

# Full Council Meeting – 9 April 2013

## Report of Councillor John Williams – Leader of the Council

### 1. EDF and Hinkley Point

- 1.1 It is extremely disappointing that such adverse comments are being made about this Council and lack of diligence in our approach to EDF. This is in respect of the many opportunities arising from the proposed development. These are coming from a minority of Members who, quite frankly, I would expect to know better.
- 1.2 This potential project was pursued by us as soon as it started to become reality. EDF concluded the deal to purchase Hinkley Point from Nuclear Energy in early January 2009 and on the 12 January 2009 a meeting was arranged for a presentation by EDF on their plans for Hinkley Point.
- 1.3 Although this was a Conservative Group meeting, because of the importance of the potential project, an invitation was extended to all political group Members and officers. The meeting covered the following points:-
- 1.4 The presentation covered six major topics:-
  - About EDF;
  - EDF and British Energy (recently merged);
  - Plans for Hinkley Point;
  - Potential benefits;
  - Response to public consultation;
  - What happens next; and
  - Questions and discussion.
- 1.5 From the foregoing it can be seen we could not have been much quicker off the mark. Our contact was Simon Dunsford, EDF Local Manager who was the EDF representative at consultations across the area.
- 1.6 Contact with Simon was maintained until he was transferred to another post and replaced by the present incumbent in the post, David Eccles.
- 1.7 By this time the Conservatives had taken over the administration of the Council and I, as Leader, together with the Chief Executive, actively pursued our contact with EDF.

- 1.8 From these early days it was made clear to us that EDF had no intention of increasing their office capacity beyond what they already had in Bridgwater. However, the prize for us would be to attract the major contractors as they would undoubtedly require considerable office and residential accommodation. We have taken every opportunity to press home the benefits of Taunton Deane by meetings and presentations of what Taunton has to offer.
- 1.9 Many meetings have taken place and some with our private sector partners to promote the benefits of Taunton Deane direct. Our Economic Development Officers and Project Taunton have also been closely involved in promoting Taunton Deane to EDF representatives and potential major sub-contractors and these contacts continue.
- 1.10 Only towards the end of last year it became known that EDF were looking to secure large offices part of which would service the Hinkley development but also be convenient to Gloucester, London and France.
- 1.11 We have pursued this rigorously but being realistic, geographically we do not provide a natural fit. As we understand it, no deal has yet been done and we are still lobbying hard on the basis that EDF should show commitment to Somerset for hosting the new power station.
- 1.12 I am sure most Members will see from the foregoing that we have been, and continue to be, actively involved in securing benefits for Taunton Deane from this major development should it go ahead.

## **2. South West Business Insider, Business Breakfast**

- 2.1 A very well attended business breakfast sponsored by a number of local businesses and Taunton Deane was held recently at the Cricket Club. There were over 100 in attendance to hear lively debate and searching questions to a panel of mainly private sector business people.
- 2.2 I am pleased to say what did come across was positive and a “can do” attitude to promote economic growth in Taunton, together with major investment across the Deane. Planning and improved infrastructure were highlighted as being an impediment on growth but it was also acknowledged that changes/investment for the better were being implemented.
- 2.3 The shortage of available freehold employment land suitable for investment by small businesses was also raised which is a well known problem to us. It is also a particularly difficult problem to resolve as most suitable land around Taunton has already been optioned to major developers or has access problems preventing it coming forward. We have submitted an offer on suitable land for employment purposes to

meet this need. Because of access problems the vendor has decided not to sell in the interim. We are trying to resolve this problem as we do recognise the need for such sites to come forward.

### **3. Ongoing Projects**

3.1 As an Administration, Members and Officers are being criticised for lack of ambition and lack of leadership. This I find extremely disappointing on behalf of my colleagues and officers who are committed to delivering success for Taunton Deane. I can only put it down to a lack of understanding of what is actually going on at present and list as follows some of the major projects ongoing at present:-

- Working with our partners and Somerset County Council to deliver Firepool of which the Northern Inner Distributor Road is key;
- Working with EDF and others to promote Taunton Deane as a place to live, work and enjoy;
- Working with the Local Enterprise Partnership to agree and secure opportunities to bid for funding from the various growth and regional funds available;
- Sale of the Taunton Youth and Community Centre site to deliver a substantial capital receipt;
- Major flood alleviation scheme to protect existing properties and allow new development;
- Delivering a solution for the Thales site to encourage employment use and a solution that maintains our income;
- Working with the new owners of the Orchard Centre to deliver new retail space and protect against loss to out of town retail shopping;
- Negotiating the purchase of Quantock House, Taunton;
- Possible relocation of the Deane DLO to free up a prime employment site for inward investment;
- Working with County on “growth points funding”;
- Working with County on new infrastructure to accommodate major development at Monkton Heathfield and Junction 25;
- Implementation of the Creechbarrow Road housing development both Council Housing and Knightstone development, total 87 dwellings and hopefully a community hub;
- Successfully using the 30 year Housing Business Plan to deliver funding for the 57 dwellings at Creechbarrow Road and a further 30 new dwellings around Taunton Deane;
- Over £7,000,000 investment in major repairs and extensions to our existing housing stock;
- Establishing and steering through an approved Infrastructure Delivery Plan;
- Delivering a major increase in housing development across Taunton Deane including affordable housing;
- Carrying out a review of our own office accommodation needs and what is best to take us forward that is affordable and fit for purpose;

- Preparation of a Business Plan for possible shared services or management with West Somerset District Council;
- Negotiations with bus station owners to relocate bus stops from Castle Way to the bus station and allow completion of Castle Green; and
- Review of our Corporate Business Plan and future priorities to meet the impending cuts in Revenue Support Grants and make us sustainable as an organisation in the long term.
- Safely implementing the changes required by the Welfare Reform agenda.
- Swimming Pools – progressing a solution.

3.2 These are in no order of priority and I will no doubt have missed some important issues. However, what I have tried to do is demonstrate that a huge amount is ongoing at any one time but this is only possible because of the team effort and commitment of a great team! This in no way belittles the very important tasks of ensuring the day to day services of the Council continue to be delivered in an efficient and courteous manner. We must truly thank our staff for the manner in which they carry out their duties despite the necessary savings that have to be made to meet budgetary requirements.

#### **4. Northern Inner Distributor Road (NIDR)**

- 4.1 This is a key component for the delivery of development on Firepool and at present it is awaiting Ministers final sign off of the funds already allocated. Initial preparatory work has been commenced with the clearance of bushes and trees but it does not look as though the date noted previously of 8 April 2013 for commencement will now be met.
- 4.2 We are liaising closely with Somerset County Council to try and resolve this and remain ready to lobby Ministers if the need arises but at present County are taking the lead on this. We are pressing for and hopeful a satisfactory conclusion will be reached soon.
- 4.3 The Local Enterprise Partnership Chairman is also taking a keen interest in this because of the major economic development potential the new road will release on the Firepool site.

#### **5. Orchard Centre**

- 5.1 Having seen preliminary plans for the extended Orchard Centre they are deliverable and with great potential. They should help us protect the town centre against the loss of valuable town centre retail to out of town locations.
- 5.2 The proposals as seen will deliver 105,000 sq ft of retail space in a number of units set around an attractive town square environment. It is presently with Agents to establish levels of interest for the proposed

developments and it is hoped to progress a planning application later this year.

## **6. The Brewhouse Theatre**

- 6.1 This will be before Members for debate and consideration as to a way forward but it is good to see interested parties come forward with expressions of interest in keeping this establishment going as a successful performing arts and exhibition centre. There are several potential expressions of interest – with different focuses – and we look forward to learning more.
- 6.2 The final decision on the future of the Brewhouse clearly rests with the appointed Administrator and the bid date closing is 12 April 2013. We must work closely with the Administrator or the chosen bidder to ensure the Brewhouse Theatre maintains its role as an important venue for delivery of the arts and culture to our community.

Councillor John Williams

# **Council Meeting - 9 April 2013**

## **Report of Councillor Mrs Vivienne Stock-Williams - Corporate Resources**

### **1. Customer Contact Centre**

#### **Telephony Refresh**

- 1.1 After lengthy procurement discussions, Customer Contact was able to announce that the contract for refreshing the Contact Centre's telephony technology was signed with Siemens on 28 February 2013, with an expected go-live date by the end of summer 2013.
- 1.2 The refresh project will deliver class leading technology to the Contact Centre and provide the infrastructure necessary for enhancements which will improve service delivery to our customers. The project will deliver the following products:-
  1. Siemens OpenScape Contact Centre V8.0 (including Web collaboration and Social Media modules);
  2. NICE IEX Workforce Management;
  3. ASC Voice/Screen Recording and Quality; AND
  4. Netcall voice recognition automation.
- 1.3 As with the current MacFarlane solution, Taunton Deane Revenues and Benefits Telephony Team will also run off the new solution and Customer Contact staff will be working with their team to assist them with the transition over the coming months.

#### **Service Delivery**

- 1.4 February saw delivery of service for Garden Waste Renewals and 11,000 renewal letters were sent out during the second week of the month. Calls and postal renewals are dealt with within the Contact Centre and a walk-in renewal service is provided by both Wellington Community Office and The Deane House Reception.
- 1.5 Council Tax billing was sent out on 12 March with 62,000 bills being delivered by Royal Mail over a week long period. Changes to Council Tax and Benefit arrangements originally had a significant impact on the service, but a new triage arrangement put in place within the service has meant that staff have been able to ensure that calls are directed to the correct team with as limited disruption to customers as possible.

#### **Statistical Information – February 2013:-**

- 1.6 During February 2013, a total of 1,593 enquiries were dealt with at The Deane House Main, Housing and Planning Receptions. 1,528 people visited Wellington Community Office – 962 to make enquiries including TIC and 566 to make a payment through the kiosk. Staff dealt with 1,521 letter and email enquiries during February, including Garden Waste renewals.

Service Line	Reporting Authority	KPI No	Performance Measure	Frequency of Reporting	2012/2013 Target	Feb-13	Mar-13
						<b>QUARTER 4</b>	
Customer Contact	TDBC	1	% of calls answered in 20 secs	Monthly	80%	85%	
Customer Contact	TDBC	2	% of calls resolved at first point of contact	Monthly	92%	97%	
Customer Contact	TDBC	3	% of external customers rating the Customer Contact service as Very Good/Good	Annually (monitored quarterly)	75%		
Customer Contact	TDBC	4	Abandoned call rate - less than 5%	Monthly	<5%	2.29%	

## 2. Corporate and Client Services

### Client Team

- 2.1 The Client Team have now completed the contract changes required to facilitate the return of the Revenues and Benefits Service in-house. The service will return on 1 April 2013. A staff integration plan will be implemented in April for all the staff in the service.

### Performance and Delivery

- 2.2 The majority of the key performance indicators (KPI's) and Service Development Plans (SDP's) have now been agreed with Southwest One for 2013/2014. We continue to monitor service delivery by the various Southwest One services, which are broadly on track.

### Retained ICT

- 2.3 The Retained ICT Lead is working with the Southwest One ICT service to progress the ICT Strategy.

### Procurement

- 2.4 The shortfall in delivered savings through the Procurement Transformation Project remains a significant concern and issue for the Authority. Consequently, we are closely managing the position. Detailed Procurement Transformation update reports are made to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee every 6 months (the most recent was presented on 24 January 2013).

### **Savings**

- 2.5 Savings are continuing to be delivered, with a further £100,000 having been delivered since July 2012, bringing the total savings delivered to date beyond the £1,500,000 mark. Current savings initiatives to look at potential savings in fleet, banking, domestic heating and waste removal, disposal and recycling (excluding those items within the scope of the Somerset Waste Partnership) are continuing.

### **Pool refurbishment**

- 2.6 The Procurement Service is actively involved in assisting with the pool refurbishment project.

### **Retained Finance and Corporate Insurance**

- 2.7 The Retained Finance Team continues to manage the finance functions not provided by Southwest One, provide support to the Section 151 Officer, assist the Client Team in monitoring the Finance Service element of the Southwest One contract and provide support for the retained Parking functions.

### **Procurement of New Contracts**

- 2.8 The new banking contract has now been signed and is effective from 1 April 2013. Work is ongoing in respect of the procurement of the new insurance contract. The Treasury Management Contract is due to be signed in the near future.

### **Year End**

- 2.9 The focus for the last month has been on preparation for Finance year-end.

### **Retained HR**

- 2.10 The Retained HR Manager continues to provide strategic HR support to the Authority, manages the HR functions not provided by Southwest One and assists the Client Team in monitoring the HR aspects of the Southwest One contract.

### **Current priorities**



#### 2.11 Current priorities include:-

- Managing the HR aspects of the forthcoming return of the Revenues and Benefits service in relation to secondees and any staff who will TUPE transfer to the Council;
- Assisting in the provision of cover for the vacant Health and Safety role and the recruitment of a new Health and Safety Officer;
- Monitoring sickness levels throughout the Authority; and
- Ensuring the implementation of the new lease and car allowance policies

#### **SAP Re-Launch and Patching**

2.12 The key elements of the system have been launched and are working.

#### **PREDS Module**

2.13 The performance review (PREDS) element of the system is scheduled for launch in April 2013 and training has been arranged for the Business Support Teams.

#### **Residual Modules**

2.14 This leaves the e-recruitment, sickness and overtime modules to be launched.

2.15 The Client Team is shortly going to review an upgrade version of the e-recruitment module. The sickness module is provisionally scheduled for launch in July 2013.

#### **Corporate Projects**

2.16 **ICT Infrastructure Upgrade** - The initial stage of the infrastructure upgrade has commenced, which has involved the upgrading of network switches in The Deane House. New servers have been delivered and installed. The new servers are now being used and all services will be deployed during 2013/2014. The e-mail migration project is now complete.

2.17 **Welfare Benefits** - The new local Council Tax Reduction (CTR) scheme changes have been implemented and bills have been issued.

### **3. Corporate Performance**

#### **Corporate Performance**

- 3.1 The Quarter 3 Corporate Performance report was considered by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 21 February 2013, and by the Executive Committee on 13 March 2013.

### **Out-turn Performance**

- 3.2 The Quarter 4 Out-turn Performance report will be prepared during April and reviewed by CMT on 8 May 2013.

### **Performance Scorecards**

- 3.3 Now that the new Corporate Business Plan has been approved, CMT will commence a review of the Corporate Performance Scorecard and recommend new measures / updated targets for implementation in 2013/2014. Members will also be invited to help develop a refreshed scorecard and suite of performance indicators.

### **Service Planning**

- 3.4 Service Planning 2013/2014 – Theme Managers and Lead Officers have commenced the annual review and refresh of all Service Plans. This will be a relatively 'light-touch' review until further work has been completed with Members and CMT on the agreement of a costed profile and prioritisation of all Council services (ref LGA facilitated Member workshop to be held on 24 April 2013). 2013/2014 Service Plans will be discussed with Portfolio Holders and submitted for approval during March/April 2013.

### **Monitoring Audit Recommendations**

- 3.5 The Performance Lead has recently undertaken a review of all audit recommendations (both external and internal audits). Managers have provided an update on the status of all current audit recommendations.
- 3.6 As at 8 March 2013, there were a total of 113 'open' recommendations and 72 actions from the original list are now 'closed'. Monitoring of the status of all 'open' actions will occur on a quarterly basis and be reported to the Corporate Governance Officers Group. The Corporate Governance Action Plan will next be reported to the Corporate Governance Committee on 20 May 2013.

### **Risk Management**

- 3.7 The Corporate Risk Register was reviewed by the Corporate Governance Committee on 11 March 2013, together with progress of the Council's Risk Management Action Plan.
- 3.8 CMT will conduct a further review of the Corporate Risk Register as part of the Quarter 4 Performance Review (8 May 2013), particularly in light of the decision to progress the business case to look at joint working with West Somerset Council.

## **Corporate Change Programme**

3.9 The Council's Corporate Change Programme is overseen by the Strategy and Performance team. Project Managers for all major corporate projects report monthly to the 'Programme Management Group' (PMG). The major corporate projects currently within the scope of this group are:-

- Corporate Business Plan (Simon Lewis / Dan Webb)
- Community Infrastructure Levy (Tim Burton)
- DLO depot relocation business case (Sue Tomlinson)
- Welfare and Finance Reform (Paul Harding)
- Flood Alleviation Solutions (Mark Green)
- Taunton Town Centre (Ian Franklin)
- New Swimming Pool (Sue Tomlinson / Alison North)

## **New Projects**

3.10 New projects to be added to the PMG 'programme' are:-

- West Somerset joint-working Business Case;
- Accommodation and Customer Access;
- Asset Strategy; and
- Phase 1 Housebuilding/Creechbarrow Road.

## **Overview**

3.11 An overview of the entire programme will be provided for Members as part of the Quarter 4 / Out-turn Performance Monitoring report.

## **4. Legal and Democratic Services**

### **Legal Services**

4.1 A replacement for Judith Jackson has now been successfully recruited. Roy Pinney is the current Principal Solicitor at Mendip District Council and comes to Taunton Deane highly recommended. It is anticipated that Roy will start on 1 July 2013 and that there will be a hand-over period with Judith.

4.2 The contract for the on-line legal library has now been signed. The procurement of a single contract for the four individual authorities has resulted in a saving of £68,000. If Mendip decide to join the consortium next year, that will increase the saving further.

4.3 Unfortunately, there is continuing delay to the implementation of the CASE management system. We are still waiting for Civica to come back to us to confirm that they have everything set up for the hosting arrangements.

Civica are being pushed on this, as we are keen to get this system up and running.

### **Corporate Support Unit**

- 4.4 Tracey Meadows is at present on sick leave and is recovering well from a successful knee operation. During her absence, Tracey's work is currently being covered by the other members of the team.

### **Land Charges**

- 4.5 A report is currently being prepared by Tonya Meers, in which it is recommended to CMT that Land Charges should move to Building Control. Figures have recently been received from Finance, together with some deadlines from IT, relating to the PALC (Public Access Land Charges) system. The Monitoring Officer is, therefore, working towards a date of 1 September 2013 for a transfer of the function.

### **Judicial Review**

- 4.6 The Judicial Review instigated by Mike Davis regarding the Halse Farm development has been withdrawn.

### **Complaint to Auditor**

- 4.7 In addition, the licensing complaint submitted by Mike Davis is currently being assessed by the Auditor and the outcome is awaited.

### **M5 Investigation**

- 4.8 The prosecution case against Geoff Counsell has been listed for a five week trial, commencing the week of 11 November 2013. The Crown Prosecution Service is carrying out a considerable amount of the work, but we are maintaining an overview of the investigation.

### **Business Case for the Pool Project**

- 4.9 A dedicated team is working on the complex legal issues involved in the preparation of the business case for the proposed pool project at Blackbrook.

### **Elections**

- 4.10 The Elections Team is currently preparing for the Somerset County Council Elections which are due to be held on Thursday, 2 May 2013.

### **Freedom of Information Requests**

- 4.11 Over the last few years we have monitored the numbers of FOI requests that have come in and the results are set out below:-

4.12 Total requests by calendar year (Jan- Dec):-

2009 = 269  
2010 = 326  
2011 = 432  
2012 = 520  
2013 = 136 (so far)

4.13 Clearly, this results in a huge cost to the Council in officer time taken to respond to these requests. This will need to be monitored carefully in times of dwindling resources.

## **5. Revenues and Benefits**

### **Welfare Reform**

- 5.1 Revenues and Benefits have experienced unprecedented demands on the service this year. In planning for the major Welfare Reforms, in early February 2013 information was sent out to all customers directly affected. This information, in the form of fact sheets, explained the new localised Council Tax Support scheme which will replace Council Tax Benefit.
- 5.2 More information was also sent to everyone who would potentially lose benefit, as a result of changes in Housing Benefit for those in social housing, because they were considered to have a “spare” bedroom.
- 5.3 These fact sheets and other information on Welfare Reform are also now available through the TDBC website. This supplemented information we made available to customers following the announcements about the reforms. It was thus intended that by the time new benefit notifications and Council Tax bills hit the mats for 2013/2014, our customers would not receive news they had not been expecting.

### **Reaction**

- 5.4 Unfortunately, our Communications Plan has not prevented record numbers of worried people contacting the service since 11 March 2013. This has been exacerbated by last minute announcements on changes by the Government.

### **Housing Benefit**

- 5.5 As Members will be aware, the Welfare Reform Act meant that, from April 2013, working-age social tenants would have their Housing Benefit reduced if they live in housing considered to be too large for their needs. The policy is highly controversial and has been labelled the “bedroom tax”.

### **Legal Challenge**

- 5.6 Restrictions on entitlement to Housing Benefit based on the size of the accommodation have applied to claimants living in privately rented housing since 1989.
- 5.7 A legal challenge was brought against the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) by families who had disability needs living in privately rented accommodation. In May 2012 the Court of Appeal found unanimously, declaring the rules applied to these families were unlawful and discriminatory.
- 5.8 However, the DWP immediately lodged an appeal and advised Local Authorities to withhold any extra benefit that could have resulted from this judgement until the outcome of their appeal. On 4 March 2013, it was reported the Government faced another legal challenge, expected to go ahead in May 2013, brought by 10 disabled people and their families. This challenge is against the under-occupation measure to be applied for social sector tenants of working age.

### **Current Position**

- 5.9 On 12 March 2013, the DWP withdrew their appeal against the ruling of May 2012. However, we understand the DWP still intend to defend the "10 families" case. Guidance has now been received stating that we should no longer restrict Housing Benefit for "severely" disabled children when we are satisfied they cannot share a bedroom, but revised regulations have not yet been received.
- 5.10 This announcement, together with further concessions to be allowed for people with foster care responsibilities and parents of adult children serving in the Armed Forces, came after we had issued our annual benefit notifications. Consequently, the information sent out is no longer correct. We will now have to undertake remedial action to identify those people who could possibly benefit from these changes. A briefing note to all Members on this issue will be circulated soon.

### **Council Tax and Business Rate Collection**

- 5.11 On a more positive note, the targets for in-year Council Tax and Business Rate collection have already been exceeded. At the time of writing, they are 97.86% and 98.82% respectively. This is very good news for the Council in a time of continuing financial pressure.

### **Return of Service**

- 5.12 Finally, the Revenues and Benefits Service will be returning to Taunton Deane from Southwest One on 1 April 2013. I will be joining Penny James on a tour of the service on 2 April 2013 to welcome staff back.

### **Council Accommodation and Customer Access Project**

- 5.13 The Executive considered the report on The Deane House Accommodation Project in September 2012. One recommendation was that officers were asked to look comprehensively at the Council's future accommodation needs in the light of priorities identified in the Corporate Business Plan. A report will be going to the Community Scrutiny Committee on 2 April 2013, prior to being considered by the Executive and Full Council.

### **Customer Access**

- 5.14 Any review of accommodation needs to take into account access to services. The latest customer access strategy was approved in 2005 as part of the Southwest One project. This now needs revisiting and updating in the light of both social and technological changes and the Council's changing role.

### **Alignment with West Somerset Project**

- 5.15 As Members are aware, the West Somerset Project is progressing alongside this project. The Council Accommodation and Customer Access Project will consider a recommended strategy for Taunton Deane Borough Council, but which can be scaled to accommodate a shared approach should that be the final outcome.

Councillor Vivienne Stock-Williams

# **Council Meeting – 9 April 2013**

## **Report of Councillor Mark Edwards - Planning, Transportation and Communications**

### **1. Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan**

- 1.1 Officers have now finished consulting on the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan. The events themselves were extremely well attended with around 1,000 people attending the 11 events.
- 1.2 Whilst we have not yet had the opportunity to consider or read through all of the comments in detail, it would appear that we have in the order of 600 or so comments which will be published on the website in due course.
- 1.3 We will now need to reflect on the responses we have received from the communities and key stakeholders before developing a 'Preferred Options' plan which we will take out for further consultation in the Autumn.

### **2. Community Infrastructure Levy**

- 2.1 The response period for comments on the Council's draft CIL Charging Schedule has now closed. We have received responses from twenty five individuals and organisations which will now go on to the Examination.
- 2.2 Many of the issues raised are common to other CIL examinations in the country in so far as they relate to matters of viability and assumptions underpinning the viability assessment.
- 2.3 Officers will now be working towards summarising these comments and submitting the Charging Schedule to the Planning Inspectorate during April.
- 2.4 The CIL Examination is likely to be heard in June/July. The Council intends to adopt CIL in the Autumn.
- 2.5 Beyond the technical work required, officers in various parts of the Council and beyond are undertaking vital work to establish a mechanism for identifying funding priorities and the systems which need to be in-place for CIL implementation.



### **3. Neighbourhood Planning**

#### **TDBC Neighbourhood Plan Groups**

- 3.1 Plans are progressing in the three designated Neighbourhood Plan Areas (Trull, Wellington and Wiveliscombe). These three groups have been accumulating information on their communities (qualitative and quantitative) which is helping them identify likely Policy Direction.
- 3.2 Taunton Deane has received an application from Bishops Lydeard and Cothelstone Parish Council to undertake a Neighborhood Plan. The application is undergoing six weeks statutory consultation before the Council rules on the appropriateness of the designation.

#### **Funding**

- 3.3 The Government have announced financial support for Local Authorities and Neighbourhood Plan Groups for the next two years. Local Authorities are able to claim financial assistance, up to £30,000 per Neighbourhood Plan Group, towards their costs of administering and supporting Neighbourhood Plans. These payments, made in three stages and in arrears, are welcome but may not cover the full costs incurred by the Council as there is a cap on the funds available and number of claims which can be made.
- 3.4 On 15 March 2013, the Government announced a new £9,500,000 two-year programme to help Neighbourhood Plan Groups develop their Neighbourhood Plans. Details of the fund will be made available shortly but early indications are that the Neighbourhood Plan Groups will bid direct to the Department for Communities and Local Government. A number of organisations will be delivering the support, including Planning Aid who has been working recently with the Taunton Deane Neighbourhood Plan Groups.

#### **Taunton Deane working with Planning Aid**

- 3.5 Planning Aid has run two excellent workshops for the Neighbourhood Plan Groups in Taunton Deane. The first in October was about Plan Preparation and looked at project planning, community engagement (what, who and how), evidence base (information needed to underpin the Plan and building an evidence base), and identifying sites (what else you need to consider).
- 3.6 The second event in mid March focused on the practicalities of Policy Writing; best practice, drafting a policy, assessment of policy and conditions statements. Attendees were very positive about the events, finding them very helpful. Along with Taunton Deane, the Neighbourhood Plan Groups wrote letters of support for Planning Aids bid for future funding.

## **Neighbourhood Planning and Planning Policy**

- 3.7 As the Council's Site Allocation and Development Management Plan (SADMP) progresses and adopts site allocations, revises settlement boundaries and development management policies, the ability of Neighbourhood Plans to influence that process diminishes. However, Neighbourhood Plans can still allocate land in addition to that in the SADMP and provide policy guidance along with more detailed information such as Design Codes and community priorities for CIL.

## **4. Planning Enforcement**

- 4.1 The Enforcement Team won a recent appeal regarding the construction of a Carnival Float at Crossways Farm, Bickenhall.
- 4.2 The Inspector considered that the Council was correct to enforce so as to remove the harm to the residential amenity of the adjoining neighbours, but to allow the float to be moved to a different location where the construction could continue without any undue disturbance.

## **5. Heritage**

- 5.1 Four men have now been sentenced for the fire at Sandhill Park. We now have an amended scheme for the enabling development and a new Listed Building application for the conversion of the house and outbuildings.

## **6. Communications**

A number of high profile issues kept the press office extremely busy in February and March.

- 6.1 The closure of The Brewhouse Theatre prompted a number of interview requests and media statements. Parking issues at Castle Green were also in the news, along with the preparation of a business case on joint working with West Somerset Council.
- 6.2 Preparations for the homecoming parade for 40 Commando Royal Marines is well under way and a large media presence is expected for the event in mid-May. The first press release on the parade has been issued and will be followed by more detailed information.
- 6.3 Taunton Deane's annual Council Tax booklet is going online in the coming year, in line with the other Somerset districts. Information on Council Tax and the new Council Tax Support scheme in Taunton Deane is also being provided in Somerset County Council's publication, "Your Somerset" for the first time. It is due to be distributed to households this month.

6.4 Communications “champions” are coming forward from a number of services to improve both internal and external communication. Thank you to all who have volunteered.

Councillor Mark Edwards

# Council Meeting - 9 April 2013

## Report of Councillor Jane Warmington - Community Leadership

### 1. April 2013

- 1.1 This April many of the changes the Coalition Government has been planning over the last two years take effect. A number of these have an impact on local authorities and the communities we serve.
- 1.2 The NHS has been reorganised. NHS England holds the budget for specialist services now, with over 200 GP Clinical Commissioning Groups replacing the Primary Care Trusts. Public Health becomes the responsibility of the Local Authorities with the formation of a Health and Wellbeing Board across each county.
- 1.3 Legal Aid is restricted and likely to be available to only a quarter of those who have used the service before.
- 1.4 The new Police Commissioners have published their first Police and Crime Plans.
- 1.5 Other changes include the Self Financing of our social housing, where we bought ourselves out of the previous arrangement with the Government. This necessitated the development of a robust 30 year Business Plan enabling the setting up of our Social Housing Fund to build some new council houses.
- 1.6 Changes to Non Domestic Rates mean we are able to keep more of our own Business Rates but take on much greater risks of loss through business failure. We cannot set them which is still controlled centrally. The new Business Support Scheme was developed in house to provide local incentives for businesses to set up and grow and has already contributed to securing inward investment from a major company.
- 1.7 Welfare Reform starts in April with Universal Credit rolling out from October over four years. It aims to be a simpler, fairer system which makes work pay. Pensioners are fully protected with reforms affecting those of working age. However its implementation will not be easy despite continuing efforts to prepare for and mitigate its impact here across the Borough.
- 1.8 Some elements begin immediately: benefits are now capped; under occupancy (spare rooms) of a (council) property may result in reduced benefits; Council Tax Support now decided locally may be less; the discretionary Social Fund (crisis loans) is now local; Personal Independent Payment replaces the Disability Living Allowance with all recipients being (regionally) reassessed. They may appeal but it seems likely that many deserving will still lose out.
- 1.9 Universal Credit is digital by default (though details can be taken over the telephone) and should be more responsive. Payments are monthly (cause for concern as lower incomes are harder to budget). Work allowances have increased as has support for childcare. It has to be implemented as not to would be

unaffordable for the remaining taxpayers. We need to try and make it work, supporting those through the process and campaign where we see any serious injustices.

## **2. Police and Crime Plan**

- 2.1 Sue Mountstevens has launched her first Police and Crime Plan setting out her vision for policing and community safety across Avon and Somerset for the next four years.
- 2.2 The Plan covers the Commissioner's four priority areas of tackling anti-social behaviour, burglary, violence against women and children and putting victims at the heart of the criminal justice system.
- 2.3 The Plan also focuses on key issues that were raised by the public during consultation in January and February, such as road safety and visibility of Police Officers.
- 2.4 The Commissioner has also introduced six extra local Police and Crime Plans to reflect and respond to local needs across the policing districts of the Constabulary. Taunton Deane falls under Somerset West.

## **3. Shelter Update**

- 3.1 Shelter Somerset closed at the end of March. They have 600 clients, 377 of whom live in Taunton Deane. Last year the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) referred 140 cases to Shelter.
- 3.2 Taunton Deane expects the need to increase due to Welfare Reform and the current economic climate. This will affect the CAB and Housing Options Team who were asked what would be of most help.
- 3.3 Full Council was therefore asked to support the additional New Burdens Funding of £40,000 (agreed) to ease benefits changes. Housing (HRA) are also funding an additional £15,000 to provide an enhanced Money Matters service. An addendum to the CAB Service Level Agreement is being drawn up to ensure that these funds also help mitigate the loss of Shelter advice.
- 3.4 Shelter will continue to provide a website and free phone line.
- 3.5 Some of the work undertaken by the SW Private Sector Housing Partnership will help, especially that bringing empty homes back into use with nomination rights, as should the ability to bid into the EDF funding made available for Taunton Deane from the proposed development of Hinkley C.

## **4. Health and Wellbeing**

- 4.1 An Audit of South Somerset District Council services is going to the Leads meeting asking them to review and adapt this for Taunton Deane. The aim is to produce an audit of what the Council does and what the TDP Partnership (TDP) does against the three Health and Wellbeing (HW) objectives.

- 4.2 The audit will lead to a gap analysis and proposals to the TDP to use the fund they hold from HW through Somerset County Council (SCC) for this.
- 4.3 Health and Wellbeing is being introduced to the impact assessment which accompanies committee papers and is expected to be particularly relevant to key services such as major planning applications, changes to leisure and environmental health services.
- 4.4 Members will be updated and asked to comment in a report coming to the Community Scrutiny Committee in July.
- 4.5 The new pilot **drop-in GP surgery** at the Acorns in Halcon (open on Tuesdays from 11am until 1.30pm) is not getting much use (after being asked for). Ward Councillors in particular, please encourage residents to use it so that it stays. It is so much closer than both health centres. A banner is being put up on Tuesdays to remind everyone.

## 5. Safeguarding

- 5.1 Following the internal report and action plan on safeguarding (lead Vikki Hearn) training materials are being developed and will be rolled out across the Council to include both officers and Members. This will be happening over the next couple of months.

## 6. Community Development (Priority Areas)

- 6.1 Congratulations to Martha Prangnell who married James at the end of March. She is now Martha Dudman and rejoins the Community Development Team in May.
- 6.2 **Halcon Brunch Club** is running again across the Easter holidays, Monday and Friday late mornings.
- 6.3 The **Graffiti Art Project** has two more sessions over Easter and one at Whitsuntide working on two local teen shelters and some panels to brighten up some park fencing.
- 6.4 **Pride in Priorswood (PiP)** has two events on Tuesdays over the Easter holidays.
- 6.5 **Happy Halcon** has two activity days on Thursdays over the holidays.
- 6.6 **18-25ers** group of young people who are taking action for themselves to lobby for activities and facilities for their specific age group now have a DVD of the film produced with Fixers. The launch at All Saints Church filled the hall. Councillor Williams has been involved and has suggested possible premises which might be suitable on a trial basis.
- 6.7 The two successful **football tournaments** held last year for youngsters are taking place again this year. The first Community Fun Day at Hamilton Gault on Saturday 27 April and the second at Taunton Academy South Site in August.

- 6.8 This years schedule is being drawn up for the **Community Clean Up Days**.
- 6.8 Somerset College runs a **National Citizenship** course which has a voluntary service element. Working with Martha Dudman, this year they are improving more open spaces and enhancing Blenheim Park.
- 6.8 **Anti Dog Fouling Campaign** has started with local schools being invited to submit campaign posters by the 28 March. The response has been good and the winning entry will be used to draw attention to the new bins being provided across Taunton East and North Taunton to try and reduce the problem. \*
- 6.6 There are many other ongoing activities which Taunton Deane supports or has supported to get started across the district as well as those organised by the friends groups, churches, charities, the Police and the voluntary sector.

## 7. Partnership Working

- 7.1 An opportunity has arisen for closer partnership working with the Police in Halcon where they have set up a dedicated Neighbourhood Policing Team. Good liaison in particular with our Community Development Team, Estates (Housing) Officers, and Anti-Social Behaviour Officers has helped deliver significant improvements within the community. The plan is to build on this now with a shared base or hub to work from in the future.
- 7.2 This links well with the Troubled Families Project which also intends to improve lives with more in-depth smarter working across agencies.

## 8. Youth Forums

- 8.1 Feedback from the recently held SCC local choices events and from local youth providers in Somerset highlighted the need for a youth forum in each of the five districts in Somerset.
- 8.2 In response, SCC Youth and Community Service (lead Gail McCarthy) is setting these up. Forums are already operating in South Somerset and Mendip. Over the coming few months they will be established in Taunton Deane (where we have a youth liaison group already), Sedgemoor and West Somerset.
- 8.3 The forums will provide space for area based meetings to involve providers, VCS groups, town and parish councils. The forums will be co-ordinated, administered and funded by SCC.
- 8.4 The forum aims to provide an opportunity for representatives from communities to broaden their networks and meet other organisations to share ideas, good practice, funding advice and other functions to be agreed with forum members as they evolve.
- 8.5 The membership of the forum is voluntary and is not exclusive however those with strategic roles and with responsibility for managing youth provision within their area

will be encouraged to attend. Terms of reference and agreement of fixed agenda items will be agreed at the first meeting in each district.

- 8.6 Taunton Deane has a youth liaison group although it has not met for over a year. It seemed obvious that this should be the basis for a youth forum in line with the other districts and serviced by SCC. Those on the YLG (and others) are being invited to meet up in June with invitations being sent out by the end of April from Gail McCarthy.

## **9. Rural Matters**

- 9.1 The Spatial Planning Working Group (a sub group of the TDP set up under the Local Development Framework) has been renamed the **Community Planning Working Group** (CPWG). The Group has recently agreed to take on the rural priority areas.
- 9.2 The Group thought that with Welfare Reform, it should concentrate on access to services, particularly the internet and see what community facilities there were across the parishes which enabled internet access. For example Churchstanton has access in its Post Office. Also what advice and support was available (village agents in some areas). Gaps could be identified, good ideas shared and applications for funding prompted.

## **10. Family Focus (Troubled Families)**

- 10.1. Louise Casey, who holds the Government's portfolio on Troubled Families has recently visited Somerset and left feeling confident that the Districts were now delivering.
- 10.2 In excess of 75% of families for 2012/13 have now been signed up in Taunton Deane and across the County, guaranteeing payment to the County for the second year of the (three year) project.
- 10.3 The post of Family Focus Project Manager (fixed term to 31/3/15) has just been advertised (internally).
- 10.4 Recruitment of Family Intervention Workers into the SCC Early Intervention Hub has been agreed and should begin very soon.
- 10.5 SCC are also consulting on an Early Intervention Strategy and are inviting input.
- 10.6 For a regular update visit [www.tauntondeane.gov.uk/familyfocus](http://www.tauntondeane.gov.uk/familyfocus)

Councillor Jane Warmington



# Council Meeting - 9 April 2013

## Report of Councillor Cavill - Economic Development, Asset Management, Arts and Tourism

### 1. Rigid Containers Limited

- 1.1 Purchase and conversion of the former Co-operative Distribution Depot at Chelston in Wellington by the cardboard box manufacturer and distributor, Rigid Containers is proceeding smoothly. The company has already recruited its senior posts in Wellington and aims to have completed the recruitment prior to an initial opening of the plant in August 2013.
- 1.2 The Council actively worked with the company to secure its investment in Chelston, as follows:-
- Planning permission for the change of use of the property, to include B2 General Industrial uses, was turned around by the Council in under 6 weeks;
  - The Council has offered the company £1,000/per job from its Investment Fund, up to 100 full time equivalents and has also worked with the company to assist it in obtaining relief on the Business Rates whilst the property has been empty; and
  - The company is talking to officers about holding a 'Jobs Fair' at the Wellington Job Club later this Spring to encourage local people to apply for the 140 jobs that will be needed when the site is fully developed.

### 2. Summary of Small Business Grants awarded this year

#### New Businesses

- 2.1 The following 15 new businesses in Taunton Deane were supported during the 2012/13 financial year:-

Georgie Fox, Brendan Hill	£1,000
Mat Dusting, M24	£1,000
Sebastian Tipley, webcards	£1,000
Opus consulting	£1,000
Creative Innovation Centre	£1,000
Wivey Business group-	£865
Pauline Homeshaw	£2,000
Keith Bellringer	£1,000
Sue Mitchinson	£598
10 Community Youth	£800
Paula Cooke	£1,000

Wandering Wivey	£1,250
George Akroyd- Moorish	£500
Laura Pinkney- isomerset	£500
Emma Hawkes	£500

## 2.2 Rural Post Offices and Shops

The following rural Post Offices and Village Shops were also supported during the 2012/13 financial year:-

Stoke St Gregory Stores	£2,000
York Inn, Churchinford	£155
Bishops Hull Post Office and Stores	£2,000
Churchinford Shop	£2,000
Blagdon Hill Pub and Post Office	£2,000
Oake Shop	£2,000

## 3. Taunton Town Centre Events Programme

### Somerfest

- 3.1 The Council and its partners in the Taunton Events Group are finalising plans for the Somerfest event on Saturday, 15 June 2013. This one day event will be held in the town's new public open spaces – Somerset Square, Goodlands Gardens and Castle Green – and will also involve the closure of North Street throughout the day.
- 3.2 The community event will be procession based with musical performances and workshops for the public taking place on Somerset Square and Castle Green between 10 am and 4 pm. Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership will be organising taster sports events on Goodlands Gardens, and will be holding races on North Street. Other water based races and events will be delivered by community and sports groups on the River.
- 3.3 The Council will be underwriting the event up to the sum of £20,000. Other income, including business sponsorship is also being sought.

### Arts Council G4A bid

- 3.4 The Council is working with the Town Centre Company, SuperAct and Fuse to submit a bid to the Arts Council in April for funding to enhance a programme of cultural events in Taunton this coming Summer, thereby encouraging increased footfall and spend in the town centre.
- 3.5 If successful, the funding would enhance events that are already in the calendar, such as Somerfest and the Flower Show, through coordinated and enhanced marketing. It would also provide funding towards new, smaller street events to be held on weekends where the calendar is currently empty. The funding would also enhance the profile and visibility within the town

centre of events that are slightly outside, such as Somerset versus Australia cricket in June.

### **Christmas Celebrations**

3.6 Working with the Make Taunton Sparkle Team again, the Town Centre Company is already planning activities for this year's town centre Christmas celebrations. A report will be considered by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on the 2012 and 2013 events later this month.

3.7 The celebrations will comprise four elements, notably:-

- Festive Lights throughout the town centre;
- Light Switch on event planned for Sunday, 17 November 2013;
- Christmas Fair; and
- Marketing and Publicity.

3.8 Kelly Durdan and the Town Centre Company will again be working together with Kelly leading the fund raising and PR for the event. Kelly has various fund raising activities planned between now and November. Graham Love will be the Event Manager, working with Kelly and others to put on a safe, fun programme in November and December.

## **4. Taunton Means Business (T-M-B)**

4.1 T-M-B was launched in November, as Taunton Deane's new inward investment web site. In January a media/PR company was appointed – 'A Head for PR' – who are carrying out a three month programme to raise awareness of the site and the support the Council is able to offer investors. Activities delivered to date include:-

- A three minute video has been produced featuring five successful and expanding local businesses. The video will be shown for one month from mid April by Volo TV, which is the in-house video used by First Great Western, on all its trains travelling from London to the South West and South Wales.
- A Regional Business Breakfast, organised by SW Business Insider magazine. This successful event was held on 26 March 2013 at The County Cricket Ground and was attended by 150 local businesses and investors.
- Case studies of various local businesses, which will be featured on the T-M-B website. These include written case studies and video case studies of the five businesses that took part in the video.

4.2 On 1 April 2013, the Council rejoined Into Somerset, which will strengthen and be complementary to our own marketing work.

## **5. Taunton Town Centre Company new Company Structure**

- 5.1 Following a comprehensive review of its function and company structure during 2012 the Company has reorganised its structure with a view to encouraging more town centre businesses to have representation.
- 5.2 Since Christmas the Town Centre Manager has met with businesses to inform them of the Company's work and to encourage them to sign up as company members. Having set an initial target of 50 businesses the company already has 44 signed up, and is now looking to increase the target. Each member business pays £50 to become a member.
- 5.3 The first AGM of the new company will be held on the evening of Tuesday 9 April, 2013 at which a Company Board, comprising 10 members will be elected. Taunton Deane has been asked to nominate one additional member.
- 5.4 Meetings of the Town Centre Company will continue to be held to discuss the management of the town, hearing presentations from the Council's Economic Development Manager and the Regeneration Manager, the local Police, and other organisations. All member businesses are invited to attend those meetings. At a meeting in mid-March, 37 local businesses attended.
- 5.5 Following election of the new Company Board members the company will take a view on a future Business Improvement District (BID) proposal. Should it agree to proceed along that route a ballot could be planned for late Autumn 2013.

## **6. Hinkley Nuclear New Build**

- 6.1 Members will be aware that Planning Permission was granted by the Secretary of State for the new Hinkley C Power Station in March. EDF Energy has yet to take its Final Investment Decision on whether to proceed with the development.
- 6.2 Over the past two years the Council's Economic Development Team has engaged proactively with EDF Energy and the other Somerset Councils, to ensure that Taunton Deane benefits from the increased investment that the development will attract. That activity has proceeded on various fronts:-
  - **Hinkley Supply Chain.** EDF appointed the Somerset Chamber of Commerce to develop a Supply Chain Portal for local businesses that would be in a position to supply products and services to the power station. Over 1,250 businesses are now signed up to the Portal, including a high proportion from Taunton Deane. Taunton Deane attends the Hinkley Supply Chain Forum to keep abreast of supply issues, and has supported Somerset Chamber in delivering events and activities to encourage businesses to sign up to the Portal. In March 2012 the Council attended the EDF Nuclear Conference in London as part of Into Somerset, which showcased the County to potential

investors, and met potential first tier suppliers. Earlier this year the Council supported a 'Meet the Buyer' event by Kier Bam.

- **Attracting Investors.** The Council has actively sought to attract Hinkley suppliers to Taunton Deane, hosting visits and showing businesses around investment sites. The Council has been bidding to provide offices for EDF in Taunton.
- **Employment and Skills Brokerage.** In 2012 EDF appointed MACE to develop a mechanism for local residents to benefit from the many thousands of Employment and Skills opportunities that would be forthcoming from the power station. MACE has since set up the Somerset Employment and Skills Brokerage, including a Talent Pool on which people can sign up and register their interest in working at the plant. MACE is currently recruiting six Employment and Skills Managers to act as brokers between Hinkley Suppliers, local colleges and residents. The Council meets on a monthly basis with the Project Manager from MACE to ensure that opportunities for local residents are maximised. Officers introduced MACE to Somerset College in 2012 and the two parties have been developing opportunities for apprenticeships and bespoke training from Somerset College.

Councillor Norman Cavill

# Council Meeting – April 2013

## Report of Councillor Ken Hayward – Environmental Services

### 1. Climate Change / Carbon Management

#### Blackbrook Solar PV project

- 1.1 The report on this project presented to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 21 March highlighted that the revised timetable produced by the SWOne Project Team would see completion of the installation on 2 July 2013, which is two days after an anticipated cut in the Feed-in-Tariff rates.
- 1.2 This would result in a loss of income of £3,000 which would reduce the overall profit from the project from £100,000 to £97,000. Not a huge amount, but all agreed that every effort should be made to avoid missing this deadline.
- 1.3 The delay on the Taunton Pool Solar Panel Project last year was purely as a result of needing to wade through the correct procurement procedures. From the 27 companies registering an interest in that project, seven were selected to be the most suitable.
- 1.4 It seems sense that, as this new project follows on so closely from the last, we simply approach those seven companies on the basis that they would be the most suitable and the others still would not meet the criteria. Following consultation with Tonya Meers I have therefore approved the waiver of the Council's procurement regulations.
- 1.5 It is hoped that the seven companies will all be able to quickly turn around a proposal for installation, which we in turn will be able to quickly process. The nett effect from all of this should be that several days can be shaved off of the project timetable. I have asked officers to keep me 'in the loop' throughout.

#### Schneider Project Update

- 1.6 Schneider have now produced final reports for Blackbrook, Wellsprings and Wellington Sports Centre. The internal project group, consisting of Taunton Deane Officers together with officers from SWOne and Tone Leisure have scrutinised their findings and costings.
- 1.7 I have also gone through the reports and agree with the Group's conclusion, which, to put it simply is that the finance case as presented by Schneider, does not stack up. Under their proposals, with a bit of persistent 'drilling down', it became apparent that their costs would actually exceed the guaranteed savings.
- 1.8 Whilst we will not be proceeding with Schneider's energy saving package *per se*, it is acknowledged that their findings identified some good measures that we can progress independently. So this is what the team will be next looking at.

## **2. Environmental Health**

- 2.1 Congratulations to Scott Weetch on his appointment into the permanent position of Community Protection Lead. When he took on the role as “Acting Lead” 12 months ago after the departure of Charlotte Dale, he freely admitted it was going to be a personal challenge to him. However he immediately set about learning everything he needed to know about EH matters and more importantly, getting to know his new team. I knew back then that he was absolutely the right person for the job. In the intervening months he has quickly grown into the job, earning huge respect from everyone. His appointment is truly well-deserved.
- 2.2 I am pleased to confirm that Jo Bliss and Hannah Butcher have passed their probationary periods with the Council and are now substantive members of the team. Jo Toogood has undertaken Case Studies and an interview process to achieve Senior Environmental Health Officer.
- 2.3 I have agreed to fund from Reserves additional food inspections during 2013/2014. This will have the effect of catching up on some of the lower risk rated premises which have fallen behind as a result of less staff and additional resource placed to investigate the M5 incident.
- 2.4 The Auditors' investigation into taxi fees as requested by a local elector is nearing conclusion. This has been a very thorough process and we will await the Auditors' findings with interest. It is likely that there will also be significant interest across the Licensing community in the outcome of this challenge.
- 2.5 The Licensing Team continues to work with West Somerset Council. This work will have the effect of aligning Policies and Procedures to make it easier for the public to understand - if you ask a Licensing question in West Somerset or Taunton Deane, you will broadly receive the same answer. It is separate from the ongoing work with West Somerset and is a business as usual response to a welfare issue encountered by West Somerset.
- 2.6 Finally the Health and Safety prosecution brought before Magistrates in respect of an accident connected to a machinery sale at Walford Cross in 2011 has been adjourned until April.

## **3. Waste Management**

- 3.1 Somerset County Council have adopted the Waste Core Strategy.
- 3.2 Somerset Waste Board has resolved to note progress with implementing the Action Plan from the Business Plan for 2012-2017.
- 3.3 The Anaerobic Digester Plant at Walpole has generally progressed as intended but is running around 10 weeks behind the original schedule due to adverse weather throughout the construction period.
- 3.4 The Board successfully overturned a VAT ruling concerning VAT Partial Exemption, principally through the Chairman and individual partners lobbying

MPs and Senior Cabinet Ministers. This has saved South Somerset District Council around £100,000 per annum and avoided this potential cost for other partners and other waste partnerships.

- 3.5 The Board was not successful in securing funds from the Department for Communities and Local Government's (DCLG) Weekly Refuse Collections Fund. This limited progress against some of the Board's objectives. Most of the much criticised fund has been directed at Councils who collect waste weekly. At least one (Trafford Council ) has since advised DCLG that it will not take up its allocation of £6,400,000 as it will cost £11,600,000 to retain weekly collections over five years.
- 3.6 The SWB contacted DCLG about whether this money could be reallocated to unsuccessful but innovative bidders and was advised that "*Ministers are now considering how we can further support weekly collections, take forward the innovation being championed by the Weekly Collections Support Scheme, and help deliver greater efficiency and joint working across local government to protect and enhance frontline services. We are currently generating evidence to go into the next Spending Review in June and it is highly unlikely that Ministers will make firm decisions before this time*".
- 3.7 A Waste Analysis exercise was undertaken in November 2012 in response to rises in tonnages going to landfill. The analysis revealed that around half the uplift in 2012/2013 was due to increased green waste, linked to the extended growing season caused by the very high rainfall in the summer and autumn of 2012. The Analysis also revealed that there is still a high proportion of recyclable or digestible waste (i.e. food waste) in the residual stream, and several workstreams in the Business Plan 2013-2018 aim to direct efforts to try and recover more of this.

Councillor Ken Hayward



# **Council Meeting - 9 April 2013**

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

### **1. Parks**

- 1.1 Work has continued in the parks to repair damage caused by the continuing bad weather. Considering the battering they have received most are still looking very presentable in the main and I would like to thank all the parks team for their hard work.
- 1.2 I met with Shaun Creagan of Taunton in Bloom in Vivary Park last month and we discussed the Bloom Committee's wish to try some vegetable planting in the park. With the right weather we may be able to have a snack on our way round the park in the summer.

### **2. Community Leisure and Play**

- 2.1 We will shortly begin planning the improvements to Staplegrove play area as the S. 106 monies will soon become available to us. This will involve the parish council and using some of the great ideas that the local primary school came up with as part of a school project last year.

### **3. Tone Leisure (Taunton Deane) Limited Activities**

#### **Community, Sports and Health Development**

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

#### **Health Development**

- 3.2 New programmes are starting at Galmington Pre-school and Wellington Children's Centres in the new financial year, focusing on sports skills and physical activity with 2½-5 year olds. Sports skills have started at Galmington Pre-school on a fortnightly basis to encourage children to enjoy activity from an early age.
- 3.3 A Water Babies initiative is launching at Wellington Sports Centre through Loughborough University and the Amateur Swimming Association (ASA) focusing on weak adult swimmers and influencing their children to swim more.

## Older People

- 3.4 Men's golf is launching in Priorswood with some Market Segmentation funding. This will be run in partnership with England Golf.

## Flexercise

- 3.5 Tone currently has over 140 participants in Flexercise per month in various settings across Taunton Deane.

## Facility News

### 3.6 Wellington Sports Centre

- 3.6.1 Work has commenced on the upgrading of the Family Changing Rooms and will be completed with the centre operating normally. Staff and customers alike are looking forward to the work being completed. The work includes new lockers, changing cubicles, new floor, ceiling tiles, improved lighting and the entrance decorated. The full refit is expected to take about 5-6 weeks, with work commencing at the end of April.

- 3.6.2 Tone has received great feedback from Wellington Children's Centre who have hired out two lanes of the swimming pool. The Sports Centre staff will be coaching and teaching water confidence within a family fun environment. In partnership with Tone's Development Team, the Centre has secured funding for two further projects working with the Children's Centre, which started in March.

### 3.7 Wellsprings Leisure Centre

- 3.7.1 Two large commercial events are taking place in April - the return of Jimmy Carr and a new Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) and K1 Kickboxing event which will feature a lot of local talent and fighters from across the UK and Ireland. Current UK Mixed Martial Arts professionals, plus up-and-coming future stars of the sport, will be competing in this action packed night. The show boasts NSAC, Semi-Professional MMA fights; in addition spectators can relish full, no holds barred, professional fights as well as professional K1 bouts and an International Kickboxing Title Fight - not for the faint-hearted.

### 3.8 Vivary Adventure Centre and Vivary Golf Course

- 3.8.1 Delivering Tone's golf business remains challenging. The Golf Course has still not fully recovered from the flooding and even the smallest amount of rainfall causes the course to become waterlogged again. Tone are working with Taunton Deane to find solutions to the ongoing flooding concerns.

- 3.8.2 The Golf Academy starts at the beginning of April with Richard Coffin delivering all of the lessons and sessions to improve clients' golf skills and hopefully encourage more people to join Vivary Golf Course and Club.

3.8.3 Dan Brice (High Ropes Manager) has been out to schools to meet Heads and Teachers to encourage more school bookings and this is slowly having a positive effect. Several schools have now booked for full and half-days and two schools have signed up to bring between 15 and 24 young people per week for six week blocks as an after school club.

### 3.9 St. James Street Baths

3.9.1 During the February half-term St. James Street ran a number of short, intensive swimming courses and all of the lessons that took place had an overall occupancy of 82%.

3.9.2 Birthday party bookings at St. James Street Swimming Baths are going from strength to strength with at least one booking each weekend. The Water Walker balls have been a huge success and continue to be very popular.

Councillor Catherine Herbert.

# **Council Meeting – 9 April 2013**

## **Report of Councillor Mrs Jean Adkins – Housing Services**

### **1. Housing Enabling - Regeneration**

- 1.1 Following approval for the Creechbarrow Road, Taunton scheme at Full Council on 4 March 2013, three draft plans have been provided by the architects along with suggested elevational treatments for consultation with residents and stakeholders.
- 1.2 These will be displayed in the Members' Room on Wednesday, 10 April 2013 between 3.30 p.m. and 7 p.m.
- 1.3 A planning application will be submitted later this month.
- 1.4 Stephen Major has recently been appointed as Housing Development Project Lead with responsibility for Creechbarrow Road.

### **2. Affordable Housing Target**

- 2.1 A final figure is not yet available as information is still awaited from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) for Firstbuy. Last year this was not available until July.
- 2.2 The highways issue at Ruskin Close, Taunton mentioned in my last report has been resolved. However, the HCA would only allow six of these units as completions, which is very disappointing. The shortfall of 15 units which are physically complete will give us a good start to 2013/2014.
- 2.3 At the time of writing approximately 150 completions are anticipated from the pipeline of houses under construction.

### **3. Council House Building**

- 3.1 The four Phase One sites (three in Taunton and one at West Bagborough), which include a scheme for four Passiv Haus, are progressing towards planning applications being submitted next month (May).
- 3.2 Caroline White is the Housing Development Lead officer for these schemes. She has experience of Passiv Haus.

#### **4. Housing Services**

- 4.1 Tenders for the next Air Source Heat Pump contract will be opened this week.

#### **5. Estates Management – Benefit Changes**

- 5.1 The Tenants' Forum hosted the Tenant Information Day on 20 February 2013 at the Somerset County Cricket Ground. Advice was available from the Revenues and Benefits Team, Housing Options and organisations such as a Credit Union. Attendance was lower than hoped at 20, but those who came found it very helpful.
- 5.2 In association with Shelter, we held three workshop sessions at The Deane House on 7 March 2013 for tenants wishing to learn about budgeting and money management.

#### **6. Estates Management – Transfer Removal Grants**

- 6.1 These grants are available to assist tenants wishing to downsize, thus freeing up some of our larger stock.
- 6.2 The original budget set at the start of 2012 was £30,000. This was increased to £45,000 in October 2012 in response to the increased number of grants being taken up partly due to the introduction of Welfare Reform legislation.
- 6.3 The total number of grants awarded were 35 over the year with a spend of £42,500.
- 6.4 Properties that came available as a result of grant were as follows:-

Type of property	No	Type of property	No
6 bed house	1	2 bed house	5
5 bed house	2	3 bed bungalow	1
4 bed house	3	2 bed bungalow	5
3 bed house	18		

Councillor Mrs Jean Adkins

