley Recreation Field for a hard standing teenage area and fencing for the younger children’s play area.
- 1.3 A capital grant aid application from West Monkton Village Hall has been approved for consideration of match funding from Somerset

County Council at the next meeting of the Joint County and District Panel for Voluntary Village Halls and Community Centres.

2. Sport

- 2.1 In September I was privileged to meet with the Minister for Sport when he came to the Somerset County Cricket Ground. After welcoming him to Taunton, we chatted for a short while about Taunton Deane in general along with the improvements to the cricket ground.
- 2.2 The new sports pavilions at Hamilton Gault and Galmington Playing Fields are both now complete and opening ceremonies are being arranged.
- 2.3 Wellington Football Club has been awarded a capital grant towards new floodlighting.

3. Play

- 3.1 Playbuilder Funding
 - 3.1.1 The Council is about to sign the agreement to secure £257,000 of Playbuilder funding for seven children's playgrounds from Somerset County Council. The funding comes from the Government Department for Children Schools and Families and has had a very short lead-in period.
 - 3.1.2 In Year One, the current year, we have allocated funding to Higher Holway Open Space and will be using the remainder to develop a new play area on Howard Road Open Space in Wellington. This part of the town has no play spaces and has long been identified as a target should funding become available.
- 3.2 Play Ranger Service starts
 - 3.2.1 The Big Lottery funded Play Ranger Service for the Council has now commenced in Holway, Halcon and Rowbarton. Barnardos which is delivering the service for us has been into local primary schools and made contact with the community in the three wards prior to starting the regular weekly sessions throughout the year. The official launch of the service is planned to take place at Higher Holway Open Space on Thursday, 30 October 2008 with an afternoon of play activities from 2-6pm.
- 3.3 Higher Holway Open Space Official Opening
 - 3.3.1 Construction work on the first landscaped, natural play area the Council has commissioned is almost complete. Play England, the Government's Advisory Body on play, will be attending the official

opening on the afternoon of 30 October 2008 along with representatives of Somerset County Council (funder), Barnardos (participation work), Swan Paul (design) and Proludic (construction).

- 3.3.2 There will be a regional seminar on the design and provision of play spaces run by Proludic in the morning with a visit to the site to see what a modern play space should look like.
- 3.3.3 The play ground has been funded from Section 106, Playbuilder and some Council capital for replacing play equipment.
- 3.4 New Play Facilities in Galmington
 - 3.4.1 The replacement play equipment for older children and young people is currently being installed on Galmington Playing Field and will be completed shortly. It includes exciting new equipment based on the physical experiences of skateboarding and wind surfing chosen by the young people at Galmington Massive Youth Club.
- 3.5 French Weir Play Facilities
 - 3.5.1 The prices have been received for the exciting new play facilities and park improvements planned for this park. It is planned to have the play spaces completed in time for the judging of the park for the Green Flag Award early next summer. These improvements will complement the works funded by the Friends of French Weir Park above the weir which include environmental and signage improvements.
- 3.6 Skatepark Planning
 - 3.6.1 Work is continuing with the Community Skatepark Project (CSP), a local group of keen skaters and riders, to fund and develop a concrete skatepark at Hamilton Gault Park in Taunton. Bids have been put forward by this Council for money from Playbuilder and the Taunton Unparished Fund and CSP is applying for money from the Youth Opportunity Fund and Viridor.
 - 3.6.2 A number of Council's around the country who have successfully delivered a project of this nature have been contacted for advice on project development processes and construction options.
- 4. Tone Leisure (Taunton Deane) Limited Activities**
 - 4.1 Sports and Health Development
 - 4.1.1 Health Walking and World Mental Health Day - 10 October 2008
 - 4.1.2 Tone Leisure is working in partnership with Somerset Primary Care Trust and other agencies across Somerset to stage a programme of health walks from 5-13 October 2008, to celebrate World Mental Health

Day on 10 October. The programme, which is called “Soul Walks - Let your Feet do the Talking!”, has been organised to raise awareness of the benefits that physical activity in the great outdoors has on mental well-being, and to show that physical and mental well-being go hand in hand.

- 4.1.3 Volunteers from Tone Leisure’s Walk Well in Taunton scheme and Ruishton Health Roamers will be leading walks as part of the Soul Walks programme, and will pause to wonder at nature along the way. Tone Leisure is also working in partnership with Rethink to lead a walk from Eastbourne Court and Tone Leisure has provided walk leader training to professionals from local health and care agencies, so that they may continue to lead walks for their clients in the future.

For further details and a full programme go to:

www.somersetpct.nhs.uk/healthy_living/walks.asp

4.2 MEND (Mind, Exercise, Nutrition, Do it!)

- 4.2.1 MEND for children aged 7-13 years old and their families started again at Blackbrook Pavilion, Taunton, at the end of September.

- 4.2.2 Tone Leisure held a Childhood Obesity Awareness Seminar on 10 September 2008 for local professionals who work directly with children and their families. The seminar was well attended by a wide range of professionals including those from health, education and leisure.

4.3 MEND Water Festival

- 4.3.1 A Water Festival for past, present and future families who have taken part in MEND, will take place at St. James Street Baths, Taunton on 11 October 2008. The Festival will include fun and games in the water for children and parents, followed by a “Food Fest” of MEND-friendly food and a reminder for families of the MEND principles to encourage maintenance of a healthier lifestyle beyond the MEND Programme.

5. Facility News

5.1 Blackbrook Pavilion

- 5.1.1 The builders finally moved in on Monday, 4 August 2008 and started the long-awaited Health and Fitness Developments.

- 5.1.2 The first phase of the improvements will see the opening of the new gym on Monday, 13th October 2008. This bigger, better facility will now increase to a 71 station gym including the following:-

Improved cardio vascular equipment by Life Fitness;

Designated floor work area;
New Box Fitness concept;
The very latest audio and visual entertainment system.

- 5.1.3 Phase two will be completed by Friday, 14 November 2008, which will see the existing gym and health suite transformed into the new GOgx studio. Also we will see the development of a complementary studio, with the very latest fitness equipment including the following:-

Power plate toning equipment;
Gravity systems toning equipment;
Abdominal workout area.

5.2 Wellington Sports Centre

- 5.2.1 New gym for Wellington. Work has now been completed on the Health and Fitness development, which has seen the existing gym extended. This extension has completely transformed the facility and now boasts the very latest fitness equipment coupled with a hi-tec audio and visual system.

- 5.2.2 The GO Fitness Department at Wellington Sports Centre was successfully re-accredited to the GP Referral Scheme for a further two years.

5.3 Wellsprings Leisure Centre

- 5.3.1 Gavin Brooks has been appointed as Centre Manager at Wellsprings Leisure Centre and took up his post at the beginning of September 2008.

- 5.3.2 Wellsprings has now gone through the second cycle of its QUEST accreditation. This centre went through a vigorous two-day assessment as well as an external mystery visit. The first assessment that was completed at Wellsprings scored a fantastic 72%. This year the centre really excelled with a final score of 80%. This score is not only highly commended but ranks amongst the top performing sites in the industry nationwide.

5.3.3 Taunton Pool

- 5.3.1 Taunton Pool held its annual Swimathon on 19 and 20 April 2008. We had 80 participants - the second largest number in the whole of the South West (beaten only by Bath). The total amount raised by the Pool was £5,408.41.

- 5.3.2 Centre staff are determined to exceed this year's contribution and planning has already commenced for the 2009 Swimathon challenge. The staff at Taunton Pool are determined to be number one in the South West.

6. In-Bloom

- 6.1 As I started this report announcing that Wellington and Taunton had done so well, I felt the last part of my report must expand on the work by our Council staff to assist the community and the two In-Bloom Committees to achieve such results. May I state that the Council employees who have taken us to these heights of achievement need to be thanked publicly and through my report I wish to do that now.
- 6.2 It is fitting to say that a nearby town in Devon, who are supplied by our nursery with their hanging baskets actually won their category too, and became national champions also. Fitting that it was the work of our staff that provided their blooms!
- 6.3 “Thank you to the Taunton Deane Borough Council Staff – one and all – who played any part, large or small, to help Wellington do so well, but assisted to ensure that at long last, Taunton was a National winner and Champions”!

Councillor Richard Lees

Council Meeting – 7 October 2008

Report of Councillor Mel Mullins – Environmental Services

1. Environmental Health

1.1 General

Enforcement Policy

- 1.1.1 A new Enforcement Policy has been drafted which is based on the requirements of the new Statutory Code of Practice for Regulators issued by Government. The Policy has been out to the general public and local businesses for consultation for six weeks. This has now ended, with no comments having been received. We are now in discussion with the other Somerset Authorities with a view to having the Policy adopted on a County wide basis.

Out of Hours Emergency Cover

- 1.1.2 The Rota scheme for providing emergency Environmental Health cover has been completely revised to provide advice and support via the telephone to emergency incidents. Visits to life and limb emergencies will no longer be guaranteed as previously but will be provided where possible from a call out list of officers.

Inter-Authority Working

- 1.1.3 Claire Holman, our Team Leader for Environmental Health Support, has been spending time in Sedgemoor District Council, helping them to maximise their use of the Environmental Health specialist database, as the same system is used by both authorities.
- 1.1.4 We are also now working in partnership with South Somerset District Council (SSDC), in order to cover Jim Hunters departure. Julia Bradburn, the SSDC Licensing Manager has recently started working 50% of her time at Taunton Deane to be the Licensing Manager here following Jim's departure.

1.2 Food Safety

FoodO

- 1.2.1 The electronic version of the Food Safety Training Package and board game, aimed at 7-11 year olds, has been rolled out to all 170 Junior Schools in Somerset. This has been a truly joint venture, with Taunton Deane devising the package, the Food Standards Agency contributing all of the funding and the Healthy Schools Team at Somerset County Council giving invaluable support and advice on how the initiative should be advertised and distributed.

1.3 Environmental Protection

Prosecution

- 1.3.1 In the Taunton Deane Magistrates' Court, fines totalling £15,000, plus costs, were awarded against a family business for offences under the Clean Air Act. The offences related to repeated burning of materials creating dark smoke.

Somerset Air Quality Strategy

- 1.3.2 The consultation period for the Somerset Air Quality Strategy has now ended. The Strategy will be brought to the October Executive with a recommendation that it be adopted.

Councillor Mel Mullins

Council Meeting – 7 October 2008

Report of Councillor Hazel Prior-Sankey – Housing Services

1. Tenants' Forum Annual General Meeting

- 1.1 I was pleased to be present at the Tenants' Forum Annual General Meeting (AGM) at Wellsprings on 9 September 2008. A minute's silence was held out of respect for the late Fred Viggers, a member of the Forum who had worked tirelessly to create a vibrant new Tenants' Association in Norton Fitzwarren despite his failing health. I understand that members of the new association will continue Fred's work in memory of him.
- 1.2 My congratulations go to Ken Marshall on his re-election as Chair of the Forum.
- 1.3 The AGM ended with a formal consultation on the proposal for a National Tenant Voice, which would represent social housing tenants at national level. The draft vision says that the National Tenant Voice "believes that tenants are first class citizens, and that renting a home should be a tenure of choice." I fully support any organisation which will promote respect for the wishes of social housing tenants.

2. Review of Council Housing Finance

- 2.1 A second formal consultation with tenants was held on 15 September 2008 to consider the Government's Review of Council Housing Finance. An interesting and informative meeting was well attended by tenants' representatives, and their views will be forwarded to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) shortly.
- 2.2 The DCLG describe the aim of the Review as being "to ensure we have a sustainable, long-term system for financing council housing", something which I think all Members will fully support. The Review is being led jointly by the DCLG and HM Treasury.
- 2.3 The Review will report to Ministers in Spring 2009 after which there will be a period of formal consultation. I have asked the Chief Housing Officer to make arrangements for tenants and Members to be fully involved in providing a full and considered response to the Government's proposals.

3. Housing Strategy Event

- 3.1 In partnership with the other Somerset Local Authorities we held a Housing Strategy day at Taunton Race Course on the 25 September 2008. A wide range of stakeholders gave their views on the main housing issues affecting residents of Somerset. The Somerset

Housing Strategy will be produced with individual district strategies and policies relating to homelessness, private sector renewal and other areas of housing provision.

- 3.2 This sub-region work aligns with Government policy and builds on the excellent partnership work that has taken place between the district councils in Somerset over many years.

4. Holyoake Street, Wellington – Proposed Development

- 4.1 A successful consultation was held on 24 September 2008 with the tenants of the flats and bungalows on the proposed redevelopment site. Tenants were informed of the options available and consulted on their chosen preferences. Information on the home loss and compensation package available was also provided.
- 4.2 Tenants are aware that a planning application will be made during November 2008, and a decision on the site is hoped for in February next year.

5. Choice-Based Lettings (CBL)

- 5.1 On 4 August 2008 over 20,000 re-registration letters and a Homefinder Somerset guide were posted to existing housing register applicants across Somerset, with around 5,000 of those in Taunton Deane.
- 5.2 A programme of training on the housing register IT module was undertaken with staff, support agencies and our partner Registered Social Landlords.
- 5.3 In the week beginning 8 September 2008, reminder letters were sent to those applicants who had not yet registered.
- 5.4 As at 23 September 2008, 8225 people had registered across Somerset, with 2162 of those in Taunton Deane. The CBL helpline is continuing to assist people with queries and will maintain this service when notification of banding is sent out in November 2008. The “go live” date, when people can start bidding for vacant properties, is 15 December 2008.

6. Progress at Norie House

- 6.1 Construction of the new Rough Sleeper Unit for Taunton Association for the Homeless is proceeding well. The foundations have been laid and the external walls are being built. It is anticipated that the unit and refurbished Norie House will open in early December 2008.

7. Fuel Poverty

- 7.1 On the 6 October 2008 the Somerset Fuel Poverty Partnership is

holding an event at the Somerset College of Art and Technology to publicise Fuel Poverty issues, the New Warm Streets Energy Efficiency Scheme and the refurbished Council house at Belmont Road, Taunton (which includes solar water heating and photovoltaic panels).

- 7.2 The renewable energy systems in the refurbished house have been funded by Scottish and Southern Energy, who are also providing a large number of low energy light bulbs for low income owner occupiers, the over 60's and Council tenants living in the Deane. Four low energy light bulbs will be handed out to eligible residents who either visit The Deane House or the Wellington Community Office from the 6 October 2008.

Councillor Hazel Prior-Sankey