

Council Meeting – 10 April 2018

Report of Councillor John Williams – Leader of the Council

1. Formation of a Single Council

- 1.1 On 22 March 2018, The Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP, Minister for Housing, Communities and Local Government, told Taunton Deane Borough and West Somerset Councils of his decision to approve the creation of a new District Council covering their areas. The Minister's decision will be subject to Parliamentary approval.
- 1.2 On 19 March 2018 both Councils voted to give their consent to the start of the legal process, while their respective Executive and Cabinet agreed the name of the new authority – Somerset West and Taunton, the number of Councillors and to request a boundary review.
- 1.3 We welcome the Secretary of State's announcement that he is approving the proposal for a single new Council. This has been an understandably long process and the final decision gives us the ability to look forward with far more clarity and unity.
- 1.4 This new Council will make sure we can continue to deliver our services in a way that is sustainable into the future. We know that our residents value those services highly. It will also allow us to focus on boosting our economy, supporting the delivery of Hinkley Point C new Nuclear Power Station and fully embracing the opportunity afforded by Garden Town status awarded to Taunton.
- 1.5 We must also make the most of the great natural assets that exist – Exmoor National Park, the coastline, Quantock and Blackdown Hills and the Somerset Levels.

2. Firepool, Taunton

- 2.1 On 14 March 2018, the Council's Planning Committee approved the transformation of the Firepool Site. Firepool is an integral part of the wider economic regeneration plans for Taunton with the potential to create in excess of 1,700 jobs as well as providing office, hotel and residential accommodation and supporting waterfront leisure and retail outlets. The recent planning consent follows many months of detailed consultations between lead developer, St Modwen, and relevant statutory consultees.
- 2.2 I know how much people want to see this largely derelict site developed. It is key to our overall Garden Town strategy that puts the River Tone back at the heart of the town and, most importantly, will provide new jobs and facilities for our residents. It will also cement our place as a regional centre with excellent links to London and beyond. Taunton is one of the fastest growing towns in the region, the only Garden Town in the South West and has the advantage of

excellent road and rail connections, top quality schools and further education, first class medical facilities, great urban open spaces and superb countryside and coast on its doorstep. We need to be competitive and provide high quality facilities to attract continued inward investment and satisfy the needs of its growing population and the mix of uses proposed achieves just that.

3. Staplegrove

- 3.1 A £7,200,000 bid for Government funding to help unlock a new Garden Community development in Staplegrove, Taunton, and deliver vital infrastructure – a road, more affordable housing and enabling a new primary school – has been successful.
- 3.2 The money will help towards the early delivery of the £8,000,000 “spine road” to connect the A358 Staplegrove Road and Kingston Road, more affordable housing and enable the delivery of a much needed new primary school.
- 3.3 The funding is particularly important in terms of affordable housing, raising numbers from 15% of the total to approximately 25%. The road – and other infrastructure – is key to developing two sites at Staplegrove that received outline planning consent late last year. It is great that we have been successful in securing this hugely important money for our Garden Town development. It will ensure that we can deliver tangible solutions to the concerns raised by so many in the community.
- 3.4 The Council resolved to grant outline consent for up to 915 homes, a primary school, employment land, local centre and open space on land at Staplegrove (east). The application was submitted by PM Asset Management Limited. A similar application submitted by Ptarmigan Staplegrove Limited was for up to 713 homes, employment land, green infrastructure, landscaping, play area and sustainable urban drainage systems at Staplegrove (west).
- 3.4 The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government announced that the investment for schemes nationwide “will fund key local infrastructure projects including new roads, cycle paths, flood defences and land remediation work, all essential ahead of building the homes. Without this financial support these projects would struggle to go ahead or take years for work to begin, delaying the homes communities need. Together with the Government’s Industrial Strategy, it will provide high-quality infrastructure to support economic growth.

4. Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF)

- 4.1 Somerset County Council, Taunton Deane Borough Council and Sedgemoor District Council submitted a joint expression of interest (EOI) to the Government to access the Housing Infrastructure Fund Forward Fund.
- 4.2 This EOI, submitted in September 2017, was the first stage in a competitive bidding process to access critical infrastructure funding to unlock key housing sites in the Hinkley Housing Zone and Taunton Garden Town. The funding request totalled £83,000,000 and covered key infrastructure projects for flood

defence, new schools, highway and public transport improvements and new pedestrian and cycle links.

- 4.3 The Government announcement on 21 March 2018 for the first stage resulted in a shortlist of 45 upper tier, unitary and combined authorities including Somerset. These authorities will now be working with the Government officials to develop a detailed bid, before final funding decisions are made, which is anticipated to be in autumn 2018.
- 4.4 Taunton Deane will be working closely with Somerset County Council and Sedgemoor District Council on the next stage of the competitive bidding.

5. The Deane House

- 5.1 Phase 1 works are progressing well and staff will be moving back into refurbished space on the first floor at the end of May/beginning of June, with the new Reception operational in early to mid-June.
- 5.2 The Police area is due to be completed at the beginning of October 2018, ready for them to fit out and move in.
- 5.3 Phase 2 works will start in June through to the end of September and Phase 3 works are planned for October through to mid-February 2019. At this point all works will be complete.

Councillor John Williams

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Report of Councillor Terry Beale – Housing Services

1. Deane Housing Development

The Housing Enabling and Development Team continue to work hard to deliver a range of affordable housing, including new Council housing, in summary:-

North Taunton

- 1.1 A second public consultation was held on the 14 February 2018 which was well attended by the local residents. The event gave local people the opportunity to view and comment on the consultation project, as well as giving them an understanding of timescales, dates of future meetings and the decision process. The next consultation event is scheduled for 8 June 2018.
- 1.2 Plans for the scheme are progressing well. The work streams associated with this project are extremely complex and work continues to progress the scheme to a stage of submitting a planning submission later this year. It is our intention to organise a Members Briefing in due course.

Weavers Arms, Wellington - 26 new homes

- 1.3 There have been some delays on site due to a variety of reasons and handover is now anticipated in June although options for a phased handover are being explored with the contractor.

12 Moorland Close, Taunton

- 1.4 Three x 1 bed homes and a Community Centre are due to complete this month and a planning application is under consideration for a further four x1 bed homes.

Laxton Road, Taunton

- 1.5 Eight x 1 bed flats - Contractor procurement underway with an aim to start on site in late 2018 subject to contractor availability.

Completions

- 1.6 We have set ourselves a target of 200 affordable homes each year and over the past three years we have achieved an average of over 230 per year. However, this year has proved very challenging for a variety of reasons including material shortages a lack of labour and adverse weather conditions. In addition some schemes have suffered delays not of our making and will not complete this financial year.
- 1.7 We anticipate reaching around 100 homes this year but hope to increase that in the next period.

Parmin Close, Taunton

- 1.8 66 units extra care and 12 learning disabilities being built by Livery (formerly known as Knightstone) are due to complete April/May 2018.

Future site opportunities

- 1.9 There is a range of work ongoing to progress the next development opportunities and further updates will be provided once the work has progressed.

2. Deane Housing Repairs and Maintenance

- 2.1 This period has been very challenging however the teams have still managed a 90% first visit fix in 2017/2018, made savings in the budget, exceeded all Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and almost halved the void turnaround time whilst keeping our customer satisfaction indicator at 99% and reducing complaints down to single figures for the year.
- 2.2 This is a big improvement from where we were in the past and it is also evident that the staff now have an amazing work ethic and team spirit.
- 2.3 The teams are using the DRS (repairs scheduling system) as it should be used for the first time since implementation, with zero manual scheduled jobs for some weeks now, correct data against operatives in the system and 25% of the workforce either multi skilled or working towards it.
- 2.4 It will be exciting to see what improvements to the service this brings over the next financial year, especially since we have achieved our KPIs to date through hard work and motivating staff and in spite of our systems.
- 2.5 We are not printing job tickets anymore, we are down to 5% jobs remaining open in OC per month and our call waiting times are down to less than a minute on average from several minutes this time last year. The repairs line are now regularly answering almost all calls daily (a 21% failure rate to a 2% failure rate) and the outstanding job queue is down from 700 to < 20 daily and staying at that figure consistently.

3. Welfare Reform

- 3.1 It has been agreed to amend our existing Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) Policy to take account of the following changes.

- 3.2 A review of the policy to include:-

- A review of the Risk Assessment - following a recent audit review we determined some of the overall impacts were gauged too high and an outcome from the audit review was to review this appropriately;
- Recognising the support within the DHP Policy for customers receiving the Housing Element of Universal Credit;
- An update of funding from Central Government for 2018/2019;
- Changes to the application process to allow for longer awards where appropriate, ability to review a claim and to allow for telephone applications.

- This will allow speedier and more reactive responses for our customers;
- A review of our decision making processes - we have aligned these to our speed of processing targets currently used for New Claims for a more consistent approach; and
 - An overview of summary spending for 2016/2017 and a current update review from 1 April 2017 to 28 February 2018.

3.3 DHPs offer claimants of Housing Benefit (HB) and Universal Credit (UC), further financial assistance where the Local Authority considers that help with housing costs is needed.

3.4 The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) provides us with a specified DHP allocation that varies each year as it is partly based on our previous DHP spending. We must return any unspent funding to the DWP. During the financial year, we can only award DHPs up to a cash limit of two and a half times this annual grant.

3.5 Any spending we make above the allocation and up to the legal limit has to be funded by the Council from our budget (and so in turn from our Council Tax payers). DHPs are not payments of benefit, and we have discretion in how we manage this funding.

3.6 Following on from recent Government changes the freephone contact numbers have proved to be extremely successful as one would expect and resulted in more request for assistance being made to DWP.

4. Deane Helpline

4.1 It has been a busy couple of months or so for Deane Helpline (DH). The adverse weather which affected us all tested resources and resourcing, however the team successfully made it through by making some sensible decisions around standing people down who were further away and relying on people closer.

4.2 When Taunton Deane and West Somerset switched their telephones over to DH this created extra demand on the staffing resources. However Taunton Deane and West Somerset were not the only organisation to do so and indeed all of our corporate contract clients followed suit which caused an unprecedented demand upon our service.

4.3 During the course of the four days we saw approximately 6,000 calls taken by our staff who performed excellently under extremely difficult circumstances. I would like to take this opportunity to commend the staff for an excellent response to a very difficult situation.

4.4 I was particularly proud and pleased to see that the Emergency Response Team maintained the excellent service to our customers again in very trying conditions and well done to all concerned.

4.5 As in most cases there are positive learning points to be gleaned from adversity and one such point for the DH Team was the management of calls coming into DH.

When all the telephone lines were busy it was noticed that the line was becoming engaged at saturation rather than 'stacking' the calls.

- 4.6 This has now been rectified with the introduction of a new stacking system, which has been working extremely well at other peak times such as weekends and early evenings.
- 4.7 Since February we have welcomed 77 new customers into the DH service and have seen 63 leave for various reasons (most commonly either their passing or moving into residential care), which still sees the customer base growing by 14 customers overall for what has been a very difficult winter period.
- 4.8 Finally, the replacement programme of older generation lifelines continues to go well and the new lifeline which is digital ready for when BT switch off the analogue telephony is working well and provides a much better speech quality.

5. Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Service

Performance

- 5.1 Satisfaction with the service remains high. At the end of Quarter 4 89% (target 85% of tenants who reported ASB in year to date rated the help and advice received as good or excellent.

Casework

5.2 ASB cases recorded between 03/09/17 – 03/04/18 (12 months)

39 new cases were opened during the period, slight reduction in noise, harassment and physical violence complaints. Although noise remains one of the main concerns residents report:-

Alcohol	5
Domestic Abuse	1
Drugs misuse/Dealing	6
Garden Nuisance	2
Harrasment	8
Noise	8
Other Crime	3
Pets	1
Physical violence	3
Vehicles	2
Total	39

- 5.3 There have been a number of high profile cases which have been reported and dealt with. These include a number of possession orders being sought for drugs

and continued ASB, a Closure Order granted and tenancy terminated and a superb result in a multi-agency response which safeguarded a vulnerable tenant and laid to the removal of several undesirable people from the locale.

- 5.4 Further cases dealt with involved a serious assault, additional safeguarding needs and mental health issues. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Paul and the team for continuing to work tirelessly and for the superb multi-agency work that has been done to deliver help and support to our vulnerable tenants.

6. And finally.....

- 6.1 Two items of importance and dates for your diaries.
- 6.2 Firstly the Consultation on the draft Strategic Housing Framework for Somerset, setting out a vision, priorities and ambitions for housing across the County is currently underway with a closing date of 30 April 2018.
- 6.3 The Framework focusses on systems and leadership, bringing together housing, communities, social care, health, and town and country planning. Documents can be accessed here and please take part <http://www.tauntondeane.gov.uk/housing-and-community/housing-strategy/>.
- 6.4 A date for your diary - 6 June 2018 - the location - Coopers Associated County Ground (home of Somerset County Cricket Club) -The Affordable Housing Open Day.
- 6.5 This is an event at which anyone who has a need or is interested in housing can talk to Professional Housing Providers and other professionals who can provide information relating to housing provision. It is a one-stop-shop where advice from solicitors, housing providers, mortgage providers, Revenues and Housing Benefit support, Homefinder Somerset, Housing Options and much more.

Councillor Terry Beale

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Report of Councillor Patrick Berry – Environmental Services and Climate Change

1. Environmental Health

- 1.1 Food Safety – Charges for Rescore visits under the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme, advisory visits and Safer Food Better Business packs were introduced from 1 January 2018. There has been a largely positive response from local businesses.
- 1.2 Food Hygiene Inspections are continuing at pace in order to complete the inspection programme and submit our annual report to the Food Standards Agency. Figures to show how many inspections have been completed across the district will be available shortly after the end of the financial year.
- 1.3 Both Taunton Deane and West Somerset Council are involved in a private water supply sampling accreditation pilot scheme organised by the Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI). This will involve working in partnership with our Local Authority partners across Somerset and the South West region along with the DWI and Scientific Services to ensure that we carry out our sampling of supplies in accordance with the latest guidance.
- 1.4 Noise investigations are continuing at a number of commercial and domestic premises across the district.
- 1.5 As the events season begins, the team are busy analysing event management plans and attending Safety Advisory Groups (SAGs) in order to provide feedback to event organisers on their plans for the events this year. So far SAGs have been held for concerts in Vivary Park, Minehead Seafront and a debrief for Taunton Carnival. Other large events planned for this year include concerts at the Racecourse, Watchet Live and Fake Festivals.
- 1.6 Food Safety Officers are leading on a feasibility study in partnership with the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and the University of Birmingham. The aim of the study is to show how technology can assist local food business with the registration of their business. This is a legal requirement under the Food Safety Act 1990 and currently food operators complete a paper or online form. The aim of this study is to gain much more detailed information upfront at the registration stage to inform the Council of the scope, nature and likely risk of the business. For example information on types of food handled, equipment and numbers of staff are requested. The study will run until the end of April when a full report will be made available to the FSA.

2. Licensing

- 2.1 Work to review the licensing policies for alcohol and entertainment; and gambling, is underway.

- 2.2 The Licensing Team has been working with HM Revenues and Customs on their consultation around proposals to incorporate tax checks in licensing application processes. Their proposals would see taxi drivers, scrap metal and street trading licence holders having to demonstrate that they are properly registered to pay tax in order to have their licences renewed.
- 2.3 The Licensing Team is about to commence a complete revamp of the knowledge test for taxi drivers. In its current form, drivers must demonstrate that they understand taxi driver rules and wider legal responsibilities they would have, should they be granted a licence. Officers are planning to keep aspects of the current format but introduce several other elements, including parts focussed on local geography, numeracy, child sex exploitation and exercising judgment in certain scenarios.
- 2.4 There are also plans afoot to introduce a new requirement for applicants applying to become a taxi driver. Taunton Deane plans to introduce a nationally recognised practical taxi driving test before they can receive a licence. The test has been in place and worked well at West Somerset Council for many years.

3. Street Sweeping and Toilet Cleaning

- 3.1 Street cleansing continues to be well managed and the standard of road sweeping and litter collection remains good. Regular inspections, both pre planned ones and surprise ones continue to be held with occasional hot spots targeted for more in depth cleansing.
- 3.2 Fly tipping continues to be a priority for the Council and the surveillance cameras are regularly installed to try and capture evidence of fly tippers. We have not yet developed actionable evidence that would allow a criminal prosecution but this is our intention. We have approached several businesses in the town centre to challenge the level of care they are showing in managing their waste to the rear of their premises and have referred repeat problem businesses to the Environmental Health department who have also contacted the businesses and provided advice.
- 3.3 The waste and litter associated with rough sleeping and homelessness remains a problem as it is in all towns. We have taken action to create a multi agency group including Taunton Association for the Homeless, Open Door, Rethink, the Council and the Police to meet weekly in an attempt to tackle these issues and the collection and temporary storage of abandoned property and the clearance of waste has formed part of our approach to dealing with the situation.
- 3.4 We have applied to join the 2018 Chewing Gum Action Group Campaign. This campaign provides publicity material and posters for a national campaign to persuade people not to dispose of their chewing gum in an anti-social way but to use a bin and not the pavement!!

4. Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP)

- 4.1 SWP rose to the occasion during the recent snow events. They were unable to do their normal collections for a couple of days. The harsh and unsafe conditions in

early March disrupted up to 80,000 kerbside collections across Somerset and closed Recycling Centres. Operatives pulled out all the stops to clear sites, catch up and return services to normal as rapidly as possible in the following week. We would like to thank the crews for their efforts.

- 4.2 SWP and the contractor Kier are focusing their attention on critical areas of their service. Although 99.91% of the 20 million kerbside collections in a year are successful, the balance is getting extra effort to correct reported issues and ensure that items such as assisted collections are delivered efficiently.
- 4.3 SWP are also doing more analysis on what we throw away and in particular they are monitoring participation in kerbside recycling.
- 4.4 Recently the Council approved a motion to move towards becoming 'Single-Use Plastic Free'. In a similar reaction to the widespread move against plastic, SWP will soon be launching a 'Pledge Against Preventable Plastic'. The campaign will encourage local people to take simple steps to help reduce single-use plastic in their everyday lives. To show the way, SWP is going single-use plastic free at its Monmouth House office.
- 4.5 Finally but not least, following the resignation of Councillor Steven Ross, Councillor Gwil Wren has been invited to join the SWP Board and has accepted.

5. Cemetery and Crematorium

- 5.1 This financial year has seen a small increase in the adult cremation figures. The service has carried out 2,042 cremations in 2017/2018, whereas the figure for 2016/2017 was 2,006. Figures for burial and grave sales have gone up by 12% for full graves from the previous year, cremation sales have gone up by 4%. Other burial statistics remain reasonably static.
- 5.2 There have been times when we have reached our normal working capacity. It would be possible to work longer hours and weekends and thereby increase capacity by 30%, should the need arise.
- 5.3 New signage is being erected throughout the crematorium site. Previously the signs were in a variety of styles and some not so easy to read. The new signage on site is now uniform and clearer to read with more information panels for the public.
- 5.4 Waiting Room Project: Preliminary works have started on the project to enlarge the waiting room. Initial meetings have been held with the Conservation Officer and landscaping and preparation works for the temporary waiting room have started.
- 5.5 This year has seen a number of trees in the ageing cemetery tree stock felled due to poor weather and some becoming unsafe. The avenue of Catalpa trees leading up the main drive to the chapel will be removed and replaced with large white Birch which has a more compact crown and a striking white bark for winter colour. While felling the catalpa trees, it was discovered that many of the mature specimens had rot in the trunk.

- 5.6 A larger specimen tree which stands outside the main gate of the cemetery between the vehicle and pedestrian gate will also be removed due to safety concerns.
- 5.7 Our strategy of ensuring that our tree planting regime delivers more trees than we are having to remove will ensure our site continues to have a good, well managed and safe treescape.
- 5.8 Our recently approved projects are progressing well:-
- Wellington new grave spaces: Project complete, ground being rested until start of summer where it will be numbered and formally laid out to a plan.
 - St Mary's new grave spaces: Also completed as above.
 - Wooden board walk: 90% complete, remaining work is installation of edging for wheel chairs and some landscaping.
 - Children's area: 50% of landscaping completed, hindered by poor weather. Monuments ordered and will arrive in June 2018. Remaining work comprises paths to be laid and completed. Final landscaping works to be completed.
 - Cremation walkway: The area is being prepared by removal of the hedging and poor tree stock. Next step: Create levels, lay paths and execute landscape work. These works are in an area of high footfall, adjacent to the chapel and are thus weather dependent.

Councillor Patrick Berry

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Report of Councillor Mark Edwards - Deputy Leader and Business Development, Asset Management and Communications -

Section 1 – Communications

- 1.1 Since the last report, Taunton Deane experienced two major snow events – the most severe being Storm Emma in early March.
- 1.2 Communications used social media extensively from Thursday when the offices were closed until life began to return to normal early the following week.
- 1.3 The team was able to keep in close touch with others within the Council dealing with the event, including the Open Spaces Team, Civil Contingencies and the Deane Helpline.
- 1.4 We also worked closely with partners, particularly Somerset County Council, so that messages about issues such as roads and schools closures could be disseminated as widely as possible through social media. Sharing content was largely appreciated by the public.
- 1.5 We are also able to pick up urgent queries coming in via the Council's Facebook page and make the Deane Helpline staff aware of any issues. Followers on social media picked up significantly.
- 1.6 This also highlighted the sound partnership working that is now well established with other public sector communications teams.
- 1.7 Communications continues to respond to an increasing number of media queries coming in from local, regional and national sources. The ability to respond quickly and accurately within very tight deadlines is vitally important.

Section 2: Business Development

Productivity Strategy

- 2.1 The Heart of the South West (HotSW) Area Productivity Strategy was adopted by the Joint Committee on Friday, 23 March 2018. The next step will be to create a SMART action plan to deliver the strategy aims. This will be reported back to the Joint Committee at regular meetings.
- 2.2 As a reminder, the Productivity Strategy is a response to the Government's Industrial Strategy and lays out how at a strategic level what we intend to target. The strategy is a collaboration between all local authorities across

Devon and Somerset in conjunction with the Local Enterprise Partnership, Dartmoor and Exmoor National Parks and the Clinical Commissioning Groups.

Taunton Deane Business Awards

- 2.3 This year`s Taunton Deane Business Awards is now closed for entries. The Council is one of the key sponsors and this shows a commitment to supporting and celebrating excellence in our business community. The website address is on this leaflet.
- 2.4 The shortlisting and judging is now in progress. I look forwards to the awards ceremony at the Somerset County Cricket Club on Thursday, 28 June 2018 to celebrate the positive success stories with our community.



TDBA 2018.pdf

Heathrow Business Summit

- 2.5 The Somerset Chamber hosted the South West Heathrow Summit on 16 March 2018 at the County Ground. This was an opportunity for local businesses to meet the tier one contractors who are buying services to deliver forthcoming projects at Heathrow. Heathrow wish to extend their supply chain more widely into Taunton and Somerset. They also shared details around their awards to help small and medium enterprises develop and encouraged businesses in our area to apply.

Growth Communications and Marketing – Business Envoy Programme

- 2.6 Coast Communications work for the Council's Inward Investment Programme began in earnest in October 2017. Year One saw the creation of a comprehensive communications strategy, key messaging and a new website for the Inward Investment Programme. The focus of Year One was to develop an overarching identity and campaign for Taunton that could be built on and given more focus in work in Year Two. The new Garden Town status provided the opportunity to build that fresh identity.
- 2.7 One aspect of Taunton Deane's requirements was support for a nascent Business Envoy Programme. Given the range of activity required by the Council in the tender, it was agreed to make Year Two the focus for this business development. With the branding and identity elements completed in Year One, Taunton's Business Envoy Programme will now become the focus for targeted activity.
- 2.8 Coast are undertaking a round of contact and meetings with agreed stakeholders in the next few weeks (including a separate Agents Focus Group). We want to understand the types of networking and events and where key influencers are already active and promotional activities they would be happy to undertake or for the Council to link up with. Additionally, we

would like to gather intelligence on how they think the Council could best support their existing activities and what collateral they might require as well as capture any insights they might have into what activities they think it would benefit the Council to develop. To support this, a questionnaire has been created to ensure parity of information. This data will be used to create an evidence-based report and underpin our recommendations for a distinctive campaign that will support envoys, promote Taunton and provide supporting materials and create content.

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

Events

- 3.1 The event programme for 2018 continues to fill up with an impressive collection of events. An annual calendar has been produced (which is attached).



Visit Taunton 2018
Calendar.pdf

- 3.2 This calendar is being promoted within our poster 'rotunda' units, the new Visit Taunton Guide and the back page of the "What's On Somerset Annual Guide" both of which will be distributed throughout the region. The Marketing and Visitor Centre Team continue to liaise with many event organisers and will promote these through the destination website, social media and the Visitor Centre.

Place and Retail Marketing

- 3.3 Discussions continue to take place with town centre businesses and the Taunton Chamber of Commerce on common issues of concern and interest. The Marketing and Place Manager now sits on the new Town Centre 'Rough-Sleepers' One Team and has been liaising between businesses, property owners and members of the public on issues related to this.
- 3.4 Taunton, Wellington and Wiveliscombe continue to be promoted through open Wi-Fi, the destination website and social media platforms
Destination website (www.visitsomerset.co.uk/taunton) –
36,466 unique users in February to March period
Visit Taunton has - Facebook: 9,560 likes
Instagram: 1,600 followers
Twitter: 6,850 followers
Visit Wellington – Facebook: 1,100 likes
Visit Wivey – Facebook: 730 likes

New literature produced:

The Deano (providing ideas for the Easter holidays)

- 3.5 The new Visit Taunton guide for 2018 was launched at the Museum of Somerset during English Tourism Week by the Mayor of Taunton Deane. 20,000 copies have initially been printed and the bulk of these will be distributed via Take One Media to key locations within driving distance of Taunton and via the Visitor Centre Team.

Visitor Centre

- 3.6 The Visitor Centre Team continue to actively support all marketing activities. This includes providing content for all digital platforms in addition to the day-to-day job of welcoming many visitors to the office.
- 3.7 Throughput in to the Market House office continues to remain healthy as do bookings for the promotional banner, pennants and rotunda poster units. The Visitor Centre Box Office is experiencing record ticket sales enhanced by the major "Party in the Park" weekend event in July.

Section 4: Growth Strategy and Specific Projects

Coal Orchard Redevelopment, Taunton

- 4.1 We have recently signed off RIBA Phase 3 of this project and will be submitting the detailed matters planning application in the next few days.
- 4.2 Our marketing partner is now working on attracting commercial lettings with branded brochures having been produced targeting that market and PR in specialist press. We are completing the engagement of local specialists for the residential market. We will also begin the process of contracting with a build partner in the next few months.
- 4.3 We are progressing the Brewhouse Theatre element of this redevelopment scoping out further detail on timescales and funding approach. I would expect to share details of timescales and budgets with Members in early summer. The Team have been working with the Taunton Theatre Association to establish more detailed design briefs which will enable us to engage advisors for the next phases of this work. This is similar to the process we followed on the Coal Orchard.

Section 5: Asset Management Service Update – to end of March 2018

- 5.1 The Asset Manager left the Council as planned in February 2018 following gradual handover to his interim replacement. The new Interim Asset Manager, following approval, recruited to and appointed a new Senior Estates Surveyor who started in mid-February, and a new Lead Surveyor to manage the Estates Team, who will be starting on 4 April 2018.

- 5.2 Unfortunately the Asset Compliance Manager lost an Asset Surveyor (Stock Condition Surveying work in the main). HR are considering opportunities to fill this permanent post taking into account Transformation and, if necessary, and no suitable internal resource a temporary contractor may be considered. The Asset Data Team will also lose their Asset Compliance Technician who is moving on. Again options to resource this post will be considered in a similar way.

Some of the key project work completed during this period includes:-

Asset Management System (Open Assets by Capita)

- 5.3 Following an initial User Group Meeting held in mid-January to agree action points/next steps to move the project forward significant progress has been made:-

- A background Review including reviewing current dwelling list;
- A consultant has been appointed with specialist experience with Open Assets to support the project delivery;
- The budget reviewed;
- Discussions and actions with various internal project team members including ICT and Capital including procurement / contract approach;
- Discussions with Capita;
- ICT;
- Indicative high level Programme / Timeline;
- Review of Resources; and
- Review of Risks.

Leisure Procurement – Facilities Lease Heads of Terms

- 5.4 Asset Management has been working with Leisure Procurement and input into the Leisure Procurement tender process from a property asset perspective, attending site visits to the properties and tender preparation meetings, plus working up general draft Lease Heads of Terms for inclusion in the documents made available to bidders via OJEU. These Heads of Terms are general across all properties at this stage of the tender process.

The Deane House Accommodation Project

- 5.5 Whilst the Accommodation Project has been managed by the Accommodation Team, Asset Management have provided input to the agreement for lease with the Police for The Deane House, and the Accommodation Team have confirmed that this was signed and should be completed on 28 March 2018. The Design and Build contract has also been signed by the Council and is due to complete following completion of the agreement to lease after the 28 March 2018.
- 5.6 The Accommodation Team have appointed Lambert Smith Hampton to market part of the Ground Floor, and the whole of the second floor of The Deane House. The Asset Management Estates Surveyors will be providing

any support if required. Heads of Terms have been shared with a few interested parties in March.

Flook House

5.7 The new Senior Estates Surveyor is working successfully to regularise the accommodation agreements in place at Flook House.

Annual Asset Valuation

5.8 Wilks Head Eve have been engaged to conduct the Annual Asset Valuation work and work is well underway with draft valuations already received to date (Valuation date 31 March 2018).

Blackdown Business Park, Wellington

5.9 Another new tenant takes up occupation at Blackdown Business Park on 29 March 2018.

Councillor Mark Edwards.

Council Meeting – 10 April 2018

Report of Councillor Roger Habgood – Planning Policy and Transportation

1. Planning Policy

- 1.1 Plan Review: Work continues on compiling the evidence base to inform a future review of local planning documents for Taunton Deane. This is particularly important as the Government places an increased emphasis on ensuring plans are reviewed every five years.
- 1.2 Several key studies have been completed or are in the advanced stages of publication. These include the Green Infrastructure Strategy published last month and a new joint Retail, Leisure and Employment Study. We will shortly go out to tender on a new Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. It is anticipated that a new updated Local Development Scheme (project plan for the production of the local plan) will be presented to Members in late spring or early summer
- 1.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) consultation began on Monday, 5 March 2018 and will close on Thursday, 10 May 2018. The 28 page document covers a wide range of planning issues. The document sets out the Government's first major overhaul to the National Planning Policy Framework in six years
- 1.4 The key changes can be summarised as follows:-

Greater responsibility

Local authorities will have a new housing delivery test focused on driving up the numbers of homes actually delivered in their area, rather than numbers planned for. Developers will also be held to account for delivering the commitments, including affordable housing and the infrastructure needed to support communities.

Maximising the use of land

More freedom will be given to local authorities to make the most of existing brownfield land to build homes that maximise density. Redundant land will be encouraged such as under utilised retail or industrial space for homes, with more flexibilities given to extend upwards on existing blocks of flats and houses as well as shops and offices. This will mean we can build the homes the country needs while maintaining strong protection for the Green Belt.

Maintaining strong protections for the environment

Ensuring developments result in a net gain to the environment where possible and increases the protection given to ancient woodland so they are not lost for future generations.

Ensuring the right homes are built

Delivering more affordable homes that meet the housing needs of everyone wherever they are in their life, including sites dedicated for first time buyers, build to rent homes with family friendly tenancies, guaranteed affordable homes for key workers and adapted homes for older people.

Higher quality and design

Introducing new quality standards so well designed new homes are built in places people are proud to live in and live next door to.

More transparent planning process

Local authorities will be encouraged to work together and continue to close the gap between planning permissions granted and homes built. A new standardised approach to assessing housing need will be introduced with new measures to make the system of developer contributions clearer, simpler and more robust, so developers understand what is expected of them and will be in no doubt that Councils will hold them to their commitments.

The Councils response to the Consultation is currently being drafted

2. Garden Town Strategy and Plan

- 2.1 Members will recall that the Policy Team has been co-ordinating the work on a Garden Town Plan for Taunton. This document will set a long-term vision for the town and guiding principles to inform planning and much of the Council's future activity in Taunton. A successful visioning event with key stakeholders was held at Taunton Rugby Club at the end of March 2018, the findings of which will be shared with Members in due course and prior to the document going out to wider public consultation.
- 2.2 The Plan will identify the key activities, priorities and proposals for Taunton in a living, dynamic action plan. As previously stated our intent is to host the plan on a web platform providing up to the minute information on projects, progress towards delivery, etc.
- 2.3 Much of the background work to inform the Garden Town Plan is common to the Local Plan. As part of this work Atkins were commissioned to prepare a River Tone Strategy. Members will recall that Atkins prepared the award-winning Bath Waterspace Strategy, which was shared in autumn of last year. There will be opportunities for Members to engage with this important project in the months to come.
- 2.4 Green Infrastructure: Following the Members' Briefing regarding the Council's Green Infrastructure Strategy held in October 2017, the strategy has now been signed off. Work has been commissioned to take forward and develop more detailed project plans for each of the Strategy's priority projects. The first of the priority project plans will be

taken through Full Council very soon to deliver the Green Country Park.

3. Nexus 25

- 3.1 The formal consultation on the Local Development Order (LDO) for the Strategic Employment Site took place in July / August 2017. The responses and comments were reported to the Community Scrutiny Committee and subsequently Full Council approved the LDO.
- 3.2 This development will deliver significant employment opportunities for Taunton Deane in line with Council Policy meeting the aspirations of our community.
- 3.2 The final making of the LDO was dependent on planning permission for the M5 Junction 25 Improvement Scheme being in place. That permission has been granted and the LDO is now made.

4. Junction 25 (J25) Upgrade – Somerset County Council (SCC) Highways Authority

- 4.1 The proposed upgrade involves full signalisation and widening of the carriageway at J25, including widening the eastern exit from the junction, improving pedestrian and cycling facilities and updating signage.
- 4.2 This scheme aims to improve journey times, ease congestion, improve Park and Ride journey time reliability and create a more attractive gateway from the M5 to Taunton, Yeovil and the A303. The improvements will also unlock access into the proposed strategic employment site at J25.
- 4.3 SCC as the Highways Authority has now approved the J25 upgrade

5. Highways England Consultation - Taunton to Southfields Dualling Scheme

- 5.1 Highways England (HE) has consulted on their revised proposals to dual the A358. The previous consultation on a single route was not received well in our community.
- 5.2 Following concerted efforts by Parish, Borough and County representatives working with our MP, discussions were held with appropriate Ministers and the rethink took place.
- 5.3 Many Councillors at Parish, Borough and County engaged with this further HE consultation.
- 5.4 The Council's formal response has been made to HE as has the

County Highways Authority response. HE's Public Consultation ended on 27 February 2018.

- 5.5 HE are now analysing the feedback and will then make a decision on the choice of the preferred route. As the scheme is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) under the Planning Act 2008 HE are required to make an application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) to gain authorisation to construct the scheme.
- 5.6 It is our understanding that HE are committed to another round of consultation on their preferred route before the DCO is submitted. That said the form of this consultation and the consultees are not explicit.
- 5.7 Taunton Deane has requested further involvement as have many of the Parish Councils. The Council continues to push for its voice and the voices of Parish Councils and residents to be heard.
- 5.8 Once the DCO has been made the Planning Inspectorate will then hold a public examination before making a recommendation to the Secretary of State who will decide whether or not the scheme will be built.

6. Taunton Urban Realm

- 6.1 This scheme is being developed and taken forward with County colleagues at the Highways Authority. It is of concern that Implementation dates have yet to be confirmed.
- 6.2 The Council is dependent on County Council confirmation of the necessary traffic orders, traffic light amendments and signage being in place. Discussions are continuing with County colleagues and WSP to finalise the scheme details and to take the scheme forward.

7. Car park Pay on Foot (PoF) and Variable Message Signage

- 7.1 The contracts have now been let to the VMS sign manufacturer and to the PoF supplier. Members are aware that a delay was encountered as the PoF Civil elements of the project had to be retendered.
- 7.2 Elements of the civil ground works will commence shortly. The completion date for the project remains as planned for June 2018.
- 7.3 The refresh of the Taunton Parking Strategy has been agreed by Council along with the Designation of Car Parks into Short and Long Stay together with the revised Pricing Strategy.

8. Neighbourhood Plans

- 8.1 Bishops Lydeard and Cothelstone and the Trull and Staplehay Neighbourhood plans are made.
- 8.2 Following the completed examination of the West Monkton and Cheddon Fitzpaine Neighbourhood Development Plan, the report was agreed and accepted. The planned date for the referendum is the end of April 2018.
- 8.3 The Council continues to support the Creech St. Michael and Ruishton and Thornfalcon Neighbourhood Plans.
- 8.4 The plan area for Oake Parish Council has been designated. The Parish Council is continuing with its work of the plan.
- 8.5 Wiveliscombe and Wellington have both had their Neighbourhood Plan areas designated. Both councils have their plans under review.

9. Major Planning

Staplegrove

- 9.1 The successful Council bid for funding the £7,200,000 spine road provides a superior outcome for the community. Our officers are in discussion with the developers and agents and the funders to take this development forward.

Firepool, Taunton

- 9.2 Firepool has been granted outline planning permission. Officers are now working with the requisite stakeholders to realise this important scheme.

Comeytrove

- 9.3 Discussions with the developer consortium continue. It is expected to see this application before a Planning Committee in the near future.

10. Heritage at Risk

Tonedale Mill, Wellington

- 10.1 Works to protect the nationally important Tonedale Mill are continuing.
- 10.2 The Council's Heritage at Risk Project Manager Dr Joanne O'Hara continues to make significant progress with colleagues from the Council and from Historic England with landowners and other stakeholders.

11. A different approach to unlawful encampments?

- 11.1 As outlined in her report by my colleague Executive Councillor Jane Warmington, relevant partner organisations from across Somerset came together last month to consider illegal encampments and lack of transit facilities in Somerset.

Councillor Mrs Warmington covers the issue extensively. I therefore defer to her report, suffice to say that Borough and County authorities have roles to play in site provision.

Councillor Roger Habgood

Council Meeting – 10 April 2018

Report of Councillor Mrs Vivienne Stock-Williams - Sports, Parks and Leisure

Good sports, parks and leisure facilities improve the health and wellbeing of our local communities.

1. Community Leisure

Play and Recreation

1.1 The following works have been ordered using both the Council's replacement play equipment budget and/or Section 106 Agreement funding:-

- Comeytrove Park – delivery is awaited of a log cabin climber;
- Cotford St Luke Recreation Ground Play Area - construction of additional play equipment, as chosen by the school children, is underway.
- Howard Road, Wellington – play equipment for the under 5's has been ordered.
- Hudson Way – the concrete base works for a new skate facility have been successfully completed. The supplier of the equipment expects to be on site to start construction works during the week commencing 19 April 2018.
- Oaken Green, Rockwell Green – the Vortex roundabout has been installed. A Kindergarten pod swing has been ordered to add to the play facility.
- Victoria Park, Taunton – an application for planning permission has been submitted for a 7.5 m tower slide (resembling Burnham-on-Sea lighthouse) and baseball backstop fence.
- Wellington Park – paths works have been ordered and should be completed before the first Summer Bandstand concert takes place.
- Westford Grange – supply and installation of a multi-play unit and improvement works to the play surfacing have been ordered.

Summer Sunday Bandstand Concerts

1.2 The 2018 Summer Sunday Bandstand Concerts have been arranged, with a full take up of all the available dates. The first concert in Vivary Park will be given by Steel the Band on 6 May 2018.

Carols around the Bandstand

1.3 Arrangements have been put in place for this year's Carols around the

Bandstand, which will take place in Vivary Park on Monday, 17 December 2018.

Capital grant scheme for Voluntary Village Halls, Sports Clubs and Allotments and the Parish Play Area Grant Scheme

- 1.4 Interest has been shown in both schemes for which applications close on 30 June 2018.

Cuckoo Meadow – Minehead

- 1.5 Work is continuing with the project, which is well used by two youth groups. Paths are to be constructed within the play area.

Section 106 Funding for Play, Sport, Allotments and Community Halls

- 1.6 Work continues monitoring housing developments for payment trigger points, and assisting communities and organisations with their on-going projects. Works have recently started at both Bishops Hull Recreation Ground Sports Pavilion and Creech St Michael Village Hall storage extension and internal improvement works. Both projects are being supported with Section 106 Agreement funding from within the applicable parishes.

Victoria Park, Taunton

- 1.7 Requests have been made by Taunton Muskets Baseball Club for a field space on which to play and by a local volleyball team for a pitch. Victoria Park has been identified as having suitable spaces for both sports and, along with the American Football Goal Posts which have already been installed, would see the Park become Taunton Deane's alternative sports park.
- 1.8 Discussions have been held with the Victoria Park Action Group who have a co-ordinating role within the park. As mentioned earlier planning permission for the baseball backstop fence, which would be funded by Section 106 Agreement contributions, is currently being sought.

2. GLL (Taunton Deane)

Community Sport and Health

Swimathon

- 2.1 Wellington Sports Centre, Taunton Pool and Blackbrook Leisure Centre and Spa are supporting Cancer Research by hosting a Swimathon over the weekend of 27-29 April 2018.

Walk Well in Taunton Deane

- 2.2 The Spring Walk Programme has now been launched, which includes a new walk in Monkton Heathfield exploring the new footpaths that have been put in place following the building of the new housing development.

GLL National Awards Ceremony

- 2.3 Walk Leaders **Joy Boaden** and **Jenny Dilley**, who are both key volunteers for Walk Well in Taunton Deane, were nominated for the GLL Nick Francis Community Award for their hard work and dedication to the Health Walk programme in Taunton Deane over many years. I should like to congratulate them both on securing a prestigious place at the National Finals, which were held on 9 February 2018 in London.

Facilities

Wellsprings Leisure Centre, Taunton

- 2.4 **World Cancer Day** (Sunday, 4 February 2018) saw over 30 participants 'HIIT' (High Intensity Interval Training) cancer at Wellsprings Leisure Centre, battling their way through 30 minutes of GRIT Strength and Cardio. Through everybody's huge efforts GLL managed to raise £130 on the day.
- 2.5 **Hestercombe Humdinger and Hurtle** was held at Wellsprings Leisure Centre for the third time on Sunday, 11 February 2018. Wellsprings Ladies Running Group also took part in this popular event.
- 2.6 **Wellsprings Heart Support Group** all wore red at their class on 15 February 2018 and raised £163.36 for the British Heart Foundation.

Blackbrook Leisure Centre and Spa, Taunton

- 2.7 Blackbrook Leisure Centre and Spa also held a HIIT class to support World Cancer Day, where staff and customers raised £160.

Vivary Golf and High Ropes, Taunton

- 2.8 Vivary has had a torrid start to the year, with excessive rain and snow forcing closures. The majority of staff have been relocated to other Taunton centres to help cover vacant shifts.

3. Parks and Open Spaces

Adverse Weather

- 3.1 The recent snow and subsequent flooding has kept Deane DLO staff very busy, with our teams out gritting our bridges, Sheltered Housing sites, schools and Council Offices. Taunton Deane staff have also been helping Somerset County Council Highways with gritting and snow clearance, and dealing with the damage caused by flooding in our parks.

Grass Cutting

- 3.2 The growing season is due any time now, so the Open Spaces Team is gearing up ready to start grass cutting in the next two weeks. This does, however, depend on the weather.
- 3.3 The DLO workshop has been operating at full speed to get our ride on mowers and small tools serviced in preparation for outside work beginning

and new equipment has been arriving to replace worn out gear. The opportunity has been taken to replace some of our oldest ride on mowers with more advanced and versatile versions, which will allow us to do more with less.

Vivary Park, Taunton

- 3.4 The park is coming out of its winter dormancy period with the new Station Café due to open shortly.
- 3.5 Work to de-silt the lake has begun. The central island has been cleared ready for the operation to clear the channels and that stage of the project will commence as soon as the Environment Agency issue our licence. We hope to have the work, which will vastly improve the water quality and appearance of the lake, completed by the end of May.
- 3.6 It is anticipated that de-silting the lake and its feeder streams will transport the flow of water from upstream to the Tone faster and thus reduce the build-up. This project will not stop flooding, but it should reduce the number of times it becomes extensive. We look forward to seeing the popular Model Boat Club back in operation this summer.
- 3.7 An Easter Egg Hunt is taking place in Vivary Park this year on Easter Sunday and we are hoping for a dry afternoon.

Wellington Park

- 3.8 We are also about to begin the process of resurfacing the outer paths in Wellington Park, which have become unsafe. The unstable substratum will be replaced and the paths surfaced with grey aggregate mixed with tarmac. This grey appearance is compatible with the original landscape design for our heritage status park. It is hoped to have this work completed before the park becomes busy through the summer.

Green Flag Judging

- 3.9 Green Flag judging is taking place in early April 2018. We very much hope that Vivary Park, Victoria Park and French Weir Recreation Ground in Taunton retain their Green Flags, that Wellington Park will again receive a Green Flag and Green Flag Heritage Award, and Swains Lane Nature Reserve in Wellington will again receive a Community Green Flag.
- 3.10 These Awards are a recognition of how hard our staff and volunteers work to maintain our parks and open spaces to such a high standard, and how it really is a long-term commitment. It is an honour to fly these flags in recognition of their dedication.

4. Property

Blackbrook Pavilion Site, Taunton

- 4.1 The recent gymnasium refurbishment is now complete and two external tennis courts have been re-coated.

Leisure Facilities

- 4.2 Condition surveys are currently being carried out at all Taunton Deane's leisure facilities.

Station Road Pool, Taunton

- 4.3 Hand rails and safety rails to the entrance steps have been installed.
- 4.4 External render repairs and decoration works are planned for the summer.

Wellington Sports Centre

- 4.5 External render repairs and decoration works are planned for the middle of the year.
- 4.6 Plant room and filter refurbishment for the swimming pool will be taking place shortly.

Wellsprings Leisure Centre, Taunton

- 4.7 Uneven paving slabs in the top area of the car park will be removed and tarmac infill laid. Additional car park repairs are scheduled for later this year to rectify sunken areas.

Wilton Lands, Taunton

- 4.8 An order has been placed for work to be carried out this spring to renovate the well-used bridge at Wilton Lands. A temporary scaffolding bridge will be erected alongside so that replacement seasoned oak balustrades and decking can be installed.

5. Leisure Provider Procurement

- 5.1 We have recently finalised the procurement timetable which will ultimately lead to the appointment of an operator to run the Council's Leisure Facilities. The first step of this formal process was to advertise the opportunity through OJEU (the Official Journal of the European Union) on 23 March 2018.
- 5.2 This advert will in effect begin the formal selection process, during which time interested companies will be invited to provide enough information so that a decision can be made on which companies should move forward to the next stage. Some of the responses required are 'pass/fail', requiring companies to pass certain fundamental elements to evidence their ability to deliver a contract of this size (if ultimately selected).

- 5.3 Work in recent weeks has predominantly been to draft documents which are required for this stage – these documents include the draft contract, Heads of Terms, Services Specification and Selection Questionnaire. We are helped in this regard by our legal advisors and leisure consultants.
- 5.4 We are also in the process of developing an electronic data room. In the data room, we will place all the information that bidders will need to develop their second stage submissions – such as, usage and income figures, utility suppliers and recent utility usage, equipment registers, conditions relating to any grant aid, current opening hours and prices. When complete, it is anticipated the data room may contain 50 or more documents.
- 5.5 A ‘Bidder’s Open Day’ will take place in April 2018 to allow bidders to visit facilities, to clarify any issues and to ask questions.
- 5.6 By 4 May 2018, the responses to stage 1 will be returned and the task will begin of analysing the returns and deciding which companies to take forward to the next stage. It is our expectation that approximately five companies will be selected to progress. There are then further stages, on which Councillors will be updated as we progress.

Councillor Vivienne Stock-Williams

Council Meeting – 10 April 2018

Report of Councillor Richard Parrish – Corporate Resources

1. Corporate Services

- 1.1 The key priority is around maintaining staff engagement, communications and morale through the consultation exercise and particularly as we commence the first phase of the restructure.

2. Corporate Performance

- 2.1 GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations) - The Compliance Action Plan continues to be developed and implemented with an update report being taken to the Corporate Governance Committee on 26 March 2018. Our software providers have been contacted to identify what changes they are making to enable GDPR compliance.
- 2.2 Officers are undertaking communications by e-mail with all staff and Members to raise awareness and to explain that training will be organised and arranged for April/May.
- 2.3 Work continues to compile an updated Information Asset Register which Members will appreciate is an extensive task. On completion, a full report will be forthcoming.
- 2.4 Corporate Risk Management; during this significant period of change the risk register is under constant review and updating.

3. Customer Services

- 3.1 March has been a very busy period resulting from increased enquiries relating to service disruptions caused by bad weather and the seasonal enquiries about Council Tax bills, but officers have still maintained a high level of service.
- 3.2 The service is investigating ways to extend the service and take on new functions (for example, assisting with ICT helpdesk calls). This is in the early stages and any change will be reported on in a subsequent report.
- 3.3 We are working with the Accommodation Programme to plan the new Deane House reception layout and working arrangements in advance of the completion of the refurbishment works.

4. Facilities Management

- 4.1 Facilities Management (FM) continues to work and plan with the

Accommodation Team to prepare for the moves associated with the next phase of The Deane House refurbishment.

- 4.2 Effective evacuation protocols are essential to a safe working environment. To this end the FM Team continue to evaluate and implement updated procedures.

5. ICT/Technology

- 5.1 Currently additional temporary resource is being recruited to replace agency staff who have left and to support delivery of the Transformation technology projects.

- 5.2 Projects currently in progress include:-

- PSN compliance;
- New Mobile Data Management platform rollout;
- 8x8 telephone system deployment – largely complete;
- Year-end support;
- Follow-me printing rollout – largely complete;
- Allpay system implementation – payments are now being received and the new phone payments element of this is scheduled to go-live during the week commencing 26 March 2018.

6. Members Case Management

- 6.1 This service is now fully launched and live across both Taunton Deane and West Somerset Councils. This is working well and dealing with Member enquiries. It is hoped that Members will make full use of this innovative service.

7. Resources and Support Services

HR and Organisational Development

- 7.1 Transformation – Over 150 individual meetings with staff have been held to support them through the recruitment process and discuss their queries.
- 7.2 Payroll – We have completed our first full year in managing a payroll service and are now preparing for the year end collating pensionable pay figures for Peninsula Pensions and the issuing of the P11D information.
- 7.3 Gender pay gap – We have a legal requirement to report on the gender pay gap and work is underway to calculate the figures for 2017/2018. Statutory information will be displayed on our website in due course. We are now in the process of producing a report which will be presented to Members on completion. If required, an action plan to address any anomalies will follow.
- 7.4 Training – Important emphasis continues to be given to staff welfare and to

this end the team has attended training on harassment in the workplace and an Employer Disability Confident conference.

8. Procurement Team

- 8.1 The Procurement Team continue to provide support across a wide range of projects and business usual activity.
- 8.2 Michael O'Halloran is working on a number of key strategic projects including North Taunton Master Planning, refurbishment of Woolaway Homes (Oak), the Laxton Road development, Firepool development, Lisieux Way and the new Leisure Contract. In respect of the Leisure contract the procurement design is complete and the Contract Notice is expected to be issued on 23 March 2018.
- 8.3 David Carpenter is concluding initial design work in respect of the procurement of professional services that may be required for the Brewhouse Theatre Project.
- 8.4 Contracts recently awarded include:-
Professional Services – Minehead Seafront Improvements; and
Professional Services – Firepool Hotel.
- 8.5 The Team continue to support South Somerset District Council on several projects as well as providing general procurement advice.
- 8.6 Work is underway to develop a range of updated procurement template documents. The aim being to facilitate a greater degree of self service and general procurement skills/understanding amongst staff.
- 8.7 Work is underway to develop bespoke procurement reports within the E5 system. Tenders that have either been recently issued or are currently being evaluated include:-
- Licensed Asbestos Removal;
 - Surveys and Asbestos Related Professional Services;
 - Market Operator – Castle Green; and
 - HGV Vehicle – Property Services.

9. Finance

- 9.1 The budget setting process has been completed and several reports have been presented to Scrutiny and Executive on the budget position. This has also included an update to the medium term financial plan including updated forecasts of future funding and any potential budgetary gap. The Council's capital spending plans have also been presented to Members for consideration.
- 9.2 We have also started early preparation for completing the Council's Final

Accounts to make sure that we are ready for our external auditors and the statutory deadlines for approval and publication. Guidance has recently been issued to all budget holders and business support staff and several training sessions have also taken place.

9.3 Alongside our ongoing financial activities we have continued to support a number of potential capital projects particularly those with a commercial and regeneration aspect including:-

- Firepool Hotel;
- Coal Orchard;
- The Collar Factory; and
- Taunton Station Regeneration.

9.4 This work includes producing new and updating existing Business Cases for these capital projects to determine that they are affordable and meet investment criteria.

9.5 The Finance Team also continue to support the business transformation process and to support the preparation and delivery of financial processes for a new single Council.

10. Revenues and Benefits

10.1 The Team has carried out annual billing with Council Tax and Business Rates bills being received by customers during the week of 12 March 2018. We have advised customers of their entitlement to Council Tax Support under our new banded income scheme 2018/2019. The number of customers contacting us does not appear to be significantly more than in previous years and while some have queried reductions in the help we give them towards their Council Tax bills. In general customers appear to accept the revised scheme.

10.2 At the time of writing the Revenues Team look set to meet the annual target to collect 97.8% of Council Tax owed for 2017/2018 by 31 March 2018. The combined average speed in working out new Housing Benefit claims and changes in circumstances remains at less than 8 days.

10.3 We will have utilised most of the funding provided by the Department for Work and Pensions for Discretionary Housing Payments by year end, as well as spending all the funds available by providing awards under our Discretionary Reduction in Council Tax liability policy for those residents who are in most need of extra financial help.

Councillor Richard Parrish

Council Meeting – 10 April 2018

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 working closely 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. Somerset One Team Toolkit

- 1.1 A toolkit is now available for One Teams, their constituent partners and others who may be considering this way of working. It is very comprehensive and cross references background material to draw upon and provides a number of templates which One Teams can personalise and use.
- 1.2 It begins by explaining the concept, the local context (deprivation and demand), governance, Terms of Reference and confidentiality agreements, information sharing agreements, threshold guidance for referrals and risk assessments, agenda and minutes templates, records and retention, self-evaluation and outcomes, Team Around the School principles and lots of useful links.
- 1.3 It is a comprehensive, well researched aid to setting up and running a One Team and the reasons for why behind this. It allows for variations between different areas and values the all-important bottom up approach.
- 1.4 The Safer Somerset Partnership which provides strategic County-wide oversight has agreed the toolkit and given it their approval.
- 1.5 The toolkit has been pulled together by the Somerset Co-ordinator with help from the various One Team co-ordinators and their administrative support.

2. A Different Approach to Unlawful Encampments?

- 2.2 Relevant partner organisations from across Somerset including Local Authorities were brought together last month by the Police with representatives from the Gypsy and Traveller communities to consider illegal encampments and lack of transit facilities in Somerset to accommodate those passing through.
- 2.3 Issues were raised which continue to cause concern but two other areas have adopted a different approach for dealing with these, one Local Authority led and the other Gypsy and Traveller community led.

- 2.4 **Pop-up transit stops** - South Gloucestershire Council strive to balance the interests of local people and the travelling population in the management of unauthorised encampments. In recognition that there is no provision for emergency stopping places or transit accommodation and that eviction can result in other unauthorised encampments in less suitable locations, every unauthorised encampment is considered in relation to its individual circumstances.
- 2.5 While the encampment is in place:-
- Appropriate facilities are arranged to ensure welfare needs are met and minimise its impact in the area (for example bin bags, a skip and loos);
 - In practice after an initial assessment, negotiations begin immediately to limit the length of stay although the majority of encampments on Council land remain in place for less than a week;
 - The Council will liaise between Gypsies and Travellers and the settled community;
 - The camp will be visited daily and issues and incidents raised by the public will be investigated and resolved where possible; and
 - Decide if a tolerated period of occupation is necessary and, where appropriate, advise and liaise with all key partner agencies.
- 2.6 South Gloucestershire Council has not been able to identify any suitable locations for transit sites a difficulty experienced in many other areas.
- 2.7 **Negotiated stopping** - Following illegal encampments on part of an old industrial estate in Leeds, City Council Chief Housing Officer was tasked to lead a review with a view to initiating negotiated stopping.
- 2.7 The desirable criteria for the Local Authority were:-
- That the land was a 'defensible space' any encampment therefore would be restricted in size;
 - That there was some 'buy-in' to the project among local business owners, the Police and elected Members; and
 - The location was safe for the families and that they were prepared to stay there.
- 2.8 The pilot went ahead and the Leeds Gypsy and Traveller Exchange (Leeds GATE established 2004) assisted with drawing up and the signing of agreements between heads of families and the Local Authority. The agreement was to last for three months.
- 2.9 As their part of this agreement the City Council would provide rubbish disposal and portaloos for each family. Leeds GATE assisted with communication between local settled communities and the families and an article on the pilot appeared in the Yorkshire Evening Post and in blogs on the Leeds GATE website.
- 2.10 The Chief Housing Officer was determined that the camp would not remain beyond the agreed period. Support was gathered among relevant elected Members, local

businesses and neighbourhood Policing teams for the camp to move to another location and a successful move took place where it remained for a similar length of time.

2.11 Several other negotiated stopping sites were agreed although progress on two long term sites took three more years during which the Council remained open minded and continued searching (the long term sites have three year temporary planning permissions).

2.12 Key learning from this was:-

- Even on sites which the Council were unwilling to negotiate stopping, basic services of rubbish collection and loo facilities were provided;
- Strong communication between the Council and a number of key individuals on the camp;
- Setbacks and political will presented obstacles to maintaining momentum and progress was slow;
- The Council were willing and able to invest money into a potential site for negotiated stopping using savings made by avoiding legal and clean-up costs associated with the conventional approach to unauthorised encampments ;
- The Gypsy and Traveller community led the negotiations and discussions throughout with Leeds GATE facilitating; and
- The success of negotiated stopping agreements has been seen as positive.

2.13 Many Gypsies and Travellers live on a permanent site somewhere (often privately owned) but still like to travel. Whilst Local Authorities continue to struggle to find suitable transit sites (which are often not popular), it may be that the South Gloucestershire model of a tolerated occupation and cautious welcome for a short stay (under a week) providing basic facilities (loos, skip, bin-bags, etc) is a practical alternative to expensive antisocial enforcement - a temporary solution for a temporary need.

2.14 The outcome of the meeting last month was that Elected Members were asked to take the lead on this across upper and lower tiers of local government in Somerset together and consider a strategy to manage temporary stopping.

3. Update on Preventing Radicalisation in Partnership (Prevent)

3.1 - The national risk is considered severe (raised to critical twice in 2016/2017);
- The biggest threats are lone actors (inspired by extremists);
- In the South West there has been a rise in right wing extremists (XRW) and some left wing extremists with a focus on animal cruelty/ environment;
- We are seeing an increase in actions from those from this country (home grown) as it is now more difficult to leave the country to fight for a cause;
- Although petty criminals can be radicalised/ influenced/ brainwashed, there is no one profile of a potential terrorist; AND
- Likelihood is a lone actor, low tech, influenced but not instructed or trained.

3.2 - Prevent Duty (Section 26 Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015) places a moral duty on specified authorities to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism;

- This includes Health, Education, Local Authorities, Police, Probation, Prisons (not the Military but they are also receiving training);
- Training includes awareness (real life examples) and referral pathways; and
- Training at Taunton Deane concentrated on examples of XRW, spotting the signs and the referral pathway (delivered well by Scott Weetch).

- 3.3
- The referral pathway is built on proportionality, safeguarding and a quiet, consensual approach;
 - A referral is followed by checks/ information gathering and this may result in a low key visit from a Prevent Officer and other services may be called upon, for example Mental Health (MH) support;
 - Five percent of referrals resulted in convening a multi-agency Channel Panel which resulted in other support being put in place (MH) but then no further action;
 - Schools are the largest referring agency (about a fifth of referrals were under 18s);
 - Other referees given in examples included a GP, hospital, and airport security staff. Also listed were community, higher education, local Police, Social Services and others; and
 - Most referrals concerned adult males and vulnerability was an issue.
- 3.4
- Police and Crime Panel Elected Members were asked to be supportive of the proactive but consensual, proportional approach Prevent takes because it has received some bad press although this is gradually changing. Members are encouraged in particular to be on-line aware; support community cohesion; and promote/ encourage/ enable English lessons.

4. Resettled Refugees

- 4.1
- Taunton Deane Welcomes Refugees (TDWR) has welcomed the first Syrian refugee family to Wellington who are delighted with their accommodation and starting to settle in. A new family is due to arrive in Taunton, so another circle of volunteers are very busy preparing the house and getting everything ready. This will be the sixth family to be resettled in Taunton (including one family who have relocated from Bridgwater). Taunton also has one couple and two individual refugees now settled in the town.
- 4.2
- TDWR is a dedicated group of volunteers and a small team of volunteers supports a family for several months after they first arrive. If you would like to be an active volunteer the Portfolio Holder will put you in touch because we are expecting another family later in the year. To be an active volunteer means that you can offer an amount of time each week (two hours or more) for about a year helping a family resettle after the traumas of escaping the war in Syria.

5. Rough Sleepers One Team

- 5.1
- A One Team model of working has been established in Taunton with a specific focus on rough sleepers and street anti-social behaviour.
- 5.2
- Taunton Deane Borough Council is now chairing weekly meetings with partners including the Police, Taunton Association for the Homeless (TAH), Open Door, Somerset County Council, other support agencies and local businesses to ensure

that appropriate and necessary steps are being taken with every individual rough sleeper prioritising those who are causing anti-social behaviour.

- 5.3 It is hoped the multi-agency approach will work both proactively and reactively to minimize, as far as possible, the causes of rough sleeping, begging and anti-social behaviour and the associated problems they create.
- 5.4 The partners will always take a supportive approach first, however, if someone refuses to engage and acts in a threatening or anti-social way, the agencies will take appropriate action through the legislation available.
- 5.5 The laws and powers open to the Council and Police for addressing rough sleeping and anti-social behaviour are in practice fairly limited and often difficult to apply. However, the community concerns are recognised both in terms of ensuring the welfare of rough sleepers and their plight and about the image of the town.
- 5.6 The various partners have a range of services in place which have traditionally been effective but changing circumstances including complex mental health issues and serious problems with addiction mean that a different approach is needed.
- 5.7 The One Team method is identifying and addressing issues of real concern and developing a more joined-up service for each rough sleeper to help them break the cycle of homelessness and addiction.
- 5.8 It will also mean the Council and Police are able to take action as a last resort in the knowledge that help and support has been offered and refused.
- 5.9 Experience indicates that those who beg on the streets are not actually homeless but housed and already receiving support and only begging to maintain a drug habit. Please drop in to the Taunton Visitor Centre and give to Open Door instead and support the local facilities they provide to help anyone who is homeless or rough sleeping in the town. Thank you.

Councillor Jane Warmington