

# **Council Meeting – 23 July 2013**

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

### **1. Northern Inner Distributor Road (NIDR)**

- 1.1 The great news is that the £15,200,000 funding has now been confirmed by the Government and by the time of presenting this report work on site will have started. This has to be a major vote of confidence in our plans for regeneration of this strategic employment and housing site, also delivering a £22,000,000 construction contract that will give a major boost to our local economy.
- 1.2 The NIDR is the key to unlock the Firepool site and we will now be redoubling our efforts with our partners, St Modwens, to deliver development on the site. For the housing aspect it is recognised that the original concept of flats is not particularly saleable in this present market. We have therefore, requested a review of the scheme to meet market demands and deliver an acceptable scheme. It has to be relevant that the adjacent housing development on the East Goods Yard is being rapidly constructed and trading well.

### **2. Castle Green Development**

- 2.1 Further good news that the works and design of the above have been regarded as of sufficient merit to win the following:-
  - The national award, from the Association for Consultancy and Engineering, in respect of the design and construction of the iconic glass-sided bridge that spans the Castle Moat.
  - Commendation from the Royal Town Planning Institute, in the South West awards, for the design of this prestigious open space.
  - Our Contractor for the works, Britania Construction, nominated as one of three Contractors for the “Heritage Award” from the Chartered Institute of Building for works on Castle Green.
  - The bridge has also been nominated for a further award and judging by the British Construction Industry took place very recently. The outcome is not yet known.

- 2.2 To receive four accolades from independent organisations for the same project has to be testament to the design, construction and quality of the open space created. This is a great achievement for all involved.

### **3. Taunton Railway Station**

- 3.1 We have recently received further details of how Network Rail proposes taking the project "Creating a New Gateway into Taunton" forward. A scheme has been produced that does propose the all important change of relocating the ticket booking hall and visitor concourse to the Firepool side of the track. Associated with this is a new commercial development around the forecourt of what is now the back entrance to the Station, together with improved taxi and bus drop off and collect provision.
- 3.2 This will be the first phase of the exciting overall scheme presented to us last year which included new housing development, new workshops and a multi-storey car park. These elements are still very much intended but have been delayed because of the short term extension of the Rail Operating Franchise. At present we do not have a long term operator to work with, as was anticipated in 2012.
- 3.3 We are in the process of arranging a presentation of these plans when further details will be available. The object of this first phase is to start creating that "New Gateway into Taunton" that is so needed to improve on what we have, but only carry out works that fit within the parameters of the overall scheme to minimize any abortive work. It is to be commended and we will be doing all possible to ensure this comes forward as again, the driver for this, is the impending construction of the NIDR.

### **4. Major Flood Alleviation Scheme**

- 4.1 This is now proceeding apace with access to the land resolved and agreed with the Environment Agency and landowners. As a consequence the consultants carrying out the appraisal have been able to complete their on site surveys and the results of these should be assessed against the preliminary designs to confirm the assumptions made to date. This will confirm the feasibility or otherwise of the current designs and, if confirmed, allow us to commence the more detailed designs with certainty. Initial feedback from the consultants following on from their site visit confirms that 'no showstoppers' were identified.
- 4.2 I have no illusions that we have many challenges ahead to deliver this major scheme and other associated measures which are estimated to cost £12 to £15 million. The Environment Agency remains fully supportive as it will deliver protection to existing properties for which

they will contribute. The scheme, when finished, will also deliver essential protection to sites across Taunton that will drive economic development, with that link other sources of funds become available. As I have said, a challenge, but with persistence and commitment not one that is insurmountable.

## **5. Shared Management/Services Project with West Somerset Council**

- 5.1 Suffice to say this is the subject of a separate report to Council tonight and I do hope that Members have accepted the recommendations being proposed. There is no doubt we, and many other Councils, will have to confront the difficult decisions in front of us tonight but I think I can assure Members it is one of those situations that you either plan for and adopt on your own terms or be driven to it through lack of funding. Continuing in the same old way is not a choice! The future could be stark, either choose to save money by cutting the cost of delivery or cut the very front line services that I know are so valued by our community, and that we all expect to be able to deliver for them! I know where my vote is going, I do hope it gets cross party support.
- 5.2 To reinforce comments above about reductions in funding please find attached to my report an official chart from Department for Communities and Local Government showing the potential trend of Local Government funding to 2020. As you will note the Revenue Support Grant as predicted virtually drops to zero. This Grant is worth a substantial amount of £3,500,000 this year, with our overall formula grant (including Business Rates) having already fallen by £2,300,000 over the last three years. This is not replaced by any proposals from the Government and the only increases shown are nominal uplifts for inflation which in turn will no doubt be matched by inflationary increases in our costs!
- 5.3 If any Members doubted the necessity for radical change then I hope this peek into the future will reassure them of the need. I for one would rather plan and be in control of our future rather than have it imposed upon us through lack of funding.

## **6. Taunton Deane Leading the Field! (Ahead of the Game?)**

- 6.1 An article in Saturday's Telegraph of 13 July caught my eye where "senior Liberal Democrats" have come up with this brilliant idea that by moving a motion at their next Conference to build 25,000 more Council houses it helps save the economy.
- 6.2 A most interesting proposal because, although admirable to increase housing supply, if divided between about 340 Councils across the land it works out as an average of 74 houses for each authority.

- 6.3 On that basis we are well ahead of the game, in Halcon where we have plans for 92 new homes, (60 for Taunton Deane at Social Rent and a further 32 for Knightstone Housing Association at Affordable Rent), and approximately a further 20 new Taunton Deane homes for Social Rent on other sites across the district. Totalling 80 new social rented houses. This suggests the powers are already there from Central Government and our administration has taken full advantage of it by not waiting for motions to be moved in conference but getting on with delivery. We had already recognised the economic boost this provides. I would suggest that what is required is a motion exhorting far more Councils to be proactive and use the powers already given by Central Government, as our administration has done!
- 6.4 Taunton Deane Borough Council is again “leading the field” and others are following!

## **7. EDF South West Office Requirement**

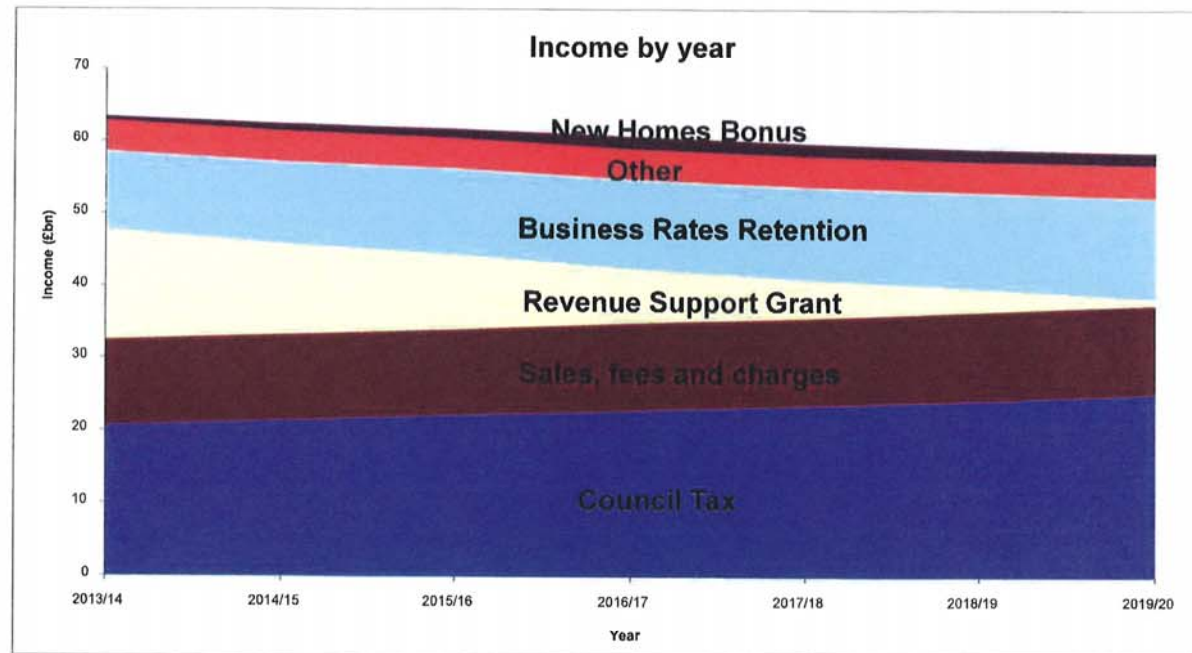
- 7.1 We became aware that EDF are again reviewing their South West Region Office requirements so all options are open again. I have invited their representatives to Taunton and met with them making it absolutely clear we will do all possible to secure their presence in Taunton. I have instructed officers to work with EDF and leave absolutely no stone unturned in smoothing the way to securing their location in Taunton Deane. I wish to assure Members that it is a top priority for us to succeed. This will also need your support should we be able to work the oracle and secure them locally.
- 7.2 There will be considerable challenges for us together with stiff competition from other areas but I have met with their representatives and stressed we will go that extra mile to accommodate them. Also I have made clear that officers have a clear mandate to make this happen. In addition I have written to Mr Caddoux-Hudson, MD – Nuclear New Build, inviting him to visit Taunton and understand what we have to offer or, the Chief Executive and myself, will be more than happy to meet him in a place of his choice.
- 7.3 I have also informed our MP of the latest position with EDF and requested his support for our efforts to secure what would be a great opportunity for Taunton and he has agreed to do all possible to lobby for this on our behalf.

Councillor John Williams  
Leader of the Council



Department for  
Communities and  
Local Government

## Potential trends



# **Council Meeting - 23 July 2013**

## **Report of Councillor Jane Warmington (Acting Portfolio Holder) and Councillor Jean Adkins - Housing Services**

**Councillor Jean Adkins would like to thank other members for all their good wishes, with special thanks to Councillor Jane Warmington for standing in during her recent illness. This report is a collaboration, but responsibility for its content and any decisions made during my absence lies with me.**

### **1. The Advice Services Transition Fund - BIG Lottery Fund**

- 1.1 The BIG Lottery launched the Advice Services Transition Fund to enable local not-for-profit providers of advice services in England to continue to give vital help to people and communities.
- 1.2 The Taunton Partnership – Target Taunton – succeeded in its bid and has been awarded £332,000 to fund its project over the next two years. Taunton Deane Borough Council has committed £15,000 a year from its housing funds while social housing landlord Knightstone is contributing £5,000 a year. The new scheme will provide better and more targeted advice to people in Taunton struggling in difficult circumstances.
- 1.3 Taunton and District Citizens Advice Bureau is working closely with Taunton Deane Borough Council, Knightstone Housing and other partners on the project that aims to help those most in need.
- 1.4 Other partners involved are: Mind in Taunton and West Somerset; Somerset Advice Network (SAN); Taunton Association for the Homeless (TAH); Langley House Trust; The Community Council for Somerset; North Taunton Partnership; Somerset County Council and Children's Centres in Taunton Deane; 10 Communities Youth and Taunton Deane and West Somerset Credit Union.
- 1.5 The Project's aims include recruiting more volunteers to work with communities, new telephone support services, more support on managing money for the under-25s as well as social housing tenants and other residents especially those in the least advantaged areas.
- 1.6 A Money Matters Team will be set up to work closely with the Credit Union and volunteers will be trained to provide advice on managing money – a vital skill in challenging economic times.

### **2. Welfare Reform Strategy**

- 2.1 Housing Services began working on its Welfare Reform Strategy and Action Plan in the autumn of last year, finalising it in March 2013. The purpose is to help mitigate the impact of welfare reform on Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Services and its tenants. The action plan pulls together activities in relation to benefit and money advice, financial inclusion and affordable warmth.

- 2.2 Several of the action plan objectives relate to: Helping tenants resolve any debt problems they may have; Improving the money management skills of tenants; and ensuring tenants are claiming all of the benefits they are entitled to.
- 2.3 The success of the Target Taunton's bid to the BIG Lottery means we are able to secure the delivery of an advice service on money management for the benefit of those living in Taunton Deane and our housing tenants.

### **3. Housing Services Digital Inclusion Project**

- 3.1 The project group has been convened as a part of the Housing Services' response to the Government's changes to welfare benefit payments.
- 3.2 Parts of Welfare Reform Act 2012 became law in April 2013 and the Universal Credit part of the Act is due to become law in October 2013 in London and then rolled out across the rest of the country. The Government's aim is that 80% of benefit will be claimed on-line.
- 3.3 In respect of digital inclusion the intention is to support our tenants, link up our meeting halls to enable access to an IT system with help and advice available from the Supported Housing Team.
- 3.4 Some of the benefits for tenants include:-
- Enabling them to claim for the benefits that they are entitled to;
  - Enabling tenants to improve their lives;
  - Completing job applications;
  - Completing CV's;
  - Reducing rent arrears to the organisation; and
  - Providing support for other residents in our communities.
- 3.5 The project is expected to be up and running by March 2014.

### **4. Welfare Reform Visits - Under Occupation**

- 4.1 The number of Taunton Deane Housing Service tenants affected by Under Occupation are 458 however this is subject to change on a daily basis as tenants go on and come off benefits (down from 516 in October 2012). 454 have been visited following appointments. Of these:-

235 want to stay and pay  
80 want to downsize\* (increasing)  
143 were not home for the appointment  
of these 60 completed 2<sup>nd</sup> visits (39 more to do)  
44 were not at home for 2<sup>nd</sup> visit  
65 are no longer affected by changes or are considering their options

- 4.2 Of the 80 wanting to downsize\* we have undertaken:-
- 1 Direct Match approved and completed

16 Successful bids on CBL (Homefinder Somerset) and  
3 bids awaiting verification;  
7 Mutual Exchanges completed and  
1 Mutual Exchange being processed;  
Just over one third so far.

- 4.3 Tenants choosing to downsize have been offered help to complete Homefinder Somerset application forms and given advice on how our allocation system works. Tenants have also been assisted to complete financial statements where necessary.
- 4.4 All tenants are being offered advice on Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) and help to complete the application form.
- 4.5 A total of 49 DHP's have been awarded to tenants (for reasons such as a few months off pension age, children nearly old enough, and waiting to downsize); The majority of the DHP's awarded do not cover the full amount tenants have to pay and initially are for six months.
- 4.6 A "Mutual Exchange Day" will be held at Moorland Place meeting hall on Tuesday, 13 August 2013 as a pilot scheme to see if this helps bring tenants together and will be rolled out across Taunton Deane, if successful.

## **5. Housing Development - Regeneration**

- 5.1 Exciting times and good progress for Housing Development.
- 5.2 After extensive engagement with the local community, Tenants Forum, Tenants Services Management Board, Councillors and officers, the Housing Development Team have submitted a planning application to redevelop Creechbarrow Road. We would like to thank James Barrahan and his team for their impressive work.
- 5.3 This is significant for Taunton Deane Borough Council who, in partnership with Knightstone Housing Association, are again investing in affordable housing. The plans are for 92 new dwellings, 60 of which will be Council stock, and a community hub. In total this represents an investment of over £11 million.
- 5.4 In addition to this, three small scale sites have been consulted on for further Council Housing (originally four were being looked at, but difficulties have been encountered with one). Plans for sites in Normandy Drive and Bacon Drive in Taunton along with a small development in West Bagborough have been discussed with the local communities as well as the Tenants Board and Tenants Forum.
- 5.5 In West Bagborough the plans were generally met very favourably. These plans allow for the development of 1x4 bed house, 2x2 bed houses, 2x3 bed houses, and 2x1 bed flats (one of which will be wheelchair suitable). A planning submission for West Bagborough is due for the end of July.
- 5.6 On the Taunton sites some helpful community feedback has led to a review of the original plans. New plans now provide for the building of 4x2 bed houses on Bacon Drive and 8x1 bed flats on Normandy Drive. Further consultation is scheduled for early August.



- 5.7 These smaller sites will again add to the Council's Housing Stock and represent approximately £3 million of investment. We hope the planning applications will be submitted this summer.

## **6. Moving Out**

- 6.1 The decant is progressing well with 24 properties now empty across the Creechbarrow Road site. A further 15 individuals/families are in the process of viewing properties or have accepted properties and are preparing to move. All residents on the Knightstone part of the site have found new homes. So far five existing residents of Creechbarrow Road intend to return to the new development once complete and are being moved to properties temporarily in the meantime.

## **7. Tailored Support**

- 7.1 Moving home is a major upheaval for everyone but even more so if you are elderly or vulnerable. Recognising this, Enabling Officers came up with an innovative scheme to provide a friendly helping hand. The decanting process at Parmin Close has run quite smoothly thanks to the huge support a local agency providing tailored support has given to those tenants who have requested assistance.
- 7.2 Once it is established that help is needed the tenant is visited and helped to sort out all aspects of the move. Removals are booked, post redirected and other kinds of paper work dealt with if required. Possessions are then packed and unpacked under the watchful eye of the tenant.
- 7.3 There have been many phone calls of praise for the work the local agency has done at Parmin Close and it is about to move eleven households at Victoria Gate who have requested help. This is a marvellous service provided by Taunton Deane which is available free to our elderly and more vulnerable tenants and will, of course be available for Creechbarrow Road tenants if required.

## **8. Affordable Housing completions**

- 8.1 There is an update to the total number of completions as reported at year end for 2012/2013, following information received from the Homes and Communities Agency there appear to be eight more Firstbuy Units than previously thought.
- 8.2 Although the target of 200 has not been reached for this financial year, there was a surplus over target in 2011/2012 and a good start has been made to 2013/2014 with 53 homes completed in the first quarter, partly due to slippage from the previous year. We are therefore on course to achieve the overall target of 600 in the three year period 2011/2014, especially as the Government's Help to Buy scheme is reported to be popular.

## **9. Affordable Housing Open Day**

- 9.1 This attracted over 300 visitors, with 24 exhibitors which included plans for the Creechbarrow Road redevelopment, Housing Options, Revenue and Benefits, Somerset West Landlord and Tenant Services teams, CAB, seven housing

associations, several house builders, a firm of architects which have designed a lot of affordable housing, a firm of solicitors and two mortgage providers.

- 9.2 They were able to provide help and advice on a wide range of subjects including affordable rented housing, affordable home ownership and a list of all the properties that could be reserved. This is the eighth time this popular OneStopShop event has been held. Compliments came in from both visitors and exhibitors alike, many of whom have asked to come back next year. Huge thanks to everyone who helped to make this event another great success.

## **10. Right to Buy Sales**

- 10.1 As we are accumulating funds from Right to Buy Sales which have to be spent within three years, in addition to our housebuilding programme, we are considering buying property on the open market which was previously Council stock. Three such properties have been offered to us recently. This will help to keep up our stock of houses as further sales are anticipated.

## **11. Homefinder Somerset**

- 11.1 Home Finder Somerset Annual Activity Summary Report has just been published with yearly statistics for 2012/2013.
- 11.2 The figures for the number of active registered applicants (Table 1) are worth noting. The text in 1.12 explains why the numbers have decreased since 2010.
- 11.3 The age profile of those accepting offers of accommodation (Table 5) is interesting with nearly a fifth aged 24 years or under (the second highest demand).
- 11.4 The number of Taunton Deane Housing Services property advertisements placed was 540 in the year, with 767 property advertisements placed across Taunton Deane by all landlords (Table 8).

## **12. Rent Arrears**

- 12.1 The refreshed Housing Revenue Account Business Plan had included further provision for bad debt, which had been anticipated as a result of changes to the benefit system, especially the introduction of Universal Credit, which has been delayed. Consequently this provision has not been needed and will, therefore, be reviewed in the Autumn.
- 12.2 Overall arrears are reducing, with arrears for those tenants directly affected by changes to Housing Benefit increasing slightly this month to £51,881.25.

Councillor Jean Adkins

# **Council Meeting - 23 July 2013**

## **Report of Councillor Mrs Vivienne Stock-Williams - Corporate Resources**

### **1. Customer Contact Centre**

#### **Service Delivery**

- 1.1 April is always a busy month within the Contact Centre, as first payments for the new Council Tax year become due. Precedence also needed to be given to Garden Waste renewals and queries relating to both.
- 1.2 This year we experienced the first of the new arrangements which increased the number of residents liable to pay Council Tax. This change generated over 5,000 reminders in April – the majority to first-time payers.
- 1.3 Staff also achieved an 8% increase in answered calls coming into the service in comparison with the same period in 2012. This high level of recovery was sustained in May. The team was able to cope with the heavy workload during both months by working effectively with the Revenues and Benefits Team to plan the activity in advance.

#### **Staff Development**

- 1.4 The Contact Centre held their annual team days in May, which focussed on improving service communication and internal development requirements for both the Staff Forum and the Workforce Planning Group.
- 1.5 Positive and useful feedback was provided at these events, which will enable staff to move forward in both developing the service and understanding how they can best engage in the future.

#### **Customer Access and Accommodation Project**

- 1.6 The service has been invited to play an active role in the Customer Access and Accommodation Project. The team is delighted to be able to take part in this exciting project for Taunton Deane, which will help shape the way services are delivered to customers in the future.

#### **Statistical Information – April and May 2013**

- 1.7 During April, a total of 1,893 enquiries were dealt with at The Deane House Main, Housing and Planning Receptions. 2,015 people visited Wellington Community Office – 1,071 to make enquiries including THE

Tourist Information Centre and 949 to make a payment through the kiosk. In May, the figures were 1,749 for The Deane House and 1,875 for Wellington Community Office (1,025 enquiries and 850 payments). The team dealt with 591 letter and email enquiries during the period, including Garden Waste renewals.

Service Line	Reporting Authority	KPI No	Performance Measure	Frequency of Reporting	2012/2013 Target	Apr-13	May-13
						<b>QUARTER 1</b>	
Customer Contact	TDBC	1	% of calls answered in 20 secs	Monthly	80%	82%	81.76%
Customer Contact	TDBC	2	% of calls resolved at first point of contact	Monthly	92%	98%	97.57%
Customer Contact	TDBC	3	% of external customers rating the Customer Contact service as Very Good/Good	Annually (monitored quarterly)	75%		
Customer Contact	TDBC	4	Abandoned call rate - less than 5%	Monthly	<5%	2.74%	2.78%

## 2. Corporate and Client Services

### Client Team

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

### Southwest One Contract

- 2.2 Following the recent changes to the Southwest One contract agreed between Somerset County Council (SCC) and Southwest One (which saw the return of the Property, Facilities Management and elements of SCC's ICT and Procurement Services) the Client Team is undertaking a review of Taunton Deane's services. This review is ongoing, but we hope to bring the results and any recommendations to Members later in the year.

### Minor Changes to Southwest One Contract

- 2.3 Taunton Deane has, however, recently made some minor changes to its contract with Southwest One and brought back in-house both ICT Strategy and the Health and Safety functions.

## **Procurement**

- 2.4 SCC and Southwest One have now resolved their outstanding dispute in relation to procurement and SCC has taken back in-house elements of its Procurement service. The Client Team has, therefore, been working with Southwest One to gain confidence that the remaining Procurement Service will be able to continue to deliver for the Council.
- 2.5 This is work in progress, but we are assured that the Procurement Service will now be able to focus on delivering savings for Taunton Deane. Initial indications suggest that there is now greater capacity within the Procurement Service to focus on the Council's procurement work, which is obviously to our benefit.

## **Procurement Savings**

- 2.6 The savings delivered continue to be short of the original anticipated amount and are likely now to remain so. Nevertheless, savings are being delivered. At 31 May 2013 (latest reported figures) £2,891,000 of savings initiatives had been signed-off. Of this total, £1,704,000 has been delivered to date, with the remainder scheduled for delivery at future periods.

## **Savings Initiatives**

- 2.7 Current savings initiatives are focussing on waste contracts (not the Somerset Waste Partnership) and specific initiatives relating to Deane DLO and Housing Property Services.

## **Retained Finance and Corporate Insurance**

- 2.8 The Retained Finance Team continues to manage the finance functions not provided by Southwest One, provide support to the Section 151 Officer, assist the Client Team in monitoring the Finance Service element of the Southwest One contract and provide support for the retained Parking functions.

## **Southwest One Contract Review**

- 2.9 In addition, a significant amount of work has been undertaken in the past couple of months to assist the Client Team with the review of Southwest One services.

## **Treasury Management Contract**

- 2.10 The new Treasury Management contract has now been completed and signed.

## **Retained HR**

- 2.11 The Retained HR Manager continues to provide strategic HR support to the Authority, manages the HR functions not provided by Southwest One and assists the Client Team in monitoring the HR aspects of the Southwest One contract.

### **Corporate Projects**

- 2.12 In the past quarter, the Retained HR Manager has been heavily involved in supporting key corporate projects such as the Corporate Business Plan, West Somerset Project and the review of Southwest One services.

### **Strategic and Retained ICT**

- 2.13 The responsibility for the ICT Strategy function was returned, by mutual agreement, from Southwest One to the Council in April 2013. Fiona Kirkham (our former ICT Manager) returned with the function.

### **Corporate Projects**

- 2.14 This has allowed Taunton Deane, at no additional cost, to fill the Strategic/Retained ICT role on a permanent, full-time basis. This provides the Authority with the technical expertise to enable us to more fully manage the ICT element of the Southwest One contract, which was a recommendation made during last year's LGA Peer Review. Additionally, this provides in-house, technical expertise to advise on a number of key technology-related projects.

### **SAP**

- 2.15 The new role will also pick up the launch of the remaining elements of the SAP system from the Authority's perspective.

## **3. Corporate Performance**

### **Outturn Performance**

- 3.1 The 2012/2013 outturn Corporate Performance report was considered by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 23 May 2013 and the Executive Committee on 10 July 2013.

### **Quarterly Performance**

- 3.2 The Quarter 1 (2013/2014) performance report is currently being prepared for review by Corporate Management Team (CMT) on 31 July 2013 before being reported to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 15 August 2013 and the Executive on 11 September 2013.

## **Corporate Performance Scorecard**

- 3.3 The Corporate Performance Scorecard (content, measures / performance indicators and targets) has been refreshed and updated to reflect the new Corporate Business Plan (2013/2014 – 2015/2016). The new scorecard will be used from Quarter 1 2013/2014.

## **Performance Scorecards**

- 3.4 Theme and Service Performance Scorecards are also produced quarterly. They include detailed performance information and updates on progress against Theme and Service priorities. These scorecards are available from all Theme Managers.

## **Risk Management**

- 3.5 The Corporate Risk Register was last reviewed by CMT in May 2013 and was reported to the Corporate Governance Committee on 24 June. CMT will conduct a further review of the Corporate Risk Register as part of the Quarter 1 Performance Review (31 July 2013).

## **Corporate Change Programme**

- 3.6 The Council's Corporate Change Programme is overseen by the Strategy and Performance Team. Project Managers for all major corporate projects report monthly to the 'Programme Management Group' (PMG).
- 3.7 There are two distinct 'programmes' that are designed to deliver the Authority's strategic aims: i) Growth and Regeneration, and ii) Corporate Transformation. An overview of the entire programme is provided for Members as part of the Quarterly Performance Monitoring Report.
- 3.8 To further develop the Council's approach to effective programme management, Simon Lewis (Strategy and Performance Manager) and Dan Webb (Performance Lead) are completing an accredited training course in August on 'Managing Successful Programmes'.

## **Secondment**

- 3.9 The Performance Lead (Dan Webb) has recently been seconded for a minimum six month period (3 days per week) to work with the Growth and Regeneration / Project Taunton Team to bring additional project and performance management rigour and capacity to support the delivery of key economic and regeneration initiatives.

## **4. Legal and Democratic Services**

## **Staff**

### **Legal Services**

4.1.1 Sadly, we say goodbye to several staff within Legal and Democratic Services. Judith Jackson retired on 30 June after 24 years with the Council. She was a much valued and highly regarded officer who will be missed. However, Judith's replacement, Roy Pinney, started with us on 1 July and is settling in well.

### **Building Control**

4.1.2 The Authority will also be saying goodbye to Carole Fennell and Jo White, as the Land Charges Service passes to Building Control on 1 September 2013. Carole has been with the council for 27 years and Jo for 9 years. Thus, Judith, Carole and Jo had a total of 60 years of service between them. I should like to wish them well in their retirements.

### **Democratic Services**

4.1.3 I am pleased to say that Tracey Meadows is now back at work and is recovering well from her knee operation. The Corporate Support Unit has coped really well in her absence and I should like to thank them for all their hard work during this time.

### **Standards Committee**

4.2 Since July 2012, when the Standards processes changed, the Committee has only received one complaint. This did not necessitate an investigation and was dealt with adequately by the Monitoring Officer.

### **The Mayor**

4.3 The Mayor is now fully embracing Social Media and has both Twitter and FaceBook accounts. This enables her to engage with people of all ages across Taunton Deane. The Council has received positive comments about her "getting into the 21st Century". This new venture seems to be linking well with the Mayor's stated aim "to reach people that other Mayors have failed to reach".

### **Mayoral Charities**

4.4 The Mayor has begun the Civic Year with a busy schedule. Her two chosen charities have linked up with the Council enthusiastically and have put forward some excellent ideas for helping people in the North Taunton area who are suffering from Alzheimer's disease.

### **Mayoral Activities**



- 4.5 During the Mayor's first week in office, Councillor Ms Lisgo attended the Royal Marines' Homecoming Parade and delivered an excellent speech to everyone in the town centre. She had the privilege of meeting the Duke of Edinburgh at the Medals Parade at Norton Manor Camp that afternoon. Her impression was that he was both charming and seemed genuinely pleased to meet her and Alan.
- 4.6 The Mayor subsequently raised the Armed Forces Flag at The Deane House for the beginning of Armed Forces Week. During her time in office, the Mayor has met with the Royal Marines and the local ex-Service Associations on several occasions, ensuring that the strong relationship the Authority has with the Military continues. This has demonstrated Taunton Deane's commitment to the Somerset Armed Forces Community Covenant.

## **5. Revenues and Benefits**

### **Return of Service**

- 5.1 It is now three months since the Revenues and Benefits Service returned to the Council and I am pleased to report this transition has gone extremely well. Staff are happy to be back and the transfer has had no detrimental effect on our customers.
- 5.2 This is particularly pleasing as the transfer took place at a time of unprecedented demand on the service. On 1 April 2013, the Authority launched its new Council Tax Support scheme (CTS) replacing the national Council Tax Benefit (CTB) scheme. At the same time, it was necessary to implement the removal of the spare room subsidy (commonly referred to as "the bedroom tax").

### **Discretionary Payments**

- 5.3 The demand for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) and Discretionary Council Tax Assistance (DCTA) to help in meeting benefit shortfalls is high. For the period to 30 June 2013, the Council had given extra help to 101 customers, which exceeds DHPs for the whole of last year (82).

### **Benefit Cap**

- 5.4 The Benefit Cap restricting the total amount of benefits that can be received by out-of-work customers will start in Taunton on 15 July 2013. Single people without children will have benefits capped at £350 a week. Couples with or without children and lone parents will have their benefit capped at £500 a week. Any benefit over the cap must be deducted from Housing Benefit entitlement. It is estimated that this will affect 30 households in our area.

## **Council Tax**

- 5.5 Revenues staff have responded to many enquiries from customers who have previously not had to pay Council Tax. Under Taunton Deane's Council Tax Support scheme, the maximum support available is limited to 80% of the weekly liability for people of working age. Whilst many people have made adequate payments, some have struggled.
- 5.6 Arrears of Council Tax in comparison to this time last year have increased. Council Tax collection at the end of Quarter 1 was 34.84%, which was 0.45% below target. Encouragingly, Business Rate Collection was 0.67% ahead of target.

## **6. Council Accommodation and Customer Access Project**

### **Staff**

- 6.1 Kate Owsley has recently been appointed as part-time Project Officer to support Dean Emery, who is Project Manager.

### **Project Update**

- 6.2 The project is now in progress, working from a detailed project plan to achieve a full Business Case ready to present to Full Council on 10 December 2013. Regular project meetings are being arranged and there are agreed Customer Access channels. A FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) document is currently under construction – for consistency, it has been decided to base this initially on the FAQs from the Taunton Deane/West Somerset Project.

### **Accommodation**

- 6.3 A full valuation on The Deane House has been requested. The cost of a new-build at Firepool has also been commissioned via Mark Green. A review is being undertaken of the current accommodation in The Deane House and a report is expected in mid-July.
- 6.4 Dean Emery has recently attended a SCC workshop on shared accommodation. He will both visit and speak to officers in other authorities who have already undertaken shared accommodation projects.

### **Alignment with West Somerset Project**

- 6.5 As Members are aware, the West Somerset Project is progressing alongside this project. The Council Accommodation and Customer Access Project will consider a recommended strategy for Taunton

Deane Borough Council, but which can be scaled to accommodate a shared approach should that be the final outcome.

## **7. Joint Management and Shared Services Project**

### **Progress**

- 7.1 The Joint Management and Shared Services Project between Taunton Deane and West Somerset Council is progressing well.

### **Transformation Challenge Award**

- 7.2 The final draft of a bid to Central Government for the Transformation Challenge Award was shared with the Project Board and the Joint Management Advisory Panel during the week commencing 8 July before its submission on 11 July 2013.

### **Communication**

- 7.3 Regular newsletters for all staff and all Members at both Authorities have been circulated and have been well received. In addition, two sessions for lead officers and two Members Briefing sessions at both Councils have been delivered in order to keep Members and Managers fully up to speed with project progress.

### **Project Team**

- 7.4 The Project Team have held a number of informative joint meetings with some of the Service Managers from both Councils, and more are planned with other service lines.
- 7.5 These meetings have been approached in a very positive manner and have been helpful in understanding the possibility for sharing services between our Councils, and will inform the Business Case.

### **Timetable**

- 7.6 The project remains on track to deliver a detailed a Business Case for joint management to Full Council of both Authorities in October 2013. A high level Business Case for shared services will be delivered to the same time-scale".

Councillor Vivienne Stock-Williams

# **Council Meeting – 23 July 2013**

## **Report of Councillor Mark Edwards - Planning, Transportation and Communications**

### **1. Planning**

- 1.1 With work now starting on the Northern Inner Distributor Road (NIDR), the Crest residential development at Firepool Lock is moving on well. The mix of houses and apartments are of a contemporary style and include waterside villas overlooking the canal and river.
- 1.2 Planning permission has recently been granted for the conversion and extension of the Pump House to a restaurant use to enable the current owners to take it to the market and find a prospective purchaser or tenant. The conversion would allow for the renovation of the heritage asset as well as finding a suitable re-use of the building.
- 1.3 A reserved matters application has just been received for 97 homes at The Cades Farm Development in Wellington. Outline planning permission was granted for up to 300 dwellings with a local centre and public open space in July 2012.
- 1.4 The Planning Department has a new Major Applications Officer to replace Anthony Pick, who emigrated to Australia. John Burton has many years experience working as a planner at Torbay Council and joined Taunton Deane on 1 July 2013. John will be dealing with some of the more significant and controversial applications in the Taunton Deane and I welcome him to the Council.

### **2. Site Allocations and Development Management Plan**

- 2.1 Following the 'Issues and Options' consultation in January - March 2013 a total of over 900 responses were received. The Plan will reflect the policies and proposals in the Core Strategy; allocating land to meet the growth requirements set out in the Core Strategy together with detailed development management policies to assess planning applications.
- 2.2 The Council's initial response to the consultation has now been published together with a further consultation document on additional sites available for development and suggested 'tweaks' to settlement limits arising from the consultation.
- 2.3 Copies of both documents are available in public libraries and community offices and all persons / organisations on the Councils Planning Policy database have been informed. Following this further consultation on additional sites, officers propose to publish a 'Preferred

Options' document around October 2013 for further consultation. It is anticipated that the Plan will go to Examination in early 2015 with 'Adoption' in summer 2015.

### **3. Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)**

- 3.1 Following publication and receipt of comments on the Charging Schedule an Examination into the Borough Council's proposed CIL will be held on Wednesday, 24 July 2013.
- 3.2 The Examiner is Mr Paul Crysell (MRTPI). It is anticipated that the Council will be in a position to adopt and implement CIL early in 2013.

### **4. Employment, Retail and Housing Monitors**

- 4.1 Officers are completing their suite of annual monitoring reports on Employment, Retail and Leisure and Housing for the period 2012-2013.
- 4.2 Information from these documents are included in the annual Authorities Monitoring Report (published December). They are used to inform future planning policy and decisions on planning applications. When complete copies will be available in the Members room and from the Council's Planning website.

### **5. Neighbourhood Planning**

- 5.1 Residents in Bishops Lydeard and Cothelstone Parish have become the Borough's fourth designated Neighbourhood Plan Area. They join Wiveliscombe, Wellington, Trull and Staplehay communities who are all producing the Community Led Plan to shape the future growth and development of the place where they live, work and play.
- 5.2 Trull and Staplehay Neighbourhood Plan Group will launch their Neighbourhood Questionnaire at the end of the month to gather community views on a range of things including future housing and employment, roads and transport, wildlife and green spaces, as well as community assets.
- 5.3 Wiveliscombe Neighbourhood Plan Group are working through their Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire returns, they had over 32% of questionnaires returned.
- 5.4 Planning Aid ran a Policy Writing workshop with the four Neighbourhood Plan Groups in March 2013. This practical session covered Policy Writing for Beginners, Evidence Base, Condition Statements, Drafting Tips and Check Lists. Professional input from Planning Aid has been of immense benefit to the Council and the Communities. Planning Aid in partnership with Locality has secured

funding to continue to help communities around the Country. This help will be delivered through the new Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) Direct Neighbourhood Plan Funding.

5.5 Neighbourhood Plan Groups can apply for direct funding from the Government to help with the preparation of their Neighbourhood Plans. Support is being offered in two ways:-

- Direct support – advice and support, with an average value of equivalent to £9,500, tailored to meet the needs of supported neighbourhoods – support delivered by organizations such as Planning Aid and Locality;
- Grant payments – up to £7,000 per neighbourhood area, to contribute to costs incurred by the group preparing a neighbourhood plan or order.

5.6 Wiveliscombe have applied for funding and are waiting to hear if they have been successful. The Council is encouraging all its Neighbourhood Plan Groups to apply for this support and will, of course, assist where it can with the applications.

## **6. Heritage**

6.1 Revised applications for the restoration of Sandhill Park have recently been approved by the Planning Committee and work to convert the Grade 2\* listed building (a building at risk on English Heritage's register since 2000 and as you will all be aware, the subject of an arson attack), enabling development in the grounds and restoration of the parkland. It is scheduled to commence this autumn.

## **7. Communications**

7.1 Two major events, the Royal Marines Parade in May and Somerfest in June, passed off successfully with excellent support from the local and regional media. In the case of the Parade, national coverage was achieved with a half page in the Daily Telegraph.

7.2 The communications team is now looking at exploring the potential of social media, principally Twitter, to keep the community informed and updated. We will shortly report on progress.

7.3 The launch of two community radio stations – Apple FM and Tone FM – is providing new opportunities for the Council. Both stations are keen to feature Council news. The Community Development Team hosted Apple FM at a community clean-up day in Rockwell Green which resulted in a very positive report in the station's Community Matters slot. Further features are being planned.

- 7.4 As the Council undertakes a number of major projects and explores social media, the Communications Team has been strengthened with the addition of Helen Phillips.

## **8. Parking**

### **Wellington Free after Three**

- 8.1 I was delighted to respond to requests from retailers in Wellington to consider introducing "Free after Three" parking as I had in Taunton last September.
- 8.2 It has been agreed for a period of six weeks starting mid-August that on a Thursday, Friday and Saturday there will be no parking charges in Wellington after three o'clock.
- 8.3 We are working with the Town Council and the Local Business community to assess the impact of this trial over that period and will then consider introducing it on a permanent basis.
- 8.4 We need to do a trial to make sure it has the desired impact of increasing business and does not just change shopping habits and create other challenges within the Town.

### **Taunton Free after Three**

- 8.5 I am presently discussing the repeat of the very successful "Free after Three" scheme in Taunton on Saturdays for the month of September only. I will confirm with Members shortly.

### **Christmas Parking**

- 8.6 I initiated discussions with Somerset County Council and the Town Centre Manager about using the Park and Ride for the late night shopping leading up to Christmas and the Christmas Festival arranged in November for the light switch on.
- 8.7 I will be in a position to make an announcement shortly on the detail and arrangements.

### **Multi-Storey Lifts**

- 8.8 Work on Lift 1 is halfway through its programme and is on schedule for completion later this month which, I understand, is slightly ahead of schedule.
- 8.9 Lifts 2 and 3 have been kept operational whilst Lift 1 is out of action so inconvenience and disruption to our customers has been kept to a minimum. There have been no breakdowns on these two over this period.

- 8.10 The works will be completed by October in time for the Christmas sales period.
- 8.11 We will be giving the stairwells some redecoration and some lighting improvements as the work on the lifts is finished. The stairwells have also recently had a deep clean.

Councillor Mark Edwards



# Council Meeting - 23 July 2013

## Report of Councillor Jane Warmington - Community Leadership

### 1. Partnership Working

- 1.1 For several years the core work of the various agencies has gone along in parallel (in partnership) across our priority areas, overlapping mainly through work to develop the communities, supported through the Multi Agency Groups (MAGs) and focused through the two community centres (Priorswood Resource Centre and the Link Centre in Halcon) guided by the original (five year police) action plan updated by the Priority Area Strategy (follow-on action plan) and overseen by the strategic Taunton Deane Partnership.
- 1.2 Agencies and volunteers alike have worked and succeeded in making beneficial, visible changes across these communities alongside daily Police business, housing and tenant issues, family support and continuing community development.
- 1.3 The recently adopted 'One Team' approach in Halcon offers the opportunity for each agency to understand more fully those partners roles across the ward, look at problems together and work out the various ways to best tackle and ultimately solve them. To begin to address underlying problems, not necessarily apparent to all, which persist, often behind closed doors and have resulted in the ward being in the top most deprived 5% in the country.
- 1.4 By regularly sharing information, charting this, using the different threads of expertise across the team, they are able to think differently and work differently, together. This concerted team effort aims to change the lives of the people living there for the better and for good, addressing the root causes of deprivation.
- 1.5 The One Team are well placed to refer families into the developing Family Focus Programme and have made the most referrals to date and both present the opportunity now to start to make a lasting difference  
[www.tauntondeane.gov.uk/familyfocus](http://www.tauntondeane.gov.uk/familyfocus)

### 2. Community Development

- 2.1 This continues to support regular ongoing projects mainly in Taunton East and North Taunton across the school summer holidays. These include:-
  - **Halcon Brunch Club** on Monday and Friday late mornings.
  - **Happy Halcon** activity days are on Thursdays.
  - **Graffiti Project** has been extended.
  - **Pride in Priorswood** (PiP) has themed days every week on Tuesdays.
  - **Community Clean Up Days** are across the Borough every Thursday this year.
- 2.2 Several wonderful composite **pick-up-after-your-dog** campaign posters have been produced from all the competition entries from local schools in North Taunton to

draw attention to the new bins being provided there and in Taunton East to try and reduce the problem. Look out for them, they are charming.

### 3. Police Report

3.1 Presented to Community Scrutiny on 2 July 2013 by the Sector Inspector Stuart Bell. This was the first report since the end of the Police crime year (31/03/13) and includes the headline crime figures for the Taunton Policing Area.

3.2 Total crime – Reduction of 11.9% - 851 fewer victims of crime. Detection rate of 45.2% - up 5.8% in the year (this is one of the highest in the Country).

3.3 Crime figures per main crime type:-

Dwelling burglaries	reduction of 8.4%	(-20)	
Non-dwelling burglaries	reduction of 37.9%	(-236)	
Theft of motor vehicle	reduction of 39%	(-38)	
Theft from motor vehicle	reduction of 16.3%	(-84)	
Robbery	reduction of 33%	(-9)	(very small numbers)
Criminal damage	reduction of 13.7%	(-168)	
Violence	reduction of 11.8%	(-181)	(all violent offences)
Theft of cycle	reduction of 21.8%	(-62)	
Shop theft	increase of 14.7%	(+118)	

3.4 The shop theft crime type is interesting. There has been an increase in the age of first time offenders, traditionally early teenage (girls) stealing small items (make-up). We have now seen a significant rise in middle age/older age persons stealing food items. This is alongside increasing referrals to the Taunton Foodbank (to which the Police have contributed) and demonstrates a real impact on our communities.

3.5 In the first three months of this crime year we have continued to see a reduction in reported crime by a further 18.8% (341 less crimes).

3.6 There has been a change to the Avon and Somerset district Policing boundaries. Six Policing districts, (Bristol, South Gloucestershire, Bath and North East Somerset (BaNES), North Somerset, East Somerset and ourselves in Somerset West have reduced to three districts, so South Gloucestershire and BaNES, Bristol remains and a greater Somerset District (combining the previous East, West and North Somerset districts).

3.7 The new Somerset District is led by Chief Superintendent Nikki Watson, with Chief Inspector Pete Saban responsible for the Policing in the old Somerset West area and Inspector Stuart Bell remains as the local Policing lead for the Taunton Deane Sector.

3.8 Police Sergeant Andy Murphy has received the Queen's Police Medal in Her Majesty's Birthday Honours' List for his services to neighbourhood policing. This is a great honour and well deserved. He will be presented with his medal in October.

3.9 The One Team pilot project in Halcon was nominated for the Tilley Awards, an international problem solving award. This has won the Avon and Somerset award

locally and now goes forward into the national round with an awards event in London, later on in the year. The joint presentation for the local award to the One Team took place yesterday with members of the Police, Taunton Deane staff and other partner agency staff in attendance.

#### **4. Pathways to Independence**

- 4.1 P2i (Pathways to Independence) is an innovative partnership project between Somerset County Council, the five District Councils (Sedgemoor, South Somerset, Mendip, Taunton Deane and West Somerset) and a consortium of housing providers including Knightstone Housing, TAH, Bridgwater and Mendip YMCA.
- 4.2 The P2i service offers support for homeless and vulnerable young people aged 16 to 24. The service will cover joint needs assessments, family mediation, housing advice, emergency accommodation, supported housing, floating support and signposting to other services.
- 4.3 Each district has established a P2i 'Hub' providing a single point of access for young people in each local area. This way, they'll be able to access mediation and joint support from relevant agencies to get the best possible help available to them.

#### **5. Youth Forums**

- 5.1 The new Taunton Deane Youth Forum, the successor to the Youth Liaison Group met last month for the first time. The forum aims to provide an opportunity for representatives from communities to broaden their networks and meet other organisations to share ideas, good practice, funding advice and other functions to be agreed with forum members as they evolve.
- 5.2 The forums provide space for area based meetings to involve providers, VCS groups, town and parish councils. The Forums are co-ordinated, administered and funded by Somerset County Council.

#### **6. Benefits Welfare Cap**

- 6.1 The Benefits Welfare Cap to limit households to no more than the average wage was implemented on 15 July 2013. The aim is to encourage people back into work, to be more fair and affordable.
- 6.2 This is likely to affect 40,000 families across the country.

Councillor Jane Warmington

# **Council Meeting - 23 July 2013**

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

### **Culture and Events**

#### **The Brewhouse Theatre**

- 1.1 There is a Report to this Council which could resolve the purchase of lease and contents of the Brewhouse, from the Administrator.
- 1.2 David Pratley Associates who were appointed in April 2013, started their commission in June to advise this Council on the reestablishment of the Brewhouse. They are currently meeting with key stakeholders (including Taunton Theatre Group, Tone Leisure, Colleges, Cricket Club, Tacchi Morris Arts Centre) to identify interest in operating a new facility. Phase 1 of the commission involves an analysis of the options available to the Council to enable the theatre to be reopened. They will report back to officers before the end of July, and to the Steering Group shortly afterwards.
- 1.3 Phase 2 involves the recommendation of a way forward to the Council for the theatre, which could then mean working with one or more operator on a robust Business Plan.

#### **Somerfest**

- 1.4 Somerfest was a successful event on 15 June 2013, involving a celebration of procession, music, sports, and performing arts in Taunton Town Centre. The day saw an uplift in visitors to the town centre of around 15,000 people (25%).
- 1.5 No negative incidents or additional criminal activity, and positive feedback was obtained from town centre businesses and visitors on the day. The event was sponsored by Taunton Deane (£20,000) and delivered by the Taunton Town Centre Company, with support from SuperAct, FUSE, Somerset Sports and Activity Partnership, Tim Hill, and others.

#### **Street Performance**

- 1.6 The objective is to have more and better quality street performance in Taunton over the remainder of this Summer. Firstly, to have Our Big Gig on 13 July 2013 which is part of a national event to encourage music in town centres.
- 1.7 We had four performance venues, and music symposium delivered at the Creative Innovation Centre. There is a busking festival being planned, which could be held quarterly and hosted by cafes, restaurants and pubs.

## **Shakespeare Festival**

- 1.8 GB Theatre Company is planning a large event over three days (8-10 August) on Castle Green. Four performances, including a matinee on the Saturday. Includes performances of A Mid-Summer Night's Dream and The Merchant of Venice. Ticket sales going well.
- 1.9 The target is to have around 300 people at each of the performances. Taunton Deane is underwriting the event, to a maximum contribution of £5,000. It is hoped that the event will be successful, in which case the event will generate a net income for the Council, and the event will act as a model for different types of paid performances in future.

## **Arts Council G4A bid**

- 1.10 Working with SuperAct we submitted a bid to the Arts Council for funding to enhance our events in Taunton over this Summer. Regrettably the fund was significantly over subscribed and as a consequence our bid was unsuccessful.

## **2. Employment land**

- 2.1 Following developer moves to bring serviced land to the market, and further enhanced by our own measures to free up our own sites, Taunton Deane now has additional availability of sites to meet businesses' investment requirements. The sites currently either on the market, or progressing to the market, are:-
- Firepool;
  - Land at The Hatcheries at Bathpool (recently bought by a new developer and now being actively marketing by Phil Wade from Katmar). The development will include around 40,000sq ft of speculative development, and the potential for a further 40,000sq ft in response to business need);
  - Thales site, which has been supported by Scrutiny and the Executive, and has the potential to be a major 'high-tech' park;
  - Bindon Road;
  - Westpark at Chelston; and
  - Wiveliscombe Business Park.

## **3. Business Rates meeting**

- 3.1 In response to ongoing concern expressed by businesses over the Non-Domestic Rates system, an event has been arranged for businesses in Taunton on Friday, 19 July 2013. Speakers will include Paul Fitzgerald and Dean Emery from Finance at Taunton Deane, a representative of the Valuation Office and Jeremy Browne MP. The meeting will be held at the CICCIC.

## **4. Taunton Town Centre Company**

- 4.1 A new Board was formed at the end of March, and Guy Bottard, Partner at Future Law, has been elected as Chairman of the Board. The Council is represented by Councillor David Reed.
- 4.2 The Board has recently prepared 'A Plan for Taunton', drawing on the views of businesses in the town centre. The plan sets out an ambitious agenda to improve the business environment in the town, drawing upon the Council as well as its own activities and services. The Plan will underpin a debate around whether the company should proceed to ballot businesses on a further BID programme in 2014.
- 4.3 Having held a successful Family Fun Day at the end of May, the Town Centre Company is currently planning the Christmas event, comprising a Christmas Fair, lights and a lights switch on event. The event will be held on Sunday 17 November 2013.
- 4.4 Councillor Kelly Durdan is again involved in the fundraising for the Christmas Lights. All risk analyses for a safe and successful event will of course be overseen by Graham Love who will be working with her.

## **5. Inward Investment and Jobs Clubs**

### **Inward Investment**

- 5.1 We are currently in discussion with inward investors in the fields of ICT/Telecoms, electric vehicles, insurance and logistics, and assisting with locating suitable premises.

### **Employment and Skills Board**

- 5.2 A partnership of Somerset Colleges and Sixth Forms has been formed to promote Higher Level Apprenticeships (Level 3 and 4). A website is to be launched this month to promote the opportunities to employers, young people and parents.

### **Jobs Clubs**

- 5.3 Vista has just been awarded a further contract for the delivery of Jobs Clubs in Halcon, Priorswood and Wellington.
- 5.4 During the past year the Jobs Clubs have advised and assisted 198 people, helped 50 to return to work and created 139 opportunities for work experience/informal learning/social action.

### **Taunton Means Business /Website**

- 5.5 The Taunton Means Business (TMB) website is currently being updated and will now carry the strapline 'Growing for the Future'. All related publications will also carry the same strapline.

- 5.6 A new Inward Investment Prospectus is being prepared which will include a stock of case studies for prospective investors.
- 5.7 As there were problems with the data feedback from the previous train campaign which promoted the TMB video, Volo TV has agreed to re-run the campaign, free of charge. It will be interesting to see the feedback we receive from this, and the data received will be closely monitored.

### **Planning Liaison**

- 5.8 We are currently liaising with two companies with planning issues regarding their potential moves. In addition our officers have regular liaison meetings with the developers of Westpark at Wellington, the Wiveliscombe Business Park and units at Monkton Heathfield.

### **Vacant Unit Monitoring**

- 5.9 The vacancy monitor was updated in June. This demonstrated a reduction of 2.5% in empty retail units. It is now 8.5% against the national average of 14.1%.
- 5.10 We now have confirmation for occupation of five more units that are presently with planning. An additional four further units are under offer and another one on an edge of town site.

## **6. Business support**

- 6.1 We have just awarded 10 businesses in this first round of applications to:-
- A & S County sports - towards costs of a secure gun room
  - Matilda Gibbs, Bishops Hull towards setting up a forest school
  - Paul Black, Wiveliscombe towards outdoor education
  - Francesca Dillon, baby shop in Crown Walk, Taunton
  - John McCarthy, Norton Fitzwarren, NHS consultant
  - Mohamed Kouki, Creperie business in East Reach
  - George Ackroyd, Wiveliscombe towards marketing campaign
  - Kerri-Ann Lloyd, Imagine Design Creation in Bath Place towards costs of creating a creative centre for artists
  - Nick Harvey, Rockwell Green towards costs of a mobile DJ and Disco business
  - Ruth Streeter, Trull towards setting up an Employment Law practice.
- 6.2 The total of these 10 awards is £5000 and each of the above will be used as a case study that will appear on our website.
- 6.3 A summary sheet of last year's awards has been circulated to all Councillors.
- 6.4 We are working with Wellington Business Association to see if we can add value to the National Small Business Saturday campaign. Preliminary discussions are to be held within the next few weeks.

- 6.5 Similarly, with Wiveliscombe Business Group, we are helping them to organise a business fair in October. Sally (our new apprentice) has completed an audit of their business database that can be used as a marketing tool.
- 6.6 Discussions have been initiated and we are working with private sector partners to enable a Thursday Market on Castle Green. It is hoped this will begin in the next few weeks.

## **7. Asset Management**

- 7.1 An Option Appraisal on Surplus assets is being prepared. It is a non-operational asset review – A suitability scoring matrix is being developed, which will enable us to assess the value/cost and return from individual properties.
- 7.2 The Chestnut Tree Club demolition will see demolition to slab level. The Car Parking service will then be responsible for further works to create new parking spaces.
- 7.3 Matt Parr is currently assisting Project Taunton with various projects including the sale of the former Taunton Youth and Community Centre site, which has now been agreed by the Board of Lidl; the possibility of relocating the Tourist Information Centre and the Town Centre Company to a more central location; and the Church floodlighting project (ongoing)

Councillor Norman Cavill



# **Council Meeting – 23 July 2013**

## **Report of Councillor Ken Hayward – Environmental Services**

### **1. Environmental Health**

#### **Food**

- 1.1 The Food Standards Agency is running a consultation on changes to the Food Law Code of Practice. The aim is to gain more consistency in the risk rating of premises and clarifying how the risk scores are made up. Further, to improve the effectiveness of enforcement by making visits to lower risk, compliant businesses less frequent to allow focus on businesses that are non compliant with food law.
- 1.2 The catch up programme for food inspections is starting to take effect and this means that there are now fewer businesses that are overdue an inspection. This then lessens the likelihood and risk of problems at those premises - or if problems are found, then remedial action can be taken to lower the risk to public health.
- 1.3 The team has assisted Public Health England in investigating an EColi case within a family. This meant liaison with a small nursery as well as a voluntary closure whilst the investigation took place.

#### **Health and Safety**

- 1.4 Catrin Brown has continued to assist with the corporate Health and Safety role. This has meant a reduction in Environmental Health capacity but has undoubtedly improved the corporate position in relation to Health and Safety.
- 1.5 The M5 investigation continues to take a considerable amount of resource, but is hopefully moving towards a conclusion.

#### **Environmental Protection Team**

- 1.6 The team continues to receive a high number of Public Health funerals. These can again be very resource intensive as information relating to the individual and the estate is sought as well as ensuring that an individual has a respectful service and committal.
- 1.7 After the wash out of 2012, the Wasp season is coming into swing. Numbers are still down on previous years but certainly improved on 2012. The service has been offered to West Somerset on the same charging basis as those for Taunton Deane as we continue to seek improved service. West Somerset currently signposts to other commercial providers so this is a potential source of revenue to Taunton Deane.
- 1.8 The replacement of Gulls' eggs with plastic ones has now been completed and continues to be successful in keeping Gull numbers down.

- 1.9 The Air Quality Monitoring report is nearing its completion. This work is being carried out by the University of West of England, and will imminently be submitted to the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

## **Licensing**

- 1.10 The Financial Auditor's report relating to an objection to account has been returned. This related to the level of taxi fees in 2011/2012 and whether or not they were set in excess of costs and further were excessive. The Auditor has concluded that because the Council was unable to demonstrate the details of how the costs were originally set, this was an unlawful item of account but that the fees were - or appeared to be - reasonable. He has acknowledged that much work has been done to reconcile costs and recommended further work to clarify these. The Council is currently considering its position in relation to these findings.
- 1.11 There has been a change in the law on regulated entertainment which will mean that less issue of Licence is required for items such as performing of plays or live music between 8am and 11pm. It is unclear what effect this will have at this stage but will be discussed at the Licensing Committee.
- 1.12 The Council is working with Okoko Nightclub on Bridge Street in Taunton as well as local residents in relation to concerns raised. Productive meetings have been held and through further liaison with other responsible bodies, it is hoped that an acceptable way forward can be agreed.

## **2. Crematorium**

- 2.1 The new cremators are installed and will be independently tested within the next couple of weeks.

## **3. Waste Management**

- 3.1 The Anaerobic Digestion plant at Walpole has now been completed by Somerset Waste Partnership's (SWP) partners – Viridor. Dry waste trials are well underway with wet waste trials starting imminently. It is planned therefore that it will be fully operational within 2-3 months.
- 3.2 The plant will be able to process up to 30,000 tonnes of food waste per annum, 20,000 tonnes of which will be provided by SWP. If demand is sufficient, its planning consent allows the facility to be expanded by a further 15,000 tonnes pa.
- 3.3 The new facility will save Somerset Council Tax Payers £200,000 a year over current arrangements to recycle the County's food waste. In addition, SWP have a profit share arrangement to allow tax payers to benefit from additional income above a base level earned from the sale of energy as well as the digestate.

- 3.4 Once operational, gas from the plant will be used initially to generate electricity. It will have a generating capacity of 1MW and should generate about 9,500 MWh a year, with about a fifth of this used within the plant and nearly four-fifths (78%) exported to the Grid, which is enough to power more than 1,700 homes.
- 3.5 Viridor are also evaluating the potential to instead scrub or clean the biogas, either for injection directly into the National Gas Grid or use to power Somerset's recycling and refuse collection fleets. This has even greater benefits in energy and environmental terms than generating electricity and so would make the process even more sustainable.

Councillor Ken Hayward

# **Council Meeting – 23 July 2013**

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

### **1. Parks**

- 1.1 The best time of the year is here and the floral displays are looking great in all our parks. Our thanks go out to all the staff involved with making the displays spectacular year after year.
- 1.2 Taunton In Bloom have been preparing for judging which has been moved slightly later than expected on Thursday, 25 July 2013. This year it has been decided to enter a new category which limits the area judged to the town centre and awards pennant's rather than medals.
- 1.3 Work is continuing to repair the bridge in Vivary that was recently vandalised, and also to replace the bridge at the far end of the golf course. Pumps in Vivary Park have caused us no end of angst lately but I am pleased to say they are all being sorted out - repair of the pump on the old fountain, repair to the pump in the Sensory Garden and replacement of the pump in the children's play area.
- 1.4 The planters have now been removed from Castle Green and I hope that the public will now respect the area as an open space to be enjoyed by all.

### **2. Community Leisure and Play**

- 2.1 Wellington Cricket Pavilion should be totally finished by the time we meet - the major part of the building was handed back to the club on Friday, 12 July 2013 and I am sure they will be enjoying their great new home already.
- 2.2 Work is progressing very well on the Station Road Pool refurbishment with a project team now in place and all working together to achieve the tight timescales.
- 2.3 You will have all seen the update sheet and will have seen within that there will be various methods employed to keep users and others up to date with the project as it progresses. Obviously an important issue for the public is the availability of water time during the unavoidable closure. This has been worked on by Tone to achieve some public swimming at various times of day throughout the week.

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

## **Community, Sports and Health Development**

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

### **3. Health Development**

#### **3.1 Weight Management**

3.1.1 The Community Pounds project has been extended to another area, with additional funding which has been agreed, and will launch in Wellington in September, based at the Wellington Children's Centre. It will run until Christmas 2013 and look to continue a weight management programme into the New Year.

#### **3.2 NHS Health Checks**

3.2.1 Health Checks are being conducted in Priorswood and Halcon and placing a new focus on Wellington. To date, Tone has delivered over 300 NHS Health Checks in the Taunton Deane area.

#### **3.3 Market Segmentation - Older Men**

3.3.1 A new initiative was launched in May to provide activities and social inclusion for older men who may be experiencing isolation. A 12 week indoor golf and boccia initiative was set up targeting this demographic in Taunton.

#### **3.4 Children's Centres**

3.4.1 Tone continues to support Galmington Pre-School in their Sports Skills activities for the children. Talks, health checks and a drop-in service are also taking place at a young parents group at The Hollies Children's Centre.

#### **3.5 Sportivate Funded Programme - Spring Sisters Running Group**

3.5.1 In March Tone successfully applied for funding to Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership (SASP) to start up a beginners running group for women aged 18-25 in North Taunton. Eight women have taken part in the sessions which started in May on Wednesday evenings, and have been led by a volunteer Running Leader.

3.5.2 The aim was to encourage young women to become more active and improve their fitness through running. Participants were incentivised to take part regularly with an offer of paying their entry fee into the Race for Life (5K run) in Taunton on Sunday, 14th July 2013 once they had completed six sessions. The project plans to continue by training volunteers to become Running Leaders via a course provided by England Athletics, to help sustain the group.

## 4. Facility News

### Somerfest

- 4.1 Tone's Leisure Centres were very well represented at this year's Somerfest in Goodland Gardens. This promotional event gave Tone a fantastic opportunity to showcase its portfolio of activities on offer and generated over 750 customer leads.

### Wellington Sports Centre

- 4.2 With assistance from the Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership (SASP), Wellington has launched two ladies' netball sessions. In just six weeks there are already two regular training sessions held at the centre and lots more ladies interested.
- 4.3 The newly refurbished family changing rooms are now open and providing the customer with a much improved experience.

### Wellsprings Leisure Centre

- 4.4 Wellsprings are working with the Youth Service to redevelop the VIBE youth sessions on a Friday night for a re-launch in the autumn.
- 4.5 Following continued damage to the plastered walls in Wellsprings' free weight area, Tone has fixed checker plating to this area to prevent this damage recurring and ensure the facility looks presentable at all times.

### Blackbrook Pavilion

- 4.6 Blackbrook Pavilion has started work on adopting Tone's Community Hub Strategy and is working closely with the community in a number of different ways to increase footfall at the site, while offering the community something different:-

**Free** craft sessions for under 5s at Halloween, Christmas and Easter with a view to holding these sessions every three months.

**Free** room hire to local charities – The National Childcare Trust held their annual meeting at Blackbrook and Millie's Charity are running a first aid course.

**Free** room hire for new groups – Baby Sing and Sign were looking for a new location to run their sessions.

### Tennis Centre

- 4.7 The solar PV installation is now complete on the Tennis Centre roof. Commissioning took place in early July and the centre will soon benefit from up to 50Kw per hour of reduced cost electricity.

## Taunton Pool

### 4.8 *Swimathon 26-28 April*

4.8.1 This proved a great success with 64 swimmers taking part, either individually or in teams, and they raised over £4,000 for Marie Curie Cancer Care.

4.8.2 Taunton Pool has recently benefitted from the installation of cavity wall insulation and Phase 2 of the replacement windows has also commenced at site and will be complete in July. Both will positively help reduce carbon emissions in the facility.

4.8.3 In an effort to increase junior participation in swimming, Tone has increased its pool time made available for the midweek "Fun Float" sessions during school holidays. These will now run from 2.15 pm-4.00 pm Monday to Friday, starting on 24 July 2013.

## St. James Street Baths

4.9 During the May half term St. James Street programmed its first Scuba session for children. The course was extremely popular and a creative programme has now been launched for the summer holidays.

4.10 The learner pool at St. James Street has been closed for five weeks while essential maintenance was completed. The pool re-opened on 26 June 2013. Despite this closure lessons were accommodated in the main pool and there was no loss of business. Swimskool numbers at this site remain strong and above budget.

## Vivary Adventure Centre

### 4.11 *High Ropes*

4.11.1 Business is growing on the High Ropes and a company called Aspect Marketing have been working with Tone to help with this. Group bookings in June were especially strong in the education sector, when over 800 school children used this facility.

4.11.2 There is an Open Day planned for Sunday, 14 July 2013 at Vivary Park on the same day as Race For Life.

### 4.12 *Golf*

4.12.1 The usage of the course has been improving, although it is clear that pricing sensitivity is an issue for golfers, with season ticket sales in particular remaining challenging.

4.12.1 The delay in replacement of the bridge from the 4<sup>th</sup> green to the 5<sup>th</sup> tee is causing golfers concern and it is understood that a structural engineer will be surveying early in July to progress plans for this urgent work.

### 4.13 *Café*

4.13.1 New equipment has recently been purchased for the café, including a new fresh bean coffee machine and a new soft ice cream machine.

4.13.2 The Edge Café menu was re-launched in early July and it is hoped that this will see a further lift in usage and revenue.

Councillor Catherine Herbert.