

Council Meeting – 14 July 2015

Report of Councillor John Williams – Leader of the Council

1. The First Full Council Meeting of the Quadrennium

- 1.1 May I wholeheartedly welcome all new Councillors and those re-elected for this quadrennium. I look forward to working with you all and please be assured we welcome good ideas from any Councillor whatever the party affiliation. I am available to discuss any queries or points you may have just let me know and time will be found. In saying this I am very conscious of the large influx of new Councillors to the Council and the loss of so many years of experience that either chose to stand down, or were not re-elected. The numbers are adequately covered in Councillor Mrs Warmington's report but I must comment on the excellent service of Councillors Meikle and Bishop with cumulative years of experience lost to the Council of 99 years. This is truly above and beyond the call of duty, congratulations to both of them.
- 1.2 We were elected on a positive manifesto to drive Taunton forward and that is our intention. We have been given a strong mandate and it is now up to us to deliver, which we intend doing. I cover some of the initiatives continuing or planned as follows.

2. Investment and Growth Initiatives

- 2.1 The sale of the old TYCC (Taunton Youth and Community Centre) has been concluded to LIDL and they have lost no time in commencing work on site. They are investing heavily in the new site with larger trading premises as they cannot keep up with demand in their existing Wood Street premises. Once the existing premises are vacated the existing shop will be demolished and I understand will be replaced with retirement homes. An excellent use of this brown field near the town centre site fronting the riverside.
- 2.3 I am delighted to report that Quantock House, Paul Street, Taunton is now scheduled for redevelopment. We have worked with the purchasers, The Quantum Group, to resolve historic title issues as we owned the land it is built on, pre 1962. These issues have now been satisfactorily resolved and it is proposed to redevelop the site with "Extra Care" accommodation for the elderly. A great use for a town centre site and adjacent our beautiful heritage park, Vivary Park.
- 2.4 Redevelopment of the site is almost certainly to involve demolition of

the existing buildings, something that can only be welcomed as the present structures are an eyesore in this prominent position.

- 2.5 West Park, Chelston, Wellington continues to perform extremely well with commercial units being taken before construction is completed. The Care Home is under construction and going well. The Sturgeon Farm is hopefully soon to commence. All very good news for Wellington and Taunton Deane.
- 2.6 Works have commenced on the railway station upgrade which is all part of the multi million pound remodelling and refurbishment programme. We have already secured £4,600,000 which will see major changes including the relocation of the ticket offices to the Firepool side of the tracks. This will improve vastly the main entrance to Taunton by rail, away from the awful, almost subterranean, entrance that now exists under the bridges, to the high side of the station with views across Taunton. A further £3,000,000 has been secured to construct a multi-storey station car park that will help cater for the increase in rail passengers projected as being up 40 % by 2020. Securing the development and funding has been achieved by close partnership working and is to be welcomed that we have achieved so much. In addition, we have just endorsed and supported a further bid for £1,000,000 to allow commercial development to proceed from the Station Commercial Project Facility Fund
- 2.7 Firepool Site - The final design and land acquisition is nearing conclusion. We should be in a position to commence public consultation in August with a planning application shortly after. It was hoped that public consultation would have taken place by now but resolving all the complex issues around this site have taken longer than anticipated. The proposals will be in accordance with the "Taunton Town Centre Rethink" document agreed by Full Council earlier this year. It will also see the design of the long planned "Boulevard" which is key to the railway station upgrade as it will provide the much needed improved gateway to Taunton.
- 2.8 The housing development on the old Priory Bridge Road Car Park has now commenced and this will deliver 49 new homes in this lovely riverside location. This adds to the potential number of homes on this site, the East Goods Yard and the old Livestock market site of near 700 homes on brown field land, nearly 25% of which are affordable homes.
- 2.9 Deane DLO relocation – We have now agreed the sale of the old depot to Helston Motors which consolidates them on this site and assures their future in Taunton. This will allow the company's expansion in Taunton bringing investment in this high quality business together with additional jobs. We have identified suitable alternative sites for the DLO which we are in the process of negotiations to acquire. One of the sites is much larger than required which will, if acquired, allow us to provide freehold serviced sites for employment use so help drive the

economy. It is a much heard plea from businesses for readily available freehold employment land which will be great if achieved.

3. Infrastructure

- 3.1 The Northern Inner Distributor Road works are progressing and I am discussing with Somerset County Council (SCC) the likely timetable and will circulate to Members as soon as I am advised.
- 3.2 Monkton Heathfield - The Western Relief Road planning application is approved and land assembly needs completing together with agreement of a delivery programme. One thing is certain - this new road link in the overall network is essential to accommodate what will be greatly increased traffic as the new development grows.
- 3.3 Junction 25 of the M5 motorway expansion and upgrade - £13,000,000 grant funding has been allocated from the LEP (Local Enterprise Partnership) from the Growth Fund to carry out this work and design work is continuing by SCC. Once the design has been prepared the Business Case can then be agreed and funding released. The upgrade of this junction is essential to progressing the proposal to create a 25 hectare strategic employment site adjacent the motorway.
- 3.4 A358 dualling and Henlade Bypass - Highways England (HE), formerly the Highways Agency, have now appointed a Project Manager to commission the design and implementation of this major £274,000,000 project. Regular liaison meetings are held with them particularly to ensure whatever works are carried out at Junction 25 are compatible with the new route and design of the A358. HE Project Manager is very keen to meet stakeholders along the route of the A358 and hear their views and we will be doing all we can to encourage this.

4. LGA (Local Government Association) Conference

- 4.1 I attended the above conference in Harrogate together with Councillor Eddie Gaines and it was extremely well attended with "devolution" being the major topic. What was obvious was the acceptance it is not a case of "one size fits all" but that economic areas should consider how best they could combine resources to create their own "powerhouse" to drive growth locally. This needed to come from the bottom up, not be driven from the centre.
- 4.2 Government Ministers made it clear that re-organisation of Local Government, ie Unitary, was not on the agenda but local authorities were expected to cooperate by sharing services to create "powerhouses" for growth right across the country. The clear brief is to agree what powers can be devolved, governance required, the budget required to go with it and the benefits it will deliver. The Government

will then assess it on its merits and advise. To take this forward a meeting of local authorities from across the West Country is being arranged by SCC to see if any appetite for delivering a “West Country” Powerhouse and what form it might take.

- 4.3 It was made clear by Ministers that although they expected elected Mayors for the major “City Deals” being considered currently, it was not a prerequisite for urban centres with large rural areas. However, whatever proposal was made would have to deliver clear governance arrangements and a sustainable future.
- 4.4 Ministers delivered a clear message that that the Government had been given a clear mandate in the election so they fully intended delivering their election pledges. This includes the reduction in funding of Local Government, right to buy extension and 1 to 1 replacement, devolution and to substantially increase the rate of housebuilding to meet demand, to name but a few. From their responses I do not see the capping regime being lifted or amended.
- 4.5 I attended a very interesting meeting arranged by the Local Government Boundary Commission particularly as we are on the list for a future review. I believe there is a case to be made for a reduction in the number of Councillors to ensure that we as elected Members, contribute towards budget reductions in the future. Any proposed review will be subject to full consideration by Members.

5. The Deane House Relocation Project

- 5.1 Work is progressing on agreeing requirements so full details can be brought before Members for final approval as follows.
- 5.2 **Space Requirements Analysis and Summary** - DTZ have continued to analyse the staffing data obtained from Service Managers and have produced a summary document calculating work station requirements. From the data obtained, three levels of analysis have been applied. We are currently basing our requirements on Level 2 which equates to 173 work stations.
- 5.3 **Space Planning** - DTZ have made a start on planning the Taunton Deane back office space within Block A2 at County Hall.
- 5.4 **Statement of Requirements** - With feedback from various stakeholder groups on the initial Forum design, we have produced a ‘Statement of Requirements’ document. This document prioritises Taunton Deane’s requirements using the following rating system and was submitted to SCC on the 30 June 2015:-

- Must Have
- Should Have

- Nice to Have

- 5.5 **Concept Designs** - The next stage of the design process is for the SCC Architects to analyse the feedback from all partners and to produce 'Concept Designs' we are due to receive the Concept Designs from SCC on the 15 July 2015 and will have until the 31 July 2015 to review, comment and sign off. During this period we plan to share the designs with as many stakeholder groups as possible.
- 5.6 **Due Diligence** - DTZ continue to seek more information from SCC in relation to the Due Diligence of 'A Block'.
- 5.7 **Heads of Terms** - In preparation for the final decision DTZ have started work on the draft heads of terms.

6. **New House Completions**

- 6.1 I am pleased to report that housing completions for last year come to a grand total of 778. This is excellent news as it means for the first time since the adoption of the Core Strategy we have met and exceeded the plan target (by 78 units). To put it into context this is the highest completions figure since 1999/2000 when for the only time in more than 30 years more than 1,000 homes were built. Prior to that we need to go back to 1989/1990 for the last time 800 completions were exceeded.
- 6.2 Perhaps most encouragingly, there were more than 500 completions recorded for Taunton itself, the first time anything like that number has been achieved in the town for a significant time. This evidence would certainly point to a recovery in the market locally.
- 6.3 Of the total 778 houses completed, 602 were open market and 176 were affordable equating to 29% affordable houses being delivered - an excellent achievement.

Councillor John Williams

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Report of Councillor Terry Beale – Housing Services

1. Deane Housing Development

- 1.1 The Phase 1 Council Housing development scheme has been completed with the completion of eight units at Normandy Drive, Taunton. This is in addition to the four units at Bacon Drive, Taunton and seven units in West Bagborough (completed 2014- 2015)

Creechbarrow Road

- 1.2 The building programme is being closely monitored with handovers scheduled for late Summer. The Knightstone Housing Association area of the site has had issues which have delayed the handover of this particular site.
- 1.3 There has been a delay in availability of the new play area so we are putting in place alternative options to cover this.

Weavers Arms, Rockwell Green, Wellington

- 1.4 A Planning application has been submitted for this site with an anticipated determination in September 2015.
- 1.5 There is continuing support to facilitate the two remaining decants and provide a vacant site.
- 1.6 The tender documents are being prepared to enable us to select a contractor.

Further Development Opportunities

- 1.7 A development pipeline is progressing with new schemes to come forward for Full Council approval later in the year. There will be a consultation with local residents who may be affected before any announcement is made.

2. Affordable Housing

- 2.1 I am pleased to report that 187 affordable homes have been completed in the financial year 2014/2015. Some of these schemes have slipped into 2015/2016, which currently shows anticipated targets of over 250 affordable homes.

2.2 The provision of much-needed homes is welcome news not only for Taunton Deane but also for the New Homes Bonus earned in these years, which could receive a boost.

3. Welfare Reform Visits

3.1 The number of tenants affected this month are 339. However, this is subject to change on a daily basis due to tenants moving in and out of employment.

3.2 The breakdown of tenants that have now downsized are as follows:-

- 2 Direct Match approved completed
- 47 successful moves on CBL completed
- 0 successful bids on CBL pending
- 0 Mutual Exchange processed
- 23 Mutual Exchanges completed
- 1 move to private sector completed

4. Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)

4.1 All affected tenants are being offered advice on DHP and assistance to help them complete the application form.

4.2 The Revenue and Benefits Team are completing End of Year reports and gearing up for the introduction of Universal Credit.

4.3 Since the start of the financial year, 47 DHPs have been awarded to Taunton Deane tenants.

5. Rent Arrears

Date	Welfare Reform Rent Arrears	No. of Tenants	Change on Previous Month
1 st April 2015	£41,483.73	179	n/a
1 st May 2015	£44,874.09	192	+ £3,390.36
1 st June 2015	£41,762.32	184	- £3,111.77
1 st July 2015	£38,152.16	162	- £3,610.16

6. Universal Credit (UC)

- 6.1 Universal Credit went live on 20 April 2015 and, to date, eight Taunton Deane tenants have submitted a claim. We have been working closely with the tenants and have noted that the level of help and support needed is substantial. This support needs to be tailored to the claimant dependant upon their personal circumstances.
- 6.2 Currently, only single and newly unemployed people are able to make UC claims. This only accounts for a small number of tenants at this time, however, as UC expands to involve families, the number of tenants claiming UC will increase significantly.

Councillor Terry Beale

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Report of Councillor Patrick Berry – Environmental Services

1. Environmental Health / Licensing

1.1 Food Hygiene:

- Free Coaching : Twenty food business premises across Taunton Deane and West Somerset, which performed poorly on the last food hygiene inspection, benefitted by being offered a free coaching visit by the Food Standards Agency. The visits focused on hygiene practices, cross contamination and hand washing. Since their coaching, eight of these businesses have been re-inspected and all improved their standard, going from food hygiene rating scores of 2 or below to either 4 or 5 out of a possible score of 5.
- Food Inspections are now all up to date, the back-log from the previous quarter having been cleared.

1.2 Licensing:

- The shortage of fully skilled Licensing Officers has been addressed with two temporary appointments (covering Taunton Deane and West Somerset). This should enable the backlog to be reduced and delays to be minimised within acceptable levels. This area will remain under scrutiny until the back-log comes down.
- Thanks to the efforts of Licensing Chairman, Councillor Kelly Durdan and others, the Taxi Forum has been restarted and will address some of the issues being raised by the taxi operators. A regular programme of meetings has been arranged where perceived “unfair practices” can be discussed in a fair and informal way.

1.3 Environmental Health:

- Blackbird 3 Hinkley Point Emergency Exercise: Officers from both Taunton Deane and West Somerset were involved in the Blackbird 3 Emergency Exercise on Tuesday, 9 June 2015. An emergency control room was set up at West Somerset House and officers were dispatched to the Avon and Somerset Police HQ at Portishead to liaise with the Police, Fire and Ambulance and organisations such as Wessex Water, the Meteorological Office, the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Environment Agency, Sedgemoor District Council and Somerset County Council.

2. Climate Change

2.1 Solar Power/ Photovoltaic Panels:

- PV is currently being installed on two projects:-
 - The first is the new Swimming Pool complex at Blackbrook. This is part and parcel of the construction which is reported elsewhere.
 - The second is a Housing Revenue Account project to retrofit panels on 350 existing Council homes across Taunton Deane. This project is due to be completed in September 2015. Specific addresses have to be approved by Western Power Distribution to connect to the National Grid. Connection of too many homes in one specific area may result in disturbances of supply. The Feed In Tariff (FIT) received by the Council for electricity generated will go towards paying for the cost of the panels, which is predicted to be within 12-13 years. The FIT is guaranteed for 20 years, which means Taunton Deane receives a positive cash flow from years 13-20. This amount is estimated to be worth £1,200,000. Carbon savings are estimated to be in the region of 11,000 tonnes over 20 years.

2.2 External Wall Insulation (EWI):

- 40 Cornish type non-traditional homes are being installed with EWI to provide better insulation. The substandard existing cladding is being removed, concrete inspected by a specialist and EWI installed to the walls. The aim is to prevent heat loss from the properties, therefore increasing thermal comfort and reducing heating bills for tenants.

3. Somerset Waste Partnership

3.1 Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP) met on 19 June 2015.

- In order to raise awareness of the need to recycle, SWP organised a Recycle Week during last month.
- SWP are now executing a detailed analysis of the trials carried out around Somerset for recycling of additional materials. The analysis will include the examination of options to help increase the amount of recycled material, and reduce the non-recyclable black bin refuse. Overall cost reduction is the eventual target.

4. Deane DLO

4.1 Street Sweeping and Toilet Cleaning:

- The current street cleaning campaign with its small additional budget

continues to show good results.

- The DLO has brought in, free of cost for a six week trial period, two new solar powered compactor bins which have been installed near the Market House at the end of High Street in Taunton and a second one in Wellington. The manufacturers claim that this new type of bin will contribute savings in the cost of collecting refuse. The bins, which are powered by solar panels and batteries, compact the rubbish. They will therefore hold as much rubbish as eight regular bins. When full, they send a message to the DLO depot that they need to be emptied.

5. Crematorium

- 5.1 The Cemeteries Department is currently developing four new burial sections at Taunton Deane Cemetery. Some works have already been completed such as drainage, paths, water supply etc. Planting will be carried out during the Autumn and Winter period when it is hoped to start using the burial sections.

Councillor Patrick Berry

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

Firstly I want to pass my sincere thanks to my predecessor Councillor Norman Cavil, for his support and for agreeing to recently attend a few key meetings where he has had invaluable knowledge of the projects being progressed.

I have spent this initial period assessing the plans in place and better understanding some of the issues at hand.

The one clear message I have given all officers is that I want the Council to look outwards and speak with a loud voice for all of Taunton Deane and for Taunton as the County Town of Somerset.

We will be proactively pursuing companies and highlighting the benefits of Taunton Deane as a destination for their business. We need to speak out clearly and robustly. Whatever organisation or group we are members of, only we can properly sell ourselves as a key destination at the heart of the South West. Whilst very important it is not enough to have a website or a good social media presence. It is vital to get out, knock on doors and introduce what we have directly to companies.

We have been given a very clear mandate by the electorate and we already have much to be proud of but so much we want to achieve and I am determined we will realise our potential.

I am fully satisfied we have the team to achieve what is required and I will do my utmost to make sure Taunton Deane's voice is heard.

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

1. Local Business Support and Networks

Local Investor Support

- 1.1 Continuing liaison is carried out with businesses in Taunton Deane, particularly larger businesses looking to expand and grow. Recent meetings include EPS Services in Wiveliscombe, Claims Consortium UK, Relyon and Swallowfield.
- 1.2 Amongst those businesses, I was pleased to note that EPS Services was successful last month in securing Government funding under the Regional Growth Fund (RGF). The business manufactures and services bandsaws, and is one of only three companies in the UK in that industry. The grant of £25,000 will assist the business to purchase new machinery at its factory in Wiveliscombe. Members will be pleased to

note that the Council's Economic Development team signposted the business towards the RGF.

Account Management

- 1.3 The Economic Development Team is currently introducing an Account Management approach to engaging with our 40 larger businesses. Led by the Director and Assistant Director, the team will aim to visit each of those businesses at least once per year with a view to strengthening relations with each, and positioning the Council better to respond to their needs.

Taunton Deane Business Directory

- 1.4 Working with the national publisher, Burrows, the Economic Development Team is currently producing a new business directory, featuring a printed directory of larger employers, and an on-line business directory. Funded by advertising, the directory is a useful vehicle to promote the advantages of investing in Taunton Deane, at no financial cost to the authority. The publication is due to be issued in the Autumn and features adverts from a cross section of organisations, including many of our larger and more prestigious businesses.

Taunton Deane Business Conference

- 1.5 Officers are currently in the early stages of planning a large conference to be held in November 2015 at the County Cricket Ground. The event is intended to celebrate the diversity of the area's businesses and to raise awareness of Taunton Deane's strengths as an investment location. This is an early indication of my challenge to officers to look outwards and I welcome this initiative.

Research

- 1.6 The team has commissioned Somerset County Council to carry out research into the growth sectors within Taunton Deane. The research will be completed in July and will inform targeted policy interventions to support those sectors showing the most growth potential.

Social Media Workshops for Businesses

- 1.7 In excess of 50 businesses have recently attended Social Media and Search Engine Optimisation workshops delivered by Cosmic. Businesses picked up many hints and tips to help make themselves stand out on Social Media. The Council supported the learning events financially and in organisation, and will be bringing a programme of similar events across Taunton Deane over the forthcoming months - more details to follow.

Taunton Town Centre Ambassador

- 1.8 I am delighted to announce that Councillor David Durdan has agreed to take up the role of the Taunton Town Centre Ambassador. I can't think of a better person to engage with the town centre businesses after the success he had as Mayor and, in particular, with the Dragon Trail. I am awaiting his next big idea for our area..... I wish him well and will give him all the support I can to make his role develop and benefit the County Town of Somerset.

2. Supporting inward investment and fulfilment

New enquiries have been received from eight businesses, either inward investors or smaller local businesses with specific property enquiries, since 1 April 2015. All have been responded to positively and are being progressed. The team is also liaising with a further 18 businesses to assist their expansion.

Into Somerset

- 2.1 On 1 April 2015 the delivery of the Into Somerset service transferred to the Somerset County Council, drawing upon the support of all the districts in the County. The new service has appointed consultants to manage and redesign the website, and is currently planning a full promotional campaign for the County. To date one enquiry has been received via the Into Somerset website, although it is essential that effective enquiry handling and fulfilment systems are in place in anticipation of EDF's decision over the new Nuclear Plant at Hinkley Point.
- 2.2 The team is also liaising with the heart of the South West Local Economic Partnership (LEP) to ensure that local marketing and fulfilment activities are coordinated across the LEP area, particularly to benefit international investors.

www.taunton.uk.com

- 2.3 Extensive work has been undertaken within the team since March to improve the functionality and enhance the Taunton Deane inward investment website. The work is now completed and the site has much greater usefulness.
- 2.4 A consultant was appointed in 2014/2015 to review the team's marketing activities, including the branding the Council uses for inward investment and the tools it has available to provide a responsive and quality marketing and fulfilment service. That work is continuing, and is due to be completed in July.

Employment sites

- 2.5 The team is currently producing a comprehensive audit and summary of Taunton Deane's available employment sites. The work will, firstly, assist in the marketing of the Borough, and, secondly, will enable targeted interventions to bring 'blocked' sites to the market. The work is continuing.
- 2.6 In recent months Taunton Vale Business Park has been presented to the market at Monkton Heathfield.

3. Place Based Regeneration

Coal Orchard Redevelopment

- 3.1 In April MACE was appointed to progress a design brief for this key town centre site, drawing upon consultation with local businesses and stakeholders. Consultation activities and events are currently underway, and Members will be consulted over the Summer. The consultants are due to have produced their recommendations to the Council in October 2015.

The Market House

- 3.2 The refurbishment and disposal of The Market House has progressed extremely well in recent months (see Visitor Centre relocation below). The restaurant chain Wildwood has now opened and has been well received by visitors and other businesses in the town, driving up the quality of food in the town and enhancing the evening economy. Discussions are continuing with other tenants in the property.
- 3.3 The area outside The Market House on Fore Street has been 'decluttered', with benches and other street furniture removed (mostly relocated to elsewhere in the town) to create a new town centre open space. This space was used for the first time to great effect in the recent Somerfest celebrations.

4. Marketing the Area through Culture

Somerfest

- 4.1 This year's Somerfest was bigger and even better than last year's, attracting greater numbers of visitors to the town centre, and involving a greater number of partner organisations, including the Somerset Wildlife Trust who part funded the event. The planning and delivery of the event was outsourced this year to FUSE Performance, a local company that works with young people to engage them through the performing arts. The event included activities on all of the town centre's open spaces as well as the High Street and The Brewhouse. A full review is currently under preparation and will be circulated to Members.

Events Support

- 4.2 Working through the Taunton Events Group, which I Chair, the Economic Development Team has lent its support to numerous cultural events already delivered, or planned over the next few months. These have included:-
- Taunton Live 2015, bringing classical music and the visual arts together into one week-long extravaganza between 18 and 25 July.
 - The Dragon Boat Race in May, which was very well organised by Headway Somerset, attracting 25 business sponsors to take boats.
 - Parrot in the Park in August, hosted by 40 Commando in partnership with the Apple and Parrot Pub, the pop concert should attract around 1,500 people to Castle Green.
 - 10 year anniversary of Stand Against Violence in September, with a day of events on Castle Green.
 - Santander business event on Castle Green in July.
 - Make Taunton Sparkle Christmas season in November and December

The Brewhouse Theatre

- 4.3 The Taunton Theatre Association has recently made two key staff appointments to the Theatre, which will enable full time expertise to be brought to the facility. The new Chief Executive, Vanessa Le Francois is due to start in July, while a Technical Manager has already started. Repair works have been commenced on the roof of the Gallery to make the room safe. Upon completion, the lease can be amended to extend the demise of the property to cover that room.

5. Marketing the Borough to Visitors

New Taunton Visitor Centre

- 5.1 The Visitor Centre Team has worked hard in preparation of the move of the centre from the existing premises on Paul Street, to the newly refurbished centre in The Market House. The new centre will provide an opportunity to redesign the service, and Visitor Centre staff are discussing how to enhance income streams as well as build on the quality of the information services delivered to date. The service is due to relocate in mid July and is on budget.

6. Other activities

South West Audit

- 6.1 A full audit of the Council's business grants is currently being carried out, due to report back in July. The review looked in considerable detail at the New Business Grant and the Investment Grant, and tested the governance and delivery processes of both schemes.

Economic Development Service Plan

- 6.2 A service plan for the Taunton Deane side of the Economic Development Team is currently being finalised for 2015/2016, and will be circulated to all Members once signed off by the Executive Portfolio Holder.

7. Communications

Social media

- 7.1 Twitter was very usefully deployed during the elections in May, both in the run-up and for the results. We were able to post messages reminding people to vote and to pick up queries.
- 7.2 On the night of the General Election count we posted updates throughout the night and were able to announce the result immediately.
- 7.3 On the night of the local election counts we tweeted throughout as results came in and increased our following substantially. This increase has seen incremental growth – we are now heading towards 1,600 followers.
- 7.4 The Visitor Centre Team continue to lead on the promotion of the area through social media. The Facebook account (TauntonTown) currently has over 1,600 likes. @moreTaunton on Twitter has nearly 4,000 followers and we have recently added Instagram to our promotional channels with already over 100 likes.

Town Centre Marketing Project

- 7.5 Destination CMS continue to promote Taunton Town Centre for us. Through their brand-maker's regular visits to retail businesses in the town, their social media and PR team are promoting these special offers, promotions and events through our destination website (www.visitsomerset.co.uk/taunton) and social media channels.

Visit Wiveliscombe leaflet

- 7.6 The team are working with the Wiveliscombe Business Group to create a leaflet to promote the Walkers Welcome, businesses and things to do in the town.

Traditional media

- 7.7 This continues to be busy, with both proactive and reactive communications. News that the council is trialling solar powered waste bins prompted considerable interest with regional media picking this up. We were able to promote some strong messages on keeping our town centres clean and tidy.

Internal communications

- 7.8 The One Team newsletter continues to be well received and content is over-subscribed at times! Feedback on improvements would be welcome please contact myself or Debbie Rundle directly.

Councillor Mark Edwards

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Report of Councillor Roger Habgood – Planning Policy and Transportation

1. Site Allocations and Development Management Plan

- 1.1 As previously reported the Council has completed its publication period on the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan. Officers analysed the responses and as Portfolio holder I have now signed the plan off subject to minor amendment in readiness for submission to the Secretary of State and The Planning Inspectorate within the next week.
- 1.2 Once the Plan is submitted an Examination in Public will be scheduled towards the end of September / early October before the Plan is formally adopted in December.

2. Neighbourhood Planning

- 2.1 Bishops Lydeard and Cothelstone Neighbourhood Plan is out for wider consultation before entering its final regulatory stages.
- 2.2 Stakeholder responses to the plan are being sought by the Neighbourhood Plan Group. Responses are due back with by 3 August 2015.
- 2.3 The Council expects Bishops Lydeard and Cothelstone Neighbourhood Plan Group to submit their Plan to the Council later in year.
- 2.4 Trull and Staplehay Neighbourhood Plan Group are considering all the comments they received from their wider consultation before submitting their Plan to the Council for pre-examination consultation and examination.
- 2.5 Officers are considering the submitted Staplegrove Framework Master Plan with a view to taking this item back to Members in the coming months. This document will guide the future development of this mixed-use urban extension of around 1,500 new homes setting a framework for decision-making with planning applications expected in late Summer / early Autumn.

3. Custom-build Register of Interest

- 3.1 Officers have been considering a response to the Self-build and Custom House Building Act (March 2015) under which the Government placed a duty on Councils to understand the demand for self-build or custom-build projects in the area.
- 3.2 Officers met with the Department of Communities and Local Government and National Custom and Self Build Association Leaders for Custom Build research to plan its response to this new Act.
- 3.3 The Council undertook its first Custom-build Register of Interest in May 2015. The responses did not reveal any discernable trends, therefore we are unable to translate this into policies or allocations at present.
- 3.4 The Council will continue to monitor demand for custom-build, as it does for other land uses. Depending on capacity, the Council may pursue the preparation of a Supplementary Planning Document on Custom-build later in the year.

4. Sport, Recreation and Open Space

- 4.1. Strategies for Children's Play and Community Halls have been updated. Produced jointly with Leisure Development, the strategies are evidence base for planning policy, leisure development and parks work.
- 4.2 An update of strategies for Green Space, Allotments and Playing Pitch is continuing.

5. Gypsy and Traveller Provision

- 5.1 A County-wide Project Group is looking into residential and transit provision across Somerset. The project aims to identify the ideal range and geographical spread for provision, establish criteria for acceptable sites, identify potential sites and scope the requisite finance sources.
- 5.2 A report will be brought to Members for consideration in due course.
- 5.3 The bi-annual statistical caravan count is being undertaken by Planning Enforcement with help from Planning Policy around 16 July 2015. It is a Central Government requirement to record local data on the number (authorised and unauthorised) and the seasonal movement of caravans from the Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showmen cultures.

6. Car Parking

Orchard Car Park

- 6.1 Refurbishment of the stairways and lobbies of the Orchard Car Park is continuing, with Level 2 to 5A completed and the Ground and Level 1 areas currently being revamped. Once completed, work will commence to refresh the single stairway.
- 6.2 The specification of the refurbishment is to reflect that of the stairways and lobbies under the control of the Orchard Shopping Centre.
- 6.3 As part of this project the Council is investigating the feasibility of implementing an external contract for the cleaning of these areas and the general car park.
- 6.4 New security gates and a barrier at the bottom of the entrance ramp have now been installed.

Continuing Projects:-

- 6.5 Currently there are four Major Projects involving the Taunton Car Parks:
- Orchard Car Park - major repairs;
 - Signage review (including VMS) – work has commenced;
 - Pay at exit at four major car parks – linked to signage review;
 - Taunton Rethink (proposed closure of Coal Orchard car park) – Project Team in place.

Priory Bridge Car Park

- 6.6 Development work has now commenced on the former Priory Bridge Road Car Park. The access road for the residents and permit holders will remain in place until the Northern Inner Distributor Road is opened.

Shopmobility

- 6.7 The transaction of service providers from PLUS to Compass Disability Services on the 1 April 2015 went extremely well. All participants' worked together to ensure uninterrupted service to Shopmobility Customers.

Phone and Pay (PnP)

- 6.8 The change from “Ringo” to “Phone and Pay” occurred on the 1 April 2015 with 532 motorists using the system to pay for their car park on that day. Between April and June there have been £45,000 transactions using the PnP system.

Councillor Roger Habgood

Council Meeting – 14 July 2015

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

1. Parks

- 1.1 I think you will agree that the floral displays are looking glorious again this year. The sunshine has certainly made them look their best and it has also meant our parks and play grounds have been busy.
- 1.2 We will have had the Britain in Bloom judging day by the time we meet, so I hope the sun will have shone on Thursday 9 July to help our town look its best.
- 1.3 The bandstand concerts in Vivary Park are in full swing now and continue on many Sundays through to early September. We have also hosted Tone FM who 'broadcast from the bandstand' for their breakfast show a couple of weeks ago.
- 1.4 Maintenance is continuing across our estate all year. So far this year we have undertaken the following; Cleaned Vivary Gates, repainted the Vivary Fountain, repaired the fountain pump, repairs to Wellington Bandstand, replaced the gates on Wellington Park Lodge and repairs to the ha-ha wall in Wellington Park. Soon to come is a new gate for Wellington Park, repainting of the Wellington Bandstand interior and repainting of Taunton Bandstand.

2. Community Leisure and Play

Hudson Way

- 2.1 This is one of the most exciting play projects we have undertaken for a long time! Funding for this £256,000 project has come from Section 106 Agreement off-site children's play contributions from the developments at Silk Meadows and 245 Staplegrove Road. The tender to install the equipment was won by Parsons Landscapes Limited of Stoke St Mary who have won previous contracts to install playgrounds for the Council so they are tried and tested, although this will be the largest children's play project Taunton Deane has carried out.
- 2.2 You will see from the attached images the centrepiece pirate ship and other equipment to be installed. The ship is bespoke and designed following consultation with the local children. The spinning wheel will be, as far as we are aware, only the second one in the United Kingdom, the other one is in a theme park.

- 2.3 The ship is in two parts, one for older children and one for younger, being linked by a net tunnel. The play area will also contain toddler swings, roundabout, zip wire, pod swing and two trampolines.
- 2.4 Work is due to commence on-site towards the end of August. The children from Staplegrove School are to be invited onto site to witness the build as it progresses. The existing “tired” play area will be removed after the new one has been installed.

Fields in Trust – Centenary Fields

- 2.5 The Royal British Legion and Fields in Trust (formally National Playing Fields Association) are leading a nationwide initiative aimed at securing recreational space in perpetuity in honour of the memory of the millions of people who lost their lives in World War 1. The objective of the programme is to encourage every local authority in the United Kingdom to nominate at least one recreational space to be dedicated as a Centenary Field. We identified three sites within the local area, one of which - Wellington Park - was suggested by Fields in Trust due to the current War Memorial in the park.
- 2.6 Work is underway to dedicate Wellington Park and Hamilton Gault Park as Centenary Fields in Trust. Wellington Park’s dedication work is further advanced than Hamilton Gault.
- 2.7 Dedication of parks under this programme will not only secure these vital recreational spaces for future generations to enjoy, it will also open the potential to apply to the Centenary Fields Programme for improvement grants, a welcome source of potential funding.

3. Tone Leisure (Taunton Deane) Limited Activities

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

Community Development

Wellington News

- 3.1 Tone has recently appointed a new Active Lifestyles Officer, Amy Colwill. Amy is working with the Children’s Centre and Community Empowerment Officers from Taunton Deane Borough Council and Knightstone in Wellington to plan a programme of summer activities. Tone are encouraging people to get active in their local parks and outdoors by running a six week programme of Buggy Walks for parents and carers with young children (0-5 years) over the summer holidays. For children aged 9-16 years Tone are delivering a six week programme of sports activities in Howards Road, Wellington. The summer season will be finished with a family Summer Olympics at Dobree Park, Wellington.
- 3.2 For adults, Amy ran a successful Health Awareness Event in the WHERE Centre in Wellington in partnership with Age UK, Active Living and Bluebird

Carehome. Fifteen health and lifestyle checks were carried out on adults aged 60+ years.

Play Forum Information

- 3.3 Tone support Somerset Play Forum through hosting their development worker and supporting the organisation of their annual Play Conference, which was held at Huish Woods, Taunton in April. Over 80 people attended the outdoor play workshops, inspiring play workers from across the county to take new ideas and inspiration back to their childcare/play/school settings.

Health Development

- 3.4 A series of monthly health events are planned to be delivered, starting on Wednesday, 1 July at Priorswood Community Centre. Service users will be educated about how healthy eating and physical activity can assist in preventing and managing chronic diseases such as Coronary Heart Disease and Diabetes.

Healthy Eating, Physical Activity and Weight Management Tender

- 3.5 Somerset County Council has recently commissioned various weight management, physical activity and healthy eating programmes for the whole of Somerset. Tone Leisure has submitted a tender for these programmes and the results will be announced in August.

Ruishton Walks

- 3.6 Tone is now managing the Ruishton Walks scheme, which has an average monthly attendance of 50 walkers. The scheme runs fortnightly at Creech St. Michael and Ruishton.

Facility News

Wellsprings Leisure Centre

- 3.7 In May Wellsprings had a full house for the comedian Jimmy Carr. Wellsprings also hosted for the first time the children's TV Channel Five production of Milkshake, with over 520 children enjoying the show.
- 3.8 The Friday 'Vibe' Youth Nights continue to grow from strength to strength. Attendance numbers are now regularly exceeding 80 youngsters, with a record attendance of 104 on 12 June 2015. The average age is 12-14 years with a 60:40 split of boys and girls. The most popular activity is Parkour. The sessions are attracting young people from all over Taunton including Holway, Inner/Outer Circle and Galmington.

Taunton Pool

- 3.9 Following the refurbishment of Taunton Pool a number of new aquatic activities have been introduced to the swimming programme. These include:-

- a Junior Masterclass/Stroke Improvement course which takes place on Monday evenings from 7.30-8.00 pm. This small group session is designed for children aged between 8 and 15 years old and targets specific swimming skills and techniques to help children reach their goals;
- a Junior Tri Fitness session which takes place every Wednesday from 7.00-8.00 pm. The session is designed to introduce children to triathlon swim training and the demands of competing in triathlons. While this session is designed to work on swimming technique and fitness, it also has a focus on being fun and engaging. It is aimed at children aged between 10 and 15 years of age, or Tri Star levels 1, 2 and/or 3 and is also suitable for juniors who want to keep fit through swimming but have no plan to complete in triathlons;
- adult Learn to Swim which takes place every Wednesday from 8.00-8.30 pm. Taking place in the privacy of 'adults only' swimming, this small group session helps teach fundamental swimming techniques and build water confidence. This session is suitable for adults who cannot swim two continuous lengths at Taunton Pool; and
- adult Triathlon Fitness which takes place every Monday from 8.45-9.45 pm. This Instructor led session works on the technical and fitness (stamina, speed, power etc.) aspects of triathlon swimming, including open water swimming drills. The training follows an annual plan and is broken down into the preparatory, competitive and transition phases of training. While this is a specific session for Triathletes, it is also suitable for anyone who wants to improve their swimming fitness. Customers must be able to swim a minimum of 200m in any recognised stroke. On average there are 25 customers attending these sessions on a weekly basis.

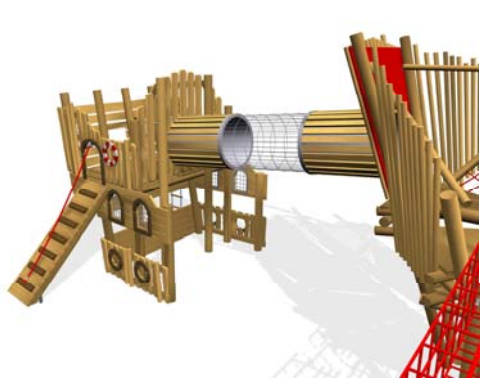
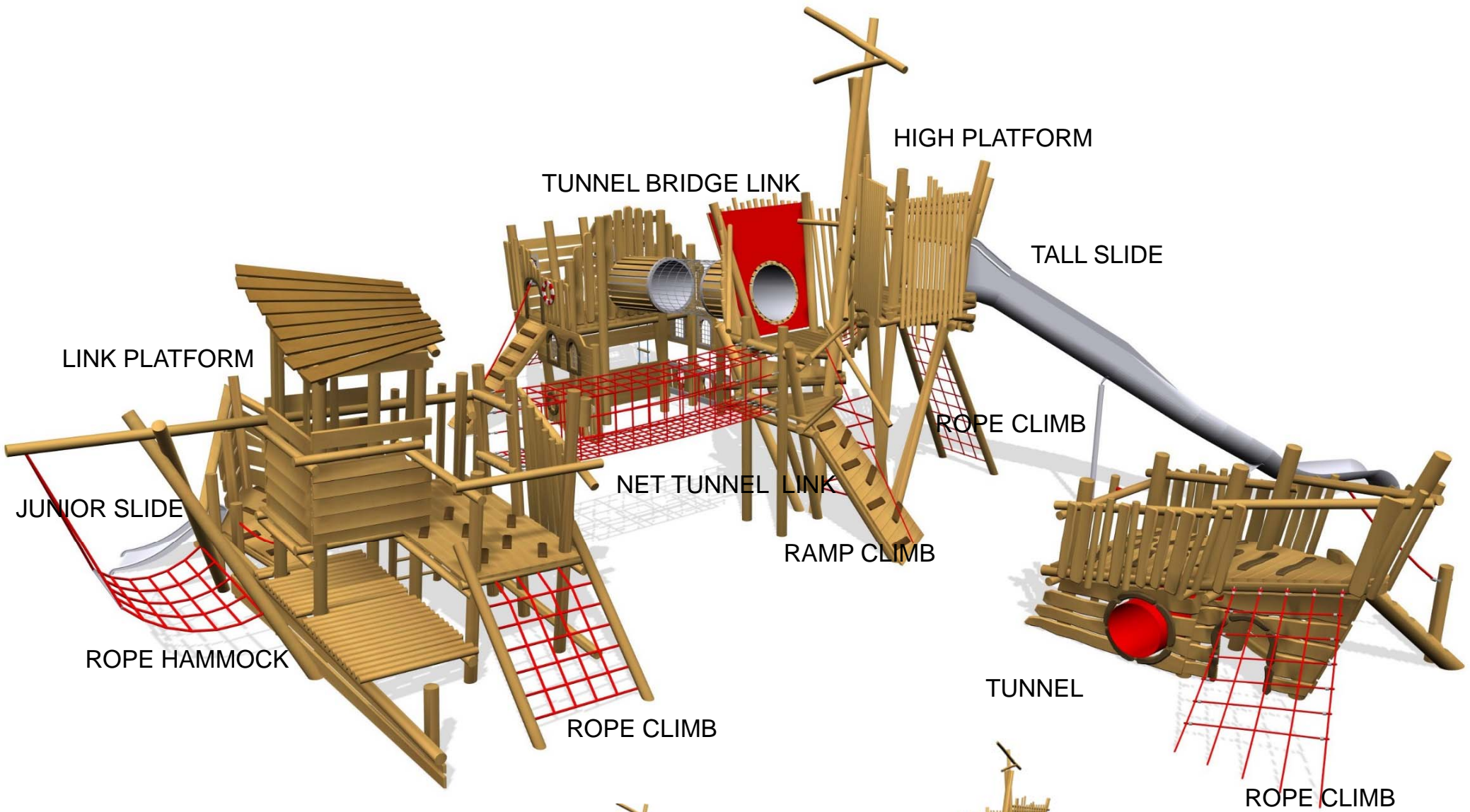
Blackbrook Pavilion

- 3.10 The Blackbrook Sports Hall has seen an £11,000 refurbishment investment, as the facility was showing its age. Due to customer feedback the Council have reintroduced the soundproof boards around the perimeter to improve the acoustics. The facility is now looking much improved.

Vivary Park

- 3.11 Footgolf - This season 300 customers have kicked, sliced and toe-punted their way around Vivary Golf Course. Half the visits took place in May, with a very strong uptake during the school half term. There are plans for mini leagues, tournaments and working with local football clubs to assist with a pre-season training programme to boost individual fitness. This will see a round of Footgolf combined with a Boot Camp fitness session.

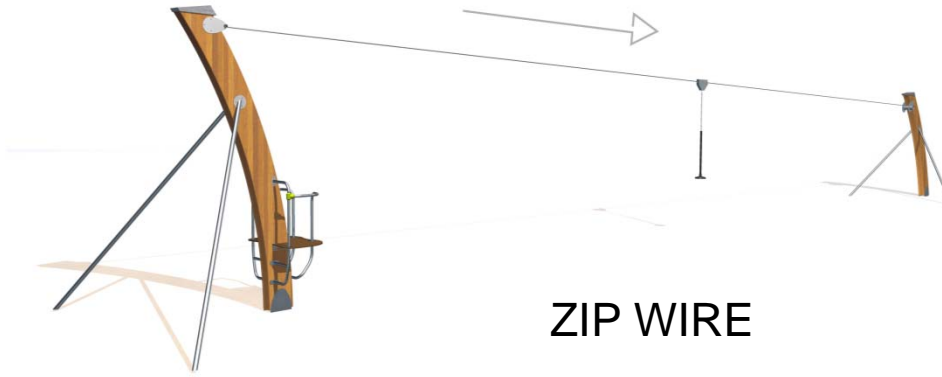
Councillor Catherine Herbert



TWO PIRATE SHIPS ONE FOR OLDER PLAY AND THE OTHER FOR YOUNGER PLAY BUT WITH A TUNNEL LINK



SPINNING WHEEL



ZIP WIRE



INCLUSIVE ROUNDABOUT /
ROCKER



TWO TRAMPOLINES



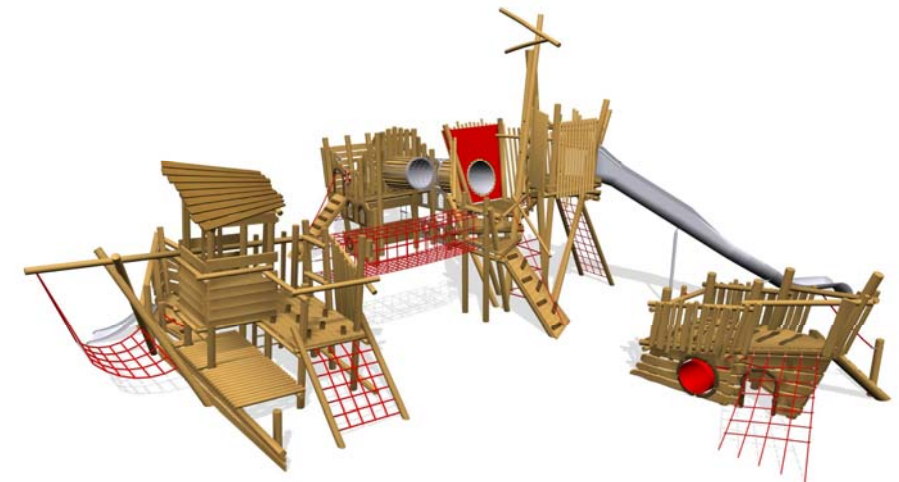
TODDLER SWINGS



BASKET SWING



MINI SPRINGY DINGHY



TWO LINKED PIRATE SHIPS

Council Meeting - 14 July 2015

Report of Councillor Richard Parrish – Corporate Resources

1. Corporate Strategy and Performance

- 1.1 Quarter 4 Performance Report has been reviewed by the Joint Management Team and is progressing through the Scrutiny and Executive review process.
- 1.2 The Annual Governance Statement 2014/2015 has been drafted and reviewed by both the Corporate Governance Committee and the Standards Committee. This is now due to be signed off by the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive prior to the process being completed before the September deadline.
- 1.3 Complaints Process – A new database has been introduced to monitor complaints and officers are implementing a new joint complaints process with West Somerset Council. This system is anticipated to have time saving implications for both Councils whilst providing an improved service to customers. The maximum time for dealing with complaints is to be brought in line with the Freedom of Information Act response time.
- 1.4 Quarterly Performance reporting for 2015/2016 – Work is under way on collecting the data for Quarter 1 and is due to be reviewed by the Joint Management Team on 28 July 2015 prior to being presented to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee in August.
- 1.5 New Corporate Priorities – Preliminary work is being undertaken to start the engagement process with Members over the Summer to identify the new priorities for both Councils. Members will be invited to attend workshops during August and outcomes reported for consideration by the Joint Project Advisory Group.
- 1.6 Data Transparency – The Council has now delivered the majority of the additional requirements (e.g. publishing details of land and property assets, our waste services contract) and had a favourable follow-up audit which is encouraging. It is recognised that the Council's web site requires updating on entries of spending over £500 but due to pressure on officer time, there is likely to be a delay on achieving this.
- 1.7 Freedom of Information Requests (FOI's) – Taunton Deane continues to deal with significant numbers of increasingly more complex requests – 700 in 2014/2015. This is undoubtedly putting strain on Council resource.

2. Customer Contact

- 2.1 The Key Performance Indicators for 2014/2015 remained on target:-
- Percentage of calls answered in 20 seconds = **84.87% (previously 81.49%)**;
 - Percentage of calls resolved at first point of contact = **97.44% (previously 95.8%)**; and
 - Abandoned call rate = **1.25% (previously 3.1%)**.
- 2.2 This service continues to operate very well and shows improved performance. There are no other significant issues to report.

3. Facilities Management and Business Support

- 3.1 Office moves – The remaining office moves to support the JMASS Phase 1 restructure are in the process of being completed. This will see the Housing Property Services Team move from Priory Depot to the vacant ICT Office on the ground floor of The Deane House and is expected to be completed on the 15 and 16 July 2015.
- 3.2 Security Evacuation Procedures – The procedures have recently been updated and are being rolled out to staff and managers. This is an improvement for the safety and security for staff, customers and property.
- 3.3 Fire Wardens – Additional Fire Wardens have been identified and trained to ensure we have adequate cover at all sites.
- 3.4 Pool Cars – Two additional VW Up pool cars have recently been added to the existing four pool two seat vans at The Deane House. This enables more than two persons to travel in a vehicle and has potential cost savings to the Council.

4. Human Resources and Organisational Development

- 4.1 Absence Management – Officers continue to monitor closely and to work with managers to manage individual cases. Last year's figure was 7.89 days per employee, which was lower than the previous year (8.39) and better than the target figure of 8.2 days. Figures relate to staff employed as of 31 March each year.
- 4.2 Staff health checks have been organised in conjunction with the NHS and are being offered during July to staff over 40 years of age. The checks will monitor such things as life style habits, blood pressure, body mass index etc. I have asked for prostate disease information posters to be provided to staff lavatories.

- 4.3 Organisation Development Plan – Work has commenced on delivering the plan for 2015/2016 and is currently focussing on the development of a Management Development Programme which will be delivered in two programmes - one commencing in September and the other in October. Both will last for nine months.
- 4.4 Online e-learning solution known as Learning Pool – Work is currently underway to get this set up and tested in advance of the rollout to staff in September and to Members later in the year. This system will provide a valuable audit trail to identify staff/Member training deficits.
- 4.5 Project Support continue to provide HR support to a number of key projects such as the Accommodation Project, Southwest One (SW1) exit strategy and the staff terms and conditions review. The Chief Executive has held meetings with staff to brief them on possible changes and a survey has been conducted with 500 employees. Results from the survey are currently being evaluated. This is also reported as part of Transformation Programme Management below.

5. ICT and Information

- 5.1 ICT Strategy – A draft strategy has been produced, which is to support the potential accommodation move and Transformation Programme – Officers are currently in the process of obtaining expert external challenge to the draft strategy to ensure it is fit for purpose.
- 5.2 Potential SAP replacement – Supporting the SW1 Succession project with a review of alternative SAP system options.
- 5.3 Staff workshops – Currently in the process of undertaking interactive workshops with staff to ensure all staff are clear on how to access systems across both Councils.
- 5.4 Mobile Data Management – Officers are working with the SW1 ICT service to prioritise the development and implementation of a Mobile Data Management solution.

6. Transformation Programme Management

- 6.1 JMASS Phase 1 Transition Plan – Continuing to implement the plan including the Terms and Conditions Review.
- 6.2 Phase 2 – Work is underway to develop Phase 2 and the necessary programme governance to support this which incorporates key projects such as the Accommodation Project and SW1 Succession planning.
- 6.3 One Team Newsletter – continues to put a lot of focus into this as a key

communication tool.

- 6.4 Staff Communications Survey – Undertaken during June 2015, the results are currently being collated.

7. Southwest One (SW1) Succession Planning

- 7.1 Following the update given to Members in March the project is progressing well and it is on track to deliver the options report and recommendations to Members in the Autumn.

8. Law and Governance - SHAPE Partnership Services

- 8.1 In terms of legal services, it is relatively early days for the new Shape Partnership Services – Law and Governance which started in operation from 1 April, 2015. It can be reported that in the first three months of operation there have been 100 formal referrals from Taunton Deane and a breakdown of the subject areas are set out below.

- 8.2. 2015/2016 Q1 Report on Instructions Received from Taunton Deane:-

Instructions received from TDBC	100
Instructions received from WSC	30
Total	130

TDBC

Commercial , Contract and Procurement <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advice on Existing Contracts• Advice on New Contracts	8
Electoral Law <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advice	1
Employment <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advice on Law and procedure	1
Enforcement/Prosecutions <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advice on enforcement• High Hedges/Anti-social behaviour	4
Housing <ul style="list-style-type: none">• General Advice	13
Information & Complaints	2

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice re FOIA/DPA/EIR 	
Litigation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debt Recovery • Homelessness Appeals • Housing/Property repossessions 	7
Planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Advice - TCPA • General Advice – Building Regulations • Compulsory Purchase • Road Naming Orders • S106 Agreements 	24
Property <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreements • Leases • Advice on Property Law • Purchases • Sales • RTB 	40
TOTAL	100

9. Electoral Services

9.1 Taunton Deane Borough Council was part of the sample of Returning Areas whose performance the Electoral Commission was monitoring at the May 2015 polls and this involved the submission of a series of monitoring returns.

9.2 The Council has been advised that further to a review of their proposed assessments by a panel of members of the UK Electoral Advisory Board and senior members of the Electoral Administration team, the Electoral Commission has confirmed that Taunton Deane has been assessed as meeting all the standards. Officers are to be commended for this achievement.

- 9.3 The process of undertaking a canvass of the Electoral Register (with a new register required to be published on 1 December, 2015) will commence at the end of July.

10. Democratic Services

- 10.1 The induction programme for new (and where appropriate returning) Members is well underway and will continue over the coming weeks/months. This programme has been both extensive and engaging for Councillors. Feedback from attendees has generally been positive.
- 10.2 A system for audio recording formal Council/Committee meetings has been installed in the John Meikle Room and will officially take effect from the Full Council meeting on 14 July, 2015.

11. Finance and Procurement

- 11.1 The Finance Service has been working through the financial year end period – always a particularly busy time of year. This has been the first “year-end” process undertaken since the completion of the organisation-wide restructuring under JMASS, which was completed in February 2015. This is also the first time the ‘One Team’ for Finance Shared Service has worked through year-end jointly for the two Councils.
- 11.2 The financial outturn position against budget has been confirmed for the last financial year, with details of performance against budget reported to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 25 June and to the Executive on 8 July 2015. Overall, financial performance is positive with net spending remaining within budget and adequate reserves maintained.
- 11.3 As well as monitoring the position against the budget we have produced the Annual Statement of Accounts for 2014/2015 and these were approved by the Director of Operations on 30 June 2015 in line with statutory deadline. These accounts are now subject to examination by the external auditor, with the audited accounts then scheduled to be presented to and approved by the Corporate Governance Committee in September. In future, the year-end process will be even more challenging with the statutory deadline for completing the unaudited accounts being brought forward to 31 May, and audited accounts approved by 31 July, from 2017/2018 onwards.
- 11.4 The service is also gearing up for the new financial year, and the team have recently delivered training to staff on budget monitoring process and cost sharing arrangements.
- 11.5 In May, Members were provided with an introduction to the Council’s financial position as part of the Members Induction Programme. Further financial awareness training – open to all Members – was provided on 13 July 2015.

- 11.6 A review of the Council's 5-Year Medium Term Financial Plan is also currently underway and updated financial forecasts will be reported to Members in August, setting out the estimated scale of the financial challenge ahead.
- 11.7 Working with the SW1 Strategic Procurement Service we have also recently rolled out training for staff to help embed social value considerations as part of our procurement process. This will be a continuing process with opportunities being identified on a case by case basis, and captured to build a 'library' of best practice. A progress update was reported to Community Scrutiny Committee on 30 June 2015.

12. Revenues and Benefits Service

- 12.1 The Revenues Team have sent over 51,000 Council Tax bills for 2015/2016 with a combined value in excess of £56,000,000. At 30 June 2015 nearly £20,000,000 (34.91%) had been collected. For Business Rates over 4,000 bills with a value of nearly £42,000,000 have been dispatched. So far 32.2% has been collected meaning we are slightly behind target, but are confident we will improve on this position as the year progresses.
- 12.2 The average time for the Benefits Team to work out a new claim and changes in circumstances for Housing Benefit or Council Tax Support is six days. Nearly 80% of customers accessing the "There and Then" service at The Deane House have been able to receive an immediate decision on their claim.
- 12.3 The phased implementation by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) of Universal Credit started in our area on 20 April 2015. We are providing local support on Universal Credit to assist customers needing help to complete their claim online, as well as extensive support for vulnerable customers or those with more complex claims.
- 12.4 On 1 June 2015, two staff employed in the Revenues and Benefits Service transferred to the DWP's Single Fraud Investigation Service. We are hoping to launch a Corporate Fraud Investigation Service in August 2015 in partnership with South Somerset District Council and the South West Audit Partnership.
- 12.5 Consultation on five options for our Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme in 2016/2017 started on 1 July 2015. These options are:-
1. No change to the existing Council Tax Support Scheme;
 2. Reducing the Capital Limit to £6,000;
 3. Setting a Minimum Income for Self Employed People;
 4. Limit support to a maximum of 80% of a Band D Property; and
 5. Increase income taper from 20% to 65% for applicants with no earnings.
- 12.6 Everyone liable to pay Council Tax pays for the CTS Scheme through their Council Tax payments, so it is important to get the views of all Council Tax

payers regardless of whether they receive CTS or not. Therefore, I would ask all Members to encourage residents to participate in this consultation exercise.

- 12.7 More information and a link to the consultation can be found on:
www.taundean.gov.uk/benefitconsultation.

Councillor Richard Parrish

Council Meeting - 14 July 2015

Report of Councillor Mrs Jane Warmington - Community Leadership

1. New Councillors

- 1.1 Welcome to all 22 new Councillors successfully elected in May who are now serving on Taunton Deane Borough Council and representing their Wards. The continuing challenge will be our diminishing budget with which to provide the statutory services we depend upon and the non-statutory services which we value so much.
- 1.2 The Council has already begun to adapt in order to do this and we need to continue to modernise (transform) and create simpler processes with better tools (IT) to meet the challenge. We have already shown that by thinking differently and doing things differently we can be more efficient and also be more effective.
- 1.3 Increasingly closer working with our other public sector partners and the voluntary sector should help us achieve this. There are examples of good practice developing locally (for example One Teams) and others from farther afield and one in particular is being more looked at more closely (Eastbourne Borough Council).

2. Retiring Councillors

- 2.1 Ten Councillors have retired with 198 years of service between them.
- 2.2 Councillors Bruce Nottrodt, Mrs Umi Palmer and David Reed have served for 4 years, Mrs Elaine Waymouth for 8 years, Councillors Tony Beaven and Ken Hayward for 12 years, Councillor Bryan Denington for 16 years and Councillor Mrs Jean Allgrove served for 24 years with one break.
- 2.3 The “grand-daddies” of them all though are Councillor Cliff Bishop who has served for 42 years and Councillor John Meikle who has served for 56 years and was Leader of the Council for many years. Both have devoted over half their lives to help shape the Taunton Deane we know and love and they deserve our grateful thanks for this astonishing feat of public service.
- 2.4 We say goodbye to twelve Councillors who were not re-elected this time around and had served an impressive 98 years between them. Most notably Councillors Ross Henley (24 years), Tim Slattery (16 years) and Alan Wedderkopp (12 years) who had all held office at Taunton Deane Borough Council (TDBC). Councillor Henley was also Leader for three years and led the Liberal Democrat group in opposition. Councillors Peter Smith, Miss Louise James, Mrs Nicci Messenger, Ben Swaine, Gill Slattery, Paul Tooze, Mrs Justine Baker, Mrs Jackie Govier and Mrs Judy Gaden all served on Council for between 9 months and 2 years.

3. Community Leadership

- 3.1 A resume of the Community Leadership Portfolio during the last quadrennium has been circulated to all new Members for information. The current list of Executive Members Portfolios and key responsibilities includes the following (in bold) for Community Leadership which are expanded upon here:-
- 3.2 **Taunton Deane Strategic Partnership** (TDSP) pulls together many partners to collectively focus on our **Priority Areas** (both urban and rural) and more recently to join-up and deliver services for vulnerable residents; to solve problems, improve outcomes and **develop communities** to become resilient in the future enabling them to be more independent and self-reliant.
- 3.3 These are now largely achieved through our three urban **One Teams** and the rural **Village Agents** project both established during the last four years. Oversight of both is provided by the TDSP through its combined public and voluntary sector membership. The TDSP Executive (Silver) is made up of managers with tactical responsibility and TDSP Board (Gold) is made up of leading Members and officers with strategic responsibility.
- 3.4 **Community safety** is complex and tackled at many levels. The county-wide Safer Somerset Partnership is at the top with a strategic and a tactical group both with recently expanded memberships. This was to establish formal missing links with the Health and Wellbeing Board, Safeguarding Board, Adult and Children's Services and Registered Housing Providers.
- 3.5 Local Authorities Community Safety leads sit on the Tactical Group and often support Executive Members on the Strategic Group alongside other partners. The top tier authority Somerset County Council (SCC) leads on Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHR) under the chairmanship of the Strategic Group.
- 3.6 Safer Somerset Partnership outcomes are to identify and prevent vulnerability in our communities and reduce the demand through preventative activity. Much has been put in place to start to achieve this through the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) with services being reconfigured or recommissioned. Suffice to say there is greater emphasis on reducing reoffending, rehabilitation and victim support.
- 3.7 Avon and Somerset Police Constabulary (ASPC) are pioneers with their Impact programme for offender management in Bristol and the PCC has recently set up integrated victim support (Lighthouse). Demands on the Police Force are changing though with increasing concerns around child sexual exploitation and cyber crime with traditional crime reducing.
- 3.8 **Community safety** at district level is mostly concerned with frontline delivery. We support this through our CCTV coverage, an excellent working relationship with our local Police Force (ASPC) at several levels, the related local forums (domestic abuse and anti-social behaviour are two good examples), support for the South West Businesses Against Crime initiative and recently through our One Teams.

- 3.9 Successes include the One Team pilot in Halcon with £750,000 awarded from the Home Office Police Innovation Fund to establish two more and continue to innovate in Halcon; the prompt use of new legislation around anti-social behaviour which led to the second closure in the country of a shop selling so called legal highs; the Taunton Town Centre Wardens Pilot over the Christmas period last year; the second Public Spaces Protection Order in the country to be put in place (in Taunton and Wellington will hopefully follow); and mention by the Home Secretary of Taunton's part in her decision to ban so called legal highs (New Psychoactive Substances) following a visit with our (then prospective) Member of Parliament Rebecca Pow.
- 3.10 The county-wide **Health and Wellbeing** Board has officer and Member representation from each district as Public Health is now part of both Local Authorities responsibilities. There is a determination to enable a more preventative approach as well as improved support for those with long term health problems.
- 3.11 The Better Care Fund is a pooled budget that shifts resources into Social Care and Community Services to support transformation and integration of Health and Social Care services to ensure local people receive better care. These budgets sit within County Hall.
- 3.12 Taunton Deane responded to the wider County Health and Wellbeing Strategy with its own review of health and wellbeing to ensure it is threaded through whatever we tackle. We regularly attend the Taunton Deane GPs Health Forum and GP Federation events. The Assistant Director of Housing and Communities now sits on the county Safeguarding Board. Our successful Troubled Families model (which now sits with County) has resulted in our Strategies and Partnership Lead Mark Leeman being invited to sit on their Commissioning Board.
- 3.13 The **Voluntary and Community Sector** are supported by our representation on many of them (Outside Bodies), in Partnerships, through Service Level Agreements and from the various small grants pots across several Portfolios within the Council.
- 3.14 Grants help grow both small and larger businesses; help establish and equip local sports clubs and leisure activities; improve village halls and local play areas; support the Quantock Hills and Blackdown Hills advisory services; part fund community centres and the activities they run; group projects including **youth diversion**; support community safety through our CCTV cameras and recent town wardens pilot; fund equipment, projects and youth activities in the Unparished Area; and the same to benefit our tenants.
- 3.15 **Equalities and diversity** are implicit in all we do and this is reflected in our Equalities and Diversity Strategy which may be referred to in the Members Room or found our website. The lead officer for these is Mark Leeman.
- 3.16 Similarly a **Safeguarding Strategy** has been produced primarily for staff. The lead officer in the Council responsible for safeguarding is Simon Lewis (Assistant Director for Housing and Communities) who also sits on the Safeguarding Board.
- 3.17 In my view the greatest impact of partnership working for our communities is being felt through the work of the One Teams with individuals and families whose chaotic lives are beginning to improve, as one by one their problems start to be solved. Our

frontline Housing Officers (Estate, ASB, Supported, Temporary and Welfare Reform) are key one team members. Taunton Deane and ASP together lead on the One Teams.

- 3.18 This work is being independently evaluated and benchmarked by Bath Spa University from August with the final report expected near the end of next year, paid for by the Police Innovation Fund.
- 3.19 Before then we hope to persuade Social Care, Education and Health to fully engage in the process and get a proper grip of early intervention, plan long term future provision to sustain improvements and foster independence, to reduce overall costs to the public sector which should then become manageable.

Councillor Jane Warmington