

# **Council Meeting – 31 March 2015**

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

### **1. The Last Full Council Meeting of the Quadrennium**

- 1.1 I put on record my thanks to all Members for the support and commitment shown in delivering the best possible for our community. It has not been an easy four years with swingeing reductions in grants from Central Government to do “our bit” towards the national debt, in common with all Councils. But I am particularly proud that we have done so whilst maintaining virtually all front line services and continued our policy of planning and substantial investment for the future.
- 1.2 My special thanks go to the long serving Members who have made what I am sure for them is the difficult decision to stand down. Your experience, wisdom and wise counsel will be sorely missed as between you, aeons of years of experience has been amassed.
- 1.3 Also a big thank you to my Executive colleagues who have given of their time and energy to work unstintingly on behalf of the community and the Council. I am sure you will also join with me in placing on record our sincere thanks to all our staff who have accepted major changes in working practices and new responsibilities so making it possible to continue delivering the front line services so valued by our community. Only by being committed to, and accepting new ways of working, has it been possible to continue “business as usual” as far as our community is concerned.
- 1.4 Again, thank you all and whatever the outcome of the Elections I wish you all well for the future.

### **2. New Council Housing**

- 2.1 We are proud to be building Council Houses in Taunton Deane for the first time in over twenty years.
- 2.2 The Council is replacing 46 outdated and inefficient homes at Creechbarrow Road with a mix of 60 new Council homes and 32 housing association homes for affordable rent on the same site.
- 2.3 The £11,000,000 project brings a significant improvement in range of homes from 1 bed to family homes. The design will be to Code Level 4 so sustainable to minimise energy consumption, thus providing a

comfortable home at minimum running cost for the benefit of residents. The site design incorporates play areas and open space so creating a great environment for residents.

- 2.4 The new flexibilities to build new homes has been well and truly grasped by the Council as four new homes in Bacon Drive, Taunton have already been completed and handed over as have seven in West Bagborough and eight in Normandy Drive, Taunton scheduled for completion in April.
- 2.5 In addition to this, a further 26 new Council houses are planned at Rockwell Green so in total 105 new Council houses are in process of construction or about to start. To support this into the future we have included in our budget for the coming year £1,000,000 per year for five years specifically to add to our Council Housing Stock as we recognise the desperate need in our community with around 3,000 families registered on our Housing Waiting List.
- 2.6 The Secretary of State, Eric Pickles, recently visited the Creechbarrow Road site and he was extremely pleased to see so many new affordable homes under construction.

### **3. Firepool, Taunton**

- 3.1 Legal and site acquisition details are presently being dealt with as a matter of urgency and the latest projections are that public consultation should commence in May.
- 3.2 This vital scheme is being progressed in accordance with the Town Centre Rethink document that was approved by Council last year.
- 3.3 The housing development by Acorn Blue on the site of Priory Bridge Road Car Park is now scheduled to commence soon. All outstanding contractual issues have now been resolved to allow a start on site without further delay.
- 3.4 The Northern Inner Distributor Road is progressing well and besides being a vital new road link around the town centre it also provides the main access to the Firepool site. This needs completing to ensure the new development on the former Livestock Market site can be built and then opened with full access and car parking.

### **4. Investment in Taunton Deane**

- 4.1 The legal agreements with LIDL in respect of the former Taunton Youth and Community Centre site are about to be concluded which then confirms the planning consent as already approved and payment for

the site will be made.

- 4.2 As this triggers payment for the site it will allow funding to be made for the COACH project and lever in the near £500,000 grant funding from Sport England.
- 4.3 Rockspring LLP, purchasers of the Orchard Centre, Taunton have announced the purchase of further commercial premises on the corner of High Street/Fore Street so expanding and consolidating their position on site which is to be welcomed.
- 4.4 Work is continuing to ensure we identify a suitable site for the Deane DLO relocation so we have certainty in delivery of the DLO site and the purchasers are reassured the dates can be met. Consultants have been engaged to undertake a full options appraisal of those sites being considered with a report coming back to Members in due course for decision making. Dialogue is continuing with the purchaser to ensure that they are confident that the transaction will proceed.
- 4.5 I am also pleased to note that works have commenced to convert town centre premises to two major restaurants, Wildwood and Bills which will be an excellent addition to the town centre offer and further evidence that Taunton is an attractive and viable place to be.

## **5. A358 and Proposed New Strategic Employment Site at Junction 25**

- 5.1 I am pleased to say progress on this continues and only recently the Department for Transport issued a feasibility study on the upgrade proposals for the A303/A30/A358 and concluded it represented “very good value for money”. Three sections of the route were prioritised for early commencement one of which is the A358 to be dualled from Southfields Roundabout (on the A303) to Junction 25 of the M5. This is excellent news and requires this to be completed by 2021.
- 5.2 The other major milestone being passed in my view is that the Highways Agency formally becomes Highways England as from the 1 April 2015. This establishes them as a “stand alone” company with a remit to deliver the agreed programme with the budget to cover it. This hopefully offers further reassurance that the funds so far allocated will be available to deliver.
- 5.3 I am aware of concerns existing amongst some in Henlade and Ruishton. However, if the wish is to see traffic massively reduced from about 30,000 vehicles per day existing to about 3,000 per day then we do need to look at the best way of delivering the scheme for the greatest benefit. This would help reclaim the busiest road in Somerset, after the M5, as a village road.

- 5.4 As the funding stream for Junction 25 upgrade and extension is available separately through 'Growth Deal' monies administered by the Local Enterprise Partnership, work can commence separately from the A358. Current plans are to phase the works to enable early occupiers to locate on the proposed employment site in 2018.

## **6. Blackbrook Swimming Pool Extension**

- 6.1 I do not wish to steal my colleagues thunder but I am delighted to say that by the time of this meeting work will have started on site in earnest with contract commencement scheduled for the 30 March 2015.

Councillor John Williams

# **Council Meeting – 31 March 2015**

## **Report of Councillor James Hunt – Environmental Services**

### **1. Climate Change**

- 1.1 Deane Housing Development has recently completed three new build Council Housing schemes in Taunton and West Bagborough, all at The Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4. Therefore providing thermally efficient homes, on social rent, with fittings such as low water use toilets, baths and taps, 'A' rated boilers, Air Source Heat Pumps, bike stores and water butts.
- 1.2 The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is also about to commence works on installing photovoltaic panels to 350 existing Council homes across Taunton Deane. This will displace 11,000 tonnes of carbon over 20 years, save tenants in the region of £240 per annum on electric bills and generate a positive cash flow for the HRA via the Feed in Tariff.
- 1.3 In addition to this, the HRA is starting a programme of works on approximately 40 pre-reinforced concrete flats and houses to install External Wall Insulation (EWI), making the homes easier to heat and improve occupant comfort.
- 1.4 And as a reminder that it was agreed to allocate up to £80,000 of Climate Change reserve and Climate Change budget toward a Solar PV scheme to be included as part of the building of the Blackbrook Pavilion Swimming Pool. This will be a 36 KW scheme saving approximately 35 tonnes of CO<sup>2</sup> pa and providing an estimated pay-back period of approximately 10.5 years.
- 1.5 The income from feed-in tariffs, electricity generated and through providing the electricity generated to Tone Leisure at a discounted rate will be retained and used to improve energy efficiency of Council buildings and toward supporting voluntary and community groups in furthering energy efficiency and Climate Change mitigation measures

### **2. Deane DLO**

- 2.1 As you will all remember we replaced the rubbish bins in and around Taunton Town Centre last year following allocation of money from Council. As part of that programme I requested additional cigarette bins be provided to help us combat the blight of cigarette ends on the pavements.
- 2.2 We purchased ten and were given an additional one by the vendor in the form of a bulk purchase discount and these are now being installed around town.

- 2.2 The toilets in Castle Green have been undergoing a refresh in the last few weeks. While this has resulted in them being unavailable for public use for a short time it will provide a more pleasant environment for users once completed.
- 2.3 The gentleman's facilities will shortly be completed and the ladies will then be refreshed immediately after.

### **3. Environmental Health / Licensing**

- 3.1 There is not much to report from Environmental Health this month but I would like to once again thank all of the staff for their hard work and dedication during some testing times over the last year or so.
- 3.2 They have continued to provide a high quality service despite a number of staff changes and should be commended for their dedication and professionalism.
- 3.3 I reported last time that a tendering exercise was taking place for a contractor to arrange public health funerals. This exercise was inconclusive and in doing our due diligence, we have decided to go back to the market to try to secure a better deal, in line with our current arrangements and those of other Councils across Somerset.
- 3.4 The Dog Warden Contract is being expanded to also cover West Somerset. This will have no impact on Taunton Deane except that it is a reflection on an excellent first year in partnership with the Somerset Dog Warden Service delivered by St. Giles' Kennels of Wrantage.
- 3.5 Finally some staff related news. I would like to welcome back Emily Vining and Jo Toogood who will be returning from maternity leave in the next few weeks and say 'Congratulations' to Olivia Denis from the Licensing Team who has become a mum for the first time. Mum and baby are doing well.

Councillor James Hunt

# **Council Meeting – 31 March 2015**

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

### **1. Parks**

- 1.1 The bulbs are emerging and Spring is here - we hope for fine weather at Easter so the planned Easter Egg Hunts can be in the sunshine.
- 1.2 I reiterate anyone with a connection to a youth group or school to encourage them to help grow our musical offering – they are welcome to use the bandstand for a concert, just make contact with Debbie Arscott to arrange a date. We will be making sure the concerts get better advertising this year so look forward to seeing you there.

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

- 2.1 Section 106 Agreement children's play contributions have been used to fund the following works in Taunton Deane owned sites:-
  - Longrun Meadows – benches and bins;
  - French Weir Park – outdoor table tennis table;
  - Wellington Skate Park – youth shelter;
  - Killams Park – climbing unit;
  - Vivary Park – additional play equipment; and
  - Farriers Green – complete refurbishment of the play area.
- 2.2 Taunton Deane has also made improvements from its budget to the play areas at Priorswood Park, Comeytrove Park and Humphries Road, Wellington.
- 2.3 Stoney Furlong has had a basketball hoop installed with Section 106 funding and Council funding.
- 2.4 Milverton Recreation Ground and North Curry Recreation Ground have both completed upgrades to their play areas with assistance from Section 106 funding and the Taunton Deane Parish Play Area Grant Scheme.
- 2.5 Stoke St Mary has upgraded its play area using a Parish Play Area Grant.
- 2.6 Langford Budville has installed a play area in village using Section 106 funding. This is the first play area within the village.

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

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

## **Health Development**

### Walk Well with Tone

- 3.2 1,278 walkers took part in the Taunton Deane Walk Well in Taunton and Taunton Deane Walk Well in Wellington schemes during December and January.
- 3.3 Ruishton walkers have joined the scheme and are offering two walks per month in the Ruishton and Creech St. Michael area.

## **Facility News**

### Wellsprings Leisure Centre

- 3.4 Wellsprings hosted the Hurtle and Humdinger Race on Sunday, 8 February 2015 for the first time. This race has previously been based at Hestercombe. This was a very successful event, with 270 runners competing in the challenging 5 mile and 13½ mile races. The 2016 event has already been re-booked at Wellsprings for Sunday, 14 February.
- 3.5 Vibe Youth Nights continue to run at Wellsprings on Friday evenings between 6 p.m. and 8 p.m. The cost is £1 per head and there are a wide range of activities including football, parkour, basketball, trampolining, table tennis, pool, gym and cycling sessions. 'Stand Against Violence' have delivered some education sessions and funding has been received from the British Heart Foundation for ten manikins for CPR training. There has been an average attendance of 62 youths per night since the start of 2015, which peaked on 27 February 2015 with a total of 83 attending. There are an average of 39 boys and 23 girls attending each Friday night;

### Taunton Pool

- 3.6 Taunton Pool are supporting SURE as their chosen charity for 2015 and are hosting their first fundraising events on 18 and 20 March 2015 with 50+ coffee mornings.

### Blackbrook Pavilion

- 3.7 Blackbrook is the first site to have its fitness facilities re-branded in the new exciting colour scheme. Painting was completed in January and has been well received by customers at the site.
- 3.8 Contracts have now been signed for the building of the new swimming pool at Blackbrook. Tone Leisure are supporting Taunton Deane Borough Council in the build up to the start date, ensuring communication with customers is informative with a focus on 'business as usual'. Plans are also being drawn up to start the consultation with existing clubs, users and staff at St. James Street Baths, commencing after the Easter holidays.



### Wellington Sports Centre

- 3.9 During December the Sports Hall at Wellington was given a facelift. The hall was repainted and the flooring replaced with a new modern sprung wooden floor. At the same time the squash court corridor area was re-branded in line with the colour schemes used in the recently refurbished Reception and Foyer areas.

### Vivary Golf and Adventure Centre

- 3.10 Tone Leisure, in consultation with Vivary Golf Club, has installed an 18 hole Footgolf course. This sport, though relatively new, is growing in popularity nationally and adds another new attraction to Vivary Park. The Vivary Footgolf course opened to the public for an open weekend in February and has been tried and tested by North Town Primary School football teams. The Footgolf season commences in full from the Easter holiday period and will be operated outside of core golf times.

Councillor Catherine Herbert

# **Council Meeting - 31 March 2015**

## **Report of Councillor Mrs Jean Adkins – Housing Services**

### **1. Deane Housing Development: Bacon Drive, Taunton and Vale View, West Bagborough**

- 1.1 This month the keys to the first new Council Houses to be built in Taunton Deane for over 20 years were handed over to tenants.
- 1.2 Four 2 bed houses at Bacon Drive and a mixed development of 7 homes at Vale View are now occupied.
- 1.3 At West Bagborough, where we have worked very closely with the Parish Council, the homes have all been allocated to people with a connection to the Parish or the neighbouring Parish of Bishops Lydeard.
- 1.4 A joint sign-up event for the new tenants and buffet lunch was held at the Village Hall followed by an opening ceremony on site which was well attended by members of the local community, as well as representatives from the Tenant Services Management Board. The sun shone for the occasion. A speech was given by Councillor John Williams, Leader of the Council and the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Marcia Hill cut the ribbon. Also present were Councillor Vivienne Stock-Williams, Taunton Deane's representative on the Health and Wellbeing Board, and Ward Councillor Peter Watson. The tenants very kindly allowed the party to view their new homes which are built to Code 4 for Sustainable Homes and have air source heat pumps with some solar PV.

### **2. Deane Housing Development: Normandy Drive, Taunton**

- 2.1 The remaining Phase 1 site, all of which have been built by Pollards, 8 flats at Normandy Drive, will be handed over at the end of the month.

### **3. Deane Housing Development : Weavers Arms, Rockwell Green, Wellington**

- 3.1 Our second rural development of 26 homes will be submitted for planning approval shortly and a start on site is hoped for in the Autumn.
- 3.2 The decant process is under way with two tenants moved out already and two moves in hand, at the time of writing. Of the nine tenants, three have expressed a wish to return to the development so their moves will be temporary.

#### **4. Right to Buy Social Mobility Fund**

- 4.1 The Government recently announced this initiative and invited bids for the fund with a deadline of Wednesday, 18 March 2015. The Government will pay, on completion, a sum of £20,000 to assist tenants, who would have qualified for Right to Buy on their home if it had been suitable for their current needs, to purchase another home, thus freeing up social housing.
- 4.2 We have submitted a bid for funding in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> quarters of 2015/2016 and, if successful, will promote this initiative with the help of the Tenant Services Management Board. It will be aimed particularly at tenants of one bedroomed accommodation as we have need of this for those wishing to downsize.

Councillor Jean Adkins

# **Council Meeting - 31 March 2015**

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

### **1. Corporate and Client Services**

#### **Corporate Services**

- 1.1 The current key priorities for Corporate Services remain around ensuring the smooth implementation of the Tier 6 structure, the maintenance of service delivery and in recruiting to the remaining vacant posts in the new structure. Good progress is being made in respect of these priorities.
- 1.2 Detailed below are specific updates in respect of each of the service areas within Corporate Services.

#### **Corporate Strategy and Performance (Lead officer: Paul Harding)**

- 1.3 This area incorporates the management of the strategy and performance functions for both Councils and includes functions in relation to the management of audit actions, complaints, local Government Ombudsman, Freedom of Information (FOI) and Data Protection.
- 1.4 Monthly meetings continue to be held with officers from the Southwest Audit Partnership (SWAP) in order to track progress against the delivery of the Audit Plan. A progress update was made by SWAP to the March Corporate Governance Committee. In addition the Committee reviewed the proposed Audit Plan for 2015/2016.
- 1.5 Work is currently being undertaken to review and improve the Corporate Complaints procedure. We continue to receive increasing numbers of Freedom of Information requests (140 in February) and consequently have reviewed and made changes to our procedures for dealing with these.
- 1.6 The Quarter 3 Corporate Performance Report has recently been reviewed by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee. We have issued the annual customer satisfaction survey with the Council Tax bills. The results of the survey will be made available in June 2015.

#### **Facilities Management and Customer Services (Lead officer: Angela Hill)**

- 1.7 The new Corporate Business Support function, which went 'live' on 1 February 2015, is now successfully up and running, although we are still in the process of filling vacancies within the team. (The team provides support to The Deane House based Operations Directorate

services, as well as providing some specialist functions to all services such as audio word processing).

- 1.8 The Facilities Team are also managing a number of internal office move-arounds within The Deane House, which flow from the restructure. In addition we are currently reviewing and updating a number of our emergency procedures e.g. Bomb Procedures.

#### **Human Resources (HR) and Organisation Development (OD) (Lead officer: Fiona Wills)**

- 1.9 The HR and OD service continues to play a key role in supporting managers with the implementation of the Tier 6 restructure.
- 1.10 The team are continuing to closely monitor staff absence. The figures indicate that the year-end position is likely to be similar to last year i.e. around the 8.2 days mark. We are also in the process of running absence management refresh courses.
- 1.11 The Organisational Development plan for the coming financial year is currently being developed in conjunction with Service Managers. The delivery of this will be supported by the new Learning Pool IT based learning solution that will be rolled out in quarter 1 of 2015/2016.
- 1.12 The HR Team are also managing a number of staff TUPE transfer issues in relation to the proposed Legal Services and Building Control partnerships.

#### **ICT and Information Management (Lead officer: Fiona Kirkham)**

- 1.13 This area incorporates the retained ICT functions for Taunton Deane, the management of the West Somerset Council ICT Service, Information Management for both Councils, Design and Print and Website Content Development.
- 1.14 The installation of WIFI within The Deane House is now complete and access will be rolled out to Members in due course. Accessing WIFI will in some instances require the issue of tokens and passwords. However, we are looking at improving this to make accessing WIFI as trouble free as possible. In April we will be improving the Broadband link into The Deane House, which should improve the speed of WIFI access for external users.
- 1.15 The TDBC PSN (Public Sector Network) compliance audit submission has now been submitted and we await the response. We will shortly be rolling out a new corporate intranet site. In addition we are currently working on a new ICT Strategy.

#### **JMASS Project and Transformation Programme (Lead officer: Kim Batchelor)**

- 1.16 The first phase of the project has effectively come to an end and consequently a 'closedown' report is going to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 26 March 2015. This will confirm that the majority of the Phase 1 objectives have been delivered. The review of terms and conditions will be undertaken during the 2015/2016 financial year. In addition we are actively progressing the Legal Services and Building Control partnerships.
- 1.17 The next key phase of the project is the Transformation Programme and we are continuing to work with Members, other Authorities and the LGA to identify the key objectives for the programme.

### **Southwest One Clienting (Lead officer: Adrian Gladstone-Smith)**

- 1.18 We are continuing to closely monitor the delivery of the remaining elements of the Southwest One (SWOne) Contract and we continue to progress concerns in the ICT services in relation to capacity to deliver projects and delays in the pricing of additional work.
- 1.19 We have not received any further information in relation to the potential impact on SWOne of the Avon and Somerset Police's potential partnership with Wiltshire Police.
- 1.20 We are now beginning to look at Succession Planning in detail and a specific report is being taken to Corporate Scrutiny on 26 March 2015 and Full Council on 31 March 2015 to update members.

## **2. Corporate Health and Safety (H&S)**

### **Health Surveillance**

- 2.1 The Health Surveillance Programme continues with further hearing tests to be carried out in the near future plus medicals for asbestos removal operatives and those working in confined spaces. The initial programme will be completed by the end of April 2015.

### **Market House**

- 2.2 The H&S Team have been involved in the review of tenders for the Market House refurbishment project.

### **Crematorium**

- 2.3 H&S update visits to the Crematorium and accident investigation with the Crematorium Manager have been completed.
- 2.4 An updated Safety Policy statement for the Joint Taunton Deane and West Somerset partnership organisation has been produced and will be signed off by the Leaders of each Council, post-May 2015.

- 2.5 The Lone Working Policy has been reviewed and approved by the H&S Committee. A pilot scheme for extending the Lone Working Scheme via the Deane Helpline service is being worked on, with the proposed start early in the new financial year.

### **Tool Box Talks**

- 2.6 The stress risk assessment and action plan for Tool Box Talk packs have been completed and copies given to Deane DLO managers for use during team briefings. Talk packs are also available to download from the H&S intranet site. New information has been put together on the following key areas:-

Discarded needles;  
Stress at work; and  
Accident prevention.

- 2.7 Display Screen Equipment (DSE) workstation refresher training for the assessor volunteers took place on 18 February 2015. Ergonomic assessments for three employees who have medical requirements have been carried out by a specialist and appropriate equipment and adjustments made.

## **3. Customer Contact Centre**

### **Performance indicators**

- 3.1 The service has continued to perform exceptionally well in line with its contractual performance indicators, with no failures since the last update and consistently exceeding targets.
- 3.2 During the last quarter, 98% of contacts were resolved at first point of contact and 97% of external customers have rated the service they received to be good or very good.
- 3.3 No complaints have been received during the year 2014/2015.

### **New Telephony Technology**

- 3.4 Whilst we have still not implemented the new automated attendant, automated payments are proving a popular channel for our customers. In January and February, the adoption of auto-payments increased to 60% with some 2000 payments being handled in February.

### **Twitter**

- 3.6 Customer Contact continues to support TDBC's corporate Twitter account by reacting to inbound Tweets and working closely with colleagues in Communications regarding outbound Tweets. The

service is looking to develop its social media strategies over the coming year.

### **Operating Level Agreements (OLA's)**

- 3.7 Customer Contact continues to maintain excellent working relationships with Taunton Deane service lines and service managers. The service is looking forward to developing these relationships over the coming year.

### **Service Delivery Plan (SDP) 2015-16**

- 3.8 Customer Contact is working with Fiona Kirkham on agreeing a set of deliverables for the SDP 2015/2016.

### **Service Restructure**

- 3.8 The Customer Contact Centre's internal restructure is progressing in line with the original time-scale set out in the proposals. Transactional and Specialist teams are now in place in The Deane House Contact Centre and Service Experts are being appointed during March/April 2015.

## **4. Health and Wellbeing**

### **Tenant Services Development (Steven Clarke)**

- 4.1 The following meeting halls now have Kiosks for residents to use:-

Newton Road Guest Room;  
Heathfield Drive Guest Room;  
Moorland Place in the small room next to the Guest Room;  
Darby Way in the Main Room;  
Middleway in the Main Room;  
Creedwell Orchard in the Main Room; and  
There is also one at Priorswood Resource Centre.

- 4.2 Access for the kiosks will be done through the Estate Officers or Supported Housing Officers from the area teams.

### **Taunton Deane as a Dementia Friendly Council**

- 4.3 More than 200 members of Taunton Deane staff and Members have already become Dementia Friends and we are still on track to achieve our goal of becoming a Dementia Friendly Council by the end of April 2015. As the Deane DLO staff work closely with customers it is important they are also given dementia awareness training, so they understand what dementia is and are able to provide good customer service to those affected by it. Gary Kingman and Kate Woollard are



preparing a Tool Box Talk specifically for this purpose, which will incorporate the key information in a snappy ten-minute presentation.

### **Reminiscence Learning (RL)**

- 4.4 This charity, which is part funded by Taunton Deane, is continuing to roll-out their intergenerational dementia awareness programme of activities across communities in the area. These activities are being well received and receiving good media coverage, which in itself raises awareness of the illness and how people can live well with dementia.

### **Taunton Deane Disability Discussion Group**

- 4.5 Stuart Hall joined Helen Phillips at the biennial Taunton Deane Disability Discussion Group in March, where he spoke about the Disability Facilities Grants and Helen spoke about Dementia, explaining what the Council and others are doing to support those living with the illness.

### **Equality and Diversity**

- 4.6 The Health and Wellbeing Team are working with colleagues to ensure that the Authority's website provides services for those with additional needs. By April, we aim to have British Sign Language video links on the site for use by our deaf clients.

### **Housing and Community Strategic Lead (Mark Leeman)**

- 4.7 Public Health have entered into an agreement with Taunton Deane (and the other Somerset Districts) to support public health initiatives and, in particular, to develop closer relations between the Health and Wellbeing Board and the following services:-

Town and Country Planning; and  
Environmental Health and Licensing.

- 4.8 The value of the grant to the Council is £44,530. This money will be used to fund the following projects:-
- Integrating Public Health into the Taunton Deane Local Development Framework. There will be particular emphasis on implementing the Green Infrastructure Strategy. This project presents opportunities for joint work with West Somerset and Mendip District Councils. It also includes provision for Member - training.
  - Embedding Public Health priorities into planning policy across Somerset. This project will explore best practice and will be a county-wide research project managed by the Somerset Strategic Planning Conference.

- Developing effective relationships between Public Health and Environmental Health (including Licensing). This project will raise awareness of / address health and wellbeing issues among target audiences: e.g. taxi drivers, business community, tattooists. There is also provision for Member training.
- Developing effective relationships between Public Health and Environmental Health (including Licensing). This county-wide project will carry out research into requirements and best practice and is being managed by South Somerset District Council.
- Small projects – in addition to the above, there is some funding available to support a number of ‘smaller’ projects including a Taunton Deane Healthy Living Fair; and support for Creating Active Communities (active lifestyle opportunities for the residents of North Taunton).

4.8 This grant money will be spent during 2015/2016 and will be monitored by the Health and Wellbeing Board

## **5. Legal, Democratic and Electoral Services**

### **Legal Shared Services Business Case**

- 5.1 The Business Case to establish a shared Legal Service between Taunton Deane, Mendip and West Somerset Councils was endorsed at the meeting of the Council held on 24 February 2015.
- 5.2 The Council also agreed the Inter-Authority Agreement that would govern the operation of the new arrangement. With both Mendip and West Somerset Councils also making similar decisions, the new shared service will commence on 1 April 2015. Whilst Mendip is the lead Authority, the intention is for staff to be able to work flexibly across the three Council areas to ensure that the transition will run smoothly.

### **Electoral Services**

- 5.3 This is obviously an incredibly busy time for the Electoral Services Team with the 7 May 2015 Elections approaching fast.
- 5.4 Nomination packs have been produced. These have included as much information as possible to assist candidates and an informal briefing session has also been held.
- 5.5 Staff will be available at The Deane House for the busy period before the Elections to receive nominations and answer queries from Councillors and the public.
- 5.6 The issue of postal votes will take place over the weekend of 18 April 2015 and the packs will be posted 1<sup>st</sup> Class on 22 April 2015.

- 5.7 Opening sessions will take place daily (weekdays only) between 11am and 4pm starting on Monday, 27 April 2015. Each candidate may attend along with their agent and they may also appoint a Postal Vote Agent to attend the openings (these appointments must be made by 20 April 2015).
- 5.8 The venue for the Verification and Count will be at Wellsprings Leisure Centre, Cheddon Road, Taunton. The verification of the Ballot Papers will take place immediately after the close of poll on Thursday, 7 May 2015. Once the verification figures have been agreed the Parliamentary Count will begin. The counting of the Borough and Parish Council papers will take place at the same venue commencing at 3 pm on Friday, 8 May 2015.

### **Democratic Services**

- 5.9 This is also a busy time for the Democratic Services Team, who closely assist with the operational work for the Elections. They are also leading on designing and arranging the Members Induction Programme that needs to get underway as soon as the elections are over. Details of the programme will be made available as soon as they have been finalised.

## **6. Resources**

### **Procurement**

- 6.1 We continue to monitor the delivery of the Procurement Transformation Project and day-to-day procurement service by SWOne. Latest information, as at January 2014, reports that £2,306,000 savings have been delivered to the Council through the signed-off procurement related initiatives. A further £1,125,000 of savings are scheduled to be delivered from these signed-off initiatives during the remainder of the SWOne contract.
- 6.2 The Strategic Procurement Service continues to review the 'pipeline' of further possible initiatives for Taunton Deane to provide a clearer forecast of likely savings at the end of the current SWOne contract in 2017. The current best estimate is that a total of £4,990,000 savings could be delivered.

### **Finance**

- 6.3 The Council's budgets, Council Tax and housing rents were approved at the last Council meeting in February 2015. This concluded a significant 'project' for the service, and has been a great achievement.
- 6.4 Alongside the preparation of next year's budget, the service has been supporting managers to pull together the latest forecasts for the current

financial year. Details of the Quarter 3 forecasts were reported to Corporate Scrutiny in February and as an information report to Executive Councillors in March. The Council is on track to remain within budget again this year. The high risk areas are being carefully monitored in the final weeks of the year to ensure forecasts remain reliable.

- 6.5 Preparations for the financial year end are continuing, with a thorough work programme scheduled in the coming weeks to produce the outturn reports and annual Statement of Accounts which must be completed by end of June 2015. As stated in my last report to Council, this deadline is to be brought forward to the end of May from 2017/2018 onwards.

## **7. Revenues and Benefits**

- 7.1 At the time of writing, annual billing for Council Tax and Business Rates is underway, with bills hitting the mats mainly in the week of 16 March 2015. The Revenues and Benefits Service have ensured many of the benefit notifications are accompanied by the Council Tax bill, whereas previously they were despatched separately. It is hoped this will reduce the number of customer enquiries as well as saving on postage costs.
- 7.2 So far, the Revenues Team have collected more than £54,000,000 in Council Tax, with collection on 16 March 2015 at 97.43%, meaning we are on track to meet the end of year target of 97.8%. Similarly, we have recovered Business Rates of £41,000,000 to date, with collection of 97.9% against an annual target of 98.4%.
- 7.3 At the end of February, the average time for the Benefits Team to work out a new claim and changes in circumstances for Housing Benefit or Council Tax Support was 7.2 days.
- 7.4 It looks likely we will have distributed the entirety of the funding of £133,000 provided by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) for Discretionary Housing Payments by 31 March 2015.
- 7.5 Staff have been busy preparing for the implementation of Universal Credit by the DWP on 20 April 2015. Officers will deliver a report with a presentation given by the Somerset DWP Partnership Manager to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 26 March 2015.

As this is my last report to Full Council during the present quadrennium, I should like to place on record my thanks to all members of the teams within my portfolio for their consistent cheerfulness, commitment and co-operation throughout the past four years. They have made an outstanding contribution to the wellbeing of this organisation and the residents of Taunton Deane.

Councillor Vivienne Stock-Williams

# **Council Meeting - 31 March 2015**

## **Report of Councillor Mark Edwards – Planning Policy, Transportation and Communications and Chairman of the Events Group**

### **1. Taunton Deane Events Group**

- 1.1 I thought this would be an excellent opportunity to highlight the Taunton Deane Events Group of which I am the present Chairman.
- 1.2 The Group was set up as a direct result of the 2012 Olympic Torch Relay where we had gathered together so many varied organisations and individuals and some extraordinary talents, which I really did not want to lose as a collective body.
- 1.3 The concept of the Group is that we are a conduit for current, existing and new events. These are doers not just talkers - the Group is brimming full of individuals that make things happen and by having regular meetings we bring together so many of these groups and individuals who then help or signpost each other.
- 1.4 The Group is made up of the following organisations:- Go Create, CICCIC, The Brewhouse, SASP, Tacchi Morris Arts Centre, Phoenix, Time 4, Somerset Museum, The Castle Hotel, The Flower Show, Taunton Carnival and Marathon, Taunton Comedy, Somerset Cricket Club, Taunton Literary Festival, FUSE, Orchard Centre, Make Taunton Sparkle, Go Commando, Taunton Carnival, Taunton Live 2015 and the Taunton Sustainability Show. In addition, meetings are regularly attended by Licensing, the Tourist Information Centre and Avon and Somerset Police. In addition we get numerous other visitors who are planning specific events and they find the meetings invaluable for networking and advice and critically making sure we do not have too many clashes. I can guarantee I have missed someone from this list so apologies to them.
- 1.5 We have encouraged and assisted so many events from Dragon Boat Racing to the Shakespeare Festival. We are also fortunate in Taunton that we have key events such as the Carnival and the Flower Show, which have successfully run for many years. It is fantastic that new events such as Somerfest and Taunton Live 2015 have been born but there is one common factor.....the Events Group.

And now to my normal business -

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

- 2.1 The Council has completed its publication period on the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan. The next step for officers will be to analyse the responses received before the Portfolio Holder is asked to sign the Plan off for submission to the Secretary of State and The Planning Inspectorate.
- 2.2 Once the Plan is submitted an Examination will be scheduled and is likely to be held during the Summer before the Plan is formally adopted towards the end of the calendar year or in early 2016.
- 2.3 Consultation has also recently finished on the Staplegrove Framework Masterplan. The responses have been sent to the Site Promoters who will analyse the responses and should seek to address the issues raised before finalising the Framework Masterplan and tabling it back to the Council for consideration.

## **3. Neighbourhood Planning**

- 3.1 Public consultation is underway on the Trull Neighbourhood Plan. Taunton Deane Borough Council will need to consider the need to make formal comments on the draft prior to the Plan's submission to the Deane.
- 3.2 The consultation process finishes on the 6 April 2015. It truly has been a huge task for those involved but they have worked extremely hard and I believe should be truly proud of what they have achieved. I believe it to be an exemplar of Neighbourhood Planning and I am sure others could learn a great deal from the way this has been progressed.

## **4. Affordable Housing Thresholds**

- 4.1 Through the National Planning Policy Guidance the Government has recently introduced a new national threshold below which contributions towards affordable housing should not be sought.
- 4.2 I will shortly be making a Portfolio Holder decision which will ensure that in designated rural areas, commuted sums towards the provision of affordable housing can be collected in Taunton Deane on schemes of between 6-10 units.
- 4.3 Officers are currently compiling a list of designated rural areas affected and Members should note that outside of these areas the Council will be unable to seek contributions towards affordable housing on any housing schemes of 10 or less dwellings.

## **5. Monkton Heathfield Governance Board**

- 5.1 Following the granting of planning permission for the Western Relief Road, discussions are taking place aimed at smoothing the process for technical approval to ensure that the road both meets Somerset County Council standards and can be delivered within a timescale that does not result in the delivery of homes being stalled.
- 5.2 The HR process to recruit a dedicated Delivery Team funded by the Large Sites Capacity Fund is underway. Julie Moore who has many years of experience working on the Monkton Heathfield proposals will head the team up.

## **6. Car Parking**

- 6.1 During 2014/2015 Taunton Deane “Commuter” Car Parks have seen a 10.4% increase in usage, with an average of 21,700 transactions/visits per month per car park.
- 6.2 Orchard Car Park : Work is continuing to refurbish the stairways and lobbies of the Orchard Car Park and it is anticipated it will be completed by the Summer.
- 6.3 The Crescent Car Park: The “roundabout” and associated white lining to the entrance of the Crescent Car Park has been refreshed.
- 6.4 Phone and Pay: Work is continuing in the preparation of the change of service provider to Bemrose for the “Phone and Pay” service. Notices are now in place in the car parks and on the pay and display machines. Further publicity is scheduled to follow including information in the local press, website and twitter. Customers registering on line at [www.phoneandpay.co.uk](http://www.phoneandpay.co.uk) before the 1 April will pay no transaction fee for the first month.
- 6.5 Shopmobility: Taunton Deane is still working closely with PLUSS and Compass Disability Services to enable a smooth transition of service providers on the 1 April 2015. It has been confirmed that the contact telephone number will remain the same.

## **7. Communications**

- 7.1 As the Local and National Elections approach, we have been working to ensure good media relations before, during and after Polling Day.
- 7.2 Briefing notes providing background information on the Taunton Parliamentary Constituency and on the Borough and Parish Councils have been prepared and issued.
- 7.3 We have also provided tours of the venue for Sky, BBC and ITN with



the help and support of Tone Leisure at Wellsprings. The tours ensure the crews have the necessary technical information.

- 7.4 In addition, two Deane Dispatch pages were published in March, one focusing on the Council's Housing initiatives, the second on promoting Taunton – and Taunton Deane – with the accent on activities.
- 7.5 The One Team newsletter continues to be well received – feedback is very welcome.
- 7.6 On social media, the @TDBC twitter account continues to attract followers at a rate of about 100 per month. Activity during the pre-Election period is less busy and we have posted a tweet to that effect with a link to guidance.
- 7.7 The Council will be attending a Really Useful Day in May – arranged by the Department of Communities and Local Government – on the use of social media.

I will now sign off and would like to thank all the officers that I have worked with over the last four years for all their efforts on behalf of the Council and the community we all serve.

Councillor Mark Edwards

# Council Meeting - 31 March 2015

## Report of Councillor Mrs Jane Warmington - Community Leadership

Having nearly completed one term of office as part of the administration, I thought I would reflect on what has been achieved through Community Leadership over the last four years.

### 1. Community Leadership

- 1.1 What stands out in particular is that much of what we do in the community is increasingly achieved through working together in partnerships with others. Initially these entail more work, more time, more meetings and many more conversations but lead on to long term efficiencies, simpler arrangements and much better outcomes.
- 1.2 The longest standing partnerships are probably those with the voluntary sector which are well established and highly valued, from the smallest friends group to the larger Citizens Advice Bureau and many clubs, community centres and others in-between. We have been able to retain service level agreements and protect small grants during a time of austerity which has enabled those organisations to deliver so much to so many.
- 1.3 Support through grant aid comes from several portfolios across the Council. It helps grow both small and larger businesses; helps establish and equip local sports clubs and leisure activities; improves village halls and local play areas; supports the Quantocks and Blackdown Hills; advisory services, community centres and the activities they run; group projects; supports community safety through our CCTV cameras and recent Town Wardens pilot; funds equipment, projects and youth activities in the Unparished Area; and the same to benefit our tenants.
- 1.4 The support grant from Government having reduced by 40% over the last four years, continues to challenge us as to how to afford to deliver services. However, this has also made us think differently about how we do things and importantly start to do some of these differently.
- 1.5 The Council is already part of several successful partnerships with other authorities including the Somerset Waste Partnership, South West Private Sector Housing Partnership and Building Control. It has shown itself to be both responsive and innovative in forming new partnerships and strengthening others, to work more efficiently and be more effective. This is admirable and all Members and officers should be proud of what has been collectively achieved and of the plans being explored ahead.
- 1.6 We have embraced the concept of 'One Team' both for our shared management and services with West Somerset Council, and our shared lead with Avon and Somerset Police for the integrated, co-ordinated, multi-agency, frontline working we now have in our Priority Areas across Taunton Deane. Both have attracted funding from the Government in recognition of their aims and achievements and the

forerunner of the latter, the Halcon One Team, has won several awards and received national attention.

- 1.7 Improved outcomes for our Council House tenants through the collaborative working of the Halcon One Team influenced the Housing Portfolio Holder's (PfH) restructure of our Housing Services into three new area-based, multi-disciplinary, Housing Teams (North, East and West Deane) aligned to the three smaller One Team areas focused on the Neighbourhood Police Beats (North Taunton, Halcon and Wellington). We expect to see similar benefits accrue in these areas and continued innovation in Halcon where our Estate Housing Officers and Managers have contributed so much.
- 1.8 Throughout all of this, it is the teamwork we have between Members and officers translating ideas into reality, which stands out for me, and brokered with patience and professionalism by staff throughout. I would argue that together we have achieved a lot over the past four years during a difficult time.
- 1.9 The Council has agreed to explore the real possibility of a public sector hub at County Hall, admittedly with mixed feelings from some, but undoubtedly the right thing to do. This should enable better understanding of the work both Councils undertake particularly in our Priority Areas and enable the three area One Teams to develop further with more collaboration and involvement especially from Social Care. We have also initiated conversations around both authorities' assets in our Priority Areas to better serve resident's identified needs and increased independence and self-sufficiency into the future.
- 1.10 High level strategic partnerships across Somerset are opportunities to gain an overview, share best practice and influence thinking and as Portfolio-Holder I have endeavoured to do these and I represent Taunton Deane on the Police and Crime Panel and on the Safer Somerset Partnership. I have also responded to many consultations which more recently include those on Domestic Abuse, Police and Crime Needs, Local Police and Crime Plan and Financial Inclusion Strategy.
- 1.11 In the Borough, the Taunton Deane Strategic Partnership (TDSP) is responsible for the overview of our Priority Areas which include the One Teams (focused on three urban areas) and the rural Village Agents (responsible for a cluster of parishes each). The project manager for the Village Agents is on the Community Planning Rural Working Group, a subgroup of TDSP. The Village Agents are employed by the Community Council for Somerset and supported by ourselves to signpost and support vulnerable residents in scattered rural communities. I currently Chair the TDSP.
- 1.12 Other important links have been established by me to ensure better understanding of and between various groups. I am now Vice-Chair of the Area Advisory Board for the Taunton Children's Centre Cluster and sit on the Taunton Deane GP Health Forum, Taunton Deane Domestic Abuse Forum, Taunton Deane Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Forum and Taunton Deane Youth Network. I also regularly liaise with the Taunton Deane (and West Somerset) Police Sector Inspector, the Town Centre Police Sergeant, our Community Safety Lead, the three One Team Coordinators, our Housing Managers, Strategy Lead, two ASB Officers, and go to both the Halcon MAG and the North Taunton Partnership when I can.

- 1.13 I am a Member of Bishops Lydeard and Cothelstone Parish Council and one of four Parish Councillors writing the draft Neighbourhood Plan. The Parish has taken over some of the work from Taunton Deane Borough Council including running our public conveniences and a lengthsman starts work in the village in April. I generally attend one in two of the five other Parish Council meetings across the Ward and our local North Deane Residents Group. I sit on the local Children's Centre Community Forum and the Quantock Eco Cycle Path Group, exploring the proposed route alongside the West Somerset Railway into Taunton.
- 1.14 Eighteen months ago the Chief Executive asked Portfolio Holders what they would like to achieve by the end of this quadrennium. My list was short and comprised of just two things although they encompass a lot - (1) One Teams working in all our Priority areas and (2) Village Agents covering all the rural parishes of Taunton Deane. We are not quite there yet but we are well on the way and I would like to thank all Members, partners and officers for working alongside me to turn these into a reality.
- 1.15 Particular thanks go to the Portfolio Holder for Housing Services Councillor Mrs Jean Adkins, Avon and Somerset Police Sergeant Andy Murphy and Council Leader Councillor John Williams who trusted me to get on with things. It has been a privilege to serve on the Borough Council for the last four years with such good support during one of the most challenging periods for any local authority. I have really enjoyed it and would like to stand again.

Councillor Jane Warmington

# Council Meeting - 31 March 2015

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

- 1.1 The last four years have been interesting times for Asset Management. We have now brought this service back in house.
- 1.2 The minimal staff that were relocated have done a sterling job in prioritising the work schedule that needed to be done.
- 1.3 The last few months have seen various appointments made which will enable the team to manage all our various projects at this very interesting time.
- 1.4 Plans for the relocation of both The Deane House and Deane DLO are progressing well. The latter has the added advantage in enabling the opening up of a number of employment sites.
- 1.5 The work of bringing the Market House back in hand was completed and a beneficial lease to Wildwood will see circa a £1million refurbishment of the area they will take over. A number of other restaurant chains, (such as 'Ask Italian', 'Bills', and 'Le Bistro Pierre') are recruiting, constructing, or seeking a site as they have growing confidence that Taunton is the place in which to invest.
- 1.6 The Firepool Site has been mentioned in other reports, and the Coal Orchard is now at the stage of looking for a delivery strategy tender, to enable delivery of this element of the 'Rethink'.
- 1.7 It may seem like old news now but this time last year there were 'The Floods'. Fantastic work was done by Taunton Deane staff with others in the immediate emergency. Afterwards, in the follow up of grant delivery, 47 businesses were compensated for loss in trading activity and further grants have been available for repair and renewal and to make homes more flood resilient. The latter is still continuing work. In addition, major flood prevention plans have been developed with the Environment Agency and the Government. Particular mention should be made about the Upper Parrett Catchment Plan, and of course our 'super pond' on the River Tone between Taunton and Wellington.
- 1.8 The importance of a cultural offer has been recognised by the Council with its continued support for The Brewhouse Theatre. We are fortunate to have some very dedicated people who have ensured the new programme is on very sound footing and now, with the recent appointment of the Chief Executive Officer we shall see more programmes and greater activity.
- 1.9 Promoting Taunton and Taunton Deane has been the work of the Tourist Information Centre (TIC), and modern communications and a number of other

systems, recently 'Destination Taunton', have been promoting the shops and the area. In fact, destination CMS's new shopping section has helped increase the visitors by 52% on the previous year to our website. The markets within Taunton have helped to improve the footfall and assist the income for our chain and independent retailers. The four footfall counters purchased last summer give us effective monitoring of the increase in footfall that is happening in Taunton.

- 1.10 The TIC's throughput last summer was up 25%, aided by the 'Deane Dragon' Trail, and ticket sales have been boosted (43% up) by a fuller programme of events at The Brewhouse and the Tacchi-Morris. After much planning, this year we shall see the relocation of the TIC to the High Street side of the Market House. It will include a soft-square outside the new TIC, which will enable even greater promotion of what's going on. The Market House should provide a fantastic location for a service that has done so much to assist the town and local area.
- 1.11 One could list many activities that the Economic Development Section is involved with, but in particular I would like to mention the 25 new small Business Grants awarded that make such a phenomenal difference to the new start-ups and the Business Events, and local procurement workshops, all well attended, that encourage local businesses to make the best of the opportunities that are available within Taunton Deane.
- 1.12 With peoples' confidence returning - as with excellent management we are coming out of recession - it is good to see local businesses reinvesting and inward investment and growth gaining pace. This is particularly noticeable in my own Ward where we are seeing investment on a large scale: another town is being built on the side of Taunton. As the infrastructure is being installed (Eastern Relief Road) so employment sites are being serviced. In fact, as the 4,500 homes are built, five employment sites will come on stream - three in West Monkton, one at Walford (Creech St Michael) and a strategic site at Henlade which will provide potential for local employment to the incoming residents.

Councillor Norman Cavill