

REPORT OF COUNCILLOR BULGIN –PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION

The Government has indicated that the proposed change to the planning system is a high priority. Parliamentary time is being sought that could result in introduction of the new system to replace structure and local plans in 2004/5. However the Government wants structure plan making work to continue pending legislation and it would be sensible to carry it out with a view to a smooth transition to the new system. Detailed transitional guidance is likely to follow any Government announcement. In the light of this, Somerset Strategic Planning Conference has given great thought to this and has produced a draft Memorandum of Understanding embracing the District Councils of Somerset, Somerset County Council and the Exmoor National Park concerning development arrangements arising from enactment of the Planning Bill. This memorandum seeks to pre-empt some of this issues, such as involvement of members of the business community and other agencies in the system, and sets down a process to ensure the adoption of new procedures happens as smoothly as possible. This process is being looked at by other local authorities, we seem to be in the fore front on this.

I am pleased that the Lloyds/TSB building issues have now been resolved and that we shall soon see it brought back into use. Members will no doubt be pleased that it will not be yet another late night watering hole, but we are assured, a high quality retail outlet. I am thankful to the Town Centre Manager, officers of the Planning, Licensing and Conservation sections of TDBC, Somerset C.C. Highways and Planning sections for the effort put in to resolve the access issue with this property. We held a joint officers meeting to thrash out the issues and to reach common corporate agreement on what could be achieved. Thus we were all ‘singing from the same hymn sheet’. A following meeting with Lloyds/TSB cleared the air on the same issues, together with exploring options within the building. The outcome was what we see now, a relatively speedy outcome to the problem that had been dragging on for two years. A flagship building being brought back into use in the centre of Taunton.

Councillor Roy Bulgin

