

Council Meeting – 12 December 2017

Report of Councillor John Williams – Leader of the Council

1. John Collins VC DCM Honoured

- 1.1 On 29 October 2017 a special commemorative stone in honour of a local war hero, awarded the Victoria Cross during the First World War, was unveiled at West Hatch Community Hall following a service at the adjoining St Andrew's Church.
- 1.2 Bickenhall-born John Collins was awarded the highest military decoration in recognition of his bravery in the face of the enemy on 31 October 1917. Collins was an Acting Corporal in the 25th Battalion, The Royal Welsh Fusiliers, British Army during the First World War. On 31 October 1917, at Wadi Saba, Beersheba, Palestine, the battalion came under heavy fire suffering many casualties. Collins worked continuously for nine hours under intense fire to bring the wounded back to safety, saving many lives. As well as being awarded the Victoria Cross, Corporal Collins was promoted to the rank of Sergeant.
- 1.3 The commemorative Victoria Cross stone was unveiled exactly 100 years on from this heroic act. West Hatch Village Hall was chosen as the most appropriate place as it is close to the Parish of Bickenhall and, more appropriately, the building was originally used as the local school which was attended by Sergeant John Collins during his early years. The stone is embedded in the exterior wall.
- 1.4 John Collins died on 3 September 1951, aged 73. He is buried at Pant Cemetery, Merthyr Tydfil.
- 1.5 The commemorative event was hosted by The Mayor of Taunton Deane, Councillor Hazel Prior-Sankey. She was joined by representatives from the Armed Forces, civic invitees and members of the Collins family. Descendants travelled from South Wales and further afield to be present and the community turned out in force to honour Sergeant Collins at the ceremony. Wreaths were laid by the family and representatives from the armed forces. I was very honoured to present the citation and brief history that will be hung in the Village Hall so that future generations can learn of John Collins' bravery.
- 1.6 This commemoration is part of a nationwide campaign to honour First World War Victoria Cross recipients. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) is providing 469 commemorative paving stones to local authorities, 145 to the National Arboretum and 35 to the Republic of Ireland to mark the bravery of the people awarded the Victoria Cross during the First World War. Each stone will be available to view on the 100th anniversary of the heroic action that each soldier was recognised for.

2. Taunton Garden Town

- 2.1 Taunton is being awarded more Government funding to help achieve its Garden Town ambitions, sharing a £2,500,000 pot with other designated communities. The local award - £375,000 – is funding designed to help the Council make progress with vital planning work to deliver Garden Town principles. The money is the second award to be made as the Council was awarded £350,000 when Taunton was officially announced as the South West's only Garden Town in the New Year.
- 2.2 Announcing the award, Communities Secretary Sajid Javid said that locally-led garden towns have enormous potential to deliver the homes that communities need. This new funding will help support the construction of more than 155,000 homes in nine places across the country. New communities not only deliver homes, but also bring new jobs and facilities and a big boost to local economies.
- 2.3 In Taunton Deane, work that needs to be completed includes:-
- Drawing up planning blueprints for key sites under the Garden Town Plan;
 - Moving ahead with infrastructure planning – such as roads – and developing a plan to deliver the infrastructure; and
 - Progressing infrastructure projects to help deliver the new garden communities and Taunton Town Centre regeneration sites.
- 2.4 The Council is already using the funding to invest significant staff resources across the Authority to deliver the Garden Town programme, with priority areas including town centre regeneration schemes, new garden communities, the new strategic employment site, flood alleviation and strategy development. This new award will allow us to continue the good work already being done.
- 2.5 Taunton Deane recognises the importance of planning and delivering supporting infrastructure alongside growth and was one of the first authorities to implement the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Future CIL and New Homes Bonus (NHB) funding will help to make sure the necessary infrastructure is delivered and provide match funding for key projects.
- 2.6 We are investing £16,600,000 of NHB funding to ensure strategic projects happen. We are aware of existing community concerns about transport links, facilities like schools and health centres and our commitment is very much in line with the Government's preference that NHB funding is used to ensure local communities benefit from growth-related income.
- 2.7 This allocation of a six-figure sum to improve our capacity to deliver our Garden Town ambition is a real vote of confidence in Taunton as a strategic centre in the South West and a credit to our team that put our bid together.
- 2.8 On the 31 October 2017 Somerset Wildlife Trust, in partnership with the Taunton Deane Borough Council, held a successful Garden Towns Seminar. The event was attended by approximately 80 stakeholders representing many of the important partners who will be essential to delivering our vision for the Garden Town.

2.9 Several keynote speakers presented at the event including the broadcaster Chris Baines, the Wildlife Trust, Julia Thrift – Projects and Operations Director, Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) and Taunton Deane Borough Council's Director of Growth and Development, Brendan Cleere. Feedback from the event will help shape the work of the Planning Policy Team overseeing the production of the Garden Town Plan.

3. Nexus 25

3.1 Plans to create a high quality employment site on the outskirts of Taunton with the potential to create thousands of jobs are moving forward. Taunton Deane Borough Council is working with public and private sector partners to deliver the strategic employment site, Nexus 25, at Junction 25 of the M5 Motorway.

3.2 The development is being created as a 'green campus.' Space for a variety of uses such as research and development and high quality offices, alongside light industrial units and warehouses will provide a range of flexible premises suitable for many types of business. More than 3,000 jobs could be created at the site, boosting Taunton's role as a major growth centre in the South West.

3.3 Walkways, cycle ways and landscaping, including tree planting, will create an environment in line with Taunton's new Garden Town status. Taunton Deane is using a Government planning mechanism to fast-track the process – a Local Development Order (LDO).

3.4 LDOs were introduced by the Government to enable local authorities to speed up the planning process, while ensuring that the usual environmental safeguards are properly applied. It also allows the Council to have greater control and give greater guidance on what is being sought from a development rather than just waiting for what *might* be submitted to the Council as a planning application. Ultimately, it will help increase the likelihood of development being achieved; it could make it happen more quickly and will allow the Council to give better guidance on the types of development that would be acceptable.

3.5 Taunton Deane Borough Council held two consultations on the LDO: informally in March 2017 when the nature of the proposals were set out and representations invited on a number of questions about the proposals. The second, statutory consultation took place over six weeks, rather than the prescribed four, ending on 31 August 2017.

3.6 All responses to the consultation were considered by the Council's Community Scrutiny Committee on 14 November 2017. The Committee confirmed it should be considered by Full Council in December when Members will decide whether to adopt the LDO and agree to officers' recommendations of approval.

3.7 If adopted, it is recommended that the LDO should not be implemented until improvements at Junction 25 are confirmed. Funding has been allocated, £18,000,000 in total, of which £1,500,000 is from Taunton Deane for work to

Junction 25 and the scheme is currently awaiting planning approval from Somerset County Council.

- 3.8 We are committed to providing the high quality, long-term jobs that our economy needs. Taunton is growing and it is essential that we deliver a balanced economy of housing, jobs and leisure together with improved infrastructure to match.
- 3.9 There has been extensive preparatory work on flood plain modelling work, transport issues and a full environmental statement. The effect of carrying out this work is to take control of the process, enhancing the attractiveness of the development to those looking to develop new employment sites in a competitive market. Also to shorten the likely timescale before new jobs come to fruition.

4. A358

- 4.1 Earlier this year Highways England held a non-statutory public consultation to gather views on its proposals for the A358. The response received to this consultation resulted in Highways England (HE) taking the decision to plan a supplementary consultation, focusing on options for improving the road between the M5 Motorway and Lower West Hatch.
- 4.2 Following further review, HE are now taking the decision to consult again on the whole route from early 2018. They have decided to widen the scope to provide the public and stakeholders with the opportunity to have a fuller say and will be presenting a number of options for consideration. Further detail regarding scheme options will be presented when the consultation is launched.
- 4.3 The decision to widen the scope of the consultation to the whole route means that HE need more time to work on the consultation and finalise the necessary materials to support the process. HE also want to avoid consulting during December and over the Christmas/New Year period. The consultation dates and details are currently being finalised and will be announced by HE in due course.

5. Joint Committee for the Heart of the South West

- 5.1 I am delighted to see the proposal for the creation of a Joint Committee for the Heart of the South West area coming to Full Council this evening.
- 5.2 The Committee will comprise all principal local authorities in Devon and Somerset, including Torbay and Plymouth Unitary Authorities, as well as Exmoor and Dartmoor National Parks and three Clinical Commissioning Groups. The Joint Committee is the result of strong co-operation and partnership over the past two years. Whilst recognising that we must all play to our individual strengths across a diverse area, the driving principle is that we can achieve even more by working together, collectively pushing for the investment and support we need to create a more resilient and productive economy.

- 5.3 The main focus of the Joint Committee will be to drive delivery of the Productivity Strategy for the Heart of the South West, which is now nearing completion after extensive engagement and consultation with partner authorities and businesses across Devon and Somerset.
- 5.4 The work of the Joint Committee will be reported publicly and fed back through all partners involved.

6. Plaque unveiled to commemorate the Monmouth Rebellion

- 6.1 A new plaque commemorating Taunton's place at the heart of an infamous chapter in history has been unveiled. The plaque, on the wall of the Market House, now home to Taunton Visitor Centre, marks the Monmouth Rebellion in 1685. The rebellion saw the last major pitched battle fought on English soil – the Battle of Sedgemoor and the defeated rebels were brought to trial in front of the notorious “hanging” Judge Jeffreys in the Bloody Assizes.
- 6.2 Taunton played a significant role in the 17th Century when the country was torn apart by civil war and, later, the Monmouth Rebellion. The town was laid siege three times between 1644 and 1645 due to its strategic position between Bristol and Devon and Cornwall. It eventually fell to the Parliamentary forces.

7. Wellington Heritage at Risk Manager

- 7.1 I am very pleased to welcome the appointment of Dr Joanne O'Hara, Wellington Heritage at Risk Manager, who will lead the conservation management programme of a number of high profile regeneration projects.
- 7.2 Work will be targeted at the historic former mill buildings – Tonedale and Toneworks – as well as Cornhill in the centre of Wellington and Wellington Monument. Historic England is funding most of the cost of the post with the balance met by Taunton Deane Borough Council.
- 7.3 The Council, in partnership with Historic England, has also commissioned consultants Ingham Pinnock Associates, who specialise in working with historic market towns, heritage buildings and local government, to prepare a Regeneration Strategy for Tonedale.
- 7.4 I am delighted with these significant steps forward in the extremely important task of protecting Wellington's heritage. Dr O'Hara's expertise, together with the Regeneration Strategy means that real progress can be made in preserving Wellington's heritage, including the nationally important Fox's Mill complex. Tonedale and Toneworks are among the best preserved examples of historic textile manufacture in the South West of England.
- 7.5 Tonedale Mill was built in the late 18th Century for Fox Brothers and was used for wool preparation and yarn spinning. The Toneworks buildings, built in the 1830s by Fox Brothers, were used for finishing cloth produced at the mill. It is considered a rare example of a 19th Century cloth dyeing and finishing works and still contains the remnants of historic machinery which need protecting and preserving for future generations. Tonedale Mill has planning permission

for conversion of the buildings to apartments. However, the Council is currently addressing unauthorised work carried out at Grade II listed Tonedale House and Grade II* listed Tonedale Mill earlier this year to try and ensure preservation of the historic structure.

8. The Deane House

8.1 The modernisation of The Deane House is well under way. The project will provide accommodation for the Council and for Avon and Somerset Police following their move from the existing Police Station in Shuttern, Taunton. The upgraded building will also have the potential to accommodate other partners in the public or private sector in future.

8.2 The work entails:-

- Some external work - replacing windows and erecting scaffolding;
- Building contractor Midas Construction, part of the Midas Group, setting up a compound at The Deane House site for essential equipment;
- Parking in the circle area at the front of the building will no longer be available;
- Reduced customer parking will be available during the works;
- The Main Reception will stay where it is, accessed by a different entrance door until summer 2018 when the new refurbished Reception will open for business. Details and changes will be publicised in advance;
- Work will be phased with the aim of the Police moving in during the Autumn of 2018;
- No trees will be cut down during the work, lighting will be improved and CCTV will be in operation.

8.3 In the spring the Council will also be decommissioning the old, out of date cash machines that are located in both The Deane House and the Wellington Community Office. These machines will not be replaced but the Council will be offering customers new facilities that will enable them to pay rent, Council Tax and other bills at a variety of more convenient locations, including Post Offices.

8.4 As Members will know, Committee and Full Council meetings are being held in alternative premises during the construction work:-

- The Brittons Ash Community Centre, Bridgwater Road (A38), Taunton is being used for most Committee meetings;
- Planning Committee meetings are held in the Main Hall of the new West Monkton Primary School (alongside The Britons Ash Community Centre), with meetings starting at 6.15 pm and not 5.00 pm; and
- Full Council meetings are held at Shire Hall, Upper High Street, Taunton.

Councillor John Williams

Council Meeting – 12 December 2017

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

I want to take this opportunity to thank David Evans who left the Council in early October 2017. David had worked with me for a number of years in my capacity as Executive Councillor but also before that as the Lead Officer in the 2012 Olympic Torch Relay. He will be missed but I wish him well for the future in his new role in Gloucester.

Section 1 : Communications

- 1.1 The Council fully supported the Local Government Authority's tweetathon #OurDay on 21 November 2017, with communications, the Taunton Visitor Centre team and the Mayor's office actively tweeting throughout the day.
- 1.2 We achieved the largest number of tweets over the day that we have generated to date and attracted a number of new followers – increasing numbers by around 5%.
- 1.3 Other Somerset Councils taking part on the day were Somerset County Council and West Somerset Council.
- 1.4 #OurDay formed part of our campaign to improve our social media presence and provided some valuable lessons on how we can improve content and reach. Our Facebook account is also doing well, with the number of "likes" now reaching more than 500. One post promoting the Vivary Park Carol Concert reached more than 7,000 people. Again, this was part of the wider Christmas campaign that is harnessing social media to a greater extent than in previous years.
- 1.5 The Communications Team continues to promote Council initiatives – the appointment of the Wellington Heritage at Risk Manager was picked up by BBC Points West, for example. Considerable time is also spent on managing reactive communications, providing background information to the media and working with colleagues across the Council to spot both opportunities and risks.

Section 2 : Business Development

Productivity Strategy

- 2.1 The Heart of the South West (HotSW) area is producing a Productivity Strategy which aims to address the productivity gaps in our area. This is a

response to the Government's Industrial Strategy and lays out how at a strategic level what we intend to target. As a reminder, the strategy is a collaboration between all local authorities across Devon and Somerset in conjunction with the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), Dartmoor and Exmoor National Parks and the Clinical Commissioning Groups.

- 2.2 Consultation Events were held for businesses across the patch with events also being held in the East and West of Somerset in November to capture feedback. As Members will be aware I have also produced a response on behalf of Taunton Deane following discussion with the Growth Steering Group. The initial feedback deadline was the 30 November but this was extended to 14 December 2017 to enable all the responses to be captured to inform the final strategy.
- 2.3 The intention is that this strategy will be adopted by the Joint Committee which is being discussed at this Council meeting.

Rural Productivity Commission

- 2.4 Four South West LEPs: Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, Dorset, Heart of the South West and Swindon and Wiltshire, have commissioned an independent Inquiry to identify opportunities to stimulate rural productivity and growth.
- 2.5 The commission was set up to hear and review evidence from a range of sources and stakeholders to frame the South West response to the Industrial Strategy and the forthcoming Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs 25 year plans for 'food, farming and fisheries' and 'environment'; Draw out opportunities to drive rural productivity improvements; Understand functioning between rural and urban distinctions; Secure Government support for specific initiatives in the Autumn Statement; and Influence national and local policies where appropriate to improve rural productivity.
- 2.6 The commission collected evidence through an open call for written evidence from April to June, followed by five formal evidence hearings across the area.
- 2.7 The most important themes that emerged from the work are:-
 - Digital connectivity presents a game changing opportunity but without further urgent action businesses and communities will become left behind;
 - Smart technologies have the potential to create solutions to many of the challenges faced by rural areas and the development of an innovation platform on a regional scale has the ability to create higher value jobs;
 - The rural South West hardworking and entrepreneurial culture, coupled with its stunning natural environment, with the right support, can become a hothouse of enterprise;
 - Our agri-food-tourism economy is a strength upon which we can build globally recognised propositions as THE place to start and build and grow a food business;
 - There are genuine concerns that our rural communities are spiralling downwards towards 'fossilised retirement villages' unless the Government

and local leaders take prompt action. Local and national policy must move away from the 'one size fits all' approach that fail to recognise that rural areas are different; and

- Brexit has the potential to shake the foundations of our rural economy – providing either a much needed boost or sudden economic shock. Now is the time for action if we are to reap the benefits in line with the commission's recommendations.

2.8 The full report is available on the website <http://heartofswlep.co.uk/south-west-rural-commission-report>.

2.9 Our officers gave evidence to the commission on behalf of Somerset which contributed to the report findings. As our area is largely rural this report is important and will be used as a tool for the Government.

South West Growth Summit

2.10 This was held on 20 October 2017 and attended by around 350 businesses, Council's and a whole range of stakeholders. The summit heard from a range of speaker's about the challenges and opportunities in our area. The summit saw the launch of the GREAT South West brand which is intended to help us in negotiations with Government in future years. The concept is a work in progress but is intended to help give a wider view of the area in competition with brands like the Midland Engine and the Northern Powerhouse.

Events to support small businesses

2.11 The small business 'Business Bus' visited the High Street in Taunton which was a really successful way to engage with businesses. This was supported by the Taunton Chamber of Commerce.

2.12 Small businesses were able to visit the bus and seek advice from advisors on setting up businesses. I understand that this was a very busy session with many positive business plans being shared with the advisors.

Section 3 : Events, Place, Retail Marketing and Visitor Centre

3.1 The Marketing and Visitor Centre Team have been working hard in recent months to pull together Christmas in Taunton. Our package of activities have been constructed working in partnership with business and retailers.

3.2 The theme we have adopted this year is one of a Traditional Christmas. Lights have been provided in East Street, High Street and North Street, with the return of the projector in Fore Street. The Christmas tree (outside of the Market House) has again kindly been sponsored by Langford Lakes and Taunton Farmers Market, with decorations provided by Go Create and Stand against Violence and the addition this year of picket fencing around the tree donated by Westwood Fencing.

- 3.3 The Christmas tree lights and projector were organised to be switched-on to support the Orchard Shopping Centre switch-on event which took place on Thursday, 30 November 2017.
- 3.4 Using our new Street Trading Consent for the town centre, we have enabled the Christmas Chalet Market in the High Street and Christmas Craft Market in Fore Street to take place.
- 3.5 Regular e-newsletters, media releases and social media content to promote events taking place, retail promotions and special offers have been prepared and will continue to be scheduled in the run up to the big day. Separate e-newsletters have been prepared for both Taunton and Wellington Town Centres.
- 3.7 Marketing support has been provided for the return of the Christmas Carols around the bandstand in Vivary Park event on the 18 December 2017 and the Christmas Car Park offer.
- 3.8 The new online events portal (<http://eventspaces.tauntondeane.gov.uk>) continues to bed in. As hoped this is encouraging earlier booking of events and it is encouraging to see a number of new events already booked in for 2018, in addition to old favourites. The team continue to promote and encourage events to take place in our parks and open spaces.

Place and Retail Marketing

- 3.9 Taunton Town Centre continues to show encouraging signs of growth with footfall data from our monitors suggesting in the three months from August to the end of October, an average of 0.99% growth in footfall. Vacancy rates in the primary shopping part of the town are currently 3% compared to a national rate of 9.3%.
- 3.10 The number of independent units within the town centre is well over the national average and to celebrate this sector, the Marketing and Visitor Centre Team organised a best 'Christmas Shop Window' competition for independent retailers with a poll on our Facebook channels to coincide with Small Business Saturday. The winner was presented with a certificate by the Mayor of Taunton Deane.
- 3.11 Regular liaison continues to take place with retailers in Taunton and Wellington Town Centre's, business groups and the Chamber of Commerce. This includes individual account management.
- 3.12 Taunton, Wellington and Wiveliscombe continue to be promoted through open wi-fi, the destination website and social media platforms.
- 3.13 Visit Taunton has – Facebook: 8,600 likes
Instagram: 1,400 followers
Twitter: 6,600 followers
Visit Welly has – Facebook: 830 likes

Visit Wivey has – Facebook: 650 likes

3.14 New literature produced:-

- The Deano (providing ideas for the School holidays this Christmas); and
- A new Taunton Visitors Guide for 2018 is currently being prepared.

Visitor Centre

3.15 The Visitor Centre Team continue to actively support all Marketing activities providing content for all platforms, in addition to welcoming many visitors to the office.

3.16 At the recent Somerset, Bristol and Bath Tourism Awards held at the Somerset County Cricket Ground the team secured a silver award in the Visitor Information Provider of the Year category, which I would like to congratulate them for.

3.17 Advertising consent has recently been secured for 36 pennant posts around the town centre and a banner site at the bottom of the High Street. These additional services accompany the existing banner site in Castle Bow and the six rotunda poster units and are used to promote events and businesses.

3.18 Promotional space bookings continue to grow with a good mixture of charity, local and national businesses using the spaces available in Fore Street and High Street.

3.19 The Cards for Good Causes Charity Christmas Card Shop remains open until the 23 December 2017.

3.20 Throughput into the Market House office continue to remain healthy with an increasing number of overseas visitors using our services.

Section 4 : Growth Strategy and Specific Projects

Growth Strategy

4.1 The draft 'Growing our Garden Town' document for Taunton has emerged following a review and refresh of the current 'Growth Prospectus for Taunton', and was shared with the Community Scrutiny Committee on 17 October 2017.

4.2 Following some more work to finalise the 'polished' public version, it is intended that the final document will be published early in the New Year. It is acknowledged in this document that we are at the beginning of our Garden Town 'journey' and that additional thought and text is required in a number of areas, including the production of a 'Garden Town Plan' for Taunton.

Growth communications, marketing and promotion

- 4.3 A new Business Investment website has now been launched – www.InvestTaunton.co.uk which has a fresh and clean new look that celebrates Taunton's status as the South West's first Garden Town. The website aims to:-
- Stimulate interest in and ultimately investment into Taunton;
 - Provide relevant/engaging information to external business audiences who may consider moving to Taunton:
 - Provide key high-level information on the Taunton Garden Town Programme – i.e. the Vision, key developments and key good news / achievements; and
 - Provide strong links and signposting to appropriate and complementary partner websites.
- 4.4 We have already received feedback which will enable us to continue to evolve the site and ensure it meets the needs of investors.
- 4.5 The Growth Programme is attached as an appendix to this report.

Coal Orchard Redevelopment

- 4.6 We have contracted the professional services team necessary to deliver the Council's chosen development option. This was a very competitive process delivered through a full procurement exercise utilising the Crown Commercial Services (CCS) framework.
- 4.7 I expect us now to move at a good pace through the RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) Stages 2 and 3 which will bring us to a final design and lead to the submission of the reserved matters planning application. In order to support the application further, invasive survey work will be carried out in January on the Coal Orchard Car Park which will mean it will be closed for a few days.
- 4.8 This includes archaeological investigations and ground surveys. We will be advising local businesses and stakeholders of the dates shortly. In tandem with this work our marketing contractors are developing the approach to the site. We will also begin the process of contracting with a builder in the first few months of 2018.
- 4.9 We are progressing The Brewhouse element of this redevelopment scoping out further detail on timescales and the funding approach. I would expect to share details of timescales and budgets with Members in late spring of 2018.
- 4.10 As previously mentioned, in recognition of the positive nature of this project Vanessa LeFrancois, Ian Timms and Tim Foster (architect) spoke at the Theatres Trust annual conference on 17 October 2017 about the place

making nature of the project. This led to useful contacts being made and positive feedback about the nature of the project.

Lisieux Way Site

- 4.11 As Members will be aware, at the last Full Council we agreed the purchase of this site to consolidate ownerships of the land at Lisieux Way Business Park in Taunton. We are now working on the exchange of contracts with Thales which as previously reported, will support economic growth by retaining local jobs, securing new employment opportunities and attracting new businesses to this strategic employment site.

Section 5 : Asset Management Update

Asset Strategy

- 5.1 The work undertaken by Savills property consultants over the past 12 months to consider investment requirements along with financial and non-financial performance of the General Fund portfolio has now been concluded.
- 5.2 A new and ambitious Asset Strategy for the term 2018-2020 is anticipated to be adopted by Full Council on 12 December 2017 along with a new decision making framework. This strategy and the protocols coming out of this along with the resulting property specific actions will be based on actual performance data which will aid future decision making.
- 5.3 The Asset Strategy has concluded that relatively few of the Council's General Fund assets are cash positive and whilst many assets do benefit the local community that benefit can, in most instances, be maintained irrespective of ownership. There is a significant financial burden on the General Fund unless the asset base is managed differently and in accordance with the proposed new Asset Strategy to ensure those poorly performing assets are disposed of, and done so at the correct time.
- 5.4 The proposed strategy will be delivered through:-
- An investment / capital programme protocol ensuring more informed decision making on investment decisions and better forward planning;
 - A disposal and acquisition protocol ensuring disposal of poorly performing assets and acquisition of new assets where supported by a strong business case; and
 - A commercialism 'let property' protocol ensuring a better financial return on the let portfolio.
- 5.5 Officers will be more empowered to deliver the strategy and decision making will become more agile and proportionate but based on solid data and presented in a standardised format following consultation with Ward

Councillors and other key executive Councillors. Options appraisals will be triggered by performance data, planned lease events, investment requirements, energy performance and development opportunities. Whilst the new strategy is ambitious and does rely on adequate resourcing it also empowers officers to much better prioritise works and work to much clearer objectives therefore ensuring a better overall use of resources.

Transactions

- 5.6 Disposal of land at Frobisher Way, Taunton – Heads of Terms now agreed and completion anticipated and being pushed for by Christmas.
- 5.7 Blackdown Business Park, Wellington – After a few years of poor occupancy levels now all but one unit has been let or heads of terms agreed for letting.
- 5.8 Lease Events generally – Lambert Smith Hampton have progressed a number of lease events (lease renewals and rent reviews) on behalf of the Council and achieved significant uplifts in rent typically ranging from 50% to 75% increases. Over the course of the next 12 months this will make a significant improvement in rental income.

Councillor Mark Edwards

| Tranche | Project | Delivery Status | | Funding Status | | Key Progress | Key activities next period (what & when) |
|----------------------------------|---|-----------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|--|---|
| | | Last period | This period | Last period | This period | | |
| Taunton Town Centre Regeneration | Firepool | A | A | A | A | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive progress on majority of identified planning issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning determination (early 2018) Continue review/refresh of Development Appraisal and phasing plan HCA Funding Agreement reviewed & simplified Continue remaining land assembly negotiations Review / agree approach & delivery programme to NIDR junction to Firepool & Station Highways / Bus Rapid Transit issue prior to Planning Committee |
| | Coal Orchard | G | G | A | G | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procured Professional team to deliver two stage approach for phase 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instigate planning application for demolition of pool and reserved matters application for whole site Commence phase 3 build phase for Local authority Directed build |
| | Taunton Railway Station Improvements (South side) | A | A | R | R | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investment proposition surrounding car park is being assessed amongst partners | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalise revised programme phasing and timing – currently anticipated that development will take place between early 2018 and late 2018 Funding packages and programme for later stages of project to be confirmed Communications plan for works during 17/18/19 to be developed and delivered Temporary car parking arrangements whilst work is to be carried out on MSCP to be developed |
| | Taunton Access, Parking & Signage strategy | G | G | G | G | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brown signs installed awaiting final installation to sign off. (5th November) PGS contract signed. Pay on Foot (POF) moderation completed and offer made Car Parking & access strategy draft strategy reviewed and finalised | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete Procurement process for POF work. Commence physical delivery of project PGS and POF Review static sign package aligned to car parks to complete project package Parking Strategy approval |
| | Taunton Town Centre Public Space Improvements | G | G | A | A | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decided to delay trial on the back of feedback from businesses and retailers until post-Christmas Proposal for stages 4, 5 and 6 of 8 stage project received and being considered by SCC and TDBC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commencement of stages 4, 5 and 6 of project aiming at Q1 2018 implementation of trial project (stage 7) Funding approval for implementation of trail to be sought (potentially next quarter depending on progress) |
| | Rail Station Regeneration Quarter | A | A | A | A | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HCA and Network Rail in discussions to resolve how the masterplan / viability work is to be brought forward | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding to be obtained for commission Appointment of consultants to undertake masterplan, viability and deliverability work |
| New Garden Communities | Monkton Heathfield | A | A | A | A | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Option agreements for WRR land signed Master planning work has now started – initial options identified. Initial informal consultation with Parish Councils Members briefing held All of the 5 parties have now signed MoU for WRR delivery WRR detailed design work nearing completion New Primary School and Community Hall has opened | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree viability position to release funds to bridge cost gap Progress master planning (for consultation early 2018) WRR construction to start Winter 17/18 |
| | Comeytrove / Trull | G | G | A | A | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three Dragons currently liaising with Consortium's costs consultants on viability issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Viability issues to be resolved and permission to be issued |
| | Staplegrove | A | A | A | A | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outline Planning resolution to grant planning permission 24th October 2017 Staplegrove viability case assessed. HIF Marginal Viability bid for spine road submitted | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Govt decision on HIF Marginal Viability bid (Spine Road) S106 issues to be concluded & Planning permission to be issued |

| Tranche | Project | Delivery Status | | Funding Status | | Key Progress | Key activities next period (what & when) |
|--|---|-----------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|--|---|
| | | Last period | This period | Last period | This period | | |
| Unlocking Employment Land | Nexus 25 Strategic Employment Site | G | G | A | A | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft LDO (& Design Guide) consulted upon LDO presented to TDBC Community Scrutiny (14th November) J25 junction improvements Planning application submitted by SCC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final EA and SCC responses LDO approval at Full Council (12th December) |
| | Lisieux Way Business Park | G | G | A | A | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thales recently offered their interests in Lisieux Way business park to the Council, as a special purchaser, surplus to their operational requirements Report to TDBC Full Council - 3 Oct 2017 - Marriage valuation indicates best value subject to robust business case to support acquisition Council to exchange income from freehold ground rent of land for leasehold income from assets: existing and refurbished premises Proposal received from Thales – awaiting draft contract | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Late 2017 – early 2018 – exchange of contracts planned with Thales (with target completion later in 2018) Proposed future master-planning exercise to review regeneration options for site and area |
| Major Transport Infrastructure Schemes | J25 capacity improvements | G | G | G | G | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HE on Growth and Housing Fund contribution confirmed; scheme is now fully funded. Planning application submitted. Land acquisition process nearing completion. Discussions taking place with HE regarding M5 structures and post-deliver responsibilities. Quantified risk assessment carried out. Cost estimate being updated. Revised procurement strategy Programme for detailed design developed. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning application outcome (early 2018) Further work to refine costs – will take place through detailed design period. Detailed design to commence Agreements on re land acquisition completed Commence discussions on agreements re local funding contributions. Development of tender documentation. |
| | A358 improvements | G | G | A | A | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New scheme consultation announced – no dates yet given. Ongoing discussions regarding modelling. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to work with HE to develop the scheme. Preferred route to be announced Summer 2018 within statutory consultation prior to submission of a Development Consent Order |
| | Toneway corridor | G | A | R | R | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised design finalised – workshops with Taunton Area Cycling Campaign. Economic / environmental appraisal work continuing. Agreement in principal from LEP technical advisor to business case approach received. Cost estimate being prepared. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop outline Business Case to secure programme entry status from LEP/LTB (Likely to be spring 2018) |
| Strategic Flood solution | Taunton Strategic Flood Alleviation Improvements Scheme i) Phase 2: Detailed Options Appraisal & Planning | G | G | G | G | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EA issued Single option briefing note and presentations to TDBC Ground Investigation largely complete in Taunton Town Centre | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalise the Single Option report to its “Final” status Plan and commence the Combined Option analysis with an updated project programme Review approach for stakeholder engagement |

Council Meeting – 12 December 2017

Report of Councillor Roger Habgood – Planning Policy and Transportation

1. Planning Policy Development

- 1.1 The work in gathering the evidence base that informs the Taunton Garden Town Plan and the review of the Core Strategy and Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan continues to progress.
- 1.2 Updates to the Retail Leisure and Employment Studies are being made and will be completed shortly.
- 1.3 The Green Infrastructure Strategy has been shared with Members in its draft form and is due to be published before the end of the festive season.
- 1.4 A brief for consultants regarding the River Tone will be put out to market in the New Year.
- 1.5 As the Leader has already mentioned our Garden Town strategies and associated plans continue to develop apace. A series of stakeholder workshops are being held that are further informing our plans. A wider stakeholder group event is being organised for Spring 2018 in order to refine the strategies and plans before public consultation.
- 1.6 The strategy will help to identify future projects key to realising the aims of our new Garden Town. Our status as a Garden Town continues to attract attention. The vast majority of this attention is affirmative, constructive and encouraging promoting and holding our town in high regard.
- 1.7 The recent Garden Town seminar delivered through partnership was successful and added to the shaping of our programme of works. This Council's leadership in developing championing and delivering in this area continues to provide focus and impetus. Ambition and aspiration are being rewarded by recognition and funding.

2. Nexus 25 - Local Development Order (LDO)

- 2.1 As members will recall from previous Member Briefings, LDO's were enabled following enactment in Parliament in 2004. LDOs are used across the United Kingdom by Local Planning Authorities on a variety of sites to deliver a variety of schemes. This Council's long heralded ambition to create a high quality green campus is making steady

progress with our Nexus 25 LDO proposals. LDO's typically front load the planning process, reduce risk, increase certainty of delivery and provide better overall shaping of the development, thereby bringing better outcomes for the local economy when compared with a conventional planning mechanism.

- 2.2 Formal consultation on the LDO for the Strategic Employment site took place in July / August 2017.
- 2.3 A total of 43 responses were received together with comments from Somerset County Council (SCC), the Highways Agency (HA) and the Environment Agency (EA). The Community Scrutiny Committee reviewed the LDO in October and Members are in receipt of the report this evening seeking approval.
- 2.4 The final making of the LDO is dependent on planning permission for the M5 Junction 25 Improvement Scheme being in place.

3. Mid Devon and Sedgemoor Local Plans

- 3.1 Mid Devon District Council submitted its Local Plan Review 2013 - 2033 to The Planning Inspectorate on 31 March 2017, for examination into the legal compliance and soundness of the Plan.
- 3.2 Taunton Deane Borough Council responded earlier in the year to the proposals for a large allocation at Junction 27 anchored by 14,000 sqm of retail floorspace. Concerns were expressed about the compliance of such a proposal with National Planning Policy and its potential impact on Wellington and Taunton Town Centres.
- 3.3 The Secretary of State appointed Mr Paul Griffiths BSc (Hons) BArch IHBC to conduct the examination and to report to the Council in due course.
- 3.4 Following feedback from respondents Mid Devon District Council chose to review the sustainability impact of their plans and the hearings were postponed.
- 3.5 Taunton Deane's concerns remain. Our officers have reserved the right to comment on any new evidence and to present to any reconvened hearing.
- 3.6 The Council has also corresponded with Sedgemoor District Council outlining our position regarding, in particular, the proposed employment land provision within the Sedgemoor Local Plan.

4. Neighbourhood Plans

- 4.1 Ann Skippers Bsc MRTPI is currently examining the West Monkton and Cheddon Fitzpaine Neighbourhood Development Plan. I understand the examination is being undertaken by written representation. It is expected that the examination will be completed by the end of November 2017. Potentially therefore a referendum could be called in early 2018.
- 4.2 The Council continues to support the Creech St. Michael and Ruishton and Thornfalcon Neighbourhood Plans.
- 4.3 Oake Parish Councils application has been received and the designated area has been submitted and agreed.

5. Major Planning

Staplegrove Garden Communities

- 5.1 The Staplegrove applications were determined at a recent Planning Committee meeting. Officers are fully engaged with the respective developers in order to agree the Section 106 Agreements.

Comeytrove Trull Garden Community

- 5.2 As members are aware, a viability case has been submitted by developers.
- 5.3 Evidence substantiating the viability claim continues to be sought by our officers.

Firepool

- 5.4 The remaining outstanding issues that mainly centre on transport related matters are focused on enhancing the quality of this important development. Steady progress is being made.

Monkton Heathfield Garden Community

- 5.5 A planning application has been received regarding the Country Park. This is an important element of the overall plan for the community.

6. Planning Appeals

- 6.1 The Council continues to defend the respective appeals regarding Wellington and Wiveliscombe developments.
- 6.2 In essence the five year land supply is being challenged. This Councils position is, of course, robustly defended, our defence is hardy and strong, thanks principally to the suite of policies that are in place and

also thanks in part to our track record in planning decision-making that stays true to our policies.

7. Planning application performance

- 7.1 **Major applications** - Members may wish to note that the national target for major applications being determined is 60% within the agreed timescales. This Council's record over the last two-year period is 91.4%
- 7.2 **Minor Applications** - The corresponding national standard for minor applications is 70% being determined in the agreed timescale. Taunton Deane's performance over the last two years is 84.6%

8. Parking

Fees and Charges

- 8.1 Members will I am sure have noted that parking fees and charges have not been increased for a second consecutive year. The new 'Pay on Exit' system will require a review to ensure charging remains fit for purpose.
- 8.2 Christmas parking arrangements have been made for both Taunton and Wellington.

Performance against budget expectations

- 8.2 The budget Income expectation for Parking is £4,500,000.
- 8.3 The current prediction is for a 3% year end shortfall (£136,000). Utilisation rates are 2% higher than last year.
- 8.4 Members will be aware that the RAC Annual Car Park review has been published. A news release has been provided adding context to this report.

Firepool Parking (accessed by Canal Street)

- 8.5 This parking provision is now with Taunton Deane. The Customer concerns regarding potholes and customer service relating to the previous contractor have been addressed.

Parking Strategy

- 8.6 Members may wish to note that the Taunton Deane Parking Strategy has been drafted and will be considered by Scrutiny before adoption. This strategy has been developed with County Colleagues.

- 8.7 The Joint Strategy seeks to: Prioritise town centre spaces for short-stay shoppers and visitors; Provide for the needs of particular users - (e.g. disabled people, motorcyclists); Reduce the impact of congestion and pollution and enhance the town centre environment; Improve actual and perceived safety and security; and Enhance quality and customer experience.
- 8.8 I commend the draft strategy to you and look forward to the debate at Scrutiny.

Variable Message Signage and Pay on Exit parking

- 8.9 Members are already aware that the contract for the supply and installation of this signage has been let. The signs installation will take place over the winter period and will align with the 'Pay on Exit' car park improvements. The contract for pay on exit car parking has also been let.
- 8.10 This contract is currently in the cool off period. Once that period has been observed, the successful contractor can be announced. Members will remember that this element of the contract had to be re-let through the full OJEU tender process giving rise to the programme slippage. Whilst the slippage has been disappointing to all, officers, both County and Borough are encouraged by the outcome as the successful contractor meets both quality and cost considerations.

9. Connecting our Garden Town

- 9.1 Transport connectivity is a major consideration for the majority of Borough, District, Unitary and County Councils across the country. A forward-looking position paper has been developed jointly with County Colleagues (the Highways Authority) and the draft will shortly be presented to Members and will be scrutinised prior to adoption. Members are encouraged to read and respond to the document.

10. A358 Upgrade

- 10.1 The decision taken by Highways England (HE) to consult further with regard to the A358 proposals is welcomed. Further details of proposed routes and options are awaited.
- 10.2 Somerset County Council, as Highways Authority, our Parish Council colleagues and ourselves as an affected Borough eagerly await the consultation meeting dates.

Councillor Roger Habgood

Council Meeting – 12 December 2017

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

1. Parks and Open Spaces

- 1.1 As you know we achieved another Gold Award in Britain in Bloom. Bath Place was again acknowledged for their efforts via an “In Your Neighbourhood Award”.
- 1.2 I think that we have lived with beautiful parks and often fail to appreciate just how great they are. It is therefore lovely for all the people involved in helping to keep our spaces looking great to get the recognition and for the wider community to be reminded how lucky we are.
- 1.3 It was lovely also for the Mayor to have attended the Green Flag Raising Ceremonies recently.
- 1.4 In Vivary Park this autumn work has started on replacing the rose bed ropes. This has involved cutting hard back many of the climbing and rambling roses to release the old rope before the new one is installed. Although this does look harsh, be assured that roses are amazing and will throw up good vigorous growth in the Spring and we will soon have a wonderful display back again.
- 1.5 We will also be working with the Friends of the Park to replant the herbaceous bed that has been rested this year and to thin out the two other herbaceous beds.
- 1.6 In Wellington the new gardening team there is working to improve and thin out some of the beds that have become quite congested. Their efforts have been appreciated by Friends of Wellington Park whose Annual General Meeting I was happy to attend last week. This group really does so much to keep the park in Wellington buzzing with activity and entertainment for the local community and visitors.

2. Community Leisure

- 2.1 We updated Members at the briefing on 28 November 2017 about the procurement project and we will be coming back to you again in the New Year as this progresses.

3. GLL (Taunton Deane)

Whirlwinds Academy

- 3.1 On Sunday, 1 October 2017, Whirlwinds Academy organised a friendly trampoline competition to raise funds for a landing pit that the club needs to help with skill progression. The club now has two girls in the junior Great Britain squad, so this is vital for the club's continued progression within the sport. With over 200 entries across trampoline, double mini trampoline and synchro, the day was a great success.

Wellsprings Holiday Activity Programme Try Short Mat Bowls

- 3.2 Wellsprings Leisure Centre hosted their spooky Halloween activity programme in October. The staff provided a wide range of sporting activities for the children to learn new skills and enjoy being active. This included trampolining, gymnastics and racquet sports. They also received a visit from the Somerset Short Mat Bowls Development Officer, who spent the morning coaching the children. For many this was their first attempt at bowls and they were keen to make good use of the new equipment during the week. Along with lots of arts and crafts activities, the week finished with a party.

Vibe Youth Group

- 3.3 Vibe Youth Group, which meets at Wellsprings Leisure Centre, have linked with Fareshare and Tesco to provide free snacks for those young people that need it most. Staff at Wellsprings collect food each week from a local Tesco Express, which is then made available during the session. Having snacks available gives staff and coaches the opportunity to talk about healthy food choices with the young people.

Go Tri

- 3.4 Wellington Sports Centre held their first Go Tri in October. A total of 37 young people aged from 8-15 years competed in the event. There are plans to offer more of these events in the future.

Back to Cycle Course

- 3.5 Sustrans have completed their first adult back to cycle course for the customers at Blackbrook Leisure Centre and Spa. Some of the riders have been lacking in confidence and using the tennis courts has provided a safe environment where the riders have felt confident enough to push their personal boundaries. Some great feedback has been received from the riders and an improvement can already be seen in those who came to the sessions. More sessions are planned in the near future.

Walk Well in Taunton

- 3.6 The Walk Well programme in Taunton is continuing to flourish, with the very mild autumn weather and achieved over 500 participations in October. Two new walks have recently been introduced into the programme in the Staplegrove area and more are to follow during the winter.
- 3.7 In October over 70 people took part in one of the largest walks in Taunton - an amazing achievement for the dedicated volunteers.

3.8 GLL is currently working with local people from Kingston St. Mary to create a short walk programme in the village.

Best wishes to all for Christmas and the New Year.

Councillor Catherine Herbert

Council Meeting – 12 December 2017

Report of Councillor Richard Parrish – Corporate Resources

1. Electoral Services and Democratic Services

Electoral Services

- 1.1 Current activity is focussed on preparation work for the publication of the new Electoral Register on 1 December 2017. To date there has been a reasonable response rate across the Taunton Deane area of 82.25 % with the electorate having increased by nearly 4,000 since 1 December 2016.

Democratic Services

- 1.2 Since the last meeting, two major Mayoral events have taken place. The first was the unveiling of a stone plaque commemorating the centenary of the award of the Victoria Cross to Corporal John Collins of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers. Corporal Collins was born in Bickenhall and attended the school at nearby West Hatch – which is now the Village Hall – before his family moved to Merthyr Tydfil in South Wales. It was therefore appropriate for the plaque to be sited near his place of birth.
- 1.3 The ceremony which took place on the afternoon of Sunday, 29 October 2017 was well attended and publicised in the local media with over a dozen family descendants making the trip over from South Wales to honour the astonishing bravery of Corporal Collins.
- 1.4 The second was the annual Remembrance commemorations where the Mayor and her Consort attended the Dedication of the Fields of Remembrance in St Mary's Churchyard, Taunton on Thursday, 9 November 2017, the Two Minute Silence on Armistice Day, the Remembrance Sunday Service at St Mary's and the Wreath Laying at the War Memorial in Vivary Park, Taunton in the morning and at Wellington Park in the afternoon.
- 1.5 Democratic Services has moved from its traditional ground floor location to the first floor of The Deane House. This is part of the decant of staff prior to works beginning in earnest to refurbish the building.

2. Revenues and Benefits

- 2.1 At the end of October 2017 we had collected 71.63% of Council Tax due for 2016/2017 which was 0.16% above our target of 71.47%. Our Business Rates collection of 65.99% was slightly under target, although we remain confident this will improve to allow us to collect 98.5% by 31 March 2018.

- 2.2 Over the last seven months, 400 customers who would have received Housing Benefit, instead received support for their housing costs through Universal Credit. However, the overall caseload for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support (CTS) has reduced by just 50 claims.
- 2.3 The number of changes to Universal Credit for CTS recipients continues to rise with the Benefits Team now having to deal with nearly 2,000 notifications each month. This increase in workload is compromising the ability of the team to meet speed of processing targets.
- 2.4 If approved, the recommendation to change our CTS scheme for 2018/2019 to one based on bands of income, should ease the impact on CTS recipients of the frequent changes to their Council Tax liability through Universal Credit changes.
- 2.5 In January 2018, residents receiving a Single Person Discount will receive a letter asking them to explain their current circumstances. Not only will this be a way of keeping records up to date, it will also allow residents to tell the Council if there has been a change in their circumstances.
- 2.6 Working in partnership with Powys County Council and Datatank Limited, we will review details of credit applications and check information from other sources, to identify people who are claiming discounts they are not entitled to. These checks form part of our measures to prevent and detect fraud and protect the public purse. We are keen to ensure people who are genuinely living alone are claiming the 25% discount they are entitled to, but those who claim the discount improperly, place an unnecessary burden on other residents.

3. HR and Organisational Development

- 3.1 Payroll – We launched the on-line recording of expenses, absence and overtime claims through our HR/Payroll system in November 2017.
- 3.2 Negotiations are in process with UNISON for a Learning and Development Agreement with the aim of working in partnership to establish and developing a learning opportunities and wellbeing support system for all staff.
- 3.3 Recruitment continues to be busy. We are limiting permanent recruitment due to the transformation and instead the focus has been on internal secondments and recruiting via agencies as an interim measure.
- 3.4 Two members of the team are now supporting the HR work stream of the Transformation Project and they have been designing the recruitment process and shortly the new job descriptions in readiness for consultation in January 2018.
- 3.5 Building Services and Open Spaces – We have now completed the individual

staff meetings and are now working on service development plans.

- 3.6 Chaplaincy Service – We have welcomed the Reverend Ewen Huffman as our new chaplain. Ewen is part of the Taunton Chaplaincy Service and is joining us on a weekly basis to provide a confidential support service to staff.
- 3.7 The HR Team has been supporting the new Customer Contact Centre Manager with the de-secondment of our staff from a shared service with Somerset County Council. The de-secondment took place on 1 December 2017.

4. Procurement

- 4.1 The Procurement Team continue to provide support across a wide range of project and business as usual activity.
- 4.2 Michael O'Halloran continues to provide procurement support and advice to the Unified Transaction Portal project. This complex procurement has now been awarded and work on the contract is close to completion.
- 4.3 Other strategic projects include North Taunton Master Planning, the Firepool Development, Seaward Way, Minehead, Lisieux Way and the new Leisure Contract.
- 4.4 Contracts recently awarded include:-
- Professional Services for the Coal Orchard development;
 - A Mental Health Support Service; and
 - The Tonedale Regeneration Strategy.
- 4.5 The Team are supporting South Somerset District Council on several projects relating to the refurbishment of Yeovil Crematorium and providing advice to the Income Generation Board.
- 4.6 Tenders that have either been recently issued or are currently being evaluated include:-
- ICT – Remote Access Solution;
 - Professional Services - Tonedale Structural Repairs; and
 - Professional Services - West Somerset Design Guide
- 4.7 Other live projects include a material supply solution for the Depot based services, asbestos survey and removal contracts.

5. Finance

- 5.1 Medium Term Financial Plan/Budget – The Budget Setting process has started for 2018/2019 and a number of reports have been presented to

Scrutiny and Executive on the budget position, a review of earmarked reserves plus fees and charges. Detailed work on the budget setting process continues. As per the Budget Strategy we are seeking to close the budget gap via taking out known underspends and savings and we will seek to close any residual gap via the use of reserves rather than requesting services to make further service cuts.

- 5.2 New Finance and Payroll System – We continue to embed our new finance and payroll systems and to help users get the most from its functionality.
- 5.3 Projects – Progress is continuing with many potential capital projects and our Project Accountant is reviewing these projects from a commercial viewpoint to our financial analyses.
- 5.4 We have started the recruitment for a successor to Jo Nacey, Financial Services Manager who will be leaving the Council at the end of January to take up a new role at Mid Devon District Council. We wish her well in her new role and thank her for the outstanding job she has done.

6. Corporate Performance

- 6.1 Quarter 2 Performance Reporting is completed and will be presented at the December Corporate Scrutiny Committee meeting. Members will note that further work is required to improve our complaints response times.
- 6.2 GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations) - A detailed project plan is being developed to implement the necessary changes to our process. An overview and progress update is to be provided to the December Corporate Governance Committee.

7. Customer Services

- 7.1 The service returned from Somerset County Council on 1 December 2017. A key risk is the maintenance of service delivery through a period of significant change due to moving from a large shared service to a smaller in-house service. Close monitoring is taking place.
- 7.2 A detailed project plan is in place to manage the service return which includes training for staff and team building activities, ensuring we have adequate resourcing in place, technology changes with the provision of new telephony (8x8 system) and associated new equipment.
- 7.3 Regular communications and support with staff is taking place to enable understanding of how the service runs – key performance data, service metrics etc.
- 7.4 Ruth James has been appointed as interim Customer Services Manager and I have arranged to meet with her and be introduced to the Team.

8. Facilities Management

- 8.1 This Team has been assisting with office moves to support the Accommodation Project decant and will continue for some time yet. Members are doubtless aware of the amount of work involved with the decant process.
- 8.2 Planning for and implementing the move of the existing Post Room is underway.

9. ICT/Technology

- 9.1 The Deane House Data Centre move is scheduled to take place between 1-4 December 2017. An e-mail to Members on 20 November 2017 provided details of the move enabling the systems take down for a period, so closing to the public from midday on Friday, 1 December to Tuesday, 5 December 2017. A detailed project plan is being implemented to manage risks.
- 9.2 Members were made aware by the Postal service of a system outage on 25 November 2017 between 0800 – 1800 to carry out essential works requiring the power supply to be cut temporarily. An over run carried forward to Sunday, 26 November 2017.
- 9.2 Telephony system rollout (8x8) – rollout of the new telephony and associated training is progressing well.
- 9.3 The MFD (Multi Functional Devices – printers) phased rollout has commenced and will provide for 'follow-me' printing across all sites.
- 9.4 A technology Procurement exercise to provide the core software to support the delivery of the business process reengineering and future operating model is complete and a preferred supplier identified. Officers are in the process of finalising the contractual arrangements. An announcement will be made when finalised.

10. Resource and Priorities Planning

- 10.1 The ICT has a significant 'To Do' list – for both Transformation and Business As Usual projects. The key projects have been identified and prioritised. Officers are working diligently to implement these various projects.
- 10.2 An additional HR resourcing requirement has been identified, and we are in the process of recruiting.

11. Print Function

- 11.1 This service is moving to the Auction House in early December as part of The

Deane House Project decant plans. As expected this is taking a lot of planning in view of the equipment involved.

I take this opportunity to thank the officers that have supported the Council in an exceptional way during the past year and to acknowledge their hard work and dedication especially given the circumstances of the intensive projects that are underway.

I wish them all a very Happy Festive Season and every success for 2018.

Councillor Richard Parrish

Council Meeting – 12 December 2017

Report of Councillor Terry Beale – Housing Services

1. Deane Housing Development

Woolaways

- 1.1 The consultation project for North Taunton is now well under way. All tenants have been sent a letter outlining the reasons for the consultation. In addition 68% of the tenants in the affected area have been visited on a 1-1 basis and 67% of the private owners have also been seen.
- 1.2 As part of the process we have set up a Design Group with tenants taking an active part. We had our first meeting with the Design Group in October which was extremely successful. As part of this meeting we introduced the concept of the Residents Charter. This will be split into three phases Consultation, Design Process and Implementation.
- 1.3 Once again I would to thank the Housing Development and Enabling Team who are working extremely hard on this project.

Weavers Arms, Rockwell Green, Wellington

- 1.4 The scheme continues to progress well. The roofing and window installations are now complete as is the new drainage system. Further work is taking place with regards to plumbing and electrics and external landscaping.
- 1.5 We have experienced a delay in the approvals procedure for highway works which are currently with Somerset County Council for sign off and we anticipate this happening in the near future. This will delay our original handover timings and we anticipate handover of the first property early in the New Year.

12 Moorland Close, Taunton

- 1.6 Work is progressing well and we have set a handover date of the 26 January 2018 with an official opening on the 19 February 2018.

2. Welfare Reform

Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP)

- 2.1 DHP continues to be awarded for a variety of reasons which include rent shortfalls low income and help with areas or rent.
- 2.2 The Council will, of course, continue to provide help and support to our tenants who need to claim DHP and indeed any other benefits they may be entitled to.

Universal Credit (UC)

- 2.3 There were a number of issues raised within the recent budget and during clarification from the Government including the introduction of Freephone Universal Credit contact numbers to replace premium rate numbers, the removal of the seven day waiting period and reducing the six week wait from point of claim to five weeks.
- 2.4 From April, as a short-term measure the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will change how claimants in temporary accommodation receive support. Local authorities will be able to recoup over 80% of the money they spend on temporary accommodation directly from the DWP rather than from the claimant.
- 2.5 UC claimants can now claim a 'New claim advance' of up to 100% of the claimant's likely UC award. This can now be paid back over a much longer period of 12 months allowing claimant's to pay their rent whilst waiting for their first UC payment.
- 2.6 If a claimant is in receipt of Housing Benefit and makes a claim for UC they are now entitled to a two week 'run on' of Housing Benefit. Currently we are not sure how this will work in full and are waiting for further updates.

3. Deane Helpline

- 3.1 The Deane Helpline continues to provide excellent service and is constantly looking to develop using opportunities for the future. We are currently looking at some contact opportunities for the New Year.

4. Property Maintenance

Grounds Maintenance Contract and New Service Charge

- 4.1 On the 25 September 2017, the Tenant Services Management Board approved an increase in the current level of the service charge made to Council Tenants for the Grounds Maintenance Contract of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) owned land from the current charge of 81p per week to £1.84 per week as from the 1 April 2018.
- 4.2 This increase was also approved by both the Tenants Forum and the Sheltered Housing Development Group.
- 4.3 The Tenant Services Management Board (TSMB) endorsed this increase at their meeting on the 16 October 2017 in a report recommending the level of new fees and charges to be implemented from April 2018.
- 4.4 Tenants will be at the forefront of monitoring the new contract and the TSMB has agreed that a Tenants Panel, made up of representatives from the TSMB, Tenants Forum and Sheltered Housing Development Group will be used to monitor the new contract.
- 4.5 Meetings have taken place with both tenants and managers within the Open Spaces Team regarding the establishment of monitoring systems. These discussions are

continuing and the outcome of this work will be reported back to the TSMB in the New Year.

- 4.6 The review identified a backlog of work on HRA owned land across the District. The Open Spaces Team are already making progress in improving some of these areas so residents can see the improvements to certain areas ahead of the commencement of the new contract in April 2018.

5. Tenants Talk

- 5.1 All Councillors have recently been sent a copy of Tenants Magazine 'Tenants Talk' . In there you will find a wealth of information on the new Grounds Maintenance, Fire Safety, a breakdown of both the TSMB and Tenants Forum and the details of the Estate Officers across the Council.
- 5.2 I would like to take this opportunity to than everyone involved in a job well done.

6. Responsive Repairs and Voids

- 6.1 There are still challenges in reshaping the teams and ensuring maximum customer service. However the teams are stable and motivated and buying in to the change.
- 6.2 Some good results have been achieved over the past month, such as further improvement on the void turnaround times, good repair Key Performance Indicators and the jobs waiting for appointing in the Repairs Team dramatically down. These are significant achievements and has given everyone a timely boost and further increased morale.
- 6.3 The IT has been stable and all Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) have been returned to us with the necessary updates. They have been rolled out with support for those struggling with the technology. Approximately 95% of the workforce are now on PDAs and using them correctly. This has been demonstrated in productivity statistics from DRS and the majority of jobs appearing closed at the end of the day.
- 6.4 More anecdotal support to this includes less calls coming in on the planners line and less workmen at the yard. We are not printing any job tickets now unless a PDA is out of action and this has helped the Planning Team use the end of their day better as well as lessening the pressure.
- 6.5 The stress audit undertaken by HR on the back office (AWMs and Logistics Team) showed good results with an average rating of 4 out of 5 for feeling supported by line management. The 1:1s with trades were a very positive experience and in general the feedback was good.

Milestones

- Void times reduced from 44 days to 18.5.
- The average wait time for Repairs Line in October was 52 seconds, compared to 2 minutes 15 seconds in April.

- The abandon call percentage was 40% in April, compared to 6% in October.
- 10% improvement on non-emergency appointments completed on time this financial year (77% to 87%).
- 95% of repairs trades staff now equipped with PDAs and using effectively.
- Follow ons and new jobs waiting for appointing now between 0 and 30 at end of each week for the first time since I started working here.
- Only one complaint since the beginning of August. None regarding voids since January.
- 16 of the workforce are now working as multi-skillers with more currently going through the development process.

7. Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership - Private Sector Housing

7.1 The Council has been involved in the drafting of the housing element of the Somerset Better Care Fund Plan. This introduces an expanding range of housing options through use of the Disabled Facilities Grant element of the Better Care Fund. This includes:-

- Works that seek to avoid hospital admissions;
- Prevention grants (for example for energy efficiency work);
- Minor works grant for small scale adaptations around the home that may for example prevent trips and falls;
- Loaning equipment; and
- Further, grant and loan packages.

7.2 Changes to our grant policy to accomplish these measures has already been through Executive and reported to this Council.

7.3 Increasing demand by landlords for properties to purchase and rent, either as single dwellings or converted into Houses in Multiple Occupation. The team has seen an increase in license applications for Houses in Multiple Occupation which provides valuable income to the authority.

- **Handihelp service** – The Council's preferred Home Improvement Agency provides a Handihelp service. To the end of quarter two, there have been 58 jobs completed with 40 in progress. Works range from installing grab rails through to putting up bannister rails and other small jobs around the home. 38% of jobs were completed in 12 days or less, and 46% within 13 – 24 days. The timescale depends on the complexity of the job.
- **Low interest Loans** – Wessex Resolutions have received nine referrals to the end of the second quarter. £46,000 has been committed in funds this quarter which is six loans. The target for the year is 20 loans (a 50% increase on the previous year). The average time from loan enquiry to completion is three months.
- **Housing Standards Team** – Received 200 complaints in 2016/2017, up 10% on the year before. Second quarter of this year is already at 105. Licensed – 55 Houses in Multiple Occupation; two Immigration inspections completed on behalf of the Home Office; 32 Houses in Multiple Occupation inspections completed.

The team is working with the Estates Teams to look to how existing and new adaptations in the Council stock can be preserved and placed more strategically in the stock where demand is at its highest and puts less reliance on reactive adaptations, preserving the general needs stock. By being proactive with voids means that stock can be adapted with less disruption for incoming tenants.

And finally.....

There is still an enormous amount of disruption and change taking place from Transformation to the refurbishment of The Deane House. This continues to put some strain on our staff and I would like to go on record to thank all of the staff of the Housing and Communities Teams and indeed all of our staff for continuing to deliver an excellent service to our customers.

Councillor Terry Beale

Council Meeting – 12 December 2017

Report of Councillor Mrs Jane Warmington - Community Leadership

THINK DIFFERENTLY, DO DIFFERENTLY ~ The strategic vision for Taunton Deane's most disadvantaged areas is that residents lives will improve significantly and that these priority areas will look better, feel safer and in the future place a more proportionate demand on public services. These services are already being delivered differently in our disadvantaged urban areas through co-ordinated, frontline, problem-solving, multiagency one teams providing early help eventually being based together in the area they serve. Rural parishes with more scattered communities are being helped to access services through community centres and local village agents who identify, signpost and support isolated residents to get the help they need. Urban priority areas need excellent education and health facilities within them if we are to build independence, resilience and raise aspirations in individuals, families and communities, to sustain improvements and reduce the need and costs of interventions in the future.

1. Strategic Partnerships

- 1.1 The various Strategic Partnerships and Boards working across Somerset are now more aligned. They have been working towards this for the last eighteen months. Their Chairs meet twice a year and each reports at least annually into the Somerset Health and Wellbeing Board.
- 1.2 There is District representation on most of these and responsibilities include Safeguarding, Community Safety, Health and Wellbeing, Early Help, Housing, Social Care and Public Health. There is also good cross-over with Officers and Members frequently sitting on two or more Boards. This is a welcome improvement towards a more joined up approach to the benefit of all.

2. One Teams

- 2.1 With the increasing interest and roll out of the One Team Model in Somerset, the Safer Somerset Partnership agreed earlier this year to provide County-wide strategic leadership and oversight (although not governance which remains within each District) of the One Teams in Somerset.
- 2.2 Twelve of the County's most disadvantaged areas are now covered by eight One Teams including three new teams being established in Williton/Minehead, Hamp in Bridgwater and Burnham-on-Sea/Highbridge.
- 2.3 All of the One Teams have the same shared vision "to work in Somerset's most vulnerable communities and provide co-ordinated front-line multi-agency working to efficiently provide sustainable solutions for families and individuals that prevent problems escalating and costs increasing to the public sector."
- 2.4 The One Team model continues to evolve and will become more refined with the help of the new Somerset-wide Coordinator Andy Lloyd based at County Hall. This post is funded from the Police and Crime Commissioner's Community Safety Budget.

3. Homelessness

- 3.1 Taunton Deane Borough Council (TDBC) has developed a Rough Sleepers Policy which sits under the Council's Homelessness Strategy. The Strategy is currently being reviewed.
- 3.2 The underlying principle of this Policy is that we will support people first particularly our most vulnerable. TDBC works closely with Taunton Association for the Homeless (TAH) mainly through our Housing Options and Housing Services Teams and the Police. The aim is to find a solution for everybody.
- 3.3 However, the Policy also includes measures for working with partners to undertake any enforcement which might be required if people repeatedly refuse support and are causing a continuing public nuisance. It is important to balance our responsibilities to both rough sleepers and the wider community. Once adopted, the revised Strategy will be available on the Council's website.
- 3.4 We would like to thank TAH (Justin Roxburgh and Daz Northover) for their excellent briefing to Councillors on Homelessness on 28 November 2017. This covered what TAH are doing, how partners such as TDBC are helping and other initiatives they are exploring in partnership as a response to the increasing numbers of people who are ending up homeless. TAH's support is built around "what's strong" not "what's wrong" with someone.
- 3.5 TAH have recently moved their office to 7, The Crescent, Taunton TA1 4AE in order to convert their old office space in East Reach into specialised accommodation for homeless ex-servicemen. Housing will be just the start of their service for veterans. Through key support workers, they will be able to refer veterans to other suitable support agencies to help with issues such as mental health and drug and alcohol addictions. They are also keen to explore and allow the skills many veterans have to be used from their time in service. They plan to train veterans who are interested in mentoring, so that they can become a valuable part of wider TAH services supporting some of their younger more chaotic clients.
- 3.6 They are also keen to assist people staying with them to move into more permanent accommodation when they feel ready. Although residents may stay for as long as they need in their accommodation, TAH see the importance in helping them to start to live more independent lives. They now have their own Tenant Accreditation Scheme which helps residents learn how to sustain a tenancy and they have set up their own letting agency (Somerset West Letting Agency) which supports residents to find their own private accommodation.

4. Good Customer Care

- 4.1 Carol Carpenter is running more Customer Care Training for all staff in December and into the New Year, and Members are encouraged to commit to a session too.
- 4.2 This is worth making time for, supports our staff and is a foolproof sensible pragmatic approach to providing consistently good customer service (and getting on

better with everyone). The number of Members receiving training is now into double figures with very good feedback as predicted.

- 4.3 Please book up on this link if you have not already done so - <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/9CJFJ97>.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Councillor Jane Warmington

Council Meeting – 12 December 2017

Report of Councillor Patrick Berry – Environmental Services

1. Licensing

- 1.1 During the last couple of weeks, the Licensing Manager, John Rendell, was loaned for a short period to the “Transformation Team”. Then in a recent development and for personal reasons John has taken an extended leave. We look forward to seeing John back at work as soon as he is able.
- 1.2 In view of these developments, the team is getting on with their work and where possible making sure that all queries, licence applications and complaints are dealt with promptly. The team is being supported by Scott Weetch, John’s Line Manager.
- 1.3 In the meantime, performance has remained high with only one application going over the 14 day service standard. This is well above the 95% KPI requirement.
- 1.4 In recent weeks the team has:-
 - Produced an Animal Licensing Forward Plan for the inspection of premises and adopted a pro-active approach towards unlicensed kennels and breeders, thereby getting the necessary licensing requirements information to the offenders;
 - Produced a new Scrap Metal Dealer Policy,
 - Noted a reduction in the number of out-of-area taxi drivers applying for a license. These drivers are now aware of Taunton Deane’s updated policy and are not even bothering to apply.
 - Noted that following the decision to revoke the license for Taunton Food and Wine store, the store’s appeal has now been lost and the licence revoked.
 - Been streamlining its work procedures for both in-house and external customers.
 - Decided to make use of the planned systems outages to focus on out-of-office inspections and compliance checks.

2. Street Sweeping and Toilet Cleaning

- 2.1 Idverde, the Council’s contractor, continues to provide a compliant service and to maintain standards.
- 2.2 Town centre inspections show that a good level of cleanliness is being maintained. Currently the teams are kept busy with the huge quantities of

leaves that are making a nuisance of themselves.

- 2.3 The infrared motion activated cameras provided by Idverde have been installed at a number of locations and although no offenders have been identified their deterrent value has been noticeable. The team is now following up on a couple of fly-tipping incidents where some photographic evidence has been obtained. The number of incidents is remaining at a low figure and each one is now followed up where possible.

3. Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP)

- 3.1 Agreement was reached in mid-November to bring forward the expiry date of the kerbside collection service contract with Kier, from September 2021 to March 2020. This followed an extended period of negotiation between Kier and SWP aimed at launching the Recycle More service (consisting of addition of plastic packaging, pots tubs and trays and small electrical items to weekly recycling collections, accompanied by reduced frequency refuse collections).
- 3.2 Over the course of these discussions it became apparent that Kier was not best placed to deliver the Recycle More service. It was therefore agreed that the contract should be drawn to an early close to allow SWP the opportunity to find the right partner to deliver the service effectively.
- 3.3 This announcement has disappointed some who are keen to be able to recycle more at the kerbside sooner, however there are strong positive messages and, in the medium term, this should be better for residents. This will align three major changes to SWP's waste services. By 2020, there will be:-
- A new collection contractor;
 - Phased introduction of Recycle More;
 - Timely procurement of a new fleet of collection vehicles, aligning their life cycle with the service contract; and,
 - Diversion of Somerset's domestic refuse from landfill to an energy from waste facility.
- 3.4 Although some residents are concerned about the idea of three weekly refuse collections, there are already over a dozen local authorities operating a system based on this frequency, including a very successful service in our neighbouring authority of East Devon. A later start means a greater number of authorities operating in this way for a longer period, so there will be an increasing body of evidence that this can and will work.
- 3.5 This later start date of 2020 means we have sufficient time for a thorough procurement and mobilisation process for this complex multi-million Pound service. There are significant risks should we rush it and great benefits if we get it right.
- 3.6 On a slightly different subject, the undersigned carried out a joint visit to the Priorswood Recycle Centre with the new Managing Director, Mickey Green. At the time of the visit the centre was relatively quiet but the Viridor Supervisor

advised that the centre can get very busy with queues stretching up to and beyond the canal bridge.

- 3.7 He has noticed a significant increase in numbers of people who are new to the area and is concerned that the centre will in due course find it difficult to cope with the increased demand. He confirmed that Priorswood is the biggest of the SWP Recycling Centres both in terms of tonnages of materials and numbers of vehicles.

4. Cemetery and Crematorium

- 4.1 The service is performing to target with cremation numbers and income.
- 4.2 This service now has its own Crematorium based locally managed grounds maintenance service team which should give greater flexibility and allow other services to be sold to the public through these in house employees.
- 4.3 The recently approved Bereavement Service Improvement Project is now well in hand. Progress to date is as follows:-
- The Wellington Cemetery Project to increase the number of grave spaces has been completed and we now have an additional 100 spaces. This work has only just been finished and the soil needs a short period to settle before being put into use;
 - The work at the St Mary's Cemetery, Taunton has also been completed and delivers an additional 120 grave spaces;
 - The Cremation Memorial Walkway and Cremation Plots project is now at the detailed design stage and pricing of the memorials is about to commence;
 - The new Children and Babies Garden project is also progressing well. Landscaping is ongoing as well as consultation with the appropriate charities. Selection of memorials is also in hand; and
 - The Memorial Boardwalk and Natural Remembrance/Burial Area will be carried out using staff from the newly established ground maintenance service team. The materials have been purchased.
- 4.4 The Manager and his team are now working on a proposal to expand the waiting room. Currently the Chapel has a larger capacity than the waiting area and mourners are occasionally left outside when there is a well attended funeral. It is also intended to refurbish the toilets. The proposal has already been submitted for Scrutiny comments before being submitted to the Executive. The Crematorium is a listed building and great care is being taken to work within the external walls and to avoid any threat to its listed status.

5. Environmental Health

- 5.1 The team has been extremely busy during the last few months. This is partly the seasonal increase due to Christmas but also a general change in the town

centre towards more food outlets. Each new business needs an initial inspection and then the usual periodic inspections. Where an establishment fails then it needs a second inspection along with advice. New charges for these revisits are being introduced as advised in earlier reports.

- 5.2 The number of complaints about noise pollution has also led to a shortage of the sound monitoring equipment that is used to monitor this type of incident. Accordingly, the duration for the loan of the sound monitoring equipment has been reduced to one week. This reduced duration is considered sufficient to capture the occurrence of nuisance noise.
- 5.3 Other than the above, the team is getting through its workload well and the Key Performance Indicators are within the required parameters.

Councillor Patrick Berry