

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Full Council Meeting – 5 October 2010

Report of Councillor John Williams – Leader of the Council

1. Taunton in Bloom

- 1.1 I am sure all Members will join with me in congratulating all involved in the supreme effort of Taunton gaining Gold in the large towns' category, as well as the Mick McGahey Trophy for Exceptional Community Effort, making 2010 one of the best years to date.
- 1.2 Recognition was given to two members of staff in particular for their efforts, Shaun Cregan and Chris Mulcahy, who were given Community Champion Awards. Shaun has been Britain in Bloom Co-ordinator for 10 years and Chris Mulcahy, who retired recently after more than 31 years service, was until then, Parks Manager.
- 1.3 Our special thanks go to Chris for his excellent work in the Borough and what a fitting end to his long and distinguished service. We wish him well in his retirement and our thanks for all that he has done for us over the years.
- 1.4 Besides Taunton gaining Gold in the large towns' category, and the "Exceptional Community Effort" that secured the award of the Mick McGahey Trophy, making 2010 one of the best years to date. "It's Your Neighbourhood" awards were also given to: Kingston Road Allotments, Victoria Park Action Group and St. George's School, who were all commended as 'improving'.
- 1.5 A brilliant achievement all round which builds upon the honours gained in previous years.

2. Local Enterprise Partnerships

- 2.1 Somerset County Council submitted a bid on time encompassing and with the support of all Somerset Districts. It also included Devon but without general support other than potentially support from East Devon DC and Exeter City Council. Cornwall decided they wished to submit their own bid. Included in this was our West Somerset "Local Delivery LEP" which was worked up jointly between us, Sedgemoor District Council and West Somerset District Council. This also had tremendous support from local businesses
- 2.2 Preliminary feedback from Government is that they have received 57 bids to establish LEP's across the country and they are seeking to reduce this to 25 in total. Some LEP's that have a strong economic basis, such as West of England, based on the old Avon, will be given an early green light to proceed. Others, such as Somerset's bid, will be sent

back for further work to include a greater area. In Somerset's case it is suggested that Devon, Cornwall, Scilly Isles and part of West Dorset (that looks to Yeovil) should be incorporated within a much enlarged "Peninsular LEP" which would also include Plymouth which has tried to remain independent.

- 2.3 Much work yet remains but at least we have a goal to work towards and we have agreed with our Somerset partners that we must maintain the "Local Delivery LEP's" as being crucial to engage with our local private sector partners. All the more important if a huge "Peninsular LEP" is to be the final outcome

3. Hinkley Point Opportunities

- 3.1 Since the last Full Council we have been working to establish a liaison with EDF, Sedgemoor District Council and Somerset County Council as being the key players considering the impact of this enormous proposed development on Somerset.
- 3.2 Following useful and informative meetings, we will be making a submission to the relevant authority about the impact of EDF proposals clearly setting out the inadequacy of the detail surrounding the scheme. Also the lack of substance in their plans to show how they will deal with shortcomings in infrastructure, housing of workers, transportation of non water borne material and leisure facilities.
- 3.3 We have a further meeting arranged in Taunton with EDF representatives, some key partners and private sector representatives to promote Taunton Deane. We will most certainly be affected by this major development so it is incumbent upon us to do all possible to ensure our community does gain from it. This can be in the form of improved business opportunity, upgraded infrastructure, education facilities, leisure facilities and legacy issues of the required housing.
- 3.4 Building an ongoing rapport with other Districts, County and EDF are crucial to our gaining improved contributions from the development for our community. Work is ongoing on this and we will continue to try and maximise the gain because of the impact this huge potential development will have.

4. Project Taunton

- 4.1 Much has been happening and despite the national and international fears about the economy I believe we have much to be optimistic about.
- 4.2 Planning consent was granted to St Modwen, our development partners, on the Priory Bridge Road car park site for a development with the potential for 600 jobs and 49 homes. Better still, St Modwen are in an advanced stage of negotiation with an occupier for 20,000 sq ft of office space which if signed up would allow construction to commence. This

can only be a catalyst for other occupiers and is a huge vote of confidence for our regeneration plans for Taunton.

- 4.3 For the avoidance of doubt, although the above development removes a major car park, it is embodied in our development agreement with St Modwen that as car parking space is taken out of commission, they must make equivalent alternative provision on the old livestock market site until such time as the permanent multi-storey is up and running.
- 4.4 Longrun Meadows was successfully launched recently, 65 acres of meadow land bordered by the River Tone within minutes walking of the town centre. A fantastic achievement to obtain this for the benefit of our community and achieve the utilitarian objective of a huge flood retention scheme to protect the areas of new development in the town centre.
- 4.5 The Third Way is progressing well, the construction of the new road and bridge abutments is in an advanced stage with bridge construction scheduled to start in the next two weeks. Alteration and upgrading works of the Wood St/Bridge St junction has also been started and is due for completion shortly. Alterations to the Staplegrove Road traffic lights are planned for late October. The new road construction is on programme and anticipated to be open for traffic in April 2011. Great news for Taunton as it must relieve town centre traffic congestion and make a better shopping experience for all.
- 4.6 We recently held a very constructive meeting with representatives of the Orchard shopping centre and it was heartening to hear they were continuing to develop their plans for the major expansion of the centre to encompass the sites of the multi storey car parks and Quantock House. They are hopeful of producing a viable and realistic scheme. Given the present economic climate, it is a good time to develop plans in advance of the market's recovery. They hope to share some draft plans within a few months and submit a planning application next year. I await developments with great interest.
- 4.7 With the award of Growth Points Funding, we are now able to proceed with the development of the Castle Green area, fulfilling an assurance given to the Heritage and Lottery funders that if they funded works to Castle Museum we would undertake enhancement of the surrounding area. It also fulfils the aspirations of this Council to return this area to high quality open public space opening up views to the wonderful Castle buildings. Work is scheduled to commence in January 2011.
- 4.8 The funding for the vital Northern Inner Distributor Road has been withdrawn during the Comprehensive Spending Review programme, this is a vital section of road that for a £13 million investment would release in the order of £270 million of economic development. I am pleased to report that our MP Jeremy Browne is aware of the problem and has helped facilitate a meeting with Norman Baker MP, Minister of Roads and Transport to allow us to press our case direct. This will very much

be a partnership meeting of Jeremy, County, Project Taunton and Borough Council to stress the urgent need for this relatively small amount of pump priming finance to allow this strategic employment site to proceed. The Minister is scheduled to visit Taunton on 8 October 2010 and wishes to view the Third Way construction works which is an excellent example of County's ability to deliver major projects.

5. Meetings with Community and Business Groups

- 5.1 Cllr Lewin-Harris and I recently had a very interesting meeting with a Polish migrants group who wished to better understand our democratic process. Discussions were very wide ranging but what was impressive was the amount of self help they generated within their own society, language being a major problem for a lot of them which led to problems accessing other services. Full credit must go to our Lisa Redston who has been working with this group and is helping them to set up a community centre that will be multi user with other groups and provide for meeting and teaching rooms.
- 5.2 We also held a very constructive meeting with Taunton Business Forum which is a relatively new private sector business group who are interested in and concerned about the future growth of Taunton Deane. They are concerned that we have inadequate serviceable land for development whether it be for housing or employment, which will prevent Taunton achieving its full potential. They also recognise the constraints caused by lack of infrastructure and will certainly be a potent force in voicing these concerns to other partners and agencies that are needed to deliver.
- 5.3 I am shortly due to attend a meeting with the Taunton Deane Disability Group as part of a panel to answer questions from the group around barriers to their freedom of access to goods and services in Taunton Deane. It will be interesting to gain this perspective from what I anticipate will be a diverse group with many different requirements. The challenge will be how we can help remove the perceived or actual barriers identified.

6. Wellington Issues

- 6.1 Longforth Farm, I was pleased to attend a presentation by Terence O'Rourke on behalf of Bloor Homes at Wellington Town Council setting out development proposals which are being worked up in consultation with our planning department. It is hoped to submit an outline planning application in late 2010 or early 2011 and works would be phased thereafter if consent is granted. Phase one consists of 190 houses plus it would deliver a spine road to relieve traffic from the existing Relyon site. This would remove around 60% of the HGV's from Wellington town centre which represents a huge improvement on that existing. This development, although ahead of the Core Strategy, is to be welcomed. But although let us not underestimate the huge environmental issues

arising because of the presence of rare bats on the site but with care it seems these problems can be overcome by time and design.

- 6.2 Another interesting presentation was the proposal by Summerfield Developments and Montpelier Estates for a secure treatment centre to be run by Priory Homes on the Sky Park business estate at Chelston. This will need to be the subject of a change of use planning application as it does not fall within the scope of the present approval. From the information given at the presentation (subject to Planning) it would appear to be the type of development we should accept, particularly in light of the COOP recent announcement about the loss of 300 jobs. The Priory Homes development will provide for 225 jobs and a large capital investment with the quality jobs providing a welcome growth in the local economy. I believe it deserves our support to get to the planning application stage and be considered on its merits. Bearing in mind the very serious economic recession affecting the country, we must welcome the opportunity to improve employment prospects, for our community.

7. The Council Budget Situation

- 7.1 It has been much trailed that due to the very serious national economic recession that all public bodies must expect substantial cuts in their grants from Central Government. The cuts in funding to the various Ministerial departments will be announced the 20 October but we will not know the true impact of this until our settlements are notified much later in December. We have obviously calculated our MTFP based on potential cuts in grant but we are unable to firm up on this until more clarity is received from the Government.

8. And Finally, Somerset College Fashion Show

- 8.1 Recently I was invited to attend a fantastic fashion show put on by Somerset College, hosted by the owners of the Orchard Centre and ably assisted by many others including support and generosity of the many traders in the centre. Rachel Davies, Principal of Somerset College when introducing the show proudly proclaimed the recognition both nationally and internationally of the quality of Somerset College trained designers and their work. This show was a great tribute to all that participated and I was certainly proud to be invited to such a spectacular event.

Councillor John Williams

Council Meeting – 5 October 2010

Report of Councillor Terry Hall Corporate Resources

1 Corporate Strategy

It has been decided to defer until after next May, the annual review of the Corporate Strategy. This will allow the impact of the Comprehensive Spending Review and budgetary implications to be implemented and enable the new administration's policies to be incorporated.

2 South West One

In general the back office services provided for us by Southwest One continues to be of a high standard. The exception is Procurement, where the financial savings achieved so far are well behind target. Pressure continues to be exerted on Southwest One who seems to be responding. The new Southwest One Procurement Strategy was revealed at the Corporate Scrutiny meeting on 23rd September. Southwest One will be attending 18th November Corporate Scrutiny Meeting to explain and report on procurement progress.

2.1 Revenues and Benefits

The Revenues & Benefits Service continues to meet its key performance targets. As we approach the end of Quarter 2, we are on track to deliver even better performance than last year with the average speed of processing benefit claims (new claims and changes) under 10 days. Caseloads continue to rise with over 9,200 Housing & Council Tax Benefit recipients - an increase of 16% in the last 2 years.

There are many changes planned to deliver savings in benefit expenditure. These changes are down to the Government's need to find £2b of cuts in Housing & Council Tax Benefit expenditure. As Members will be aware, there is a briefing on Tuesday 18 January 2011 where we will be informed on the likely impact. I would encourage you to attend.

The service continues its fight against benefit fraud with 2 recent cases detecting substantial amounts of undeclared savings. In one instance prosecution proceedings with the Department for Work & Pensions is underway, while the other fraudster will be required not only to repay the debt but will also incur a substantial fine, known as an administrative penalty, for their misrepresentation.

Customer satisfaction surveys have been distributed not only to those receiving benefit, but also to Council Tax and Business Rate payers. It is hoped the results of these surveys and consequent actions in response to the feedback received will be available in early 2011.

2.2 Customer Contact

During the period 1st July to 22nd September Customer Contact have continued to provide a good level of service to telephone callers as well as visitors to Deane House receptions and Wellington Community Office.

The service came under pressure during August due to the success of the Revenues service in driving up the collection of Council tax. This resulted in a surge of calls in relation to people making payments and arranging to set up direct debits. The impact has continued to be felt in September.

Month	July	Aug	Sep*
CALLS OFFERED	14083	14686	11499
ABANDONED % [Target less than 5%]	4.52	12.96	7.50
G.O.S.% [Target 80% within 20 Secs]	83.60	72.76	73.08
% Answered 1st POC (Target 85%)	99.8	99.8	99.8

At last Council I reported we would be introducing a Customer Excellence Award. This will be launched within the next 3 months. We have been agreeing the process and the delivery of the Award with the Southwest One Management team and are aligning it with the Southwest One Rewards and Recognition Programme.

3 Legal and Democratic Services

Discussions are in progress with the other Somerset Councils to establish a Legal and Democratic Services partnership on similar lines to the SW Audit partnership. There are potentially service and financial benefits to all partners. It is expected that completion of the discussions will occur in mid 201.

3.1 Register of Electors – Canvass

Forms have been sent to all properties in Taunton Deane requiring residents to update and/or confirm their details.

There was a 62% return as of 22nd September. The new Register will be published on 1st December.

The Government have announced that the implementation of Individual Registration will proceed from 2014. From this date people will be asked to supply identifiers in order to register. These will be a date of birth, signature and National Insurance number. This will give greater confidence in the system of Voter registration. Northern Ireland has of course had IR since 2002.

3.2 Personal Searches

In common with the majority of other local authorities we have previously charged a fee for Personal Search Agents to examine land records in connection with

conveyances. Since 17th August, because of a change in the law, we have been unable to charge and there will clearly a loss of income to the Council.

4 Performance & Client Team

The Client Team have continued to closely monitor performance of the authorities key partnerships (Southwest One, Tone Leisure and the Waste Partnership) with no significant issues being reported.

In addition the team are working closely with Southwest One to agree service development plans, refresh the output specifications for each service area and to implement the changes necessary to meet the Govt Connect standards for IT data security.

The embedding within the organisation of the new corporate performance processes is progressing well – detailed services plans have been completed for the new themes, Corporate Aims Delivery (CAD) Plans are in the process of development, the Quarterly Performance Monitoring reports are now established and the risk management processes are back on-track. In addition the Council's Annual Report has recently been completed.

The team is also responsible for managing, from the Council's perspective, the SAP re-launch and Procurement Transformation projects. The SAP re-launch is progressing well and is largely keeping to timetable. The full procure-to-pay process was launched in August with minimal problems being encountered. Training for budget holders is taking place during September in preparation for formally re-launching our budget monitoring processes in October.

However, the Procurement Transformation savings remain behind target. We are awaiting the results from the Procurement Team who are undertaking a detailed analysis of our spending to identify potential future savings. New savings are however being identified and the Procurement Team recently re-negotiated the homeless room rates, which should produce savings of approximately £12k.

The retained Finance, HR and Organisational Development (OD) functions are also provided by the team. The key focus for retained Finance has been on supporting the external auditors with their audit of last year's accounts and on preparing a strategy for dealing with next year's budget and the significant savings required.

The retained HR Officer has been heavily involved with supporting the DLO review, liaising with Unison, HR policy development & review, supporting the Housing Client review together with the ongoing monitoring of the Southwest One HR service.

The focus for retained OD has been on working with Southwest One to ensure delivery of the Corporate Learning & Development Plan and in developing, in conjunction with CMT, an action plan to address the key issues raised in the staff survey and subsequent staff briefings.

Terry Hall

Report of Councillor Mark Edwards - Planning and Transportation

There are many challenges at present across Local Government but one message has been received loud and clear from the new Coalition Government is that if you plan for a strong sustainable future they will do all they can to support that aspiration. It is therefore vital that we look forward and continue to be ambitious about the future of Taunton Deane.

The Localism and Decentralisation Bill will be published in November with expected Royal Assent by next Summer and this will give us detail and direction with regards the changes that are being made to local Government and should shed some light on the real future of true local planning. We should then get more detail on the new homes bonus, which is central to the coalition Governments incentive for local authorities to grow and be rewarded for doing so and other planning policies.

1 Regional Spatial Strategy and the Core Strategy

1.1 The demise of the RSS meant changes to the work on the Core Strategy. Due to this administrations drive towards an employment led strategy the revised housing figure is now 15,000 for the period to 2026 with a revised employment level of 11,000 new jobs. We do appreciate this is still challenging but with the ambitious plans for Firepool and developments such as Longforth Farm coming forward in the coming years we believe this is challenging but achievable over this timescale.

1.2 The additional work to the draft Core Strategy (Regulation 27) will now be published in March 2011 and adoption in March 2012.

2. Development Management

2.1 The Coalition Government is bringing some legislative changes to the Planning System on 1st October in accordance with previous statements.

2.2 An amendment to the legislation allows buildings used as dwellinghouses to be used as small scale houses in multiple occupation (shared by three to six people) without the need for a

specific planning application. This reverses an early decision on 6th April 2010 which required planning permission for a change of use from a dwellinghouse to a house in multiple occupation.

2.3 Local Authorities can make an Article 4 Direction to remove this permitted development right if they consider that the number of houses in multiple occupation is a particular problem in their administrative area, for example, in towns where there is a high student population and family housing is being turned into houses in multiple occupation.

2.4 The Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995 has been consolidated and renamed the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Order 2010. The consolidation merges together the original order and subsequent amendments that occurred on 16 occasions. It will result in a much more useable and simplified document that will benefit all users

3Firepool

3.1 We are delighted that St Modwen, Taunton Deane Borough Council's development partner in the regeneration of Firepool, recently received permission to press ahead with its plans to build offices, apartments and a hotel.

3.2 Firepool is a strategic riverside site and is the biggest regeneration project in the South West with the potential to create up to 4,000 new jobs locally and is central to our aims to fulfill our Core Strategy targets as I have previously indicated.

3.3 The 1.54-hectare site covers the first phase of development on Priory Bridge Road car park and is a key commercial site in Project Taunton the 50-hectare regeneration of Taunton town centre being a catalyst for future development in this area.

4Affordable Housing

4.1 Officers will be taking an item to Scrutiny to debate the adoption of an affordable housing target for the Council's emerging Core Strategy. This target should be based upon an assessment of need, which is evidenced through the Strategic Housing Market Assessment and Fordham's Housing Requirements Study and

what is viable.

4.2 The viability of adopting affordable housing targets is still being tested both through an Affordable Housing Viability Study and also in relation to the prioritisation of different developer contributions through the emerging Infrastructure delivery plan. These studies have not been completed because there is still information, which needs to be gathered in respect of infrastructure requirements, which will impact upon what it is viable to ask developers to provide.

4.3 It is acknowledged that members will want to debate these matters prior to the Core Strategy itself being approved by Scrutiny and that will certainly be the intention once this work is concluded.

4.4 There is however no doubt the need for affordable housing is still extremely high and as an administration we will continue to drive to maximise the Affordable Housing developed in the district.

5Landscape Team

5.1 The Landscape Team is presently assisting West Somerset District Council (WSDC) with serving Tree Preservation Orders and processing applications. The assistance has helped WSDC cover an area of work where they have no specialists and helps the Landscape Team reduce its overall costs.

5.2 The team continues to work with local groups to enhance designated Local Nature Reserves through advice on grant applications and implementation of successful grant bids.

6Civil Parking Enforcement

Proposed County Wide Service

6.1 The plans for the introduction of a County Wide Service for Civil Parking Enforcement will be coming to Community Scrutiny next week.

6.2 These proposals have been discussed for a number of years with these discussions finally coming to fruition with an offer being made by the County Council for a County Wide approach. I look forward to hearing the Councillors views on this at the debate at

Community Scrutiny and wanted to use this opportunity to highlight that this proposal is coming forward.

7. Solar Photovoltaic arrays

7.1 Officers have recently been entering pre-application discussions on a number of sites for medium and large scale commercial Solar Photovoltaic arrays in the borough.

7.2 As a result of the Feed in Tariff (Fit) or Clean Energy Cashback scheme, solar PV is a viable option for a stand alone development due to the payment scheme being guaranteed for 25 years.

7.3 The FiT is also likely to result in a number and dwelling houses being fitted with Solar PV panels where planning permission is not normally required.

Councillor Mark Edwards

Council Meeting – 5 October 2010

Report of Councillor Joanna Lewin-Harris – Community Leadership and Communications

1. LSP

1.1 Work on the development of the LSP continues. Steve Rose, the consultant employed to help the LSP establish its key priorities and an effective structure, attended community scrutiny in August. He has recently held a series of one-to-one interviews with members of the LSP. The next step is a workshop in late October / early November for all LSP members where Steve will present his findings to date and suggest some possible models for the future. His final report will come to Community Scrutiny early next year.

1.2 I was one of those who had a one-to-one interview with Steve Rose. It was clear from our conversation that I was not the only person who feels the LSP as currently constituted is really not making a difference and that complete rethink is needed. As the report to Community Scrutiny says “it is critical to establish a partnership that will work and produce outcomes.” I very much hope that, with Steve’s help, we will develop a more effective partnership structure within Taunton Deane.

1.3 I mentioned the Deprivation Strategy in my last report to Full Council. I am glad to say this has now been renamed the Priority Areas Strategy – a much better title. Its aim remains the same: to tackle deprivation in North and East Taunton and the also hidden pockets of deprivation in the rural areas. Work on information gathering and benchmarking in North and East Taunton is well under way and a very comprehensive programme of community engagement is being planned for November through to early next year. The aim is to speak to as wide range of people within the community as possible, both residents, front line staff working in the area, the voluntary sector and elected members. This work will be resource hungry but there is agreement that it is essential to get a good understanding of the issues and pick up ideas from the community itself. The cynics will say “consultation overload”! Clearly this is an issue, but people, situations, problems change and unless we keep talking to our communities we won’t keep up with their concerns.

1.4 Work on the Rural Strategy is less advanced. The problems are different and a different approach is needed. It is an important piece of work which also needs officer time and should not be tackled until that is identified.

2. Youth Initiatives Fund and Rural Deprivation Fund

2.1 These two funds (Youth Initiatives £30,000 and Rural Deprivation £5,000) were set up as part of this year’s budget. Details of how to apply for a grant from these funds have recently been circulated to all members. If you know of any organisations which you think might be interested in applying to either of these funds,

please contact Martha Prangnell (Youth Initiatives) or Lisa Redston (Rural Deprivation).

3. Grant Finder

- 3.1 The Council has recently subscribed to Grantfinder – an online grant search system which covers around 6,000 schemes, is updated daily and provides a customer support team to help with queries and applications. Grantfinder should make it easier to identify and apply for relevant grants to support projects/initiatives across the authority.
- 3.2 We have also subscribed to Grantnet, a simplified version of Grantfinder. A link to Grantnet will be added to the homepage of the website allowing community groups, businesses and residents to search for appropriate grants.
- 3.3 If any Member would like to know more, please contact Jo Comer in the Strategy Unit in the first instance.

4. Annual Policing Awards

- 4.1 The Annual Policing Awards are now open for nominations and we are invited by the police to nominate a police officer, PCSO, or police team in our area if we think they are worthy of recognition. This is an opportunity to acknowledge outstanding service by the police. Further information is available on www.communitypolicingawards.org.uk or from Scott Weetch.

5. Communications

- 5.1 Press releases over the last couple of months have covered, among others, topics such as: Taunton's success in Britain in Bloom, the Mayor's 300 mile cycle ride to raise funds for his charities, the cleaning up of Station Road Railway bridge, free parking in Wellington on Tour of Britain Day and 4 Saturday's leading up to Christmas, Green Flags for our parks, the launch of the river Tone Community Boat, Septemberfest and, sadly, the collapse of Connaught and closure of the Co-op Depot in Wellington flagging up the help Taunton Deane is able to offer those affected.
- 6.2 Following my report to the July Full Council when I invited comments on the Members Portal, I would like to thank Members who have come back to me since then with comments. It has now been agreed that our IT Trainer will give a bit of time to help make the Portal easier to navigate and more user friendly. If any Members would like to be involved in this, please let Donna Durham know.

Councillor Joanna Lewin-Harris

Full Council – 5 October 2010

Report of Councillor Cavill – Economic Development Asset Management Arts and Tourism

Economic Development (ED)

The core economic development team is now in place, and has been allocating projects and budgets to various members of the team. They will be progressed in line with the corporate plan.

Business initiatives for schools

The ED team assisted in this business competition which was for the RDA's Enterprise Britain award. After the presentation in Exeter, Taunton won the Regional Award. It hopes to re-enter the competition next year, where we could stand a chance in the National competition. I'm sure many of you will have seen the Press reports which develop business awareness and encourage the development of business ideas amongst 14 – 18 year olds by the 'Dragon's Den' style activities.

Green Knowledge economy

'Business opportunities in the new Green Economy' is a three day event at the Genesis Centre. All three days are free to attend, and will show and inform you on many different types of renewable energy systems. The event has support from the Princes Mayday Network, founded by HRH Prince of Wales. The aim is to inspire, engage, support and challenges as many businesses as possible so they work together towards a sustainable future. The Mayday network has supplied key note speakers for this event: the first one is Peaches Golding OBE. I hope that this event is the first of an annual series, and will help establish Somerset College as a National Skills Academy in Environmental Technologies.

Local Enterprise Partnership

The ED has been assisting in putting together this bid. Our initial stance was for a local delivery partnership of TD, Sedgemoor and West Somerset, within a wider bid which would operate at a more strategic level. It is now very apparent that the LEP needs to be larger and there will be considerably more work to be done.

There is an ongoing programme underway aimed at strengthening the links between Council and the local business community, in particular, to make sure we are aware of the issues important to our local businesses so that we can work closer with them in assisting their growth.

The Co-operative Stores Ltd

The Co-op has announced that it plans to close the Distribution Centre in Wellington, and to relocate to Bristol in the Spring 2012. This represents a loss of 300 jobs. The ED unit is working with the Co-op's HR manager and other agencies to co-ordinate the support available for employees.

The ED unit is also working with a potential investor who wishes to build in the Sky Park estate in West Park, Wellington. This proposal by Priory Homes is for a secure mental health facility, and has a potential to create 225 jobs. It will go through the necessary consultation and planning procedures.

EDF

We assisted at the Supplier event on 28th September 2010. The Leader has already reported on this matter. Taunton Deane's participation in this development has great implications for the

future economic development of Taunton Deane.

Access to Finance/Grants

In conjunction with Community Strategy we subscribe to GrantNet grant directory for business and community groups, which will assist in finding funding.

Arts

St Augustine's school is allowing a redundant art building to be used as a community hub/creative workspace. At the moment there are a number of potential users; North Taunton Youth Club, Somerset Racial Equality Council, Somerset Emerging Artists network and the Polish Association. The plan is to make the building available for 3 years, reviewed annually with the school.

Chestnut Tree is presently being reviewed by SCC for its use as a youth club. There are various rebuild issues to be resolved and costed to make the building fit for purpose.

Floodlighting of various landmarks in Taunton Deane has recently been reviewed and a substantial amount of maintenance and upgrading is required to bring up the systems to the present regulatory standards.

TIC

The TIC has had a busy summer; income has remained steady and the travel centre income has increased by 10% on the previous year. In conjunction with Berry's Coaches, the TIC was present at the Taunton Flower Show, promoting the office, and opportunities and services available. Ticket sales have been boosted by the Flower Show and the Moscow State Circus. I would also like to congratulate the TIC on receiving an excellent feedback from the 'Visit England' mystery shopper – they scored an average of 90% - well done! The revised 'Welcome to Taunton' leaflet is now available at the TIC.

Asset management

We are now in a position to promote the sale of the old Nursery site at Mount Street, as reported in the Executive minutes, which will be debated at Council this evening. In addition, the site at Frobisher Way will shortly be considered by the Planning dept, as soon as we have the transport assessment/comment back from the County Council (SCC). This site is also attracting considerable local interest.

Property and leasing agreement reviews are also on-going, in particular the future use of Flook House, and the scrap yard re-let at Tone Way.

The old pavilions at Hamilton Gault and Galmington are to be removed, and the work is being costed, prior to tendering.

Local action for Rural Communities (LARC)

Larc is part of the Rural Development programme for England, which has European funding from 2009 to 2013. In Somerset we have three schemes; Levels and Moors, Western Somerset and 'Making it Local (Blackdown Hills)'. The respective budgets are Levels and Moors £1.8m, Western Somerset £2.25m, and Blackdown Hills £2.4m. Generally, small grants are in the range of £1k -10k; whereas large grants are in the £10k-100k range. Councillors Dave Durdan, Peter Watson, Andrew Govier respectively are the people to contact for their areas, for further information. The Taunton Deane Officer is Mrs Hattie Winter.

Councillor Norman Cavill

Council Meeting – 5 October 2010

Report of Councillor Ken Hayward – Environmental Services

1. Environmental Health Teams

- 1.1 On 15th September I joined the whole EH Team for a full morning workshop session to begin to lay the foundations in preparation for the forthcoming comprehensive spending review. Each team looked at the services they provide and discussed ways in which they might achieve even more efficiencies. There is a general realisation among team members that the minimum levels of service need to be clearly defined, which will then help to establish at what a fair and affordable level of service may look like. A number of good ideas came forward and it is hoped that this will also help shape some tough decisions for the future.
- 1.2 The feedback Charlotte Dale received from the officers was really positive, not only did they make the most of the opportunity to challenge the work that they do, and identify the areas where there may be some discretion but, I am told, really appreciated the support from their Portfolio Holder. The informal 'hands on' approach gave me the chance get to know the officers and to find out the details of how service currently works. It also gave those officers the chance to get to know me as well.
- 1.3 We will be following up some of the suggestions for change made during the session and have identified some additional areas for further challenge.

Community Toilet Scheme

- 1.4 Chris Hall has now invited a total of six establishments to join the pilot but interest has been somewhat muted. Local managers are keen to join, but it seems 'Head Office' has a different view! This may well be yet another indicator of the recession. At the time of writing this report, I have made arrangements to meet with Chris to discuss a way forward. I hope to be able to bring a verbal update to Full Council on the evening.

2. Crematorium

- 2.1 Mercury filtration. The successful tenderer has been chosen and hopefully work is scheduled to commence next March. We are currently in discussion to obtain architectural support etc from SW1.

3. Waste Management

SORT IT Plus

- 3.1 I am doubly delighted to report that as of 25th September I now have kerbside recycling of plastic bottles and cardboard. Not only can I now personally divert more waste away from landfill, but also as I live on just about the last street to 'go live', I can report that SORT IT Plus has now been rolled out across the whole of Taunton Deane!
- 3.2 Having said that, the Somerset Waste Partnership is very much aware that there are still some communal (i.e. flats, etc) and other properties around the Deane not benefitting from this new service. Officers are working hard to find the best solution to this problem.
- 3.3 The Somerset Waste Partnership of course faces the same challenges that we all face with regard to the Comprehensive Spending Review. Officers have organised an informal workshop for 29th October for Waste Board Members to begin working on ways of meeting these challenges.

4. Climate Change / Carbon Management

- 4.1 The Council's 10%Less Campaign was launched with 21 roadshows attended by nearly 300 staff and Members. The Campaign was the idea of our volunteer staff Green Champions and has been designed to encourage all staff to reduce their energy usage by 10%, and part of our commitment to the 10:10 initiative. Following the successful launch, the Campaign now runs for 6 months and will focus on 4 high energy use areas at different times – electrical equipment, lighting, heating and business mileage. Our Green Champions and Energy Champions will be working hard to encourage all staff to do their bit.
- 4.2 An emerging topic that fits neatly under the Climate Change Corporate Priority is that of the Sale of Electricity by Local Authorities.
- 4.3 Since 1989 local authorities have been able to put any renewable electricity they generate to local use, and to benefit from the associated feed in tariff for projects smaller than 5MW. But they have been restricted from selling any excess renewable electricity into the grid (other than that generated from combined heat and power), and also from benefiting from the additional export component of the feed in tariff. The new Regulations, which came into force on 18th August 2010 removes these restrictions.
- 4.4 As Kevin Toller recently reported to Corporate Scrutiny, these new Regulations open up a whole range of opportunities, from spending lots of money on investing in and retaining full ownership of renewable energy generation (capital intensive, but we would receive the full income stream) to simply allowing our buildings to be used to install, for example, PV panels.

With this option, the installation company would take on all the financial risk, but in return would get all of the financial benefit.

- 4.5 Talking of risk, I recently read a paper that among other things, pointed out that to continue to rely wholly on fossil fuels is in itself a risky strategy as markets become increasingly volatile and price sensitive. In addition, we in the UK have to rely more and more on imported fuel. Both these factors will serve to make it increasingly difficult to budget in the coming years.
- 4.6 The Conservative administration is committed to Climate Change as a corporate priority. As such we will explore all opportunities for renewable energy fed into the national grid. It goes without saying of course that whatever course of action we might choose to take it must be for the benefit of our wider community.
- 4.7 As a first step I shall be joining Kevin Toller & Roger Mitchinson in attending the “Renewable Energy in the Public Sector – Leading the Way to Zero Carbon” conference in London later this month.

Councillor Ken Hayward

Council Meeting – 5 October 2010

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

1. Parks

1.1 Following lots of hard work and commitment from our parks department and many volunteers, Taunton has again had a most successful year in the South West in Bloom competitions as detailed in the leaders report. I think it is important to remember that it is actually plants grown at our nursery that help many other towns also win prizes in this arena.

1.2 Last week the Taunton in Bloom awards were kindly hosted at Monkton Elm Garden Centre. It was great to see local business people mixing with allotment owners and individual gardeners united through horticulture. Monkton Elm very generously donated a new resident for the sensory garden who should be in place very soon.

2. Community Leisure

2.1 Vivary Park has again hosted a most successful series of Sunday bandstand concerts. Unfortunately the Energise event had to be cancelled due to poor weather, but the Moscow State Circus was a real crowd pleaser, and they have again impressed with their slick set up and clean pack up leaving the park as they found it.

2.2 The French Weir Park family fun day was also well supported following a lot of hard work by the Friends of French Weir Park with assistance from the Community Development Team.

3. Play

3.1 The summer has also seen all our new play areas fulfilling their purpose and they are proving to be attracting children from far and wide.

3.2 Following the suspension of Playbuilder the projects at Greenway Rec and Taunton Green were in doubt and we were expecting a decision on Playbuilder by the end of August. There has still not been any decision from Government on this but Somerset County Council have allocated some money which has saved the Taunton Green scheme. Work is still ongoing to source some funding for the Greenway Rec project.

Tone Leisure

4. Sports Development

4.1 Sunday 26th September saw the 24th Taunton 10K road race. The maximum entry of 650 runners certainly had a perfect day for a run! Luke Scott, who is a member of the team at Taunton Pool, is dreaming of a hat trick of wins as Luke has come first in both the 2008 and 2009 races.

5. Health Development

5.1 A Soul Walk was held in Taunton on Friday, 30th July, to promote the benefits that physical activity in the great outdoors has for people's mental health and well-being. Tone Leisure worked in partnership with The Albemarle Centre and the event attracted nine adults, some of which were new to physical activity. Soul Walks is a countywide initiative being provided by members of the Somerset Physical Activity Group for mental health.

5.2 A Volunteer Walk Leader Training Day was provided in Wellington in August and nine adults completed the course. Three of the volunteers have joined the team in Taunton, bringing the number of active volunteers on the Walk Well scheme up to thirteen. Three of the volunteers are contributing to the development of a new programme for Wellington and two are developing a programme for members of the Feel Good Factory at Blackbrook Pavilion in Taunton.

5.3 The development of these new programmes will increase the number of participations in walking and will contribute to Natural England's expansion of the Walking for Health Initiative.

6. Facility News

6.1 St. James Street Baths, In preparation for the essential works to the plant and machinery the small pool was closed on Sunday, 25th July to allow for the preliminary assessments to commence.

6.2 Currently the work is scheduled to be completed by 5th November, 2010. The Institute of Sports and Recreation Management (ISRM) led on the procurement process, with the contract being awarded to Biwater, who are a world leader in the water industry with a highly successful track record of working in over 30 countries. Their expertise is widespread and covers water systems, management water and environmental engineering.

7. Programmes and Events

7.1 The events planner at Wellsprings is really taking shape, with great variety of acts and artists that will appeal to a vast range of existing and new customers.

7.2 The Wedding Fair took place on Sunday, 19th September. This was the first full event that our new Events Manager, Nick Townsend, managed. A great deal of planning and event organisation went into making the day a very special one for the brides to be!

7.3 The summer holiday programme was a huge success across the contract, with both Wellington Sports Centre and Blackbrook Pavilion exceeding their numbers compared to the summer of 2009.

7.4 During this time we also had two OFSTED visits to the Blackbrook Pavilion; the feedback from OFSTED was very positive on the child provision that is provided at Blackbrook.

7.5 Vivary Golf Course held its Family Open Day on Sunday, 15th August. Over 800 people took advantage of the programme of activities including a bouncy castle, face painting, mini golf competitions for both juniors and adults and a half price offer on the Mr. Whippy specials. The feedback from families who participated was really positive and this event will now be a regular annual feature on the promotion plan for the golf course.

7.6 A number of new innovative programmes and sessions have been delivered or are scheduled for later this year; here is a selection of some of these activities.

Salsa Dance - These classes are non-partner dance and offer members the opportunity to keep fit whilst jiggling away to the very latest in Cuban music.

Zumba Dance -The Zumba® programme fuses hypnotic Latin rhythms and easy-to-follow moves to create a 'one of a kind' fitness programme that will blow you away. The goal is simple: we want you to want to work out, to love working out, and to get hooked. Zumba® fanatics achieve long-term benefits while experiencing an absolute blast in one exciting hour of calorie-burning, body-energising, awe-inspiring movements meant to engage and captivate for life!

Kettle Bell Training/Classes - We have programmed a training day to 'up skill' our internal instructors with the right skills and techniques to deliver a comprehensive workout. With the main focus on the weight and full range of exercises, customers will definitely get the toning results that they strive for.

7.7 On top of the exercise classes for adults we also have a number of new sessions for our junior customers including: indoor paint ball (without the mess), water walkers (basically children in hamster balls) and the traditional roller skating discos.

8. Environmental Investment

8.1 Taunton Deane Borough Council has confirmed that the funding for the new lighting project at Wellington Sports Centre has gained full approval, with work scheduled to take place during the October half-term in an attempt to reduce the level of activity disruption.

8.2 The new lighting system will operate on a Passive Infra Red (PIR) system that will significantly reduce the annual electricity consumption at the centre. This, coupled with an annual saving of 15 tonnes of CO₂, will go a long way to assist the Council in achieving its commitment to 10:10.

Councillor Mrs Catherine Herbert

Council Meeting – 5 October 2010

Report of Councillor Mrs Jean Court-Stenning – Housing Services

1. Housing Property Services Review

1.1 A review led by James Barrahan is ongoing to separate the client function and the DLO workforce, as recommended by the Audit Commission and the consultants, Turner and Townsend.

1.2 The Tenant Services Management Board recently considered the report which was also presented to the Member Change Steering Group and is now out for consultation with staff. This will then come to Corporate Scrutiny on 21st October and Executive for a decision on 10th November.

2. Affordable Housing

Mrs Lesley Webb has decided to take flexible retirement and will be working 3 days a week concentrating on the Regeneration sites. We welcome Jo Humble as the new Housing Enabling Officer.

2.1 A Groundbreaking Ceremony was held at Firepool Lock organised by Knightstone Housing Association and attended by representatives of the Homes and Communities Agency. The Mayor officiated and spirits were high despite the heavy rain. The opportunity was taken to tour the other Regeneration sites by bus before the ceremony.

2.2 Firepool Lock will deliver 108 affordable homes.

2.3 Work is about to start at Wordsworth Drive on 18 social rented and intermediate homes.

2.4 Other affordable housing schemes are well under way with completion of 36 units expected in March 2011 at Holyoake St, Wellington, 46 units at Westford in December and 40 expected at Hyde Lane by Autumn 2011 and 9 social rented homes at the Denmark Inn next month.

2.5 At Ruskin Close there is one tenant left to rehome and it is hoped that demolition can be carried out here in conjunction with Wordsworth Drive as the two sites are adjacent. This will provide 45 more homes of mixed tenure.

2.6 A planning application has been submitted for 64 homes at Victoria Gate and an application for a further 6 at Dorchester Rd is expected soon.

3. Regeneration of Halcon

- 3.1 South West Planning Aid have been retained to assist with public consultation at Halcon.

4. Estate Officers

- 4.1 Interviews were held last Friday for 2 vacant estate officer posts. It is hoped to recruit officers with experience of tackling antisocial behaviour who will concentrate on this issue freeing up other officers to deal with other business on their estates.

5. Sheltered Housing

An Open Day has been held at Lodge Close Wellington and another will be held tomorrow, Wednesday 6th October from 10am to 2pm at Kilkenny Court, to inform about the options for care which are available. All are welcome.

6. Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership

6.1 Empty Homes

A mapping exercise has been undertaken and work is ongoing to set a target for next year.

- 6.2 The Empty Homes Officer has been working with Revenues and Benefits as this exercise has not only resulted in 6 empty homes being brought back into use, but also the identification of properties which are in fact occupied leading to Council Tax being recovered which was not being paid.

Councillor Mrs Jean Court-Stenning