

Council Meeting – 8 December 2009

Report of Councillor Ross Henley – Leader of the Council

1. Core Council Review

- 1.1 I believe we made the right decision at our Special Full Council recently to approve Themes 2 and 4 of the Core Council Review. Our business cannot stay as it is and in light of Local Government funding and the current economic recession the Core Review is essential. I might add, though, that this is a strategic review and has gone through many months of public consultation via Members and also with staff representatives.
- 1.2 This approach I feel has been successful with Theme 1 and I am sure that Themes 2 and 4 will be equally successful. Taking Themes 1 agreed earlier in the year and now Themes 2 and 4, the Core Council Review will have delivered a total of £792,000 towards efficiency savings for this Council.
- 1.3 It would be wrong, however, not to acknowledge that we have lost staff during this process and that of course is always a difficult time. We have to acknowledge what difficult decisions we have made and also realise that we had little choice but to take this action. However, unlike many Councils we are dealing with this based upon our priorities and using a strategic approach, we now move onto the crucial implementation stage of the Core Council Review.

2. The Budget

- 2.1 You will have seen from the Quarter 2 budget monitoring reports that the projected budget gap is around £1.3 million. The Core Council Review will bring in around £450,000. The proposed car park increases will potentially bring in £360,000. Those at the last Corporate Scrutiny Committee will have observed that further substantial funding could be gained by the outlined savings plans and fees and charges adjustments.
- 2.2 More remains to be done to close this gap but strong progress has been made to bridge the gap. The administration acknowledges the difficulty of closing the budget gap but will not walk away from our pledges to flagship policies like the full roll out of doorstep plastic and cardboard recycling.
- 2.3 There are extreme budget challenges ahead and uncertainty regarding the future funding of Local Government in particular from 2011 onwards and

that has to be a concern for all of us. It is incumbent on us all to work together to rise to manage the future financial situations that await us.

3. South West One

- 3.1 You will already read in Councillor Coles' report the news that Southwest One has made savings of £260,000 and has identified potential savings of £4 million to come. Richard Jones has decided to retire in early December and I would like to thank him for the way he has performed his role. I have met with senior Southwest One Managers this week to discuss the way forward and to hear about their plans for Richard's replacement.

4. Pioneer Somerset

- 4.1 Sadly, there is still little progress on Pioneer Somerset. We had a meeting recently at County Hall to discuss progress but yet again my perception is that the political leadership of the County Council is not involved enough in this process and until that changes then there will be, I fear, little progress between the Districts and the County.

- 4.2 I believe that the decision by the County to withdraw funding from the Project Directors Group was a great mistake and has withdrawn the driver which independent consultants said was necessary for us to step up to achieve progress. In light of the lack engagement at a one to one level from the County Council political leadership then it up for the Districts to move forward with our own savings agenda. I will say again that the time has come for us to revisit the idea of shared management roles with other districts at the senior management level.

- 4.3 Like it or not this is the way forward and is happening with some success all over the country. I know that the leading opposition party on this Council expressed strong reservations to this idea when I floated it before but I will not apologise for raising it again. To not seriously consider this option is to be frankly in denial of the future of Local Government in England.

5. Carbon Neutral

- 5.1 I recently attended an excellent workshop organised by Kevin Toller and the Transition Taunton movement at Wellsprings. I was able to announce to them that this Council has signed up to the Ten Ten Agenda and that we have signed up to becoming a carbon neutral Council.
- 5.2 A workshop is being organised by Kevin with Senior Managers to discuss carbon neutral being placed into service plans and I am meeting Kevin this week to begin the work of setting targets and agreeing exactly what work

we all need to do to make Taunton Deane Borough Council carbon neutral. I have also just signed off a decision for this Council to employ a new Climate Change Officer as well.

6. EDF

- 6.1 I attended a briefing meeting recently with Councillor Mrs Smith, Councillor Williams, Joy Wishlade and Penny James to hear of the plans that EDF have for the future of Hinkley Point. It was really astonishing to hear of the all infrastructure projects involved with this project from new park and rides to accommodation for the near 4000 workers who will be needed to build this new facility if it goes ahead.

7. Local Development Framework (LDF)

- 7.1 Thanks to Ralph Willoughby-Foster for the recent LDF briefing meetings - two very well attended meetings which have now launched the public consultation process.

8. Meetings

- 8.1 Penny and I recently attended the Somerset Chamber of Commerce AGM at the Holiday Inn. It was a great chance to catch up and network with many local business people and we are following this up with a meeting with the President of the Chamber of Commerce this week.

9. Corporate Strategy

- 9.1 Work is progressing well on the review of the Corporate Strategy. Conversations began with the three political groups during June / July 2009. The output from these conversations was used to inform a fundamental review of our priorities, which in turn has also informed the Core Council Review and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).
- 9.2 The emerging draft Corporate Strategy (2010/2013) was considered twice by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee during October 2009. The proposal was to abandon our current priorities (ETCHED - Economy, Crime, Transport, Healthy Living, Environment and Delivery) and to focus on the following:-
- Affordable housing
 - Climate Change
 - Creating a Green Knowledge Economy
 - Tackling Deprivation and Community Development.

- 9.3 One of the concerns emerging from Scrutiny is that the Corporate Strategy must articulate the ambitions of Taunton to become a Growth Point. Officers are now addressing this and a proposal will be presented to Corporate Scrutiny on 26 January 2010. This will involve the expansion of 'Green Knowledge Economy' into an aim that encapsulates the wider growth agenda (e.g. housing, green knowledge economy and infrastructure).
- 9.4 Following Scrutiny, the draft Corporate Strategy and MTFP will be considered by the Executive on 3 February 2010 and Full Council on 16 February 2010.

10. Christmas

As this is the last Full Council meeting before Christmas, I would like to wish all Councillors, staff and their families a very happy and peaceful Christmas.

Councillor Ross Henley

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Report of Councillor Alan Paul - Communications

1. External Communications

- 1.1 A range of press releases have been issued in recent weeks covering the Core Council review ; the Scores on the Doors food stars scheme ; Mayoral duties and engagements ; Oxen lane, North Curry ; energize discos ; and conservation areas.
- 1.2 One of the more high profile issues for the Council concerned a decision by the Adjudication Panel of Standards for England to disqualify a former Councillor from standing for election for two years. The case was referred by the Council's Standards Committee.
- 1.3 The Council occasionally has to respond to cases of individuals who wish to publicise a complaint about the Council. For legal reasons, we cannot respond to the individual case in public, but can only refer to relevant Council policies.
- 1.4 Recent issues of Deane Dispatch have featured the work of the Link Partnership in Halcon, the Economic Vision and the Green Knowledge economy. December's edition will include news about Housing, Sort-it Plus and the Core Strategy.

2. Internal Communications

- 2.1 We have worked on communicating the outcome of the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) to Members and staff – the results are due to be made public on 9 December 2009.
- 2.2 The Council's internal newsletter, Footprint, which looks at action being taken on carbon management, was issued in November 2009.
- 2.3 Contributions were provided by Tone Leisure on their actions on cutting emissions, by Facilities Management on actions implemented at The Deane House and from Kevin Toller on the series of workshops held by the Council with Transition Town, Taunton.
- 2.4 Work is underway on the next edition of Involve, the electronic newsletter covering aspects of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy. This is due to be issued early next year.

3. Scrutiny Committee Communications

- 3.1 The Communications Protocol already envisages occasions when key issues from Scrutiny Committees and Task and Finish reviews are included in press releases. The recent Scrutiny training session identified the need to improve internal communications involving the scrutiny function.
- 3.2 I already attend as many Scrutiny Committee meetings as possible and I propose that the role of Communications Portfolio Holder should include regular liaison with the Scrutiny Chairmen to improve communications between the Executive and scrutiny functions.

4. Website Changes

- 4.1 On Monday, 30 November 2009, Taunton Deane Borough Council and Somerset County Council launched their new, closely connected, websites. At the same time a new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system for use by the Customer Contact Team went live.
- 4.2 These initiatives are part of the SAP transformation program and should deliver real benefits to our citizens.
- 4.3 The new websites removes the barriers citizens experience in accessing District and County services on-line. Citizens will still access services either through the existing Taunton Deane web address (www.tauntondeane.gov.uk) or through the County web address (www.somerset.gov.uk).
- 4.4 However, regardless of whichever of these websites is chosen, the citizen, when searching for a topic or service, will be presented with results for any related services provided by either authority. To ensure accountability is maintained, the service pages within each website are clearly branded so it is clear to the citizen when they access a service on-line which of the authorities is responsible for that service.
- 4.5 Much work has taken place by both authorities to update the content of the websites to ensure information is up to date (which in the past has been an issue), is relevant and is written in an appropriate style. The content pages have also been created in a way which makes them easier to find if a customer does not know our web address, and chooses instead, to search for our services using search engines such as Google.
- 4.6 A significant advantage of our new website over our previous one is the ability of our citizens to interact **directly** with the back office systems. For example, they can report a faulty street light online and a service ticket is generated straight away in the back office system. This has advantages in terms of speed and efficiency over the present arrangement whereby a customer would report the street light online, this would generate an e-mail to the Contact Centre Team. The Contact Centre staff would then raise a job in the back office system.

- 4.7 Another improvement for the Citizen, brought about through the direct links between the new website and CRM system, is in the consistency of advice they will be given, regardless of whether they look up information on the website or whether they speak to a member of the Contact Centre.
- 4.8 This is achieved through us and the County Council using the website as our respective single points of service information. This avoids the possibility of the customer receiving one version of a form if they download it from the website and another if they call the Contact Centre and ask for one to be sent.
- 4.9 The same will apply to information about a service. Information concerning fees, services or charges will be identical whether found on the website or relayed to a citizen over the telephone. This avoids the previous situation where Customer Contact staff often had to rely on supplementary paper-based material to help them answer customer enquiries, which can often unknowingly become out of date and may occasionally unwittingly result in out of date information being given out.

Councillor Alan Paul

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Report of Councillor Simon Coles – Planning and Transportation

1. Southwest One

- 1.1 The contract between Taunton Deane and Southwest One is structured to enable the Council to make significant savings in two broad areas. Firstly the contract provides for a year-on-year cumulative reduction of 2.5% in the costs charged by Southwest One to the Council for running the various in-scope services. This represents a significant saving in view of the number and cost of the in-scope services.
- 1.2 Secondly, the Procurement transformation project will identify and deliver significant savings over the contract term. To date £260k of savings have actually been delivered and a further £4m of potential savings have been identified.
- 1.3 Southwest One's Chief Executive, Richard Jones, who many of you will know, is retiring from Southwest One and from IBM on 4 December 2009. Richard has been the Chief Executive of Southwest One since its inception and is well known to all founding partners. Richard has made a huge contribution to Southwest One and will be sadly missed. I am sure we all wish him well in his retirement.
- 1.4 As an interim step, and until a new Chief Executive is appointed, Simon Humberstone will stand in and take over Richard's primary responsibilities. As a member of Southwest One's Main Board, Simon is well placed to ensure continuity following Richard's departure. He will be closely supported by Halleh Missaghi, Southwest One's Director of Service Operations, along with other members of the Southwest One Management Team.
- 1.5 I am pleased to say that a potential successor to Richard has been identified. I hope to be able to confirm an appointment very soon, probably after the Board Meeting on 1 December 2009.

2. Core Strategy

- 2.1 We are in the process of producing a Consultation Document. This consultation document is not a draft plan and does not contain planning policies. It contains a wealth of material derived from engagement with communities and stakeholders as well as technical studies that provide

a baseline of information that underpins the Local Development Framework.

- 2.2 As you are already aware, the statutory Public Consultation under Regulation 25 on the Local Development Framework Core Strategy and Site Allocations is planned for January and February 2010.
- 2.3 Out of this work, a range of issues and options have been identified together with preferred directions for development policy. In parallel with the main consultation document a Sustainability Appraisal of alternative options has been prepared.
- 2.4 Taunton Deane Borough Council, the local Strategic Partnership and partners have been working closely to ensure that community priorities are understood by all service providers. Responses to this consultation are essential to enable us to prepare a Core Strategy with development policies for public consultation in September and October 2010. Members, we welcome your views.

3. New Planning regime for major infrastructure projects

- 3.1 The 2008 Planning Act introduced a new approval process for nationally important infrastructure. This includes the establishment of the Infrastructure Planning commission (IPC) and the publication of National Policy Statements across a range of infrastructure types – energy, transport, water, waste water and hazardous waste.
- 3.2 The Government states that “the aim of the new planning regime is a faster, fairer and more efficient system for the consideration of proposals for nationally significant infrastructure projects”. It remains to be seen whether the new approach successfully meets these aims, but few would disagree that the previous regime which led to protracted and hugely expensive Public Inquiries for proposals such as Sizewell B and the third runway at Heathrow needed radical surgery.
- 3.3 The IPC will be the decision-making body on applications for nationally significant infrastructure projects and will use the National Policy Statements as the primary policy documents upon which these decisions will be made. The first draft policy statements were published on 9 November 2009 and related to ports as well of a suite of documents on energy matters including Fossil Fuel Electricity Generating Infrastructure, Renewable Energy Infrastructure, Gas Supply Infrastructure and Gas and Oil Pipelines, Electricity Networks Infrastructure and Nuclear Power Generation.
- 3.4 The last of these attracted most attention both nationally and locally as it identifies potential sites for new nuclear power stations including at Hinkley Point on the north coast of Somerset. Further information can be found at:-

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/infrastructureplanningwork>

4. Recent Government Consultations

- 4.1 Two significant consultation documents have been published in the last few weeks.
- 4.2 The first proposes to extend permitted development rights to take proposals relating to small scale renewable and low carbon energy technologies and electric vehicle infrastructure out of the planning system.
- 4.3 This will cover domestic wind turbines, air, ground and water source heat pumps, flues for biomass systems and combined heat and power systems as well as electric vehicle charging points in both public and private parking areas. Whilst the Government has suggested certain exceptions relating to such matters as noise, wildlife and historic buildings, these potential changes should act as further encouragement to adopt these technologies more widely.
- 4.4 The second consultation is hot off the press and is a response to recommendations from the Matthew Taylor Report and is aimed at incentivising landowners to bring forward land in rural areas for affordable housing through referral rights (that is by allowing the landowner to retain nomination rights for one or more of the properties subject to certain criteria) and allowing the landowner to retain an interest in the land.

5. Officer reports to the Planning Committee

- 5.1 The amount of information submitted with, and in response to, planning applications is growing year on year. There is therefore an increasing dilemma for officers preparing reports in balancing the need to be comprehensive with a desire to be clear and concise.
- 5.2 It is considered that to better achieve these goals it may be worth amending our current format which can often lead to reports extending to over a hundred pages on major or controversial proposals with key issues for Members being found somewhere amongst a mass of text.
- 5.3 One idea is to start the report with the recommendation and an executive summary followed by an outline of the major determining issues with conditions and consultation responses being attached as an appendix. Members thoughts on how they wish to see information presented in future would be welcomed.

And finally.....

I should like to take this opportunity to wish a The Mayor, Members, officers and their families a very Merry Christmas and a peaceful and prosperous 2010.

Councillor Simon Coles

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Report of Councillor Francesca Smith - Economic Development and the Arts

1. Economic Development Strategy

- 1.1 Work on the Economic Development Strategy is progressing well with all strategic partners aligned to the concept and encouraging the development of a plan to achieve a 'Green Knowledge Economy'. Despite the difficulty of modelling with any certainty what will happen within the UK economy in the short term, a range of economic growth forecasts have been agreed with the South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA) and the Government Office for the South West (GOSW) that do not detract from the aspirational targets underpinning housing growth within the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS).
- 1.2 On the back of this work the Council has been invited to submit an application to the European Entrepreneurial Region (EER) Project Scheme with the support of Somerset County Council. The aim of the EER initiative is to create dynamic, green and entrepreneurial regions throughout Europe and all local and regional authorities across the EU with political competencies in the field of entrepreneurial policy are eligible to apply regardless of size.
- 1.3 The EER supports outstanding regions with an EU quality label for their commitment to the development of entrepreneurial and Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) policy that takes into account the development of a sustainable and low carbon economy, social inclusion, innovation and corporate social responsibility. The regions with the most forward-thinking action plan will be granted the label "Entrepreneurial region of the year".
- 1.4 A draft report, including an Action Plan that identifies 'first wave projects' for delivery between 2010 – 2012, will be circulated in January 2010 in advance of the report being submitted to Community Scrutiny in the end of January.

2. Business Matters Month

- 2.1 A successful programme of events held during October, sponsored by Exchange House and in partnership with Business Link, attracted 99 attendees from 70 businesses. The events included 'Marketing on a Shoestring', 'Selling to Councils', a 'Women in Business' networking event, and 'Make the internet work for you'.
- 2.2 The programme has received recognition from our partners as setting the benchmark for future events across Somerset.

3. Tourism

- 3.1 The 2010 annual tourism brochure for Somerset has been produced and is currently at the printers. The 200,000 print run 'Things to see and do' and the

accommodation guide will be available from the end of November, distributed to Tourist Information Centres through the UK, and will be available for request through the Somerset tourism web site www.visitsomerset.co.uk

- 3.2 The Tourism Officer is working with the Somerset Tourism Partnership (STP) to generate national media coverage. Working with Fresh PR Ltd we have been able to secure large amounts of media coverage not just in print media but also on line and on social networking sites.
- 3.3 Working with the STP training skills coordinator, Taunton Deane tourism businesses have taken part in recent courses including 'Welcome Host', 'Marketing Skills' and 'How to improve the quality of your marketing tools'. By up-skilling tourism business owners we aim to improve the quality of the tourism offer to encourage repeat visitors and attract new customers.
- 3.4 STP has been working with the Somerset Economic Regeneration Directors Group to draw up a new delivery plan and secure funding for 2010 - 2012.

4. Taunton Tourist Information Centre (TIC)

- 4.1 The Taunton Tourist Information Centre (TIC) has had another busy few months.
- 4.2 The office is currently housing for the first time the Cards for Good Causes Charity Christmas Card Shop – selling cards and goods for over 30 local and national charities. The Cards for Good Causes organisation is currently celebrating 50 years of operation, it is proving to be a great partnership and is well worth a visit!
- 4.3 The Ticket and Travel Centre are both very brisk – income is above target and amongst the events we have recently been selling for has included the Taunton Thespians first visit to the Tacchi Morris Arts Centre. Tickets on sale in the run up to Christmas include performances by Amici with Orchestra West, Collegium Singers, Phoenix Singers, Taunton Sinfonietta and the West Somerset Singers. Berry's Coaches will also be launching their new Spring day tour programme in the office during December.
- 4.4 The office continues to support numerous local artists and cottage industries selling handmade cards, jewellery, paintings and pottery. Bookings for the display units are now limited until the start of 2011.
- 4.5 The TIC Manager is currently working with the Tourism Officer and the Growth and Development Manager on a TIC Review following the Core Council Review, these proposals will be presented to Corporate Scrutiny and Executive Committee in the New Year.

5. Project Taunton

Firepool

- 5.1.1 Plans are being finalised to take forward on-site demolition (which should start before the end of this year) and the acquisition of remaining third party properties is being progressed within budget limitations.

Cricket Club

- 5.2.1 The Pegasus development and new stand is now complete. Somerset Square, including the area outside the Brewhouse, will be completed before the end of the year. There are some outstanding 'snagging' type issues and this is the subject of discussions with the contractor. Taunton's Mayor, Cllr. Bob Bowrah, will officially open Somerset Square on 14 December.
- 5.2.2. The construction of the Somerset County Cricket Club Club Hub is complete and work to convert the pavilion to a 600 seat conference facility has started with completion planned at the end of March 2010.

Brewhouse Theatre

- 5.3.1 An architectural feasibility study has been commissioned for the incremental extension and conversion of the building and this work is well progressed. The architects are giving presentations to the Brewhouse AGM and the Cultural Partnership among others.
- 5.3.2 A structural survey of the building to ensure that the costs and liabilities associated with the building are properly understood has been completed. The survey is now in the possession of the Chairman of Brewhouse Trustees and Taunton Deane's Economic Development Manager.

Coal Orchard

- 5.4.1 The Project Taunton team hope to be in a position to start preparing a brief early next year and initial discussions have already taken place. It is intended to use Savills, Bristol to assist in this work because they are already working on the High Street proposals and it will be important to have a consistent and complementary approach.

Museum

- 5.5.1 The main contractor is on site for the refurbishment of the Museum and reopening is planned for April 2011

Castle Green and Goodland Gardens:

- 5.6.1 Work is likely to start on site at Castle Green early in the New Year, although the reduction in Growth Points funding might mean a rethink of the specification.
- 5.6.2 This has proved to be an extremely complicated project because of the number of different owners affected, the different interests represented and the sheer number of design, transport, ecological, environmental and archaeological issues requiring a resolution.

Tangier

- 5.7.1 Midas have delayed the start of their scheme due to the market conditions but we understand that they have approached the Homes and Communities Agency for Kick Start funding.
- 5.7.2 Work on the Third Way Road and bridge will begin just after Christmas

Bus station

- 5.8.1 Meetings to discuss the future of the bus station have started.

Retail

- 5.9.1 EPF has completed the £3.5m refurbishment of The Old Market Centre.
- 5.9.2 An Exclusivity Agreement with Taunton Deane (as the other principal land owner) has been signed. This gives EPF 12 months to satisfy themselves that they can design a workable scheme and agree Heads of Terms with the Council. By the end of 18 months a development/land sale agreement must be exchanged.
- 5.9.3 The programme put together by EPF's project managers suggests that initial design propositions will be available to be tested and appraised as early as next January/February.

Longrun Farm

- 5.10.1 Swan Paul have been instructed to prepare plans for the landscaping of the land at Longrun Farm, part of which will fulfil planning obligations. Good progress is being made with this work and a submission to Access to Nature for funding has been made. A well attended stakeholder information meeting took place at the Genesis Centre on 27 October and a planning application has been submitted.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish all staff and Members
a very Happy Christmas and Peaceful New Year.

Councillor Fran Smith

Council Meeting – 8 December 2009

Report of Councillor Richard Lees – Sports, Parks and Leisure

1. Community Leisure

- 1.1 The Christmas edition of The Deano is being produced ready to send to every primary school aged child in Taunton Deane, plus libraries and sports centres, a copy will be published on the Council's web site.
- 1.2 At their October meeting the Joint County and District Panel for Voluntary Village Halls and Community Centres received capital grant applications from Nynehead Village Hall, Fitzhead Tithe Barn, Neroche Parish Hall and West Bagborough for inclusion in their provisional programme for 2010/2011.
- 1.3 A final decision on these applications will be made at the Committee's next meeting in March 2010. Capital grant applications to this Committee are joint funded between Somerset County Council and Taunton Deane Borough Council.

2. Play

2.1 Wheels Park

- 2.1.1 A preferred supplier has now been agreed for the contract to design and build the new Wheels Park in Hamilton Gault Park, Taunton. The project is awaiting the imminent outcome of a Lottery bid for a further £50,000 to add to the £130,000 existing budget prior to commencement in January 2010.
- 2.1.2 The contractor is working with young people to fine-tune the design of what will be a "state of the art" wheels park for skateboarders, bmx riders and in-line skaters.

2.2 Play Spaces

- 2.2.1 Tenders have been invited for the next two Playbuilder funded play spaces – Lyngford Park and Hamilton Gault Park, both in Taunton. The successful tenderer will complete both play facilities in March 2010. The third Playbuilder funded site in Oake has already been tendered and will be completed in a similar timeframe.

2.3 Strategic Documents

2.3.1 Four important strategies have been considered by Scrutiny and will have been to the Executive by the time this report comes before Full Council. All will ensure that the Council continues to manage its leisure assets to maximise community benefit and that it secures adequate new facilities for the future.

2.3.2 Strategies for Green Spaces, Playing Pitches, Allotments and Built Sports Facilities will complete the suite of leisure strategies with Play and Community Halls strategies already adopted. The strategies will be available for public consultation in the New Year and will become integrated into the Local Development Framework.

2.4 Longrun Meadows and the River Tone Corridor

2.4.1 A first stage application has been submitted to Natural England for a Lottery grant to deliver a project improving access to natural spaces along the river for the people of Taunton Deane with a special focus on the communities of North Taunton and Halcon. The outcome is expected in late December and if we are successful, the second round application will be submitted to meet the 4 May 2010 deadline.

3. Parks

3.1 Phase one of the sensory garden in Vivary Park is nearly completed. This has included the construction of all of the paths, fountain, raised timber beds and planting. Wood carvings that the school children have made, seating and signage are still to be installed.

3.2 Once this phase of the work is complete the sensory garden will be open to the public early next year. The second phase of the work involves making the artwork that the GCSE students have designed. Sponsors for each piece of artwork will need to be found in order that we can put the artwork into the garden.

4. Tone Leisure (Taunton Deane) Limited Activities

Sports and Health Development

4.1 Soul Walks - Let Your Feet Do The Talking!

4.1.1 Tone Leisure supported the Soul Walks initiative to celebrate World Mental Health Day this year on 10 October 2009, to promote the benefit of walking for positive mental health and well being. Soul Walks is an initiative co-ordinated by the Somerset Physical Activity Group and is a series of health walks that have a unique feature to promote positive mental health. Tone Leisure provided four health walks over two weeks, which saw 156 individual participations.

4.2 Health Walking in Taunton Deane

4.2.1 Tone Leisure's Walk Well in Taunton Health Walk scheme has achieved re-accreditation status from the Walking for Health Initiative. The re-accreditation badge gives recognition that the scheme is an excellent scheme, meeting safety and insurance standards, offering led health walks for beginners and providing basic monitoring information. The scheme continues to be successful, with walks being entirely volunteer-led, attracting an average of 28 participations per walk and 80 new walkers in 2009/2010 to date.

4.3 Taunton Foot Anstey Junior Aquathlon

4.3.1 101 children took part in the Aquathlon at Queen's College on Sunday, 27 September 2010. The children, who were between the ages of 8 and 16 years, competed in their age groups by swimming and running over various distances. The race has been sponsored by Foot Anstey Solicitors for the last three years and they have just confirmed their sponsorship for 2010.

4.4 FANS (Free Access for National Sportspeople)

4.4.1 The FANS scheme assists elite sportspeople to achieve their full potential by reducing the financial burden of training costs by giving them free access to Tone Leisure's fitness and swimming facilities. FANS was launched across Tone Leisure sites in February and now has 6 people on its Taunton scheme in the sports of rugby, triathlon, swimming, shooting and tennis.

4.5 Sport Unlimited

4.5.1 Sport Unlimited is a Sport England funded programme that is targeted at youngsters who may have some interest in sport, but are not particularly engaged with community or club sport. It is based around 10 week, high quality Sport Unlimited taster sessions designed to inspire youngsters to sign up for longer term participation in local clubs and in the community.

4.5.2 Tone Leisure have been delivering new teenage fitness sessions as part of the Sport Unlimited programme at Blackbrook and Wellsprings that started in September 2009, with the aim that the young people will continue to be active and take part after the 10 weeks.

5. Facility News

5.1 Wellsprings Leisure Centre

Junior Activities

5.1.1 Parkour Street Running taster sessions have been very well supported and another course may be planned for the future. The new activities

for 2010 are: Brazilian Soccer Skills for 5+ years (the next big craze in football); No More Stabilisers (learn how to ride a bike in 6 weeks).

Events

5.1.2 Wellsprings welcomed back the amazing 'Magic of Motown' event, which was yet again a sell out. The evening saw hits from an array of stars such as Diana Ross, Lionel Richie, The Four Tops and many more. Throughout December the centre will come to life again for the amazing Christmas parties. All five dates have now sold out. The New Year will see many events such as pantomimes, motown, ABBA and Jethro.

5.2 St. James Street Baths

Operational Difficulties

5.2.1 Throughout the summer of 2009 St. James Street Baths experienced extensive difficulties with pool plant failure and water quality issues in the small teaching pool. This led to the pool being closed, with much of the programme having to relocate into the main pool. Inevitably this caused public disruption and inconvenience.

Free Swimming Lessons

5.2.2. Through Tone Leisure's work with the Amateur Swimming Association's (ASA) free swimming lessons initiative it has been possible to offer 6 hours of free swimming lessons to the 50+ market. This has enabled the pool to promote the benefits of learning to swim to an age group that may never have learnt without the financial support offered by the ASA. To date, feedback from the group has been extremely positive.

5.3 Station Road Pool

Free Swimming

5.3.1 Station Road Pool had a very busy summer with free swimming proving popular with both the target groups. The closure of Sedgemoor Splash in Bridgwater at the end of August 2009 no doubt also influenced the high number of swimmers.

Free Swimming Lessons

5.3.2 The pool has been able to gain some funding from the Government's Free Swimming Initiative and is currently holding two six-week sessions of group swimming lessons to people aged 11 and over and who cannot swim. The sessions are provided free to the community in a bid to get more people into swimming.

5.3.3 Both sessions have proved popular and there is hope that the funding will continue into the New Year. Once the course is finished it is hoped to convert people onto the existing swimming lesson programme or encourage the new participants to swim on a regular basis.

Swimathon

5.3.4 Confirmation has been received from the Swimathon organisation that Station Road Pool raised a staggering £7,633 from this year's event, which took place in April. It is held annually at the pool to raise money for The Marie Curie Cancer Care and local cancer charities. Tone Leisure has signed up again for next year's event.

5.4 Wellington Sports Centre

Free Swimming

5.4.1 Free Swimming is as popular as ever with around 1,764 visits in October 2009. Tone Leisure also introduced three Free Swimming Courses to non-swimmers. Both the adult and 60+ sessions are fully booked.

Building Developments

5.4.2 A number of building improvements are currently being undertaken at Wellington Sports Centre. Progress has been made in preparing the new Bfit Studio. The old bar area has been completely removed and a new modern studio area created. These works are due for completion by the end of the year, in readiness for the Bfit project launch in the New Year. Other works include upgrading the viewing area in the upper hall and refurbishing the family changing area.

Funding Update

5.4.3 Taunton Deane Borough Council/Tone Leisure have successfully progressed to the final stage of a funding bid to the free swimming capital modernisation programme, for £350,000. The final bid is to be submitted by February. If successful, the funding will be used to modernise the pool hall, plant and changing rooms. The funding would greatly improve the overall swimming experience and help to retain swimmers from the free swimming initiative.

5.5 Blackbrook Pavilion and Taunton Tennis Centre

Programme Developments

5.5.1 Teen Gym sessions have been successfully launched at Blackbrook over the Autumn, which have proved to be very popular.

Building Developments

5.5.2 The Young People's gym activities are now being incorporated into the main studio and fitness areas, following consultation with the young people taking part in the activities. This has left an opportunity for the first floor area, which is being developed into a ladies only toning tables area. The necessary conversion works are being completed over the winter, and the new toning tables studio will be launched in January 2010. It is anticipated that this new facility will help attract less active customers into the facility.

Events

5.5.3 The Aegon British Tour took place during the last week of October 2009, with 125 entries (a record in recent years).

Funding Success

5.5.4 Funding of £15,000 has been awarded to Team Taunton Academy (the partnership between Tone Leisure's Taunton Tennis Club and the Richard Huish Tennis Academy) to develop the training of its best junior players. £10,000 will go directly to Taunton Tennis Club for players aged 11 and under and to identify and develop new talent.

Coaching and Training

5.5.5 16 parents attended a training session on 5 October 2009 to learn how to help train their children. Parents were put through their paces by Head Coach, Simon Woodhill, and Tennis Manager, Michele Hewitt, learning the fundamentals around all the basic shots and tactics in tennis.

5.5.6 16 trainee coaches attended a UKCC (United Kingdom Coaching Certificate) training course at Taunton Tennis Centre on 17 and 18 October 2009. One of the club's youngest coaches, Jon Warren, completed and passed the course.

New Activities

5.5.7 An Open Evening for new adult players was held on 12 October 2009 to welcome them into the club and to tempt them into trying a new sport. 28 players attended.

All that remains for me to say is that I would like to wish the staff who support myself as the portfolio holder and all of the Council Members a very enjoyable Christmas period.

Councillor Richard Lees.

Council Meeting – 8 December 2009

Report of Councillor Tim Slattery – Environmental Services

1. The Food and Health and Safety Team (FHST)

- 1.1 A local bakery in Wellington accepted a simple caution after they manufactured and sold a product with a moth baked inside it.
- 1.2 A prohibition notice was served on a local pool due to concerns over the safety of the water, which remained closed for several weeks over the summer. It has now reopened.
- 1.3 A local farm was served with a prohibition notice to stop them operating a child's ride unsafely. The notice has been appealed and is currently subject to an Employment Tribunal.
- 1.4 A prohibition notice was also recently served on a large local business for the dangerous use of a fork lift truck.
- 1.5 Investigations are ongoing into breaches of food hygiene legislation at an Indian restaurant in Wellington. This is likely to result in a prosecution or simple caution.
- 1.6 Investigations are ongoing into breaches of food hygiene legislation at a pizza takeaway in Wellington, which is particularly interesting as the team are engaging the services of an interpreter.
- 1.7 A total of 10 enforcement notices have been recently served on a warehouse in Taunton.
- 1.8 A Business Advice Open Day, organised by HM Revenues and Customs, was recently held at the Holiday Inn, Taunton. Members from the FHST and Licensing Teams manned a stand offering advice to local businesses.
- 1.9 A Vacuum Packing Course hosted by Taunton Deane was attended by officers from the other Local Authorities across Somerset. This is essential training following the Pennington Report which was issued after the public Inquiry into the e. coli outbreak in South Wales.
- 1.10 A local health club has been offered a simple caution for allowing an unsuitable stool to be used by its staff, resulting in injuries to several staff members.
- 1.11 **Preventative /proactive work:-**

- In 2007/08, an estimated 2.1 million individuals were suffering from ill health they believe was caused or made worse by their job.
- Up to 70% of hairdressers suffer from work-related skin damage such as dermatitis at some point during their career – most cases are absolutely preventable.

1.12 **Asbestos the Hidden Killer Campaign - Every week 20 tradesmen die from asbestos-related disease -**

- 1.13 The aim of the Hidden Killer Campaign was to raise awareness of the dangers of asbestos to general tradesmen, plumbers, electricians and joiners and inform them of the potential risk of working on buildings that might contain asbestos.
- 1.14 Taunton Deane's contributions played a huge part in realising the success of the campaign. Our Team delivered asbestos awareness training sessions at local colleges to students and lecturers of building related topics (building technicians, carpenters, plumbers, electricians, engineers and painters and decorators).

2. Environmental Protection Team

Seagull Control Programme 2009

- 2.1 Taunton Deane continues to use plastic egg substitutes as an effective control method for urban gulls. Gulls are particularly aggressive during the breeding season (defending their chicks) and cause general nuisance (localised noise/fouling). The plastic eggs work by tricking the gulls into incubating them instead of the real ones which are taken away. During this time the gulls are relatively quiet and abandon the nest at the end of the season. After using the plastic eggs for 2-3 seasons, the gulls relocate their nesting site elsewhere.
- 2.2 The aim for 2009 was to build on the success of the previous year and minimise the number of visits to premises without impacting on the success of the egg replacement programme, thus making the most effective use of officer time/resources. Based on previous experience, visits were scheduled to coincide just before the incubation limits of the eggs were reached (the first visit was 1 May 2009 – same as last year).

Facts & Figures

- 2.3 A total of 126 eggs were collected/deployed. The programme was 100% successful in that 56 nests were treated, preventing 56 pairs of gulls from successfully breeding. 55 nests or more was the target to prevent an

increase of 30% in the predicted population - based on a gull population of 182 pairs in 2005.

- 2.4 It is worth noting that since 2005, the estimated population of gulls in Taunton has doubled, with a population around 350 breeding pairs. This growth is in line with other towns/cities in the South-West Region. However, the population of breeding gulls in the treated areas of Taunton is still decreasing with the growth in breeding numbers relocating to the other areas outside the town centre (for example Priorswood Industrial Estate).
- 2.5 It is worth mentioning that our current pest control service which operates the gull control programme is being reviewed as part of the Core Council Review. One of the options proposed is the outsourcing of this service. At this stage it is unknown if this will go ahead and if the nominated contractor would provide a gull control programme. If gull control is no longer applied to the town centre, gull numbers/nuisance and subsequent complaints will inevitably increase in future years.

3. SORT IT Plus Roll out

- 3.1 As you will be aware, SORT IT Plus is the addition of weekly collections of plastic bottles and cardboard to the existing SORT IT collections.
- 3.2 New customers will be delivered a leaflet and calendar along with a second (black) recycling box for plastic bottles, food and drinks cans and cardboard, and the existing recycling box will be used for paper, glass bottles and jars, foil, clothes, shoes and car batteries.
- 3.3 Customers currently on the existing trial rounds are, with the exception of the round in Comeytrove, at present receiving fortnightly plastic bottles and cardboard collections. They will receive a leaflet and calendar explaining that plastic bottles and cardboard will be collected weekly from the first collection date, and that cans are now required to be placed in the same box as plastic bottles. A sticker will be provided to remind residents of what should be placed in which box.
- 3.4 The existing Comeytrove rounds will be delivered a leaflet and calendar informing them that the current weekly collection scheme is now permanent.
- 3.5 It has been necessary to make an adjustment to the collection day of one round – the existing West Monkton trial area. This is to ensure operational efficiency, and for this round, the recycling and food waste will temporarily change from a Monday to a Wednesday, with a view to this being changed back in a later phase when more households are introduced. Refuse and garden waste on this round will be unchanged and will remain fortnightly on Wednesdays.

3.6 As with all best laid plans, we have experienced some local problems in the Comeytrowe area which the Officers at the Partnership are resolving.

3.7 I offer my apologies to Ward Members and Residents for any inconvenience caused.

4. Bring banks

4.1 I am sure that Members are aware that in order to support the introduction of SORT IT Plus, Taunton Deane took the decision to transfer resources from the bring banks. The reduction in the bring bank budget for 2009/2010 meant that it was necessary to reduce the number of bring sites in Taunton Deane no later than the second quarter of the year to avoid an overspend that would eat into the resources that the Council had made available for SORT IT Plus.

4.2 I appreciate that this meant a reduction in bring sites with the expansion of the kerbside service but in the circumstances it was unavoidable and this point was made to both the Scrutiny Committee and the Executive at the time the decisions were made.

4.3 We have tried to ensure that the main sites with facilities for paper/card and plastic bottles have been retained and in the Wellington area these are at North Street Car Park and at Rockwell Green. In addition to these sites a full range of facilities are provided at the Poole Household Waste Recycling Centre. (The site at the sports centre was subject to repeated vandalism and it is possible we would have had to remove this site irrespective of the resources issue).

4.4 It is inevitable that there will be some transfer of materials from those sites that have been removed to those that remain and this may cause some capacity problems in the short term. However, we are working with our contractors to add capacity and increase service frequency to overcome these problems.

5. Fly Tipping

5.1 A crackdown by many Councils on people illegally dumping waste has resulted in a 7% rise in prosecutions this year and £19m of savings.

5.2 The DEFRA fly-capture database figures, show that Councils, including Taunton Deane, have prosecuted 2,000 people for fly-tipping this year, up from 1,871 last year. The amount Councils are having to spend clearing up illegal waste has fallen from £73.8 in 2007/2008 to £54.9m in 2008/2009.

5.3 These figures show Councils are getting ever tougher on the criminals who blight our landscape and pollute the countryside. A no-nonsense approach is

helping to keep public places clean and safe as well as save money, with less having to be spent clearing up after mindless criminals.

- 5.4 Fly-tipping is one of the things residents complain to Members and our Council about most. Illegally dumped waste is a big problem and our Council is actively clamping down on this illegal problem. We are striving to keep the Borough clean, safe and tidy and we need the support of the whole community to meet that objective.

6. Licensing Unit - Public Safety

- 6.1 On Tuesday, 24 November 2009 the Licensing Unit took part in a joint taxi enforcement exercise with Avon and Somerset Police and the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA).
- 6.2 In total 29% of the vehicles tested failed the test to one degree or other. 45 licensed hackney carriages were inspected, four of which were suspended and a further nine given rectification notices.
- 6.3 Six motorcycle Police Officers stopped the taxis in and around Taunton starting shortly after the school runs had ended. Each vehicle was instructed to attend VOSA's testing facility at Norton Fitzwarren. On arrival they were initially checked by VOSA Inspectors then by Licensing Officers from Taunton Deane.
- 6.4 Suspension notices were issued for two unsealed meters, faulty brake lights and a missing clutch pedal rubber. All four vehicles were re-presented for testing later in the day and notices were lifted.
- 6.5 The nine rectification notices were for lesser failures such as minor accident damage, missing no smoking signs, poor levels of cleanliness, missing first aid kit, a bent track rod end and faulty windscreen washers. These vehicles were either re-tested later in the day or given a specified period of time in order to comply.
- 6.6 In addition to the measurable shortcomings that we found, a small number of vehicles took some time to reach the testing station after being directed there by the Police. In all these cases, by the time the vehicles found their way there, they had tyres that were so new that the painted tread markings were still visible. Whereas we were unable to prove the condition of any tyres that

may have been fitted beforehand, the test ensured that they were legal within a few hours of being stopped.

Councillor Tim Slattery

Council Meeting – 8 December 2009

Report of Councillor Hazel Prior-Sankey – Housing Services

1. New Raglan Homes

- 1.1 It is pleasing to note that sixteen new Raglan Housing Association rented flats become available to applicants on Homefinder Somerset before Christmas. The development was originally open market but in the changed market conditions the Council's Enabling Team encouraged Raglan to purchase the two-bedroom flats, and provided a modest financial contribution.
- 1.2 This is one of several examples where housing associations, supported by the Enabling Team, have taken advantage of market conditions to increase the supply of social rented housing.

2. Mortgage Approvals Double, but...

- 2.1 "A doubling of mortgage approvals sounds like more evidence that the housing market mini boom will continue", reports *Inside Housing*. However, the magazine warns that the latest statistics produced by the British Bankers Association (BBA) show that most of the increase in approvals occurred in the period up to mid summer, and there has been a marked slowdown since then. The slowdown may feed through and affect house prices later in the year.

3. Tenant Services Management Board

- 3.1 Good progress is being made with the creation of the new Tenant Services Management Board by April 2010. The next planned event is to be held on the 30 November 2009 at the cricket ground, where officers and tenants will be working together to plan and agree activities to be held over the first quarter of next year.

4. Tenant Services Authority – New Regulator, New Standards

- 4.1 The Tenant Services Authority (TSA) is introducing a new system of regulation for social housing providers (such as housing associations and local authorities) in England from 1 April 2010. This will implement the powers given to the TSA in the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008. The TSA is consulting on whether their proposals best meet the objectives set for them by Parliament.
- 4.2 Taunton Deane's Housing Service will engage council tenants in the consultation process for the third and final time in late January 2010. Tenants will be given the opportunity to influence how the TSA implements its new

powers. Consultation responses are to be received at the Tenant Services Authority by 5 February 2010.

5. Recession Hits Private Tenants

- 5.1 Research by Shelter and the Money Advice Trust highlights the struggle that those in the private rented sector are facing. A new survey has shown that 90% of lower income private tenants are struggling financially, compared to just 51% in a similar survey in 2006.
- 5.2 Government and media attention has focussed on the problems of homeowners, and the plight of private tenants with low incomes but paying high rents has gone largely ignored.

6. Decent Homes for All

- 6.1 Taunton Deane will celebrate the achievement of the Decent Homes standard early in the New Year, well ahead of time. Some tenants have refused the work for their own reasons, and robust arrangements are in place to bring these homes up to the standard on re-let. Tenants are also able to change their mind and have the work carried out at a later date.
- 6.2 Taunton Deane Borough Council is one of 114 authorities managing its own stock with a traditional Housing Department, and it is interesting to see how such Councils are progressing with the target in comparison to transferred stock and those managed by Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs). Last year 20% of Local Authority managed stock was non-decent, compared with 31% of ALMO stock and 12% of transferred stock.
- 6.3 I think we can be proud that Taunton Deane will deliver this target on time for our tenants, having listened to their wishes in the stock transfer vote.

Councillor Hazel Prior-Sankey

Council Meeting – 8 December 2009

Report of Councillor Nicola Wilson – Corporate Resources

1. Southwest One Customer Contact Highlights

1.1 During October and November Southwest One Customer Contact staff have been busy preparing for the launch of the new SAP CRM system on 30 November 2009. Many staff have been involved in the development and testing of the new system and all team members have undergone detailed training in readiness for the implementation. The feedback from the trainees has been very positive and the teams are looking forward to using SAP.

1.2 Despite this huge level of activity over recent weeks, the service provided to Taunton Deane callers has continued to be excellent as shown in the table below. This has been underpinned by the temporary Customer Service Advisors that were recruited to ensure that service levels remained at a consistent level during the testing and training phase. The Qmax resource planning tool has also enabled far more accurate forecasting and scheduling of staff than would have previously been possible.

Statistical Information:

MONTH	Oct	Nov To 26th
CALLS OFFERED	13878	11986
ABANDONED % [Target less than 5%]	3.6%	1.8%
G.O.S.% [Target 80%]	87%	93%
% ANSWERED AT 1ST P.O.C.	95%	94%

1.3 A total of 5644 customers have been helped at The Deane House main and planning receptions and 1292 people visited Wellington Community Office. The team have handled 434 Web and Email enquiries during this time.

1.4 The automated customer satisfaction survey tool is being tested on the Taunton Deane lines and initial results are very positive with 93% rating the service as satisfactory, good or very good.

1.5 Future Activities

- Produce a report on the possible use of an 03 telephone number range for Taunton Deane callers which will provide improved business continuity protection in the event that it is not possible to operate from The Deane House for any reason;
- Go live with SAP CRM on Monday, 30 November 2009;

- Ensure that all staff are fully conversant with SAP CRM (post go live) and arrange additional support and training where necessary;
- Conduct a post implementation review of SAP CRM to prioritise and remedy any defects; and
- Finalise arrangements for the full implementation of the external customer satisfaction survey with the Taunton Deane Client.

2. Update on progress with Investors in People (IIP) Action Plan

2.1 A summary of the latest position is as follows:-

Completion of Performance Review and Employee Development (PREDS) reviews

2.2 Managers are scheduling in reviews for all staff. Reviews are to be completed by end of December 2009

People Management Framework

2.3 All senior managers have been trained to use the Management Competency Framework (part of the PM framework) and it is planned to use this as part of PRED review round for managers. Managers who will be involved in receiving reviews within the Competency Framework have also received familiarisation training. The People Management Framework introduces a new competency framework for managers and reinforces the need to hold regular one-to-one meetings and team meetings

Team Meetings

2.4 Managers have sent schedules of future meeting dates. A system is about to be set up to enable a central diary of all team meetings to be held by CMT. The quality and coverage of team meetings is being gradually assessed and feedback from staff sought.

IIP Working Group

2.5 Two meetings of this group have been held and a number of issues have been raised by members of the group – some positive and some which will require further action and discussion.

Related areas of activity

Management Development

2.6 The managers in the Corporate and Strategy theme are working through the assessment phase of this management development program. The next phase will be for managers to complete personal development plans to share with their managers and to undertake development activities and/or courses to help them progress.

Mentoring

- 2.7 This will complement the management development mentioned above and is about to start. People have been matched and Managers trained in mentoring skills

Training Plans and budgets

- 2.8 Training budget allocations have now been agreed and managers notified. Training plans for 2010/2011 have been requested from managers for submission by 20 December 2009. This will then form the basis for the budget allocation for next year.

Skills Audit

- 2.9 A report has been produced by SCAT which is being considered.

Theme Working

- 2.10 An initial meeting of the Managers in the Corporate and Strategy Theme has established progress so far and some thoughts and proposals have been produced in a report for CMT to consider

Support for Core Council Review

- 2.11 Training in application and interview skills for people involved in the next phase of the Core Council Review has been delivered.

3. Performance and Client Team

The Performance and Client Team covers three specific areas. An update for each is provided below:-

3.1 Corporate Performance Reporting and Improvement

- 3.1.1 The new performance monitoring processes agreed by the Executive in September 2009 are in the process of being implemented. As part of this a new service, planning process and a template has been drawn up and agreed with CMT. Workshops have been arranged with both CMT and the combined Executive and Corporate Scrutiny members to involve them in the development of a new corporate performance 'dashboard'. The aim of the dashboard is to make corporate performance reporting far more 'user friendly'

- 3.1.2 A Corporate Action Plan has been developed which pulls together into one document the improvement actions identified as a result of various inspections. Progress against this plan will be monitored by the December Corporate Governance Committee.

- 3.1.3 The Comprehensive Area Assessment result is due to be released on 9 December 2009. This will contain the results of both the Area and Organisational Assessments. Members will be aware that the Organisational Assessment, which directly relates to Taunton Deane, is now a much harder test and it would be unrealistic to expect the authority to be a 'top performer'.

3.2 Client Function

3.2.1 The Client function manages the contracts that cover the Southwest One, Somerset Waste and Tone Leisure partnerships. The majority of the focus is on the Southwest One partnership in view of its size and complexity. Monitoring of service delivery and performance indicators continues to take place on a monthly basis. However, the team is currently looking at ways of improving our contract management processes.

3.3 Managing the Southwest One transformation projects

3.3.1 The team manages delivery, from Taunton Deane's perspective, of the various transformation projects being undertaken by Southwest One.

3.3.2 SAP Back Office System - much progress has been made in resolving the issues resulting from the first release of the SAP system in April 2009. The backlog of payments to suppliers has been cleared and payments are now being made within the appropriate timescales. Posting of payments to accounts such as Council Tax, Business Rates and rents has been working smoothly for some time now. Full debt recovery processes were resumed in respect of all three back in the summer. We have also now met with staff in all services to discuss and capture their outstanding issues. However, there remain key problems with the level of sundry debt arrears and with our ability to record all budget information within SAP. Southwest One are in the process of implementing plans to resolve both.

3.3.3 SAP Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system and website – the new CRM and website are scheduled to go-live on 30 Nov 2009. This is a week later than originally anticipated, but the delay was deemed necessary in order to allow for additional development and testing.

3.3.4 Procurement project – the procurement transformation project has already delivered in the region of £250k in actual savings. However, we are behind target which is largely due to delays in recruiting key personnel both within Southwest One and the Performance and Client Team. The key posts have now been filled and work has started with Southwest One to get us back on track.

3.3.5 Additionally, we are working with Southwest One to identify and deliver a plan for undertaking work with small and medium sized enterprises (SME's). A progress report will be made to Corporate Scrutiny in February 2010.

4. Revenues and Benefits

4.1 During October, the Service successfully ran a mass recalculation of Housing Benefit following the decision to reduce rents from April 2009. November brought further challenges due to the implementation of revised disregards in child benefit and capital limits when calculating claims. As a consequence the number of enquiries in the last two months has been higher than usual but staff still managed exceptionally good response turnaround times in dealing with both visitors to The Deane House and telephone calls.

4.2 The second Revenues and Benefits Customer Forum was well received, with an increase in the number of attendees (despite appalling weather on the actual day!). The teams worked with colleagues to provide speakers on the Winter Warmth scheme and were able to demonstrate customer led service delivery in revising letters following feedback on how to improve understandability and tone.

As the year draws to a close, efforts to collect Council Tax and Business Rates have meant increased recovery action in attempts to meet challenging performance targets. The service is in the process of finalising work with the Audit Commission for their inspection of our £30m+ Housing and Council Tax Benefit subsidy claim for 2008/2009. Initial results appear to be very encouraging showing the checks that are undertaken are robust.

Councillor Nicola Wilson

Council Meeting – 8 December 2009

Report of Councillor Alan Wedderkopp – Community Leadership

1. Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP)

- 1.1 The CDRP discussed the possibility of merging the structures for the entire County to bring together the strategic work into a more cohesive whole. This would allow tactical and operational decisions to be made at a local level, whilst leaving the strategic decisions that affect the entire county at the appropriate level. This is still subject to discussion and in the mean time, the three western district council areas previously covered by CDRP's will continue to work together in an informal merger.
- 1.2 The Partners and Communities Together (PACT) process is being reinvigorated. The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) will consider a proposal in January 2010, which will be ratified by the Community Scrutiny Panel. The successful approach in Wellington (incorporating West Deane) is the model upon which this will be based.
- 1.3 The paintball project has endured a difficult time, but discussions to bring in a new partner to deliver this are at an advanced stage. The project will remain at Hestercombe and it is anticipated that this will be active again from spring 2010.
- 1.4 Community Justice in Taunton will also be taking new cases from a similar time. It is expected that a coordinator will be appointed by the partnership shortly and that training will take place in January 2010. An office space with the Fire Service has been explored as a possibility.
- 1.5 The very successful Energise discos are changing from December with a new age range and time being introduced to ensure youngsters enjoy a safe night out.
- 1.6 The Christmas disco at Shout, being held on Tuesday, 22 December 2009, will start at 6.30pm and run for three hours until 9.30pm and the upper age limit is being changed from 16-years-old to 15-years-old.
- 1.7 Next Spring further changes are being planned to make the discos member-only with a special Energize membership scheme being set up. Membership application forms are available now. Youngsters with a card

will not only be able to get into the discos but be eligible for discounts in Taunton Town Centre stores and freebies at Energize activity days.

2. Recession Relief Fund

- 2.1 The Council recently provided a Recession Relief Fund totalling £36,000. The money was set aside for organisations that provide activities to help local communities deal with the effects of the current economic recession.
- 2.2 £15,000 has already been released to support the work of Priorswood Resource Centre and the Halcon Link Partnership.
- 2.3 A further £5,000 is proposed for the Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) in order for it to expand its present services. £5,600 to Taunton Transition Town in order to deliver five rural projects and Ten Radio to receive £5,864 within the requirements of a service level agreement.
- 2.4 The money will be used to fund projects such as strengthening voluntary groups through closer working with local businesses; a range of pilot community projects focussing on building resilience and supporting local firms; and a series of discussions with local communities and businesses within the West Deane area to help identify rural recession impacts, resulting in broadcasts to stimulate further discussion and to provide advice.

3. Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)

- 3.1 The LSP recently appointed Penny James as Chairman. Penny will have a key role in leading the LSP as it now embarks on a review of its priorities, structures and ways of working. The South West Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (SW RIEP) will be providing guidance and assistance.
- 3.2 In addition to the review, the LSP will be focussing on the following areas in the New Year:-
 - Deprivation
 - Climate Change
 - Infrastructure Delivery (working closely with Taunton Deane and Project Taunton)
- 3.3 The LSP has recently had its Investment Plan ratified by the Somerset Strategic Partnership. This will now release funds for the following projects (all of which will assist with delivering outcomes within the Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement):-

- Priorswood Resource Centre: £8,500 contribution towards the appointment of a centre manager;
- Taunton East Link Centre: £8,500 contribution towards the appointment of a centre manager;
- Rural Projects: £8,500 towards three projects as follows: Somerset Biodiversity Partnership, Somerset Landscape Enhancement Scheme and Transition Town.

Councillor Alan Wedderkopp