

# Full Council Meeting – 23 February 2016

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

### 1. Budget Setting

- 1.1 The all-important annual budget setting is now nearing conclusion and will be considered by Members at this Full Council, hopefully now approved.
- 1.2 Can I thank all officers and Members for their hard work and commitment in delivering a sound balanced budget which I am proud to say has been achieved without the use of reserves and still maintaining the majority of our frontline services so valued by our community.
- 1.3 We have made it clear that we want to see Taunton Deane grow, prosper and develop a thriving and resilient economy, providing the jobs and essential infrastructure that is needed such as transport improvements, schools and employment land that go hand-in-hand with new housing.
- 1.4 Taunton is one of the fastest growing towns in the South West and we have ambitious plans with some already coming to fruition. Our key partners have secured funding for road improvements at Junction 25 of the M5, the A358 and for the improvements to Taunton Railway Station.
- 1.5 We cannot fund these major schemes on our own but by providing finance from the New Homes Bonus (NHB) we can attract match-funding and pump prime projects to achieve our ambitions. As a Council we are committed to using the majority of the NHB to deliver growth and development to benefit our community, unlike a lot of Councils, who spend it on the revenue costs of day to day services. Hence we have set out our ambition by sharing our plans to set aside in earmarked reserves £16,600,000 over the coming years to deliver our plans. This will continue to be refined and shared with Members as national policy changes to the NHB emerge, or we have a shift in growth priorities within our plans.
- 1.6 I am also pleased we have proposed setting aside £40,000 for a feasibility study to explore the possibility of re-opening a railway station in Wellington as well re-opening the Cullompton Station and running a Metro Service from Exeter to Bridgwater, through Taunton, is looking viable. The Council is also planning capital investments in transport improvements as part of a £1,050,000 programme including improvements to car park surfacing, “pay on exit” where practical and

Vehicle Messaging Signing that provides advance notice of where parking is available and other relevant alerts. It is all about trying to use existing space in a far more efficient manner.

- 1.7 The Government has, in their final settlement this month, allowed all District Councils the opportunity to increase Council Tax by £5 per annum Band D equivalent instead of being capped at 1.99%. We have accepted this. As a result our Council Tax will increase from £137.88 a year to £142.88 p.a. for an average Band D property. This means the band D Council Tax payer will receive all Borough Council services for £2.74 a week.

## **2. Somerset Rivers Authority**

- 2.1 It is proposed we support the County-wide initiative for a 1.25% levy to help fund the Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA). It is important we deal with water at its source throughout the catchment area as well as dealing with its consequences on the Levels and Moors. This levy will help provide the funds to do this. It is apparent from the work programme of the SRA they are a Somerset wide organisation. This can be seen from the wide geographical spread of flooding issues they are addressing with the help of, the various organisations that form the SRA.
- 2.2 The Government has also given the Somerset wide District and Borough Councils the ability to add a further 1.25% as an SRA levy which adds a further £1.74 a year to the bill, with the money collected – an estimated £68,000 for Taunton Deane – ring fenced to the Somerset Rivers Authority. Adding this to our precept is intended as an interim measure only for this financial year, whilst the Government enact legislation to constitute the SRA as a separate precepting body like the Fire and Rescue Service.
- 2.3 The benefit of setting up a County-wide scheme is becoming apparent as we have a wide range of partners participating, all pooling their knowledge and resources. Waterways and run-off problems are being looked at across the County. Also more efficient means of handling and disposing of water that ends up on the Levels and Moors are being implemented, attention is being focussed on sustainable urban drainage schemes, not only new developments but how existing schemes can be maintained and improved. In terms of major schemes we have regular updates on progress of the Parrett Barrage and the major flood alleviation scheme proposed for Taunton Deane at Bradford on Tone. Both schemes are being actively supported by the SRA as they provide the “all important” preventative measures to mitigate flooding.
- 2.4 Could I also report my sincere thanks to our staff here in Taunton Deane who responded so well and promptly to the recent flooding

event. Staff were working long hours, offering help and advice, also filling and distributing sandbags. From the first point of contact by phone, to the arrival of sandbags was a short time. A model of efficiency, well done to all those involved.

### **3. Proposed Development of Firepool**

- 3.1 In my last report I noted the planning application had been received and that it would be published for public consultation until mid-January. This has now passed. It is currently subject to consideration by the Planning officers and it is hoped for a decision in March/April 2016.
- 3.2 Whatever the final decision we must ensure that ultimately a scheme is approved that allows this all important site to be developed. With the impending upgrade of Taunton Railway Station it is a tremendous opportunity to regenerate the whole of the Firepool Area. It has stalled for 10 years because of the national and international recession but I feel we now have a real opportunity to move forward, we must not lose the ability to deliver a major scheme which is attractive, viable and deliverable. Otherwise we run the risk of this site remaining as an eyesore for many years to come.

### **4. A358, Junction 25 (J25) and Strategic Employment Site Progress**

- 4.1 Work continues with key parties to deliver major transport improvements and unlock a key growth opportunity for Taunton and the South West.
- 4.2 At present we are anticipating the following:-
  - J25 junction improvements outline business case to the Local Transport Board - March 2016;
  - Commission detailed design - April 2016;
  - Final business case - December 2016;
  - Commence construction early to mid-2017; and
  - Expected completion - mid 2019.
- 4.2 A358 Highways England's 'major project process' (stages 0 - 5) is anticipated to be complete by end 2018 - this includes:-
  - Options identification and selection, preliminary design, Development Consent Order process, and preparations for

- Construction.
- Government 'Road Investment Strategy' - commitment to start work by April 2020
- Public information exhibitions are being planned for late February 2016 to raise awareness of the process and Parish Councils and the public will be invited to these.

#### 4.3 Local Development Order (LDO) process:-

- Key milestones for the LDO process are currently being established (timescale and scoping expected to be clarified by the end of February 2016).
- Taunton Deane is procuring an expert consultant to work with the Planning Team to complete the process (anticipated LDO to be in place December 2016).

## 5. Devolution Update

- 5.1 We will already have considered the Devolution Document a Prospectus for Productivity and hopefully it has gained wide support. The process of bringing all Somerset and Devon authorities together, 17 local authorities, two National Parks, the Local Enterprise Partnership and three clinical commissioning groups only commenced in July 2015, a tremendous achievement to have gained agreement, across all those authorities, as before us tonight.
- 5.2 It has been a fast moving process and I accept the concerns of some Members that have felt there has not been sufficient Member Scrutiny. However, in defence, it has been a fast moving process and it was only when the prospectus, that was considered by us earlier, was finalised that we had something realistic to present. Please be assured it was shared with you as soon as it was available to us.
- 5.3 I would also stress, the prospectus is only a submission to Government to request opening of negotiations. It will no doubt experience many changes before anything is finalised and then it will come back to Members for consideration and final sign off if approved. From the experience of others that are ahead of us, the negotiation process is not quick, it is detailed and protracted in order to secure the right deal.
- 5.4 The overriding test for any final deal has to be “benefit for the community we serve”, that is how I have approached it to date and will guide me when considering the final terms.

## 6. Broadband Provision

- 6.1 Background - The Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS) partnership is seeking to procure a delivery partner to deliver a second phase superfast Broadband rollout programme, bringing coverage to a minimum of 95% premises coverage across the CDS area. In order to support this goal a range of partners, which includes Taunton Deane, has agreed to make a financial contribution to the project. The utilisation of this contribution is subject to a collaboration agreement between partners.
- 6.2 This procurement will build on the non-commercial phase one rollout which aims to bring coverage levels to 90% of premises across the CDS area. Superfast speed is deemed to be 24 Mb.
- 6.3 Initial Phase 2 Procurement (to 95% Coverage) – Members may recall that the initial procurement to secure this additional coverage was split into two elements. In essence these were a wider package covering the vast majority of the CDS area with a secondary package covering Exmoor and Dartmoor (two moors). The two moors area has a challenging geography which meant alternative solutions were likely to provide the desired level of coverage.
- 6.4 The wider area package was procured using the existing framework agreements that were in place. The framework potential bidders were Hitachi and BT. Only one bid was received, from BT, this failed to meet the threshold requirements and was therefore rejected.
- 6.5 The secondary package covering the two moors was procured on an open tender basis. The contract was awarded to Airband who are delivering a Wifi solution to provide the required coverage.
- 6.6 Phase 2 procurement – Current, the new procurement phase has been underway over the past 6-9 months. This includes supplier days, seeking to secure a new state aid notice, tender preparations, revising collaboration agreements and all the necessary work associated with a procurement of this nature.
- 6.7 In the next few months this will move into the final delivery phases and become a live issue again for Taunton Deane.
- 6.8 The procurement stage which will occur in the next 4-6 months. The ultimate goal being to secure a delivery partner to provide the minimum requirement of 95% coverage.
- 6.9 Financial commitment and Council decisions - As a reminder the Council has taken a decision “in principle” to commit £380,000 into this phase 2 procurement. This sum is incorporated in current budget assumptions.

- 6.10 Signing the collaboration agreement will create the formal commitment to provide the allocated sums. This is therefore a key decision which will need to be finalised in a few months.
- 6.11 Next steps - An update will be provided on the process to Community Scrutiny Committee, as requested when the original budget decision was scrutinised and then ensure that appropriate authorisations are in place to sign off the collaboration agreement.
- 6.12 We then need to be looking ahead to somehow deliver the “final 5%” to the very hard to reach places. It is recognised that Superfast Broadband is now as essential as the existing services of telephone and electricity as it is vital for homes and the many small businesses that operate in rural areas. Many schemes are being trialled for suitability and we must ensure our community ultimately benefits from those that are effective.

## **7. Work to the Northern Inner Distributor Road (NIDR)**

- 7.1 Work on the NIDR is continuing to progress, with piling now complete on the west side of the Kingston Loop Bridge (over Station Road). The piling rig has now moved to the east side of the bridge and work will start by installing wing wall piles before moving on to construct the piles that support the bridge. The completion of the piling will be a milestone in that the most technically challenging elements of the construction will be complete.
- 7.2 On the western side of the bridge, the crane and piling rig are now out of the way and the removal of material will now commence to enable work on the bridge supports to go ahead. Piling works are hoped to be completed in full in May 2016. It is then planned to remove the old bridge for refurbishment in late May using overnight road closures, although, dates and details will be confirmed nearer the time.
- 7.3 Meanwhile, work in the Firepool and Priory Park areas is nearing completion and should be complete around the end of February 2016. The BT box is imminently being removed which will allow completion of Priory Fields roundabout. It is also planned to start landscaping and planting in March, subject to the weather, which will improve the overall look of the site prior to projected completion in late 2016.

Councillor John Williams

# **Council Meeting – 23 February 2016**

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

### **1. Community Leisure and Play**

#### **Vivary Bowling Club**

- 1.1 I was upset to see the fire occur at Vivary Bowling Club. The club has been building itself well over recent years and although the indoor rink has not been affected the important social area will require extensive repair before being usable again. I am looking carefully to see if there are any funds available for us to help in any way.

#### **Blackbrook Pool**

- 1.2 You will all have seen the newsletters and I hope be pleased to see the progress achieved so far. I hope as many of you as possible have taken up the opportunity to visit the site this month.

### **2. Parks and Open Spaces**

#### **Winter Work**

- 2.1 The team have been using the quieter winter period to catch up with shrub tidying and clearing works where required. Works to the Vivary Park Bandstand continue.

#### **Wassail**

- 2.2 I was pleased to attend the annual Wassail at the Frieze Hill Community Orchard, Taunton. The weather held off and the tremendous bonfire kept the chill off, along with the most delicious apple cake and great live music.

#### **Flooding**

- 2.3 Many areas have been affected by the recent storms, the Vivary Estate unfortunately submerging again despite considerable work having been done to ensure the streams are kept clear of debris.
- 2.4 There have been some days when the park has been closed to the public. This is unfortunate but when areas are under water we have to close to protect the public and the park itself.

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

Tone continues to develop and support a number of community outreach programmes:

### **Health Development**

#### Walk Well with Tone

- 3.1 655 walkers took part in the Taunton Deane and Wellington Walk Well in November and December. Additional health walks have started at Priorswood Community Centre, funded by Knightstone Housing and Tone has recruited two new Walk Leaders to support this programme expansion.

### **Active Lifestyles**

- 3.2 Knightstone Creating Active Communities ran four projects between October and December with 158 participations, consisting of Boot Camp sessions at Lyngford Park/Church Hall, Priorswood and Walking Football at Wellington Sports Centre (average of 12 men attending each week).
- 3.3 A 12 weeks Community Pounds programme ran at Priorswood Community Centre and 29 people completed the programme. The biggest weight loss was 20 lbs by one client.
- 3.4 A 'Quit and Get Fit' campaign, in partnership with Solutions for Health, was launched in January at Wellsprings Leisure Centre.

### **Facility News**

#### Wellsprings Leisure Centre

- 3.5 Wellsprings is now registered as part of a partnership with the South West Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust to offer Tone's defibrillator to the local community, if needed, as a first response in an emergency.
- 3.6 Vibe Youth Nights continue to run on Friday evenings between 6 pm and 8 pm at £1 per head. There are a wide range of activities including football, parkour, basketball, trampolining, table tennis, pool and gym and dance mat sessions. 115 young people attended the programme on 8 January 2016.

Councillor Catherine Herbert



# **Council Meeting – 23 February 2016**

## **Report of Councillor Richard Parrish – Corporate Resources**

### **1. Corporate Strategy and Performance**

- 1.1 Quarter 3 Performance reporting. This report has been produced and received by the Joint Management Team (JMT) on the 27 January 2016 and is working its way through the Scrutiny and Executive process during February.
- 1.2 The new Corporate Strategy is drafted and currently going through the Scrutiny, Executive and Full Council cycle during January and February 2016. This report sets out the Corporate Design Principles to help shape the transformation programme.
- 1.3 Audit actions continue to be monitored and will be brought to the Corporate Governance Committee in March 2016.
- 1.4 The Corporate Risk Register has been updated and was reviewed by the JMT on 27 January 2016.
- 1.5 Corporate Complaints. This performance is still off target (90% response within 20 working days), but has improved in quarter 3 – currently we are delivering a 75% response.

### **2. Facilities Management (FM)**

- 2.1 First Aid training was recently provided to train additional first aiders. A former plan to borrow a defibrillator from the swimming pool in the event of a cardiac arrest was considered to be impractical and it is now planned to purchase a defibrillator for onsite use at The Deane House and to train individuals in its use.
- 2.2 FM is currently assisting in the despatch of the annual garden waste renewal and payment letters.

### **3. HR and Organisational Development**

- 3.1 Sickness absence continues to be of concern and we are currently projecting a year-end position of approximately 10 days per full time equivalent which is above target. HR is working with the JMT to manage the position and to ensure adherence with our policies.

- 3.2 The HR Team have recently organised the issue of letters to all staff to outline the approach in taking forward the Terms and Conditions Review. This process is still under consideration.
- 3.3 The Pay Policy Statement, which contains proposals to alter the severance scheme, will be going to Scrutiny and Full Council in February 2016.

#### **4. ICT and Information**

- 4.1 The retained ICT service is heavily involved in supporting the ICT elements of the Southwest One (SWO) succession project and the Joint Management and Shared Services (JMASS) Transformation programme. Specifically this involves supporting the procurement of alternative software packages to replace the SAP system and in developing a new ICT Strategy and ICT Implementation Plan.
- 4.2 Additionally work is continuing to migrate our existing intranet to a new platform which is scheduled to go live later in the year.

#### **5. JMASS Project and Transformation Project Management**

- 5.1 The current focus is on producing the Business Case for the next stage of the programme. Additionally we are producing closedown reports for the first two projects – the Corporate Priorities and Affordability Review.
- 5.2 We continue to work closely with the Building Control Partnership to ensure this goes live in April 2016.
- 5.3 The customer access review is continuing and will produce a refreshed Customer Access Strategy and detailed implementation plan, which will identify the anticipated savings from implementing a new approach to customer access as part of the transformation programme.

#### **6. Southwest One**

- 6.1 Significant work has been undertaken over the past nine months to complete the succession planning review, which culminated in the report and recommendation being taken to Full Council on 26 January 2016.
- 6.2 Having got agreement from Full Council to the recommendations, we have now formally commenced detailed negotiations with SWO which will be reported when outcomes are known.
- 6.3 In addition we are actively planning for the procurement and implementation of replacements for the SAP systems.

## 7. Democratic Services

- 7.1 A new Democratic Services Officer, Marcus Prouse, started on 11 January 2016 in Richard Bryant's team; the main focus of the post will be to support the Scrutiny function across the two Councils.
- 7.2 Electoral Services - There was some recent media coverage in regard to the number of electors on the Electoral Register reducing in some areas following the introduction of the Individual Electoral Registration (IER) system which was introduced in June 2014. This has not been the case in Taunton Deane, where there has been a steady increase from the February 2014 figure of 77,588 to 80,561 in February 2016.
- 7.3 Planning is well underway for the Police and Crime Commissioner Elections to be held on 6 May 2016 and preparations are being put in place, as best they can in anticipation of the announcement of a date for the forthcoming European Union Referendum.
- 7.4 Work is continuing in respect of the Electoral Review of Taunton Deane by the Boundary Commission for England. This is being led by the Constitutional Sub-Committee with all political groups being invited to submit any contributions with a view to the matter being formally considered by the Corporate Governance Committee in March and at Full Council in April 2016.
- 7.5 Members are invited to a briefing on the process by the Chairman of the Boundary Commission on 29 February, 2016 at 3 pm in the John Meikle Room. A recording of the briefing and copies of any associated presentations will be made available for any Members who cannot attend.

## 8. Law and Governance - Shape Partnership Service

- 8.1 The latest figures for the use of this service are detailed below. This service continues to perform well and to expectation.

Commercial , Contract and Procurement	
• Advice on Existing Contracts	2
• Advice on New Contracts	3
Electoral Law	
• Advice	0
Employment	
• Advice on Law and procedure	1
Enforcement/Prosecutions	
• Advice on enforcement	1
• High Hedges/Anti-social behaviour	0
• Car parking fines	1
• Housing	1
• Planning enforcement	2
Governance	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constitution</li> <li>• Corporate/Policy Advice</li> </ul>	1 5
Housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General Advice</li> </ul>	4
Information & Complaints <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advice re FOIA/DPA/EIR</li> </ul>	0
Licensing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advice</li> <li>• Attendance at licensing committee and sub-committees</li> <li>• Advice and conduct of proceedings in relation to negligence</li> </ul>	1 1 1
Litigation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Debt Recovery</li> <li>• Homelessness Appeals</li> <li>• Housing/Property repossessions</li> <li>• Injunctions</li> <li>• Judicial review and defending civil claims</li> </ul>	6 0 1 1 1
Planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General Advice - TCPA</li> <li>• S106 Agreements, Enforcement Notices and Stop Notices</li> <li>• CIL Advice</li> <li>• Lawful Development Certificates</li> </ul>	5 6 0 0 4
Property <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreements</li> <li>• Leases</li> <li>• Advice on Property Law</li> <li>• Purchases</li> <li>• Sales</li> <li>• RTB</li> </ul>	2 4 16 1 1 10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>82</b>

## 9. Customer Contact Service Report

- 9.1 Highlight Report .KPIs are being achieved – No fails for 2015-2016.
- SPIs achieved – No fails for 2015-2016.
  - Client CSAT results – 75% of client responses rated our services as good or very good. However only four responses were received.
  - 97% of external customers rated the service they received to be good or very good.
  - 98% contacts received resolved at first point of contact.
  - Year 2016 to date - zero complaints received.
  - Business Controls – SWO compliance continues.

- 9.2 Performance indicators. The service has continued to perform exceptionally well in line with the contractual performance indicators with no failures since the last update and consistently exceeding targets.
- 9.3. Customer Contact Association Accreditation has once again achieved the Contact Centre Association (CCA) Global Standard accreditation for 2015/2017. The CCA Global Standard is a set of key principles which have been defined and agreed by industry experts and stakeholders. It was first adopted in 2001 and has been designed to increase the reliability and effectiveness of the customer contact operation. On-going review and assessment of the criteria and key principles has ensured that the framework maintains credibility.
- 9.4 New Telephony Technology - The implementation of the Siemens Open Scape Contact Centre remains extremely positive news with no interruptions to service caused by system problems. This is specifically important because one of the primary drivers for implementing a new Contact Centre System was to reduce the amount of operational downtime which was regularly a problem with the old MacFarlane system.
- 9.5 Automated payments are still proving a popular channel for our customers. Over 60% of callers wanting to make a payment to Taunton Deane now choose to use the automated system. Between 1500 and 2000 payments are now made each month through the automated payments line.

## **10. Revenues and Benefits Service**

- 10.1 The Revenues and Benefits Service is busier than ever in preparation for annual billing and reassessing Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support for 2016/2017. Council Tax bills need to cater for the additional information that will be needed to raise funding for the Somerset Rivers Authority as well as extra revenue that may be raised to pay for Social Care. We are also reviewing Council Tax Support for all self-employed applicants of working age in preparation for the changes to our scheme from 1 April 2016.
- 10.2 The project agreed by the Joint Partnership Advisory Group to migrate West Somerset Council's Revenues and Benefits data to the same IT platform as used in Taunton Deane has been successfully delivered. The service managed this project within budget, and delivered it on time with minimal disruption to service users across both Councils.
- 10.3 The combined average speed in working out new claims and changes in circumstances for benefit recipients remains at less than 8 days from the start of the financial year to 31 January 2016. Council Tax Collection at the same date was 95.5% and we expect to meet our annual collection target of 97.8% by 31 March 2016.

## **11. Finance and Procurement**

- 11.1 The Council's management of its resources remains on track and through the budget monitoring process, coordinated and supported by the Finance Team, the performance against budget remains within acceptable tolerances. For the General Fund our forecasts as at the end of December indicate we are heading for a net underspend of c£83,000, which is within 1% of budget. For the Housing Revenue Account there is a projected overspend of £72,000 which is just 0.3% over budget. Our total capital programme spending remains on track with the majority of costs for our current approved schemes to be incurred in 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 financial years. Details of the financial position were reported to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 18 February 2016.
- 11.2 Looking to next year's budget, the detailed estimates process has been completed by managers and the Finance Service. Details of Government funding and the Council's budget proposals have been shared with Councillors throughout this process, with the Budget Consultation Pack issued to all Councillors in December and then an update report on the Draft Budget presented for review and comment to Corporate Scrutiny last month.
- 11.3 The team have grappled with the Provisional Settlement, which was set out in some detail for Members in the budget information and earlier this month the Final Settlement was confirmed and was reflected in the information presented for the Executive's final budget proposals.
- 11.4 Our external auditor has also been working with officers within Finance and other service areas in the past few weeks to complete work on their "interim audit". This enables the auditor to make a 'head start' in advance of the review of the final accounts in the summer. I have reported previously that the Council's end of year accounts will need to be completed to earlier deadlines in future years, and the Finance Team is gearing up for this with a 'dry run' for earlier closing this year. Another challenge for the Finance Service!

Councillor Richard Parrish



# Council Meeting – 23 February 2016

## Report of Councillor Mrs Jane Warmington - Community Leadership

The strategic vision for Taunton Deane's most disadvantaged areas, is that residents lives will improve significantly and that these priority areas will look better, feel safer and in the future place a more proportionate demand on public services. These services will be delivered in urban areas through integrated, frontline, early help, problem-solving, multiagency teams of individuals already working in the areas but based together. Rural parishes with more scattered communities will be helped to access services through community centres and local village agents identifying, signposting and supporting isolated residents to get the help they need. Urban priority areas need excellent education and health facilities on the doorstep which are then accessible to all, if we are to build independence, resilience and raise aspirations in individual people, families and communities, to sustain improvements and continue to reduce the need for and costs of intervention in the future.

### 1. Weekly Bulletin - Additional Section

- 1.1 Since January, news and information of interest to a wider audience including community groups, is being published in the Weekly Bulletin under the Community Leadership heading. Topics include grant funding, consultation, training and volunteering opportunities and are kept intentionally brief. There may also be links to other websites or publications to raise awareness of their existence and value. Please share these with anyone who might benefit and let us know if we are getting the mix right, or if you have articles you think should be included, please let Helen Phillips know ([h.phillips@tauntondeane.gov.uk](mailto:h.phillips@tauntondeane.gov.uk)).

### 2. Taunton Deane Citizenship Awards

- 2.1 The Council together with the local Rotary Clubs likes to recognise outstanding voluntary service given by its citizens. Nominations are being sought for individuals who live in Taunton Deane and have not been previously recognised for their services (which should not be part of their paid work). They will be very special individuals, living amongst us, who help to improve the quality of life for others through their selflessness, loyalty, kindness and consideration.
- 2.2 The Council expects to make three awards this year at a ceremony at the end of April. If you wish to make a nomination, please write to Jo Comer, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton, TA1 1HE or email [mayor@tauntondeane.gov.uk](mailto:mayor@tauntondeane.gov.uk) and a nomination form will be sent to you. Forms are also available to download via a link on the Council's website [www.tauntondeane.gov.uk](http://www.tauntondeane.gov.uk).

### 3. National iESE Award Finalist - Think differently, do differently

- 3.1 Taunton Deane Housing Service is one of three finalists for the National iESE Award celebrating public sector innovation and transformation. The award focused on what has been achieved through the Council being part of the Halcon One Team (and now two further teams in North Taunton and Wellington) for the dynamic



delivery of a variety of public services tailored to meet the needs of a community beset by high unemployment, low income, disproportionately high crime and anti-social behaviour, poor health and educational under-achievement.

- 3.2 In April 2013 the Council restructured its housing management function to complement and harness the collective energy of the local community and statutory and voluntary partners under the Halcon One Team initiative to provide a more effective and efficient service. Taunton Deane worked closely with the Police and other partners to identify a new way of working to improve service delivery to families and individuals living in the community. This is beginning to break the cycle of deprivation by taking a long term, holistic view by thinking and doing things differently, supporting them to be more independent and self sufficient.
- 3.3 The Assistant Director for Housing and Communities, the North Taunton One Team Coordinator and the Portfolio Holder have been invited to the award ceremony in London on 2 March 2016.

#### **4. Refugee Aid from Taunton (#raft)**

- 4.1 Councillor Federica Smith who is coordinating the collection of goods to aid refugees in Calais, Greece and Lebanon, is asking people to continue to donate goods, or a bit of their time to help sort, or donate some money please (<https://crowdfunding.justgiving.com/federic-smith>). Priority items include warm clothing, blankets, stout shoes, toiletries and non-perishable food. Twenty-five shipments have gone out since August with seven more planned in February. RAFT are also supplying white goods for the two Syrian families we expect to resettle in Taunton Deane to begin with.

#### **5. Syrian Resettlement**

- 5.1 Taunton Citizens' Community Refugee Group (made up of fledgling Taunton Citizens UK, local church members and RAFT) is now established and working closely with the Somerset Resettlement Working Group (made up of the Council's Housing Service, Public Health, Somerset County Council and the other districts) helping to prepare for two families to come to Taunton Deane this Spring from camps on the Syrian border.
- 5.2 There is a surprising amount of work needed to ensure that collectively we are able to properly support the resettlement of families who will arrive from very different and difficult settings. The partnership working between the two local authorities and community group has been exemplary, making best use of all our strengths and experiences. The Taunton Citizens Community Group is very well organised and has identified a range of invaluable resources, ranging from beds and wardrobes to people who can provide translation services, and we are very grateful for their support.
- 5.3 We are all looking forward to welcoming these families into Taunton Deane.

#### **6. Improving employability in the long term unemployed**

- 6.1 Part of the One Team approach to 'think differently, do differently' has been to start to address the barriers to long term unemployment in areas where this is often an historic problem which the local job clubs have found difficult to remedy.
- 6.2 Link Power was the first of these initiatives and offers the opportunity for regular, supervised, local, unpaid work experience with some personal development and training built in, in an effort to prepare around twenty-five individuals (at any one time) for the rigours and discipline of full time paid work. It is supported through the Taunton East Development Trust (Link Centre) and managed by the Halcon One Team. Individuals benefit and the communities are delighted with the hundreds of hours put in every month which is reflected in how clean and tidy the area is. Link Power is co-ordinated by Police Community Support Officer Paul Johnson who is outstanding in this role.
- 6.3 The barriers to long term unemployment are usually many and are not easily overcome. Understanding these is an important part of One Team working but so is the need for specialist support to concentrate on individual personal development to work towards employment. It is particularly important to offer in-work support to help those adjust fully to working full time, especially if they have not been in regular work before or for many years.
- 6.3 Inspired 2 Achieve (i2a) are going to provide this specialist support concentrating on our tenants across our three One Team Areas to support them into work. They are a Social Enterprise started by Yarlinton Housing Association in South Somerset, where they are helping their unemployed residents to find jobs by offering information, advice and guidance. They also provide in-work support and hope to help several hundred Taunton Deane tenants into work over the next two years. Taunton Deane's Housing Service have commissioned this work and the lead officer overseeing this is Martha Dudman who is a member of the Wellington One Team.

## **7. Supporting more school and college leavers into jobs**

- 7.1 The Department of Work and Pensions' Job Centre in Taunton set up a Job Club in January and is facilitating other local support organisations to come in to meet young unemployed people there. This will include advice on writing a curriculum vitae, mock interviews, job searching, help with information technology, coaching and more.
- 7.2 The Job Club is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays and is aimed at all 18 to 24 year olds who are unemployed. There will be two one-hour sessions each day at 9.30am and 11am and they expect between fifteen and twenty to attend each session. A young person can spend as much or as little time in the Job Club as they need, with the opportunity to tailor what's on offer to suit them.
- 7.3 The Job Club is keen to establish a database of the different types of help which could be provided should there be the demand. They are asking for details of anything which might be considered useful. The contact for the Job Club is Adam Tidmarsh ([adam.tidmarsh@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:adam.tidmarsh@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)).

## **8. Wellington One Team Business Lunch**

- 8.1 Wellington One Team organised a successful lunch for local businesses in Wellington to meet partner members. The team would like to familiarise themselves with local job opportunities for school and college leavers. This should help with a better awareness of local businesses employment needs; what, if any, barriers there are; what in-work support there is; what advice and guidance the schools are able to give; what local employment support there is; then what the established community groups and the Wellington One Team can do to help in the process to better prepare and match young people to the expanding local job market. We would like to thank Rockwell Green Christian Centre who provided the venue and put on the marvellous lunch.

## **9. Read Easy Taunton North Group - The story so far**

- 9.1 Read Easy UK is a charity set up to help those adults who struggle with reading. Tuition is one-to-one, confidential and free of charge. Preparation for the Taunton North group began in September 2015 and is nearing completion. A management committee of eight is now in place and the number of potential reading coaches awaiting training has reached double figures.
- 9.2 Recruitment of a coordinator is the next vital step. This pivotal role is voluntary and includes responsibility for recruiting and interviewing volunteers, monitoring their training as reading coaches and matching them to new readers. S/he will support and guide both reading coaches and readers throughout the teaching and learning process and will themselves receive continuing support from both the management committee and the Read Easy regional adviser.
- 9.3 The role requires excellent written and spoken communication and interpersonal skills. It is essential to have a clear understanding of and sensitivity to the needs and difficulties of those who come forward wanting to learn to read. Relevant training and induction will be provided.
- 9.4 The group already has a number of potential new readers 'in waiting' and the early appointment of a coordinator will hasten the start of the all-important coach/learner sessions.
- 9.5 Anyone interested in becoming involved with the group, either as coordinator, reading coach or learner, is invited to contact Catherine Berry on 07792 570303 or [northtaunton@readeasy.org.uk](mailto:northtaunton@readeasy.org.uk)

## **10. Bishops Lydeard and Cothelstone Neighbourhood Plan (PfH's Ward)**

- 10.1 The first Neighbourhood Plan referendum in Taunton Deane will go ahead in May after more than three years of hard work by the community in Bishops Lydeard and Cothelstone. The date is due to coincide with elections for the Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner on 5 May 2016 and will give people in both parishes their chance to vote on the plan which captures local views and will influence future local planning.

- 10.2 Work on the plan began with the Parish Council gathering information from across the two parishes. Over two hundred people visited the exhibitions in the village and almost 40% of residents completed the comprehensive questionnaire, with a similar response from local businesses. Monthly public meetings were held throughout as the plan was drafted by the sub-committee and pulled together by the Parish Clerk.
- 10.3 Planning policies were drafted and issued for consultation involving local residents again and statutory organisations such as Somerset County Council, the Environment Agency and Natural England. The draft plan was then submitted to Taunton Deane Borough Council for further consultation before being considered by an independent examiner John Mattocks who has just reported back on his findings. His report recommended, subject to minor amendments, that the plan should now progress to a local referendum. The plan has been amended and signed off by the relevant Executive Councillor and the Parish Council.
- 10.4 Following what we hope is a successful referendum, if the majority vote in favour, the Bishops Lydeard and Cothelstone Neighbourhood Plan will be eligible to be adopted by the Council as Local Planning Policy.

## **11. Register to Vote**

- 11.1 You need to be registered to vote for the up-coming elections and not everybody is yet. The deadline to register to vote is Monday, 18 April 2016 and it only takes a few minutes to register online at [www.gov.uk/register-to-vote](http://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote) . Local residents can get a paper copy of the registration form by contacting the Electoral Registration Office on 01984 635276.

Councillor Jane Warmington

# **Council Meeting - 23 February 2016**

## **Report of Councillor Terry Beale – Housing Services**

### **1. Deane Housing**

#### **Creechbarrow Road, Taunton**

- 1.1 The first four units were handed over on 12 January 2016. A decision was taken to postpone another six units to ensure safe access arrangements for residents. The next two tranches of handovers are being programmed for early March encompassing a further 14 properties.
- 1.2 A High Voltage Electricity cable has been uncovered adjacent to the foundation for Moorland House (previously called The Hub). This will require diversion and arrangements are being made with the utilities to pursue this work. Development cannot progress until this is completed.
- 1.3 Further meetings with the Directors of Galliford Try reviewing progress and quality are being arranged.

#### **Weavers Arms, Wellington**

- 1.4 WRW Construction have been selected as the successful contractor to build the Weavers Arms scheme following a detailed tender process. Work is underway on a nearby void property to rehouse the remaining decant household. Build contracts are being drawn up with an anticipated start on site early Spring. Prior to the work starting WRW Construction will be arranging a 'meet the contractor' day for the local community.

#### **Extensions**

- 1.5 Building Regulation applications have been submitted for two extensions. Work continues with the families to ensure suitable decant/transit accommodation is available.

#### **Scooter Storage**

- 1.6 Two scooter stores are due for delivery and commissioning in late February concluding the current programme of installations.

#### **Car Parking**

- 1.7 A planning application for the proposed additional parking at Bulford,

Wellington is to be submitted shortly following discussions regarding a permeable paving solution.

- 1.8 Parking solutions are being investigated at Polkesfield, Stoke St Gregory. Officers have met with the Parish Council and further studies and discussions are taking place to arrive at a mutually acceptable solution.

## **2. Affordable Housing Delivery**

- 2.1 As at the end of Q3 200 affordable homes were completed – meeting the annual target. It is anticipated that the total delivered will rise to around 220 affordable homes by the end of Q4 and is set to become the highest annual number of affordable homes delivered in Taunton Deane (218 in 2011-2012). The affordable housing pipeline remains strong, however delivery of some schemes have been slowed as the Housing Association partners and developers continue to reflect on the effect of recent Government announcements in relation to affordable housing.
- 2.2 We currently have a scheme in Parmin Way, Taunton set to deliver supported housing which is stalled whilst negotiations take place with Government on the Rent Cap and exemption from the LHA cap.
- 2.3 The External Wall Insulation (EWI) installation programme is now complete with 48 Cornish units receiving EWI. A further programme may be considered later in the year dependent on resources and outcomes of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan review.
- 2.4 In total 248 properties were installed with solar Photovoltaic Panels with a continuing management and maintenance contract in place through The Low Carbon Exchange. The final two properties could not be identified within the contract period owing to limited suitable properties and tenant refusals.

## **3. Landlord Health and Safety Compliance**

- 3.1 A number of issues have recently come forward following a high level review of Health and Safety and Compliance matters undertaken by the Interim Assistant Director of Property Services and Development driven by a lack of clarity on compliance information held.
- 3.2 As a result a full review is being undertaken to establish requirements to ensure Taunton Deane manages its statutory duties.
- 3.3 There are a number of Landlord Health and Safety areas that the Council as a Residential Provider and owner of property assets has to manage in a practicable manner to ensure as reasonably possible that we do not fall short of our compliance duties or indeed find ourselves non-compliant.
- 3.4 These areas fall under the following headings:-

- Asbestos;
- Electrical Safety;
- Gas Safety; and
- Fire Safety

### 3.5 What does this mean for Taunton Deane?

- The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 specifies that a fire risk assessment of communal areas and regular checks and servicing of equipment should take place;
- Fire Risk Assessments (FRA's) and technical inspections and servicing will be arranged by Asset Management and Property Services within the minimum mandatory intervals and recorded centrally;
- An inspection/alarm test report should be completed after each visit and retained on file for 12 months. The inspection should also be recorded on the central spreadsheet;
- The regular check of the communal areas in general needs accommodation is intended to be quick and simple. Its primary function is to ensure the safety of residents and visitors by reducing the risk of damage or injury by fire to an acceptable level; and
- Such inspections can be carried out by staff other than specialists, such as Housing Management staff or Caretakers, whose duties regularly take them to the communal areas.

3.6 As well as the obligations listed above, there were further risks that needed to be managed from the Health and Safety perspective which included Heating Installations, Water Safety – Legionella, Sewage Treatment, Radiation Safety, Lift Safety, Play Areas / Ground Safety and Energy Performance Certificates.

3.7 The review identified flaws in data held within the Codeman Asset Database and a number of standalone Excel Spreadsheets, along with inadequate and/or outdated Policies, Procedures and Processes for managing Landlord Health and Safety. Similarly, Asset information for the housing stock portfolio has integrity issues with inconsistent datasets. Therefore, the following actions have been implemented:-

- (a) A specialist surveying consultancy company, Savills have been instructed to carry out a 100% external and communal area survey and 50% internal survey on the Council's Housing Stock.

As of 1 February 2016, the company has completed 1,800 surveys and are due to finish the surveying element on 29 February and provide a draft report of outcomes by 31 March 2016; and

(b) Another specialist consultant of Savills has acted as a critical friend in reviewing Taunton Deane's Asbestos processes and procedures. We have received a report with a number of high level recommendations that may require 60+ action points to resolve.

- 3.8 As a result, a Landlord Health and Safety Board and Working Group has recently been set up to develop a comprehensive action plan to implement recommendations from the Savills report. In the meantime the Council has an interim Action Plan and processes in place to manage Asbestos Management related tasks and duties.
- 3.9 A request and agreement from the Portfolio Holder for an 18 month fixed term Project Manager post to manage the action plan is now out to advertisement. The Project Manager will also be reviewing in order of risk and priority, all the areas of Landlord Health and Safety and developing an overall schedule of actions to improve Taunton Deane's compliance status and management processes.
- 3.10 The high level of risk has been identified and included within the Corporate 'Risk Register' and monitored regularly.

### **Progress Monitoring**

- 3.11 Project Governance is being developed and implemented to manage the strategic and operational delivery of Landlord Health and Safety compliance improvements. A progress report will be presented to Full Council on a quarterly basis to ensure Members are kept appraised. The first such report is as follows:-
- **Door Entry Systems** - Carried out by ABCA - 54 completed out of a 55 yearly target;
  - **New Heating Systems** - Carried out by Keep Moat -123 completed out of a 500 yearly target. Contract started mid-way through year so consequently only half way to completing the six month target;
  - **Other Heating Systems** - Gas Heating and Hybrid with Otter South West - 15 completed out of a 29 Yearly target. Electric Heating - Carried out by T&C Electrical 4 completed out of a 6 yearly target;
  - **Windows** - Carried out by Wrekin Windows -26 Completed out of 154 yearly target. Fully SBD (secure by design) and thermal requirements met;
  - **Kitchens** - Carried out By Mi-Space - Units provided and designed by Howdens. All properties are validated before installation. Associated Electrical and Plumbing works carried out and up graded - 47 completed of a yearly 70 target;
  - **Bathrooms** - Carried out by Mi-Space. All properties are validated before installation. Associated Electrical and Plumbing works carried out and up graded - 304 completed of a yearly 500 target;
  - **Replacement Front and Rear doors** - Carried out by Pro-fit. Fully SBD (secure by design) certificated 1603 completed. 1557 was yearly target so we



have exceeded this;

- **Air source heat pumps (ASHP)** - Carried out by Otter South West - 84 completed of a yearly target of 110. Can be difficult to get Customer sign up as an unknown technology;
- **External Painting & Fascia and Soffit Replacement** - Carried out by Mitie - Timber and Render painted with UPVC washed down. Full soffit and fascia refurbishment. Some external areas up-graded also 352 completed of a yearly target of 646.

Councillor Terry Beale



# **Council Meeting – 23 February 2016**

## **Report of Councillor Patrick Berry – Environmental Services**

### **1. Environmental Health / Licensing**

#### **Environmental Health**

- 1.1 Dog Hygiene: A Dog Action Day planned for 9 February 2016 to highlight the issues associated with dogs, was postponed due to the stormy conditions. It will be arranged for a later date. The team will issue dog waste bags, leaflets and talk to dog owners in certain target areas. It is planned to target areas where we have received complaints regarding dog fouling in Taunton Deane.
- 1.2 Staff News: Chris Lewis who joined the Food Team recently has settled in well. Recruitment for a replacement for Sarah Khan is progressing with interviews taking place on 11 February 2016.
- 1.3 Some inspection services of Permitted Processes, which until recently had been carried out by contractors, have been taken back in-house. The work will be carried out by existing staff and has delivered a small but useful saving.
- 1.4 Private water supplies: New national regulations are under drafting by the Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI). The draft regulations will be discussed at a meeting with the DWI later this month.

#### **Licensing**

- 1.5 Staffing News: A new Licensing Manager has been appointed. John Rendell, who has been ably fulfilling the duties of Acting Licensing Manager since the departure of Ian Carter has now been confirmed. Recruitment is continuing for the post vacated by John.
- 1.6 Key Performance Indicator: The Licensing Team did not achieve its target of 95% of applications processed within 14 days for quarter 3, but performance did improve by 11%, from 60% to 71% when measured against quarter 2. A new approach to work (see below) commenced at the start of December and for that month, the team achieved 80% of applications processed within 14 days. The aim is continued improvement to achieve the target of 95% for quarter 1 of the 2016/2017 financial year;
- 1.7 A 'duty rota' has been developed and implemented within the team to improve customer service, diary management and overall performance within the

team. At the same time, a set of values and objectives to support the corporate aims and ensure a consistent approach has been agreed.

- 1.8 The first 'Safety Advisory Group' (SAG) meeting was hosted by Taunton Deane in January for the forthcoming 'Somerset Rocks' concerts coming to Vivary Park in the Summer. The SAG is a multi-agency group, which includes Environmental Health and the blue light services, which sits to scrutinise plans put forward by the event organiser, to ensure a safe and enjoyable event.

## **2. Somerset Waste Partnership**

- 2.1 Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP) met on 18 December 2015 and will meet again on 26 February.
- 2.2 The Recycle More Trials were considered to be a success, and much positive feedback was received. If implemented this would see residents being enabled to add plastic pots, tubs and trays; beverage cartons; small electrical items; and household batteries to be collected weekly with the existing range of items with the result that smaller quantities would go into the rubbish bins.
- 2.3 This reduction in quantities could see the refuse collection frequency reduced to three weekly. Any such change would need a major effort to make residents aware of the changes. Smart-phone apps, printed calendars and texting are all under consideration. As happened in Wiveliscombe, local radio services could also help.
- 2.4 The commercial analysis, which involves the collection truck configuration as well as collection frequency and the processing and packaging facilities, is continuing.
- 2.5 Additional charges are being introduced by Taunton Deane for Green Waste collection with the charge for the green bin being raised to £53.00 per year. The charges now represent the real cost of the service as charged to all Councils by SWP.
- 2.6 SWP is now trialling, a no-cash card-only trial for any payments at its Chard Recycle Centre. This is a trial to test recycling sites' ability to manage without cash transactions and thereby improve site security and the safety of site staff. No new charges are being introduced as part of this trial. The results will inform a review of payment policy.
- 2.7 SWP in conjunction with Carymoor Environmental Trust is looking for new recruits to the Compost Champions scheme and will be running two separate one day training courses, on Saturday, 23 April 2016 at Hestercombe House, near Taunton and on Saturday, 30 April 2016 at Carymoor Environmental Centre near Castle Carey. For more information please e-mail [rupert.farthing@carymoor.org.uk](mailto:rupert.farthing@carymoor.org.uk), call 01963 350143 or visit <http://www.somersetwaste.gov.uk/more/composting/champions/>

### **3. Deane DLO**

- 3.1 Street Sweeping and Toilet Cleaning : The preparation of the tender documentation for a possible combined contract (West Somerset and Taunton Deane) for street sweeping and toilet cleaning is proceeding.
- 3.2 The litter bin replacement programme for Wellington is now complete.
- 3.3 In order to better support carnivals and other large events, the team is investigating the practicalities of using large wheelie bins for these occasions.
- 3.4 Also under investigation is the possibility of permitting advertisements in the public toilets. This is in response to an enquiry.

### **4. Crematorium**

- 4.1 The Cemeteries Department has opened the new burial ground extension.
- 4.2 A periodic inspection of the copper sheathed roof is now almost complete and the report is expected with the next couple of weeks.
- 4.3 A major upgrade of all fire-doors is now complete thus ensuring full compliance with the latest legislation.
- 4.4 The discount system, introduced on 1 January 2016, whereby the charges for a cremation are reduced when last minute changes in the music for the service are not requested, appears to be having the needed effect.

Councillor Patrick Berry

# Council Meeting – 23 February 2016

## Report of Councillor Mark Edwards - Economic Development, Asset Management, Arts and Tourism and Communications

Activities and services progressed over the past two months within the Economic Development service are outlined below.

### 1. Supporting Business Investment

#### Business Grants

- 1.1 The Council has awarded a New Business grant to Walkers Farm Cottages in Stathe, to enable the business to purchase a wood burning stove for its larger property. The grant will directly support the creation of new jobs. A Rural Services Grant of £2,000 was awarded to Taunton Farmers Market in December 2015 to help the market purchase new parasols.

#### Investment enquiries

- 1.2 The Economic Development Team has received eight new investment enquiries during the two months of year to date, including from the supermarket chain, Aldi, who are looking for four sites for new stores in Taunton Deane. Officers are also liaising with a bakery over production space, and other manufacturers and retailers.
- 1.3 The Council aligns its inward investment services with Somerset County Council and the other Somerset Districts to promote Somerset through Into Somerset. The recently updated website at [www.intosomerset.co.uk](http://www.intosomerset.co.uk) promotes the County through the themes of work, grow, connect and life, and it includes a useful property search tool, which is populated by Estates Gazette. The service is coordinated by Somerset County Council with individual enquiries forwarded on to the relevant district or districts for fulfilment.

#### Local Government Association (LGA) Inward Investment support

- 1.4 Following the positive review of the Council's Growth services in 2015 officers have submitted a bid to the LGA to procure expert advice on our strategy to attract investors to Taunton Deane. I am pleased to report that the bid was successful, and officers will shortly appoint a consultant with expertise in marketing other local authorities and investment destinations. A report on the conclusions of the consultant's work will be circulated for Members' information at the conclusion of the commission.

#### Wiveliscombe and the 10 Parishes Area Business Funding and Support Guide

- 1.5 Working alongside the Wiveliscombe and the 10 Parishes Business Group, officers have produced a handy guide to the financial and advisory support available to local businesses. Copies of the guide will be circulated to Members.
- 1.6 The Guide will be distributed extensively by the Business Group to local businesses with the intention of assisting them to secure relevant advice and financial support. The guide also highlights the support available from the Economic Development Team to assist investors.

### **Wiveliscombe and 10 Parishes Business Showcase**

- 1.7 Working with the Wiveliscombe and 10 Parishes Business Group and the Cotleigh Brewery, the Economic Development Team recently organised an advice and information event for local businesses. Various local businesses including Porter Dodson and Natwest Bank, as well as partners such as Jobcentre Plus, Somerset Skills and Learning and Connecting Devon and Somerset, attended the event at the Cotleigh Brewery on 18 February 2016.

## **2. Taunton Town Centre**

### **Taunton Town Centre Ambassador**

- 2.1 Councillor Dave Durdan was appointed to this position by The Leader last summer in order to strengthen the Council's communications with town centre businesses. His work has exposed some of the frustrations that businesses encounter in the town and he has commenced the planning of particular projects to attract visitors and support traders.
- 2.2 Councillor Durdan has spent considerable time visiting the managers of 50 to 60 individual shops during the six months to date. Officers support Councillor Durdan on a daily basis as well as through a monthly forum and issues addressed to date include Licensing in the town centre, car parking and street cleanliness.
- 2.3 Liaison with a number of businesses is currently taking place to arrange a fashion show in the town later this year, drawing upon high street retailers as well as some of Taunton's own fashion establishments.

### **Taunton Visitor Centre**

- 2.4 The construction work and project management of the relocation has just been nominated for a Considerate Constructors award. We await the formal results but this is a really positive endorsement of this project.
- 2.5 The centre continues to remain popular with customers and after a successful Christmas with the Cards for Good Causes Charity Card shop, the Visitor Centre Team are looking at ways to increase retail opportunities and have installed a new information screen within the office to promote events and activities taking place in the area.

## **Castle Bow Banner**

- 2.6 The wires for the banner site in Castle Bow have now been replaced and bookings for not-for-profit events are now being taken by the Visitor Centre Team who are offering this service in addition to the popular town centre rotunda units.

## **Christmas Events.**

- 2.7 It is intended to bring forward a paper to Scrutiny in March reviewing Christmas 2015 which will capture the positive aspects of the Christmas period and lessons learnt for application in 2016. We are already working with the business community on 2016 and would expect to have a plan in place in the next few months to enable us to support the business community with their aspirations for the festive period.

## **Coal Orchard**

- 2.8 Officers are currently working on an outline planning application which represents the next phase of the delivery strategy. This is in line with the report agreed by the Executive.
- 2.9 In the coming months this will include engagement with key businesses and local organisations followed by wider consultation when there is a firm proposition which will enable positive dialogue to occur. The aim will be to produce an outline planning application for submission in mid-summer. This work will be informed by the new venue study which has been commissioned by Arts Taunton. We continue to work closely with Arts Taunton to understand the business case for this aspirational venue.

## **Town Centre Marketing**

- 2.10 Destination CMS continue to work with officers to promote the town centre. After a successful targeted campaign promoting the town and events taking place at Christmas, a series of competitions have been organised on social media for Valentine's Day with prizes donated by local businesses highlighting our vibrant evening economy. An e-Shot promoting half-term events has just been circulated. The Council's contract with Destination CMS ends at the end of March, and officers are currently considering options to continue the service.

## **Town Centre WiFi**

- 2.11 An invitation to tender was issued on 8 December 2015 for the contract to install the WiFi scheme, and it will be evaluated early in the New Year. The tender process is continuing and we aim to engage a contractor by the end of March 2016. This will enable rollout in the early summer.

## **Variable Message Signage**

- 2.12 We are currently completing indicative costings for this project. This includes provision of new electronic signage at key road junctions combined with installing



pay on foot at key car parks. This project aims to improve flow to car parks and create a better experience at these key car parks for users of the facilities.

- 2.13 The VMS signage will have a dual use as it will enable improved flow for events within the town. We expect to bring estimated costings to the Community Scrutiny Committee in April 2016 and then on to the Executive in May. These costings will be indicative as any final costs will be informed by procurement of the systems.
- 2.14 In association with this project we are also refreshing the Car Park Strategy to update it. There is also a review of the fixed signage package being undertaken. All of this work is in conjunction with Somerset County Council. The work, when implemented, should improve wayfinding within the town and assist with traffic flow.

### **3. Assets of Community Value**

- 3.1 One recent listing of an Asset of Community Value; 'the Garages Site' Creech St Michael, was successfully nominated by Creech St Michael Parish Council. The Council commenced the nominations scheme in 2013 and, to date, has listed 21 assets. A large number of those are pubs, located mainly in rural areas of Taunton Deane. The list of assets nominated to date can be viewed on the Council's website.

### **4. South West Regional Tourism Growth Fund**

- 4.1 The £5,000,000 South West Tourism Growth Fund (SWTGF) was awarded earlier this year to create a coherent strategic approach to promote South West England overseas and to deliver economic growth in the short and medium term.
- 4.2 The fund aims to develop businesses to be international visitor ready and to develop joined-up products and experiences across South West England.
- 4.3 The Marketing and Visitor Centre Manager has been actively supporting this programme since Christmas attending trade and consumer events across target markets to promote Taunton Deane and the region in:-
- Vakantiebeurs, Utrecht, Netherlands;
  - Holiday World Show, Dublin;
  - Salon de Vacances, Brussels;
  - Cork Holiday Show; and
  - ITB Berlin.
- 4.4 In addition the Centre Manager is working with our local trade and attractions in Taunton Deane on a Familiarisation Tour of Somerset later and is helping coordinate Visit Somerset's presence at an international buyer's event in Frankfurt in April 2016.

4.5 Local businesses are also being encouraged to attend various training courses and showcase events being organised as part of the fund. This will include the Visitor Centre Team attending Welcome Host courses to make our service international friendly.

## **5. Staff Changes**

5.1 Craig Stone joined the team on the 1 February 2016 as maternity cover for Nadine Ackland. Craig joins the team from the Customer Contact Team and will be supporting marketing and business support activities.

5.2 Additional casual members of staff have been appointed to the Visitor Centre Team to free the Marketing and Visitor Centre Manager up to focus on key projects over forthcoming months.

## **6. Asset Management Service General Fund Activities**

6.1 During the past three months the following projects are particularly worthy of mention:-

- Blackbrook Leisure Centre – Asset Management supporting the Pools Project at Project Board level.
- Former Mike Chedzoy premises off Greenbrook Terrace, Taunton – Council approval in place for sale, preferred bidder and Shape Partnership progressing the conveyancing.
- Community Asset Transfer Policy – Community consultation on this draft policy now complete. Some amendments made as a consequence and being taken to Community Scrutiny on 1 March 2016 then the Executive on 9 March.
- Blackdown Business Park, Wellington – A significant number of vacant units which Greenslade Taylor Hunt Chartered Surveyors and the Council are jointly marketing.
- Former Park Keepers Cottage, 277 Cheddon Road, Taunton - Declared surplus and works now progressing in respect of disposal of open space and registration of land to enable the site to then be marketed. A report will be taken forward with recommendations of which offer to accept.
- Blackdown Business Park – Exploring possible sale of some of units.
- Land at Frobisher Way – Exploring developing this site and retaining the asset or sale of asset.
- Continuing Asset Management support through dedicated Asset Projects Surveyor towards the Firepool redevelopment scheme. Positive progress

has been made in respect of due diligence and general land assembly.

- Asset Strategy Surveyor post dedicated to Taunton Deane General Fund work has been vacant for past month. Seeking to appoint on a temporary agency basis subject to suitable candidates being available.
- Statutory Compliance – Asset Management are leading on collating key statutory compliance data from other sources across the Council to demonstrate compliance and if non-compliance is identified, capturing and prioritising works. This project sits alongside similar work taking place across the Housing Revenue Account.

## **7. Communications**

- 7.1 The Council's social media audience continues to grow with the 2,000 followers milestone passed on twitter. The account is particularly useful for issuing timely updates to the community, as happened when Storm Imogen blew in. Retweets are always welcome!
- 7.2 Communications are supporting a number of partnership initiatives at present, including the forthcoming elections for Police and Crime Commissioner, led by Bath and North East Somerset Council, consultations on the A358/A303 improvements with Highways England and the Somerset Rivers Authority.
- 7.3 We are also working with the COACH project and with Summerfield on the new Westpark HQ near Wellington for Deane DLO.
- 7.4 The number of media enquiries is also increasing, especially as the Council is dealing with a number of high profile issues ranging from the urban extension planning application for Comeytrowe/Trull to the Southwest One Contract.
- 7.5 The annual budget briefing took place at the end of January 2016 with a good attendance as the media appreciates the opportunity to learn about the complex process first hand.
- 7.6 Deane Dispatch continues its monthly publication with topics ranging from the care of our award-winning parks and open spaces to investment in housing. The Council also provides a regular business column for the Somerset County Gazette.

Councillor Mark Edwards

# **Council Meeting – 23 February 2016**

## **Report of Councillor Roger Habgood – Planning Policy and Transportation**

### **1. Planning Policy**

#### **Site Allocation and Development Plan (SADMP)**

- 1.1 The SADMP remains at examination with hearing dates now confirmed for the end of March and the first week of April. The Inspector's interim report on Heritage and Ecological Matters has been received.
- 1.2 The final agenda is likely to be confirmed in the next week or so. In the meantime our officers are busy formulating the Council's Statements, which will be uploaded to the web in a timely manner, no later than the 2 March 2016.
- 1.3 Should Members wish further details regarding the examination more can be found through the website or by contacting the Programme Officer: Ms.Salla Arnold.

### **2. Regulation 123 List Revision and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Governance**

- 2.1 As a reminder for members Regulation 123 is the requirement for a published list of infrastructure projects or types of infrastructure that Taunton Deane intends will be, or may be, wholly or partly funded by CIL.
- 2.2 We will be revisiting the Regulation 123 list to provide greater clarity over priorities and individual projects. Governance arrangements for CIL project priorities are also being finalised.

### **3. Neighbourhood Planning: Bishops Lydeard and Cothelstone Neighbourhood Plan: Recommendation from Inspector John Mattocks.**

- 3.1 Independent examiner John Mattocks has reported back with his findings, suggesting minor amendments be made. Once the amendments were made I had no hesitation to follow the Inspectors recommendation that the plan now progresses to local referendum.

- 3.2 It is great to see the culmination of the Parish Council's hard work over the last three and a half years. In particular I would like to thank Councillor Jane Warmington for all of the work she has put into the plan. It is of course a local team effort but I know that the team greatly appreciates the work that she has done.
- 3.3 All those in the neighborhood plan area - Bishops Lydeard and Cothelstone Parish - who are eligible to vote - can have their say in the referendum. The Council aims to hold this concurrently with the Police and Crime Commissioners elections on 5 May 2016. The deadline to register to vote in is Monday, 18 April 2016.
- 3.4 Following a successful referendum, if the majority vote in favour, the plan will then be eligible to be adopted by the Council as local planning policy.

#### **4. Trull and Staplehay Neighborhood Plan**

- 4.1 Following consultation and technical legal considerations, the Trull and Staplehay Neighbourhood Development Plan is now to undergo a Structural Environment Assessment (SEA).
- 4.2 To not carry out an SEA, would place the Council and the Plan at serious risk of challenge. Carrying out an SEA will cause some delay to its progress, the consequences of which are far less than would occur if a challenge were to be mounted in the absence of an SEA.

#### **5. West Monkton and Cheddon Fitzpaine Neighbourhood Development Plan**

- 5.1 This joint plan is in its infancy and Parish Councillors and officers are busy carrying out work in the initial stages.

#### **6. Major Applications**

##### **Staplegrave**

- 6.1 The Staplegrave Framework Masterplan was recommended for adoption by the Council's Executive and was adopted by Full Council on 16 December 2016.

##### **Trull and Comeytrowe**

- 6.2 This application was heard at Planning Committee where a resolution to grant permission was agreed. The hard work to deliver the development has now commenced.

## **7. Regeneration**

### **Firepool**

- 7.1 The application has been validated and is progressing through the consultation phase a Planning determination is currently envisaged for April 2016.
- 7.2 Firepool is an important application for Taunton. It has been a long time coming for reasons that have been well understood. We now need to shape this application to ensure it is viable and that it is delivered turning an eyesore into a regenerated asset for Taunton Deane.

## **8. Transportation**

### **Variable Message Signing (VMS)**

- 8.1 This project is now taking shape. Indicative costs are in the region of £500,000. Siting of the VMS signs, the content of the signs and sign composition are being worked through.
- 8.2 A Scrutiny report is currently scheduled for late April 2016 that will cover VMS signage as well as the Parking Strategy and the Fixed Signage Review.

### **Twenty Year Infrastructure Strategy**

- 8.3 Discussions with the Highways Authority (SCC) and other partners continue. Members have been informed of the initial shaping of this work.

Councillor Roger Habgood