

Full Council Meeting – 10 December 2013

Report of Councillor John Williams – Leader of the Council

1. Taunton Town Centre Rethink

- 1.1 I attended a special meeting of the Project Taunton Steering Group on 28 November 2013, to which all Members were invited, to hear the ideas emerging from the 'rethink' of plans for Taunton Town Centre.
- 1.2 The rethink has been refreshingly 'short and sharp', led by an independent consultancy team with a strong commercial perspective. It was clear from their presentation that much has been delivered, but that ten years on from the original 'Vision for Taunton' we need to be prepared to change our assumptions for the town centre, in light of current market realities.
- 1.3 Members offered valuable feedback to the consultants and it was encouraging to be part of a healthy debate on how we can make our County Town an even greater place. Feedback ranged from the need to create a better 'after work' and evening economy, making more use of the River Tone as the 'blue corridor' through the town, reviving plans for pedestrianising key areas, making the town centre friendlier for families and people of all ages and boosting the idea of town centre living. As the County Town we need to 'think big' – there was a definite appetite to have a 'city mindset' and culture, and perhaps city status itself. The general consensus of the meeting was that the 'market town' brand no longer captured the spirit of our future ambitions for Taunton.
- 1.4 Rethink proposals will be presented to the Taunton Economic Advisory Board on 9 December 2013, before coming to the Community Scrutiny Committee and Executive in January 2014. If the final report is accepted by the Executive, we will need to refocus efforts with all parties to deliver changes on an ambitious but realistic timetable.
- 1.5 There is little doubt in my mind that the rethink proposals will challenge the status quo in a number of ways. I believe this is necessary and that as a Council we need to 'grasp the nettle' offered by the rethink to ensure Taunton is a successful centre long into the future.

2. Shared Management and Services with West Somerset Council (WSC)

- 2.1 Following the important decision at Full Council 12 November 2013 to

proceed with this project, work is well in hand to implement staff changes and recruitment. The interview panels have now been appointed and recruitment to the new staffing structure will have commenced by the time of our meeting.

- 2.2 I do not underestimate the change this will bring for officers, Members and the way services will be delivered in future, but, it is a necessary change to ensure we remain a viable and sustainable Council now and into the future. The changes we are implementing will protect most front line services but allow us to continue delivering those most demanded by the community we serve.
- 2.3 I am pleased to say these changes will deliver a major saving of near £1,600,000 per year with the same saving every year after that. It will require investment in new ways of working and technology costing a one-off £2,200,000 but as can be seen the pay back is rapid so as an organisation we will benefit tremendously from this saving.
- 2.4 I can also assure Members that even though we have reached agreement with WSC to share one Management Team and services across the two Councils this in no way inhibits or prevents us seeking to widen this alliance across other authorities. We will be constantly seeking opportunities to widen the scope of service delivery or management where it has mutual benefit to all concerned. In the meantime, let us proceed apace to take advantage of the near £1,600,000 annual savings as the Business Case presently approved. Why wouldn't we do this? It has to be a "no brainer" that we take the substantial savings now whilst still looking for greater benefits in the future!

3. The Brewhouse Theatre and Arts Centre

- 3.1 Members will know that I view culture as a vital ingredient in Taunton's success both in economic and cultural terms. It is therefore particularly heartening to see the groundswell of community support behind Taunton Theatre Association's plans for the revival of The Brewhouse. I am very pleased that the Executive will be considering the proposals on 4 December 2013.
- 3.2 Taunton School's production of "Cats" at The Brewhouse has provided our community with a brief taste of what we have all been missing since the closure of the venue in February, and I am delighted we were able to accommodate the School's request for temporary use. This has also had the additional benefit of hastening the venue's readiness hopefully for permanent use in the near future.
- 3.3 Much has been said about the need for a large multi-use venue of up to 1,000 seats but we have to approach this with pragmatism and realism!

3.4 In broad terms:-

- To bring the Mecca building back into use in the order of £13,500,000 (as a cinema it was about 1,750 seats but there is no indication it will become available in the foreseeable future).
- New 1,000 seat facility in the order of £25,000,000.
- Extend the existing Brewhouse with new 650 seat auditorium in the order of £8-£9,000,000 (the present 352 seat auditorium will be retained)

3.5 Please bear in mind all of these budgets were prepared in 2008 or 2009 so are likely to be now on the low side.

3.6 Although I am as committed as anybody to improved and increased theatre and arts provision in Taunton I have to be pragmatic and acknowledge we just do not have the available funds for this type of development. However by bringing The Brewhouse back into permanent use (hopefully shortly) we can maintain the provision of performing arts and culture in Taunton. As the economy changes the Arts Council and others will, also hopefully, see that we are a worthy cause for investment to expand our provision through larger and better facilities. This unless a wealthy benefactor steps forward in the interim!

3.7 Finally, I would encourage all members to see Taunton Theatre Association's 'Christmas Gift to Taunton' - An outdoor 'promenade' performance of the magical fairytale 'Hansel and Gretel', starting at Castle Green and flowing into the Somerset Museum in the early evenings of 19, 20 and 21 December 2013.

4. Economic Growth Prospectus for Taunton

4.1 The emerging Growth Prospectus takes a wider geographic focus and sets the direction for Taunton's economic growth over the period to 2028 (the Core Strategy timetable). I am delighted we are working so closely with Somerset County Council (SCC) on this initiative – it is essential for both local tiers of government to be working as one to ensure that the County Town is playing its full part in delivering wider growth in the region and nationally.

4.2 A key message within the emerging prospectus will be the role of both the County and Borough Council in creating the best possible conditions for economic growth. The prospectus document will include a number of economic sector priorities and a list of key infrastructure projects needed to unlock Taunton's full growth potential, providing an important catalyst for securing external funding support and building upon our status as a Principal Urban area.

- 4.3 I was privileged to introduce, together with Councillor Richard Brown of SCC, a very well attended business consultation event on 25 October 2013 on the ambitions contained within the prospectus. Councillor Cavill's report provides additional detail on this event, feedback from which will inform a draft document to be presented to the Community Scrutiny Committee and Executive in January 2014. This will become an extremely key document as it will determine where scarce resources are best directed in the future to best facilitate the growth and economic development we all seek and support.

5. Taunton Town Centre Fun Day and Lights Switch On

- 5.1 This was an incredible day for Taunton. I do not believe I have ever seen the streets as crowded as they were that day and all thanks to the size and variety of events and attractions that were provided. Also, obviously, the good publicity promoting Taunton as "the place to visit". In all it was estimated that 96,000 visitors came to Taunton to enjoy the event and go shopping, a fantastic achievement.
- 5.2 Credit must go to the Taunton Town Centre Company and their team, the Make Taunton Sparkle organisation who have yet again delivered splendid illuminations for Christmas, the Market Stalls organisers - as I have never seen as many stalls in Taunton previously - and last, but not least, our own officers and Deane DLO who worked so tirelessly to deliver such a smooth running event.
- 5.3 My sincere thanks to you all as it was truly a credit to all and more importantly, it delivered its aim of crowded streets in Taunton that brings potential shoppers for retailers.
- 5.4 Having the ability to organise an event such as this and build upon it in the future reinforces the need for adequate funding through a successful BID (Business Improvement District) process which, if approved by the Council, will see the ballot held next February. I do hope this will be supported by all businesses as without the funding, events as above will just not be possible through lack of resource to organise and funds to pay for it all.

6. Budget Setting

- 6.1 At previous meetings we have presented and agreed high level terms to guide future budget setting. This has now culminated in a report to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee to be considered shortly.
- 6.2 These are proposals as to how we can achieve a balanced budget but at this point I stress, they are only proposals. Please do engage in the process and if you wish to change any of the savings please let us know together with where you would prefer equivalent savings made. The bottom line is that we have to set a balanced budget so due to the

prevailing economic conditions we have to make savings to achieve this.

- 6.3 From Corporate Scrutiny any comments will feed into the Christmas Budget Pack for consideration in January at individual Group Meetings supported by officers to discuss and answer queries. This is an important part of the budget setting process and it allows all Members the opportunity to participate in its formation, please do take this opportunity.

7. Employment Land at Bathpool

- 7.1 The Council has re-submitted a bid (subject to formal approval of Full Council) to purchase an area of employment land at Bathpool, following its withdrawal from the market earlier this year. Ownership of employment land gives a greater degree of control to the Council in creating the conditions needed for economic growth, and I am therefore fully behind the proposal to acquire this site.
- 7.2 This in no way diminishes or dilutes our efforts to deliver a further strategic employment site as proposed east of the M5 Motorway. We regard this as vital to the future economic development of Taunton but we have to accept there are major infrastructure problems to overcome. These are such that realistically I would not see them being addressed within the next five years so the proposed employment site at Bathpool to Langaller becomes very important for early enablement of site availability and choice.

8. National Citizens Service Graduation Ceremony

- 8.1 I was honoured to be invited to participate in the above which is the culmination of about a month's concentrated hard work and commitment to team building and delivering for good causes by young people.
- 8.2 The course starts with challenging events - in this case at a venue in North Devon with various extreme activities to create team spirit and leadership.
- 8.3 This is followed by more team working back at base in Somerset College and the following projects were agreed and delivered:-
- Elderly people's tea party in the Wellesley Community Centre (Saturday, 30 November 2013)
 - Clean-up of Jubilee Garden's Priorswood (completed Saturday, 16 November 2013)
 - Sports and activity day at Viridor Park (Saturday, 30 November 2013)

- Halcon – ‘A day in the life’ community photo project (completed Saturday, 16 November 2013)
- Fundraising for Escape support group (Saturday, 30 November 2013)

8.4 It was great to see so many enthusiastic young people with the commitment and dedication to work on such good causes and I applaud them for their efforts. I would also commend Will Taunton-Burnet, the Project Lead for National Citizens Service in Taunton, and his team for organising and delivering such good work for our community. Congratulations to all.

Councillor John Williams
Leader of the Council

Council Meeting – 10 December 2013

Councillor Ken Hayward – Environmental Services

I am in the unusual position of saying that I have nothing to report to Full Council that has not either been published through one media stream or another. There seems little point in taking up time unnecessarily by repeating news that has already been dispensed.

Councillor Ken Hayward

Council Meeting – 10 December 2013

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

1. Parks

- 1.1 A relatively quiet time in the parks now, but we were pleased to host the Taunton Harvest Festival in October in Vivary Park. We also look forward to Santa on the Run on the 15 December 2013 which is raising money for the Children's Hospice South West.
- 1.2 I did a tour of the parks with the Open Spaces Manager recently and was especially pleased to meet up with The Friends of Swains Lane Nature Reserve and Friends of Wellington Park. It was most helpful to discuss their ideas and issues to feed in to our maintenance plans for the forthcoming year.
- 1.3 I was glad to attend Friends of Wellington Park Annual General Meeting recently and very pleased to hear their report of the year in Wellington Park and meet some of their supporters.

2. Community Leisure and Play

- 2.1 Station Road Swimming Pool Refurbishment – Work is now underway and you will have seen the newsletters and press releases about the project. Following some feedback from users in the increased size classes at Wellington Pool we have arranged for the aqua-aerobic equipment to be moved across to Wellington to better support the larger numbers.
- 2.2 Blackbrook Pool and Spa – Work continues on this project.

3. Tone Leisure (Taunton Deane) Limited Activities

Community, Sports and Health Development

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

Health Development

- 3.1 Weight Management
 - 3.1.1 The Community Pounds project has been extended to another area, with additional funding which has been agreed, and has been launched at Wellington Children's Centre with over 20 sign ups in the first week.

3.1.2 The initiative will benefit from weight management courses, weekly weigh ins, a funded weekly physical activity session and health, lifestyle and nutritional advice. The Children's Centre will take the lead on the project with Tone delivering the weight management, weigh ins and physical activity sessions and offering support and advice.

3.2 Memory Walk

3.2.1 Tone Leisure hosted the Alzheimer's Society Memory Walk on Sunday, 29 September 2013 in Vivary Park, Taunton. A total of 179 walkers and 19 volunteers took part. The walk was a huge success, with three times more walkers than 2012.

3.3 Healthy Workplaces

3.3.1 Tone Leisure has linked with Somerset County Council (SCC) to launch the county wide Healthy Workplace programme. A Healthy Workplaces membership has been agreed and launched from Wednesday, 9 October until the end of March 2014.

3.3.2 Tone are the main deliverer for physical activity for SCC and have launched a Trim Trail around County Hall for the Stop Smoking and increased physical activity campaign Stoptober.

3.4 Hearts and Soles Nordic Walking

3.4.1 Tone's Nordic Walking programme has been running for one year in Taunton Deane and has generated interest from around 150 people.

3.4.2 The programme, which has been part-funded by the British Heart Foundation, aims to increase the number of older adults taking part in moderate intensity physical activity, particularly heart patients and their family members.

3.4.3 Of those that took part, 62% were aged 61-75 years old; 75% were female; 29% of participants were heart patients and/or a family member of a heart patient. A small team of volunteers have been trained as Leaders and are working towards helping to lead the Adventure Walks.

3.5 Play and Funding

3.5.1 Tone Leisure has recruited a new Play Development Worker on behalf of Somerset Play Forum. He is working 16 hours a week and focusing on encouraging parish councils to provide local community play days.

3.5.2 Alison Cottey, in her role as Funding Officer, is continuing to develop reports on the Social Return on Investment to demonstrate the effectiveness of projects delivered by Tone.

Seasons greetings,

Councillor Catherine Herbert

Council Meeting – 10 December 2013

Report of Councillor Mrs Jean Adkins – Housing Services

1. Housing Enabling

1.1 Priorswood Place, Taunton

Six units built for Curo were handed over recently and the development was officially opened by the Mayor last week.

1.2 Cheddon Road, Taunton

A start has now been made on site for this scheme of discounted and low cost housing which is being funded without subsidy. A publicity campaign on the theme of “a first step on the housing ladder” has been launched and the units are being advertised as “coming soon” on Homefinder Somerset.

2. Affordable Housing Target

2.1 Completions to 31 October are 124. With units in the “pipeline” standing at 68 we are on course for 192 completions for the year, but still hoping to hit the target of 200.

3. Council House Building

3.1 The planning applications for Creechbarrow Road, Taunton came to Committee on 25 September 2013 and received conditional approval.

3.2 We will shortly be able to announce the contractor for this project as the tendering process is complete and we are now in the “Alcatel” period.

3.3 The decanting is complete, so a start on site in the New Year is hoped for and should be possible, despite the best efforts of the slowworms to thwart us by going into hibernation before their decant was completed to the ecologist’s satisfaction.

3.4 Subsequently the Phase 1 sites came to the next Planning Committee and were subject to very late objections from Highways, which resulted in one being withdrawn and then resubmitted. It was intended that the Normandy Drive and Bacon Drive sites should be tendered together,

so the issue of tender documents will be prepared ready for the hoped for approval shortly.

3.5 Vale View, West Bagborough was also granted permission.

4. Estates Management – Welfare Reform

4.1 This is the subject of a full report to the Community Scrutiny Committee on 3 December 2013 by Simon Lewis.

4.2 Updated figures as at 11 October 2013:-

- 23 moves on Choice Based Lettings (CBL) have completed;
- 1 bid was pending on CBL;
- 1 direct match had completed;
- 11 mutual exchanges had completed; and
- 5 mutual exchanges were being processed.

5. Estates Management – Rent Arrears

5.1 In my last report I stated that as anticipated the Welfare Reforms have had an effect on tenant arrears which rose from £32,094 in April (for the affected tenants) to £51,881 in July, but, happily are now decreasing, down to £46,860 in August.

5.2 There was a further reduction as at 1 September 2013 to £43,996.60 and then a slight increase at 1 October to £44,197.68

5.3 82 tenants have been awarded Discretionary Housing Payments, some of which were backdated, helping to reduce arrears.

5.4 Overall rent arrears remain below last year's level standing at £360,000 approximately.

6. Estates Management - Voids

6.1 I am very pleased to report a decrease in the Void turnaround time to just over 12 days: a remarkable achievement. This has led, however, together with the higher level of voids partly due to downsizing, to an increase in the cost of voids and pressure on the budget. This is partly offset by the increase in rents received.

Councillor Mrs Jean Adkins

Council Meeting - 10 December 2013

Report of Councillor Mrs Vivienne Stock-Williams - Corporate Resources

1. Corporate and Client Services

Client Team

- 1.1 The Client Team continues to monitor delivery by the various Southwest One services, which remains broadly on-track.

Southwest One Contract

- 1.2 The current key focus for the team is finalising the detailed contract changes necessary to facilitate the return of further services agreed by Full Council on 12 November 2013. We anticipate these changes being completed by mid December 2013.

Southwest One Update

- 1.3 Additionally, the team is working closely with Southwest One to understand the potential implications of IBM's deal with SYNEX. However, as yet, the detailed implications are not clear.

Procurement

- 1.4 We continue to monitor the delivery of the Procurement Transformation Project and day-to-day procurement service by Southwest One. As at 31 October 2013, in excess of £1,842,000 savings have been delivered to the Council through the signed-off procurement related initiatives. A further £1,336,000 of savings are scheduled to be delivered from these signed-off initiatives during the remainder of the Southwest One contract.

Savings Initiatives

- 1.5 The Strategic Procurement Service is working on a number of additional projects and savings initiatives, which should increase the value of savings delivered. A tender to procure a new commercial waste contractor for the Council's premises will be issued shortly.

Retained Finance and Corporate Insurance

- 1.6 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.

Fees and Charges

- 1.7 The Strategic Finance Officer has recently completed the Fees and Charges report for 2014/2015 and is heavily involved in supporting the financial elements of the Southwest One Review.

Retained HR

- 1.8 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.

HR Support for Corporate Projects

- 1.9 The retained HR Manager continues to be heavily involved in supporting key corporate projects and, in particular, the West Somerset Shared Services Project and Southwest One Review.

Strategic and Retained ICT

- 1.10 The Retained Strategic ICT Officer continues to provide strategic ICT support to the Authority, manage the ICT functions not provided by Southwest One and to assist in monitoring the ICT element of the Southwest One contract.

Public Services Network (PSN) Audit

- 1.11 Work has been undertaken over the past couple of months to resubmit our Public Services Network (PSN) Audit to ensure that we comply with the increasingly stringent Central Government security standards and can remain connected to the Government's secure ICT network. We will also shortly commence the rollout of the Windows 7 upgrade to all computers.

ICT Support for Corporate Projects

- 1.12 The Retained ICT Officer is also heavily focused on supporting the ICT elements of key corporate projects and, in particular, the Customer Access and Accommodation and West Somerset Shared Service projects.

2. Corporate Health and Safety

Review of Computer Display Equipment

- 2.1 A review of the policy on use of Display Screen (computer) Equipment for the organisation has been carried out. Eleven volunteers from across all Themes have been trained to carry out the assessments to ensure consistency of approach and advice. This will also ensure flexibility and resilience with more assessors able to provide the information without delay.

Accidental Asbestos Exposure

- 2.2 An in-depth report was produced following an accidental asbestos exposure within a void Council property. Substantial positive steps have now been put in place to prevent a recurrence.

Brewhouse Production

- 2.3 The Health and Safety Team has had a significant involvement in providing Taunton School and contractors with health and safety information and monitoring safety measures relating to the use of the Brewhouse Theatre for the pre-Christmas performance.

Depot and Crematorium Inspections

- 2.4 Inspections of the mechanics' and carpenters' workshops at the Depot and Crematorium have been undertaken with remedial works carried out where necessary. Good standards were found at the Crematorium and advice was given about the inclusion of accident data within the Council's overall statistics.

Risk Assessment Advice

- 2.5 Assistance has also been provided to Managers at Deane DLO on risk assessments and monitoring is taking place with programmed meetings for review.

Accident Data

- 2.6 Accident data from 2009 to present have been sorted and entered into a database. Analysis has been carried out to identify trends and subsequently training (e.g. manual handling training) has been put in place and delivered to all Deane DLO employees.

3. Corporate Performance

Quarterly Performance

- 3.1 The Quarter 2 (2013/2014) corporate performance report was considered by the Executive on 4 December 2013. The 'Health & Housing' theme was featured as part of this report.

Theme and Service Performance Scorecards

- 3.2 Theme and Service Performance Scorecards are also produced quarterly. They include detailed performance information and updates on progress against theme and service priorities – these are available from all Theme Managers and are published on the Members' Portal

Performance Monitoring Framework

- 3.3 A new Performance Monitoring Framework is currently being developed for the Taunton Deane Partnership, as well as for our Service Level Agreements with voluntary sector grant recipients (for monitoring by the Grants Panel).

Benchmarking

- 3.4 The Performance and Finance Teams are currently working together to consider how benchmarking analysis can be used better (to compare performance and costs data relative to other similar Authorities and pinpoint areas of good or poor performance). This will start to be introduced as part of the continuing performance monitoring and reporting framework in 2014.

Risk Management

- 3.5 The Corporate Risk Register is reviewed quarterly by CMT as part of the quarterly performance review process (most recently mid November 2013). A refreshed Corporate Risk Register will be reported to the Corporate Governance Committee in March 2014.

Risk Registers

- 3.6 Risk registers for Themes/Services and projects continue to be developed and are reviewed regularly, with risk response actions actively routinely planned and implemented. Key risks are also included in Theme 'Exception/Highlight' reports which are appended to the Corporate Performance report.

Programme and Project Management

- 3.7 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).
- 3.8 There are two distinct 'programmes' that are designed to deliver the Council's strategic aims: i) Growth & Regeneration, and ii) Corporate Transformation. An overview of the entire programme is provided for Members as part of the Quarterly Performance Monitoring report.

4. Customer Contact Centre

Achievement of all performance indicators

4.1 The service has continued to perform well with no KPI (Key Performance Indicator) failures to report during the last quarter. These are Southwest One's contractual deliverables for the authorities. For Taunton Deane they are:-

1. % of calls answered within 20 seconds
2. % of abandoned calls
3. % of calls answered at first point of contact
4. Quality of service,

New Telephony Technology

4.2 The service has been implementing new technology as part of the Customer Contact Telephony Refresh Programme. The new core telephony system supplied by Siemens is now fully implemented after a smooth transition.

Overview of New Technology

4.3 The ageing Macfarlane Callplus ACD (Automated Call Distributor) system has been replaced with Siemens OpenScape Contact Centre Enterprise V8. ACD is a core Contact Centre system providing the intelligence behind the scenes. For example, it will route specific calls to specific people based on what number the customer has dialled or option they have chosen and based on the skill sets of the advisor.

Interactive Voice Recognition

4.4 In our Contact Centre, we use push button menus. The acquisition of the newly enhanced technology, however, will allow us to explore true voice recognition services.

Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS)

4.5 This is a standard which all Contact Centres need to adhere to. In order to be comprehensively compliant, organisations must ensure that payment card details are not recorded or stored. Our current procedures give us part compliance as our Advisors are able to pause manually and resume calls. The new system automatically detects when card details are being processed, automatically stops the call being recorded and resumes recording afterwards.

Enhancements from new system

4.6 Enhancements provided by the new Siemens system include:
- More intuitive administration

- More detailed queue management information (i.e. can dynamically advise callers of current wait time etc)
- New contact centre channels (email, social media, web collaboration, chat)
- Increased resilience
- High definition voice quality
- Enhanced real time management information
- Increased business continuity options.

Replacement of Workforce Management System

4.6 The ageing Qmax workforce management system (purchased in 2009) has been replaced by Southwest One with NICE IEX. The Contact Centre WFM (Workforce Management) principle covers rostering, scheduling, contact trend analysis, demand forecasting and intra-day optimisation.

Our World at Work

4.7 A new staff forum has been started and consists of colleagues from each Customer Contact Team. The initiative is designed to improve engagement and empowerment within the wider Customer Contact Team. The group will retain a key focus on staff satisfaction and will be encouraged to propose solutions to problems experienced within the workplace through consultation with the wider Customer Contact Team.

Customer Service Excellence Training

4.8 Customer Contact has continued to invest in the training and development of its teams, recognising that it is imperative that customer service professionals are provided with first class training opportunities to develop existing skills and learn new techniques for delivering excellence first time, every time.

Cross Skilling

4.9 Customer Contact has continued to invest in new technologies to support the delivery of excellent customer services. Thus, investment has been made in a new e-learning tool which has helped with the cross-skilling of our multi-disciplined teams. There are now an increasing number of Customer Advisors who can handle customer enquiries for both Taunton Deane and Somerset County Council. This ensures that customers are benefitting from a more seamless and holistic customer experience.

Customer Contact Association (CCA) Accreditation

4.10 The Customer Contact Centre was assessed against the Customer Contact Association Global Standard for the second year running and

was re-accredited with no non-conformities. I should like to congratulate staff for their ongoing commitment to a high standard of service.

5. Legal and Democratic Services

Legal Shared Services

- 5.1 Mendip District Council has formally agreed their involvement in the legal shared services project. Mendip's Solicitor to the Council will carry out that role for all three Councils, if Taunton Deane and West Somerset Council are happy for her to do so.
- 5.2 The draft Business Case is almost ready to be shared with the Project Team. However, Sedgemoor District Council has now shown an interest in being part of the initial set up. Enquiries are being made, therefore, as to the remit in which they want to be a part of the project - in order for a suitable structure to be developed together with a re-calculation of the figures.
- 5.3 At the time of writing, we are still aiming for an implementation date of 1 April 2014.

Elections

- 5.4 We currently have Jonathan Kilby working with us to help keep the service running following Craig Morse's untimely death. He will be working on the canvass to ensure that we can publish the register in February 2014, which we are legally obliged to do.

European Elections

- 5.5 Bruce Lang is currently working on the future of the service, in order that more permanent arrangements can be put in place at the earliest opportunity - given the pending European Parliamentary Elections.

Deputy Monitoring Officer

- 5.6 Due to Tonya's unexpected illness, it has been decided to make Richard Bryant a Deputy Monitoring Officer to support both Roy Pinney and also Tonya whilst she is away from the office. This will be with immediate effect. Richard's new role will continue in 2014.

Standards

- 5.7 There are some processes and procedures that need to be finalised for publication. In addition, the Register of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests needs to be published on the website.

Complaint

- 5.8 In addition there is a complaint that will be heading for a Hearings Panel in the next few weeks.

Tonya Meers

- 5.9 I am sure all Members join me in wishing Tonya a full recovery from her unexpected illness. She will be working predominately at home during her treatment over the coming months, but will be in the office at times. During this period, there are a number of tasks she will be finishing off as planned

Audit and Constitutional Tasks

- 5.10 There are some outstanding audit recommendations, changes to RIPA processes and procedures, and constitutional changes that need to be completed. Tonya will be doing a review to make sure that all is up to date and also working with Bruce Lang to see where the two Councils' constitutions can be aligned.

6. Revenues and Benefits

Customer Service Excellence Re-Certification

- 6.1 At the end of September 2013, the service received re-certification for Customer Service Excellence - the Government's National Standard for Excellence in customer service. The feedback provided in the report by the independent inspector stated:

- *"The Revenues and Benefits Service provides an excellent example of a service that is totally focused on providing high standards in customer delivery.*
- *A strong feature of the service is the attention given to future planning. This is being undertaken at a time of significant changes and demands on service requirements as a result of national priorities.*
- *The service is to be commended for the foresight shown in achieving active partnership arrangements that will be of benefit to customers.*
- *Staff carry out their duties with professionalism and shared values."*

I should like to congratulate all members of the Revenues and Benefits Team on their continued commitment to providing an excellent service to our customers.

Customer Satisfaction Survey

- 6.2 We have preliminary results from the service's annual Customer Satisfaction Survey. Overall satisfaction with the Benefits Service has increased to 91%. This was a surprising result given that many customers received reduced benefit through the Welfare Reforms implemented from April 2013. Detailed comments provided in the responses show understanding that officers must implement these changes, but the manner in which we deal with implementation has a significant impact on customers' views.

Council Tax and Business Rates

- 6.3 Council Tax and Business Rate customers have recorded satisfaction at 82% - the same level as achieved last year. A full report on the survey will be presented to Members in early 2014.

Website

- 6.4 Following recent approval of the Council's revised Discretionary Rate Relief Policy, website information on Business Rates has been updated. There is now a factsheet and a claim form for rate relief on: www.tauntondeane.gov.uk/raterelief.

Finally, I wish you and your families a Happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

Councillor Vivienne Stock-Williams

Council Meeting – 10 December 2013

Report of Councillor Mark Edwards - Planning, Transportation and Communications

1. Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (SADMP)

- 1.1 The Council will shortly complete public consultation on the Preferred Options Site Allocations and Development Management Plan. This has included a number of public exhibitions - these events have generally been well-attended.
- 1.2 Following closure of the consultation, officers will consider the responses made by communities and key stakeholders before publishing a report summarising its key messages in Spring 2014.

2. Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

- 2.1 The Council's CIL Charging Schedule has now been through Community Scrutiny and Executive. The CIL Charging Schedule will be taken to Full Council for formal adoption shortly. Independent of this work, officers are developing proposed governance and monitoring measures.
- 2.2 In early 2014 officers will present the Council's proposed first draft Regulation 123 List. This list will identify the sort of schemes likely to be funded in whole or part by CIL over the short term. A separate review of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan is anticipated to commence in late 2013 / early 2014.

3. Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)

- 3.1 The 2013 SHLAA will also be finalised shortly and be published in mid December.
- 3.2 The SHLAA will provide an update on the five year land supply position. The document is built upon the extensive involvement of the housebuilding industry and will be presented through the Local Development Framework Steering Group in early 2014.

4. Authorities Monitoring Report

- 4.1 The Authorities Monitoring Report will be published on the Council's website within the next month. It provides an annual snapshot of progress in meeting the Core Strategy Objectives monitoring targets, progress on Plan preparation and CIL.
- 4.2 Regular monitoring is vital to establish trends to establish whether policies and objectives are delivering sustainable development.

5. Routes to the River Tone

- 5.1 The Council's Landscape and Parks Teams have been working closely with colleagues at the Somerset Wildlife Trust to secure a grant of £494,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for the 'Routes to the River Tone' Project and in early October were given the 'green light'.
- 5.2 The three year project aims to engage local people with the wildlife on their doorstep and, with their help, to improve the town's green spaces and waterways protecting rare species like water vole and four species of bat including brown long-eared and lesser horseshoe bats.
- 5.3 More details can be found on the SWT website by following the link. http://www.somersetwildlife.org/hlf_grant_for_taunton

6. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plans

- 6.1 The Quantock and Blackdown Hills Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are, on behalf of their local authority partners, preparing five year Management Plans to guide the work of their teams and wider partnerships.
- 6.2 The plans have been through public consultation, the results of which are now being assessed. It is expected that the plans will be approved by funding partners by the Spring of 2014.

7. Communications

- 7.1 It has been an exceptionally busy time for communications, both internal and external, due to the number of major projects that have reached key milestones.
- 7.2 The decision on joint management and shared services with West Somerset generated considerable interest, particularly in the "trade press" including the Local Government Chronicle and the Municipal Journal.
- 7.3 A special newsletter for staff and members was also issued following the decision and communications remains an important factor in the

implementation of the project.

- 7.4 A regular, monthly column is issued to the Gazette on the refurbishment of the Station Road Swimming Pool to ensure customers are kept up to date on progress.
- 7.5 Deane Dispatch has covered a number of themes, including inward investment, housing initiatives and the environment. The publication remains an important way of communicating with residents.
- 7.6 Looking ahead, we are working on ways to introduce social media into communications, principally through the use of Twitter. If successful, the use of social media will be rolled out incrementally.

8. Car Parking

- 8.1 Refurbishment of all three lifts at the Orchard Multi-Storey Car Park was completed in time for the Christmas Fair Sunday and the busy trading days thereafter. Our investment here shows the Council's commitment to supporting shoppers and visitors to the town.
- 8.2 Our "Free after 3" joint promotion with the Taunton Town Centre Company has ended and we will be looking at the outcome to see what benefits there were for both the Council and the traders.
- 8.3 The analysis of the campaign in Wellington during August and September showed there were some limited benefits but identified more work was needed with the business community to maximise this.

Councillor Mark Edwards

Council Meeting - 10 December 2013

Report of Councillor Jane Warmington - Community Leadership

1. Efficient and effective delivery of services with better outcomes

- 1.1 With government grants continuing to reduce for the next few years, the main public sector service providers have less to spend, so it is important that expensive statutory services are not considered in isolation and that planning ahead together starts in earnest.
- 1.2 Shared accommodation is being considered (ourselves with the Police at one time and just now with the County Council) and shared management and services have been agreed between the two districts Taunton Deane and West Somerset. We have some established successful shared services already (eg South West Private Sector Housing Partnership and Building Control).
- 1.3 Each organisation is restructuring and looking at what it does, how it does it, where it does it from and whether or not it still needs to. This is to continue to deliver essential services to our communities, but more efficiently to make the necessary savings, and more effectively with better outcomes to be sustainable into the future.
- 1.4 Roughly the following services are delivered by those listed below:

SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL

Waste
Highways
Education
Social Care
Mental Health
Public Health
Property Services
District Youth Fora
Libraries
Waterways
Economic Development
Civil Contingency Planning
Community Safety

HEALTH SERVICE

GPs (Federation & Commissioning)
Dentists
Hospitals
Accident & Emergency
Health Visitors
Midwives
Ambulance Service

D&S FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

Prevention (Advice, Alarms)
Putting out fires
Rescue
Cause Investigation

AVON & SOMERSET POLICE

Serious & Organised Crime
Public Protection
Safeguarding
Crime Detection
Crime Reduction
Community Safety

TAUNTON DEANE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Social Housing (and affordable)
Housing Advice Private Rented Sector
Homelessness
Direct Labour Organisation
Revenues & Benefits,
Licensing
Planning
Environmental Health, Food Safety,
Health & Safety Monitoring
Sports & Leisure
Community Safety (CCTV)
Taunton Deane Partnership
Community Development
Economic Development
Voluntary Sector Support
Public Health & Wellbeing
Family Focus (with WSD & SCC)
Gypsy & traveller pitch provision
Asset Management
Civil Contingencies

- 1.5 There is a significant amount of overlap although a statutory duty may lie with one or other particular organisation. So to be truly effective, where the demand for certain services is high and there is overlap, these need to be identified and a more joined up approach put in place.
- 1.6 Overlap is most evident and the need most acute in our priority areas (areas of high deprivation). Most problems underlying the deprivation have been identified, the challenge lies in tackling these to start to make those peoples lives better, reduce the demand on many services which are expensive, difficult to budget for and most agree are not sustainable as they are.
- 1.7 The Taunton Deane Partnership is the local strategic group which meets four times a year and concentrates on the priority areas (Priority Areas Strategy 2012-2017) which have their own Multi Agency Groups (North Taunton MAG and Halcon MAG). The rural areas are now covered by the Community Planning Working Group (CPWG) where access to services and fuel poverty are key concerns. These groups are fora, well attended and pull what's going on together.
- 1.8 However, the need is now to be joined up at the frontline. This has started already in Taunton Deane with the Halcon One Team Project and in the five districts with Family Focus (Central Government's Troubled Families Programme). Family Focus is part of the One Team in Halcon but also has it's own practitioner meetings to discuss signed up individual families and has its own governance.
- 1.9 For instance the make up of the One Team is the core of professional frontline staff from partner agencies already working in Halcon meeting together first thing three mornings a week (with a view to a shared work-base) with occasional input from others:

One Team Coordinator- Police Sergeant
 Police Officers x 4 (subject to Force abstractions)
 Police Community Support Officers x 3 (as above & one post seconded to community mapping)
 District Council Community Development Officers x 2,
 Housing Estate Officers x 2, Temporary Accommodation & Lettings Officer x 1 &
 Anti-Social Behaviour Officer x 1
 Children's Centre Family Support Workers x 2
 Family Focus Workers x 2 (not wholly dedicated in the area)
 Taunton Association for the Homeless x 1
 Local Vicar x 1
 Citizen's Advice Bureau x 1 (money management)

Occasional (less than once a week) attendance from:

Sheltered Housing x 1
 Work Academy Somerset College x 1 (education & training)
 District Council Benefits Officer x 1
 Women's Aid x 1 (domestic abuse support)
 Chapter 1 x 1 (County Council commissioned service for domestic abuse support)
 Parent Family Support Adviser (PFSA) x 1
 Housing Association x 1 (Knightstone)

- 1.10 Shared information and intelligence is also mapped (adapted from the police system used for organised crime) providing an up to date reference which then highlights problems, their scale, any links, any progress and any gaps. Individual Family Plans are drawn up from this to manage change and plan ahead. (Data is sensitive, shared but restricted and a protocol drawn up and agreed).
- 1.11 Operating as One Team has changed the way that staff from individual organisations work together in the most challenging ward in the district. Communication is paramount. It has become easier to deal with problems early on before they escalate which is more effective and more efficient. The work is demanding but shared and for most if not all now, it is better being part of a team. Many problems are longstanding and entrenched. There are few if any quick fixes, but already there are improvements for individuals, families and the community.
- 1.12 Special thanks should go to our Housing Services, those frontline and senior Officers involved and the Portfolio Holder, for listening, understanding and following this with an innovative and pragmatic approach to problem solving. Commendable.
- 1.13 The project started from the bottom up so the governance (Silver and Gold Groups) came afterwards. Their role is important with strong links between the three levels (delivery, tactical and strategic) and with other organisations. They support and intervene on behalf of the One Team when sensible actions are curtailed in some way (gaps, resources, sign off, liaison, links) and make things happen. Progress can be monitored and high level decisions taken (for example to continue to resource the project). The great value of this project is that it is driven from the bottom up and supported in this way.
- 1.14 With better outcomes there should soon be evidence of significant savings and the beginnings of long term change. The project is being written up as an operating model which the Police are interested in trying out in other high demand areas across Avon and Somerset. Sector Inspector Stuart Bell has just been asked up to Police Headquarters for twelve months to build this into the proposed new Police Operating Model the Force would like to introduce.
- 1.15 So the time is now appropriate for joint planning of services and service delivery where there are overlaps with the Constabulary and Somerset County Council in particular. This will enable both officers and members to collectively forward plan, ensuring cost effectiveness and sustainability throughout this difficult period. Government tells us that each Troubled Family is estimated to cost on average 75K a year and that in Taunton Deane and West Somerset we have 262 (this adds up to a massive probable cost of over £19 million a year). Significant savings can be made in improving the lives of these families through Family Focus and the One Team way of working.
- 1.16 Aligning services should improve all areas of business. This does not mean a unitary authority (unsuited to Somerset in my view) but we might start by sharing a building, which is being offered and is the most cost effective practical solution for both local authorities (and the most sensible from the public's point of view, most of whom think we are one and the same anyway).

Cllr Jane Warmington

Council Meeting – 10 December 2013

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

1. Business Support and Networking

- 1.1 The Economic Development Team has supported and worked with at least 20 businesses on a 1:1 basis over the last three months to assist their growth and investment. These have ranged from small, start up enterprises to some of the Borough's largest employers.
- 1.2 **Advanced Manufacturers' Forum** - Working alongside Somerset College the Council introduced a new Taunton Deane Advanced Manufacturers' Forum in early December. The Forum pulled together some of the larger manufacturers in Taunton Deane that are involved in research, development and innovation. Senior representatives of five large businesses attended the breakfast event and discussed skills, graduate recruitment and the other issues they face operating in the area. It is hoped that the Forum will continue, drawing upon additional, similar employers.
- 1.3 **Inward investment enquiries** - We have recently received ten enquiries to relocate to the Borough.
- 1.4 **Retail** - In Taunton two new shops have opened in The Orchard Centre - Game and Romans Originals. Planning is going through on 4 East Street and 45 Bridge Street (change to restaurant) in Taunton. Planning permission was also granted to the proposed Go Outdoors retailer on the edge of Taunton, which will create around 40 jobs in the first instant. A new modern style Indian Restaurant, Tamarind Bay, has opened in Wellington
- 1.5 **Somerset Work Hubs** - Somerset County Council (SCC) has recently invited bids from property owners to develop work hubs in the County. Funding is available in rural parts of the County towards the development of up to three work hubs that will provide flexible, informal space for businesses. Our Economic Development Team pulled together an event in October with four providers of rural workspace and the SCC to discuss the programme. Bids have yet to be submitted but it is anticipated that three schemes will be submitted from within Taunton Deane.
- 1.6 **Castle Green Business Group** - A first meeting of the businesses and organisations surrounding Castle Green was held in October, coordinated by the Economic Development Team. With a primary focus on delivering events in the area, the group is an effective forum to communicate with the businesses, to encourage collaboration, and to try to address their concerns.

2. Business Grants

2.1 New business grants awarded in the past three months total £3,147.38. A further £2,000 has been awarded from the Rural Services Grant. The grants awarded have been to:-

- Brendan Orchards Cooperative, Wiveliscombe towards the cost of a market wagon and a gazebo in connection with a fruit juice business;
- Integrated Training SW Limited of Hillcommon towards the cost of purchasing equipment for providing First Aid training to the community and private business;
- Oake and District Community Shop and Post Office towards the cost of the installation of a shop security system and EPOS system;
- Country Town Lettings Limited, Staplegrove towards the cost of a network attached storage facility;
- TwoTon Cross Fit, Staplegrove towards specialist gym flooring and equipment;
- Rowles Davis Limited of Taunton towards the cost of marketing their new Planning and Highways Law business. Costs covered will be a website, logo design and business cards;
- JP Rata Limited of Taunton towards the cost of a laptop, Microsoft Office and promotional literature for a new accountancy company
- Snappy Surfer, based in Wellington, towards equipment to set up their new photography company

3. Taunton Town Centre Company and BID (Business Improvement District)

3.1 The proposal for a new BID in Taunton Town Centre has made significant progress in recent months, the company having consulted extensively with businesses over the priorities for the town and the need for a BID. The company has formally asked the Council to furnish it with the necessary information to hold the BID ballot, and is aiming for a ballot date at the end of February 2014. If approved the BID would commence early in the following financial year.

3.2 The company has introduced on a pilot basis a weekly street market on a Friday and Saturday. The pilot was carried out over a six week period in October and November and was very well received by visitors, the market traders and many retailers. The Council is hoping to support the markets through the purchase of market stalls, which will enable the introduction of

new, specialist markets in other spaces in the town centre, such as Castle Green and Somerset Square.

- 3.3 Working alongside Councillor Kelly Durdan the Town Centre Company delivered the annual Christmas celebrations in the town centre, commencing with the Lights Switch on event and Street Market on Sunday, 17 November 2013. The event was very well attended by the public with an estimated 96,000 footfall in the town for the occasion and well supported by businesses.
- 3.4 Fund raising under the 'Make Taunton Sparkle' campaign proved difficult, although many businesses generously contributed prizes to the raffle and gave sponsorship donations. I thank Councillor Durdan for undertaking the challenge again and congratulate her for raising around £4,000 towards the lights and the switch-on event. Also her last year's list of companies and private contributors was of great use to the Town Centre Company in raising funds for this season. The Council contributed £10,000 towards the project.

4. The Brewhouse Theatre

- 4.1 Since the Council agreed to the purchase of the contents and the remainder of the lease of The Brewhouse, significant progress has been made alongside the Taunton Theatre Association to reopen the theatre in 2014.
- 4.2 Invitations were issued in September to organisations that wished to be considered to operate the theatre. One proposal was received, that being from the Taunton Theatre Association (TTA). Over the past two months, and drawing upon the advice of the Council's expert consultant, David Pratley Associates, the Brewhouse Steering Group has received and considered the TTA's proposed Business Plan.
- 4.3 The Steering Group will meet one more time and I hope to sign off a lease on the property and a Service Level Agreement on our financial contribution at the earliest opportunity. All things being equal the TTA hopes to launch the new theatre in April followed by a more formal opening ceremony later in the summer.
- 4.4 Maintenance work on the Brewhouse, to make it fit for use, has been undertaken and is on schedule to be completed at the beginning of December. The work is expected to be completed within the budget.
- 4.5 An approach was made by Taunton School requesting the use of the theatre for their end of term production, which is 'Cats'. Taunton School has taken the property on a short term tenancy arrangement during early December to enable it to perform its annual production.

5. Taunton Growth Prospectus

- 5.1 The Council is currently preparing a Growth Prospectus for Taunton, which presents our vision for the town's growth over the next 15 years. It outlines

the strategic schemes needed to deliver Taunton's economic potential in order to generate commitment and secure the necessary investment from key partners locally, nationally and internationally.

- 5.2 At a consultation event on 25th October 2013, 40 local businesses heard about the Prospectus and were invited to offer their views on Taunton's future economic growth to inform the document.
- 5.3 The final version of the Prospectus will be produced in the New Year, and will also form part of the County Council's Growth Plan.

6. Small Business Saturday

- 6.1 The Economic Development Team has been working with local traders to create events across Taunton Deane to dovetail the national Small Business Saturday Scheme that is happening on the 7 December 2013. Detail below:-

Taunton: We have partnered with Santander plc and the Gazette to hold a competition to promote independent shops. Retailers will be nominated and voted for to win a cash prize of £2,500 plus two days of free business advice and a years advertising in the Gazette. The event was held in the Taunton branch of Santander on 4 December 2013.

Wellington: Production of four information boards that will be placed in the towns car parks to promote the town's retailers. During November 55 shops were involved in a programme of promotions/ discounts for customers (each shop offering something different). If green and red balloons are displayed outside the shop is participating in the initiative!

Wiveliscombe: Led by the Wiveliscombe Business Association, 7 December will see a day of activities, including the unveiling of a 'mock up' traders board in each of the towns car parks to promote the towns retailers. The boards will be replaced in the New Year by permanent boards (subject to Planning). Other activities and celebrations will include Puppet shows, an Art and Craft Fair and an event at Cotleigh Brewery.

7. Job Clubs

- 7.1 In June 2013 the contract for the delivery of Job Clubs in Halcon, Priorswood and Wellington was awarded again to Vista for 12 months. 18 people into work has been achieved over the past three months, with a further 30 people undertaking training or a work placement.

8. Business Advice Workshops

- 8.1 Following a tendering process in September we appointed the Somerset Business Agency to deliver a programme of workshops to provide start up and business advice to small businesses in Taunton Deane. The six month

programme commenced in October and already 73 businesses have attended and received support.

9. Land for Business Investment

- 9.1 Over recent months significant progress has been on a number of fronts to bring new employment land to the market, demonstrating significant optimism and faith in Taunton Deane's future economic prospects. All of the following are receiving active support from officers:-

Westpark, Wellington - Summerfield Developments continues to invest in speculative as well as bespoke buildings on the business park. It is currently nearing completion of the development of Block C comprising 14 small units for local and inward investors. Already one has been sold and a further six are committed to occupants. The company has recently submitted a planning application to enable the expansion of the site, and is in advanced discussions with two further investors, including involving a 100,000 sq ft development. .

Wiveliscombe Business Park - CMS Developments secured Planning Permission in October for the development of a 24 bed low security health facility. A developer is on board, which will enable the commencement of the development of the whole business park, opening it up to other business investment.

Land East of Junction 25, Taunton - The Council has appointed Peter Brett Associates to carry out an Economic Demand Assessment in relation to the potential employment site at the rear of the Park and Ride Scheme. If appropriate, the site would form a vital element of Taunton's land supply in the medium to long term.

Land at Monkton Heathfield - In partnership with the developer we have expressed interest in purchasing this land, to the agents. We await their response. Any deal will have to come back to be considered by Full Council.

10. Regeneration and development

- 10.1 LHC, in carrying out the Rethink Project, has recently held a briefing meeting with all Councillors as part of their final consultation. They are now working on the final draft which should be presented to the Taunton Economic Advisory Board (TEAB) on 9 December 2013.
- 10.2 A new directional monolith and sign post has been installed at the top of the High Street. Work continues on installing the twig benches and outstanding repairs are being completed, all of which should be in place before Christmas. In January, the remaining drainage work is planned to be completed. The budget for these works will come from the capital budget and from the maintenance budget. Presently, Taunton Deane owns the drains.

Completion of this work is essential as it will enable their adoption by the Highways Department.

- 10.3 There is also a directional signpost adjacent to County Stores, which directs people to Castle Green and other places.
- 10.4 The deal on the Thales site is about to be completed. Hopefully I can update Councillors at the meeting.
- 10.5 Flood risk assessment - Further work on the modelling of the Tone Catchment Basin has now concluded that Taunton's flood protection system is at a level to cope with the 1:100 year storm. Further work is still required upstream to offset the effects of climate change.
- 10.6 Work on the Northern Inner Distributor Road is progressing well, and at the moment is on schedule.
- 10.7 The Asset Management Strategy report has been completed by the consultants, Bob Baber. It will be considered by Executive prior to this Council Meeting, so there may be some amendments to the paper.

11. Taunton Tourist Information, Ticket and Travel Centre (TIC) Update

11.1 Visitor Numbers and Spend

The TIC has continued to have a busy autumn. The location of the Cards for Good Causes Charity Christmas Card pop-up shop within the office has boosted throughput and sales (this will remain in the TIC until the 23 December). Increased interest in the Tacchi Morris Arts Centre and other cultural venues in the area have also seen a significant upturn in event ticket sales over the same period.

11.2 Tourism Update and Business Support

The TIC Lead and Economic Development Project Officer continue to work with the Somerset Tourism Association (STA) attending board meetings and assisting with their promotional activities and events including working on a new updated version of the www.visitsomerset.co.uk website.

The STA has just launched its first Destination Management Plan as the first step of their strategy to become a Destination Management Organisation for the County.

- 11.3 The TIC has been and will be covering telephone calls for the Somerset Visitor Centre whilst it is temporarily closed until mid Summer 2014.
- 11.4 Meetings have been held with the Somerset County Cricket Club and Taunton Theatre Association and colleagues in Community Leisure, Licensing and Taunton Town Centre Company over joint promotion and possible marketing opportunities.

- 11.5 Advertisements promoting Taunton and the events taking place in the town have been placed in First Great Western's Escape Magazine, Lamp magazine, Somerset Jewel of the South West brochure, Suited and Booted and Wessex Water's Customer Magazine.
- 11.6 Twitter continues to be a positive way for the TIC Team to promote the area and the @TauntonTIC account now has over 1,600 followers which are growing each week.
- 11.7 **New Activities Planned**
The TIC Lead is continuing to work with the Asset Management Team on the possible relocation of the TIC with a report due to come to committee for consideration in early Spring 2014.

I should like to take this opportunity to congratulate Jon Sumner on the excellent work which he has done for us and wish him all the best in his future career working for Avon and Somerset Police. His asset management work has been exceptional and has enabled us, over the last two years, to put our records onto the 'Atrium system' provided by SouthwestOne. We have, as a result, benefited considerably from his endeavours.

Councillor Norman Cavill