

COUNCIL MEETING 24 FEBRUARY 2004

Report of Councillor Cavill – Economic Development and Tourism

Asset Management

We are currently undertaking a number of reviews:

a) our public open spaces and playing fields. The purpose of the review is to ensure best use is being made of these areas, and to plan for the future so that they are maintained to the standard that is required.

b) a survey of our shops, to be finished by the end of March. This will assess the condition of the premises, identify any asbestos problems and will be incorporated into the five-year maintenance plan.

c) DDA. We are now looking at car parks as well as our premises in order to complete our assessment before October. The assessment will allow us to prioritise the work required.

Work is progressing on GIS/Computerised Asset Management register, transferring our asset management plan onto the computer system, to inter-link with other systems and thus to make best use of valuation services.

Other minor works to improve the workplace environment include checking all windows in Deane House so they function correctly. Toilets are being fitted with 6 litre flushes to economise on water use.

Assets and the Vision for Taunton

In undertaking a survey of the open spaces in Taunton, our valuation department and surveyors have drawn up plans, to maximise their value. It has become apparent that it would not be prudent at this moment to dispose of any of these assets until we know how they will affect the Vision plan. As one of the major landowners along with the SCC we have the ability to assist and enhance the Taunton Vision. Thus the proposed inner relief road line needs to be reviewed or it could be a serious economic detriment to our assets, the Vision, and the economy of North St.

Broadband

The Broadband road-shows that were held at SCAT and Milverton were a great success and well received by individuals and businesses alike. Building on this success three more have been planned, Corfe Village Hall 18th March, Cleeve Hotel Wellington 24th March, and WPA Blackbrook Business Park 29th March. In addition to morning and afternoon sessions, an evening session will be held from 7 – 9.30pm on each occasion.

TICs

Our TIC in Taunton won the 'Best Development Award – South' from National Express/Holiday Extra's for the period April – June 2003. Of the 17 TICs in the South West, Taunton was the second busiest with over 136,000 visitors. The TIC is jointly funded, equally by SCC and TDBC, at present. SCC is considering reducing its funding and is asking their staff to consider reducing the opening hours. There must be concern that if this is done, their success in generating an income of £221,600 (in 2003/4) may be compromised, with subsequent economic knock-on effects in the Deane. There is a proposed £1.2billion e-business action plan for Tourism in Somerset. This would make the Taunton TIC a hub office of strategic importance, as a central point for collecting data on a County level.

Visitor Guide for 2004

This has been launched, 26000 copies have been distributed to date, and have been well received. There have been considerable numbers of requests from institutions and businesses, indicating it may be a source of information for those interested in relocation.

Councillor Norman P Cavill