

Council Meeting – 22 July 2014

Report of Councillor John Williams – Leader of the Council

1. Regional Growth Funding

- 1.1 I truly welcome the news that the plans to enhance Taunton Station and surrounding area have received £4,600,000 of Government Funding from the Local Growth Fund as administered by our Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). The importance of this cannot be underestimated as it kick starts a £22,000,000 station development and is estimated to increase investment by £74,000,000. All great news for Taunton.
- 1.2 I am sure that an opportunity I had to meet the Secretary of State for Transport, Patrick McLoughlin, and make a presentation alongside Network Rail was instrumental in securing our award. The Secretary of State when visiting the station grasped immediately the benefits of upgrading and increasing capacity as Network Rail predict a 40% increase in passenger traffic by 2020. It was great to be able to meet and discuss the potential development with the Secretary of State.
- 1.3 The station project has been worked upon over a number of years but has quickened in the last six months with the realisation by the LEP of the importance of this project as a catalyst to future economic benefit. Delivery plans which will see the south side of the station complex redeveloped can now be finalised and at last the subterranean entrance and exit on the north side of the station, as the main entrance, will be no more.
- 1.4 There is a commitment to consultation with local people and commuters to ensure that any disruption during construction is minimised. The plans will lead to a fantastic new gateway for Taunton, increased parking capacity and improved accessibility for pedestrians, cyclists and buses.
- 1.5 The enhancement and extension project will transform an ageing, tired and increasingly congested station into a proud, modern and welcoming environment for passengers, businesses and the wider public. It will also be a boost to the adjacent Firepool regeneration site where our plans are also coming together. It is very important that the boulevard link across Firepool is constructed as this connects with the riverside walks leading to the town centre.
- 1.6 We also must congratulate Somerset College on their successful bid for £1,000,000 to establish an Advanced Centre of Excellence for

Engineering to which they are adding £2,000,000 so creating a state of the art centre at their Wellington Road, Taunton site which is to be welcomed.

2. Local Government Association Annual Conference – 8 - 10 July 2014

- 2.1 As always, the opportunity to meet colleagues from far and wide is very much an important part of this conference, to share experiences with others and know that we are all experiencing similar issues and then how there are a wide and diverse solutions applied is most helpful. One thing is certain the message from Ministers and representatives from all parties was that whoever won the next election the age of austerity and planning policy must continue! The headlines were:-
- 2.2 There would be no lifting of the capping on Council Tax;
- 2.3 The austerity measures applied over the last few years will continue until the Country's financial state has been repaired;
- 2.4 The stated aim was to increase the level of self sufficiency of finances for Councils by raising the National Non-Domestic Rate retention of the amount collected from the present 50% to in excess of 80% but then the sting in the small print was that other sources of grant funding would be reduced!
- 2.5 The LEP's will still figure highly as a means of disbursing funding to the regions in what is seen as the most cost effective way to meet locally established priorities;
- 2.6 We are still not building sufficient houses to meet the needs of our communities so no let up in pressure to improve and 200,000 or more houses per annum is the stated goal;
- 2.7 No significant change to the National Planning Policy Framework is envisaged and if anything the only changes will be ones to encourage release of more sites;
- 2.8 Simon Stevens, new Chief Executive of the NHS gave an excellent presentation on how the NHS and Local Government can best work together to ensure better health and better services that are sustainable into the future. He made specific reference to Councils' public health responsibility from October 2014 changing so that together the NHS and Councils can promote and aid the principle of self care for high needs individuals in their own homes. This is the "Better Care" system and the NHS are working with the LGA and community groups to produce a prospectus which should be available shortly as to the proposed way forward.

- 2.9 In a session about the 'High Street Dead', a very interesting fact from Simon Roberts, MD of Boots UK, was that "click and collect" was becoming an extremely important part of their business with at least 50% of orders being placed were then collected in store. He saw this as an excellent opportunity to promote and enhance footfall for all town centre businesses. Collecting from one shop will inevitably attract shoppers for other businesses so maintain the vitality of town centre retail.
- 2.10 On the final day some of the main plenary sessions did not go ahead or had alternative speakers because Government Ministers scheduled to speak had been summoned to an emergency Cabinet meeting in Whitehall. Unfortunate but unavoidable!

3. Somerset Community Foundation

- 3.1 I have had the opportunity to meet with Justin Sargent, Chief Executive of the Somerset Community Foundation, recently and the message is clear, the Somerset Community Foundation is here to help fund the needy, the deserving and community groups that have projects to help their community.
- 3.2 Although they disburse charitable funds they are not fund raisers in the traditional sense but secure funds from benefactors, bequests and other charities who do not have the capacity to administer small grants. They welcome applications for funding from a wide range of people and groups and further details can be obtained from their web site <http://www.somersetcf.org.uk> on which will be seen a simple on line application procedure.
- 3.3 This can be a useful source of funding for all Councillors to promote to their community when a need is identified whether it is helping older people and carers, children and young people or supporting rural facilities and Parish initiatives. They also operate a "fast track" application system where there is urgent need and claims up to, I believe, £1,000. In this case they try and turn them around within 10 days. So as can be seen a potentially useful source of funding for your community.

4. Accommodation Project

- 4.1 This was considered by the Executive at the last meeting and it has been recommended to Full Council for approval of the option to lease part of the Public Services Hub at County Hall. It has been considered by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee who agreed not to support the preferred option. Consultation has also been undertaken with the Tenant Services Management Board. I can fully understand the difficulties and the sensitivity of this proposal but in these difficult times we have to look at the most cost effective solution to deliver services

and I do hope that Members will have been persuaded to support it by the time we reach this report.

- 4.2 What has been included in the recommendation is now a clear commitment to reinvest the amount of receipt for The Deane House and site in an income generating investment. This hopefully addresses the genuine concern I heard from many that we were disposing of the 'family silver' by leasing our future accommodation, not owning it. So in this way we should get the best of both worlds, leasing as the most economical way forward and reinvesting the capital receipt to derive an income and what should be capital growth.
- 4.3 One other concern I have heard loud and clear is ease of accessibility of County Hall and parking for visitors. The agreement sought tonight is subject to detailed design and legal agreements before final sign off. I have requested that ease of parking and sufficient bays for the short term parking we presently offer be negotiated with the County Council and included in any agreement as a must. I hope this offers reassurance on this point.

5. 2013/2014 Underspends

- 5.1 The variance from Quarter 3 is substantial at £964,000 surplus of which the majority, £706,000 is increased income or volatility in demand such as benefits. Parking income has held up much better than anticipated, the Crematorium has not experienced the drop in income anticipated because of other crematoriums coming into use locally and planning income surged as applicants tried to get ahead of the Community Infrastructure Levy requirements.
- 5.2 The result is that we can focus on improving the environment with more grass cutting and cleansing, invest substantial amounts in car parks and a cemetery extension and most important provide funds to develop a fit for purpose IT strategy.
- 5.3 I do hope that Members will have been able to support these proposals.

6. Flood Alleviation Scheme

- 6.1 This is for the major scheme on the River Tone between Taunton and Wellington for which the broad location has now been agreed and the final scoping report will be available to present to Members in September or October. Following this, full design of the structure can then be carried out.

- 6.2 The estimated cost in the Somerset Flood Action plan is between £15,000,000 and £20,000,000 and the point is clearly made that substantial external funding will be essential to deliver the final scheme. I look forward to it coming before Members shortly.

7. Affordable Housing Open Day - 4 June 2014

- 7.1 Taunton Deane is experiencing considerable growth both for housing and employment opportunities. It is a place people want to live and work. Through this growth a range of affordable housing is being developed with over 800 affordable homes in the planning pipeline. These range from the low cost housing options at Cheddon Road, Taunton to numerous shared ownership opportunities across the Borough.
- 7.2 The past year has seen many milestones achieved by the Council's Housing Development Department, and I was pleased to launch the new name – "Deane Housing Development" for future Council housing developments at the above open day. The largest site is in Creechbarrow Road in the Halcon Area. This saw the demolition of 42 flats, garages and incorporating a large area of communal gardens that were underutilised. In partnership with Knightstone Housing Association, work is continuing on the development of 92 new flats and houses. Deane Housing Development will have 60 properties and Knightstone 32.
- 7.3 The two smaller infill schemes in Taunton will result in a block of 8 x one bedroom flats, four of which will be suitable for wheelchair users, and a separate development of 4 x two bedroom houses. The third development is in West Bagborough, a rural village in an area of high property values, making it difficult for locals to find homes they can afford. This scheme will provide the village with seven new dwellings being 2 x two bedroom, 2 x three bedroom and 1 x four bedroom houses and 2 x one bedroom flats (one suitable for wheelchair). All of the schemes will be built to the Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4, meaning they are more economical to heat.
- 7.4 The total investment by Taunton Deane for these schemes is in the region of £10,000,000, which proves our deep commitment to providing much needed, quality, affordable homes for Taunton Deane.

Councillor John Williams

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Report of Councillor Mark Edwards - Planning, Transportation and Communications

1. Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (SADMP)

- 1.1 Following earlier rounds of consultation, officers are currently drafting the SADMP. The Council is waiting for transport modelling to be completed by Somerset County Council and the agents. This will in turn inform the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and viability assessments which form part of the Councils evidence base.
- 1.2 When all the relevant evidence base is complete, (including for example a final Sustainability Appraisal), the final version of the draft plan will be taken to Local Development Framework Steering Group, Scrutiny, Executive and Full Council for publication later in 2014. A six week period for formal representations will then be made prior to Examination of the Plan (by The Planning Inspectorate) in 2015.

2. Monitoring

- 2.1 The annual Employment and Housing monitors for the period 2013/2014 have been completed and available. The annual retail and leisure monitor (which is published in the summer) is underway.

3. Mid Devon Local Plan

- 3.1 As part of the required 'Duty to Cooperate', officers and Members have been involved in discussing proposals for a major retail, leisure and employment uses around Junction 27 (Tiverton) in Mid Devon District Council's Local Plan review (Issues and Options document).
- 3.2 Taunton Deane, Exeter City and other districts have expressed initial concerns at the impact of the proposals within the sub region and continuing discussions are taking place.
- 3.3 More evidence and studies are currently being presented and need detailed assessment so we will update Members when this work is finished.

4. Policy Team Staffing

- 4.1 From 1 July 2014, the Council's Tier 4 and 5 structure will become operational. Nick Bryant (Taunton Deane) will be the Planning Policy Manager. Toby Clemson and Martin Wilshire (West Somerset Council)

will be the Principal Planners in the Policy Team.

5. Jurston Development Brief

- 5.1 The Council is consulting on the Jurston Development Brief. Taunton Deane's Adopted Core Strategy allocated the Jurston site in Wellington as part of the mixed use urban extension Cades/Jurston. The Core Strategy stated that the development of this strategic site would be further guided by a masterplan and design code to ensure a coordinated approach to the delivery of the site.
- 5.2 The development brief sets out contextual information (location, history, planning policy, consultation), constraints and opportunities presented by a site and a set of the principles of the type, form, layout and look of development for it. Views are being sought to further shape the development before the Council progresses the Development Brief to adoption as Supplementary Planning Document.
- 5.3 Consultation closed on the 10 July 2014.

6. Neighbourhood Planning

- 6.1 The Government has announced an extension to their financial support for Local Planning Authorities who are supporting Neighbourhood Planning in their area. This is an extension of their grants scheme to help meet some of the costs associated with designation, examination and referenda.
- 6.2 The Government are also to announce in the autumn greater support for Non-Parished areas undertaking Neighbourhood Plans.

7. Taunton Railway Station Enhancement

- 7.1 Members that have attended briefings over the past year or so will be aware of Network Rail's ambitions to enhance Taunton Railway Station. It is fantastic to see that these plans have now gained funding from the Local Economic Partnership (LEP) following their inclusion in the Growth Prospectus for Taunton and the Taunton Rethink.
- 7.2 The station enhancement will create a fantastic new gateway to Taunton for the travelling public, businesses and new investors.
- 7.3 The enhancement will create many jobs and economic benefits in its own right, and will also act as a beacon for new investment into Taunton.
- 7.4 I wish to thank all the officers involved in the work they did in preparing the bid and following through to a successful conclusion.

8. Exeter to Devon Metro - Wellington Railway Station

- 8.1 I have also been working with the LEP, Mid Devon Council, Exeter City Council, Devon County Council and Somerset County Council in conjunction with Network Rail to facilitate the introduction of an Exeter to Taunton Metro to include new stations at Cullompton and Wellington.
- 8.2 It is clear from the initial business cases that have been developed that there is potential and I am presently starting discussions within Taunton Deane on how we can best deliver this long term strategic aim.

9. Communications

- 9.1 Twitter continues to be a valuable tool in communications, with the number of followers standing at 641 at the time of writing my report. Customer Contact and Word Processing are providing vital help in ensuring we can link quickly to news releases and answer queries.
- 9.2 We are in the process of drafting a social media policy which will come to Members in due course. I had hoped to have something to share with the Members by now but it is vital that we get this point right so we are taking advice from other bodies including the Local Government Association (LGA) to make sure it is appropriate and robust.
- 9.3 Recent activity has centred around events such as Somerfest, preparations for Taunton Flower Show and, of course, the very successful reopening of Taunton Pool by Mark Foster.
- 9.4 Partnership work continues to be key – with housing partners such as Knightstone, the Police, as well as Somerset County Council and colleagues in other districts.
- 9.5 While external communications has been busy, work continues on internal communications with the One Team newsletter, issued monthly to all elected Members and all staff. Help and guidance has been provided by the LGA's Communications Team which has been invaluable.
- 9.6 Deane Dispatch, compiled with the help of the Corporate Support Unit, continues to provide a monthly update on Council news and initiatives. This provides a good opportunity to focus in depth on important issues.

Councillor Mark Edwards

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Report of Councillor Jane Warmington - Community Leadership

1. Community Safety

1.1 Headline crime and satisfaction figures for the Taunton (Deane) Policing Area have recently been presented to the Community Scrutiny Committee and are reproduced here for information.

1.2 Total crime - reduction of 5.5% - 346 fewer victims of crime. Detection rate of 40.8% (upper quartile performance and amongst the best in the country).

1.3 Crime figures per main crime type:-

Dwelling burglaries	reduction of 9.2% (-20)
Non-dwelling burglaries	reduction of 3.4% (-13)
Theft of motor vehicle	increase of 25 % (+15)
Theft from motor vehicle	increase of 13.7% (+59)
Robbery	increase of 61.1% (+11) (very small numbers)
Criminal damage	reduction of 9.4% (-99)
Violence	reduction of 3.8% (-57) (all violent offences)
Theft of cycle	reduction of 3.1% (-7)
Shop theft	increase of 0.3% (+3)

1.4 Anti-social behaviour calls have reduced by 2.4% (-108). Reported crime has continued to decrease into the 2014/15 crime year by a further 3.4%. Reductions are currently being recorded in a number of categories such as burglary, violent crime, shop theft and criminal damage. The overall detection rate of 37.5% so far this year remains amongst the best in the force.

1.5 Satisfaction figures during 2013/14 - these are the sixth best in the country:-
87.2% of victims were satisfied with the way the local Police dealt with their crime (a 1.3% increase on the previous year);
84.25% of victims were satisfied with the way local Police dealt with their anti-social behaviour incidents (a 3.1% increase on the previous year).

1.6 In a similar manner the levels of customer satisfaction have continued to increase in the new crime year with the crime satisfaction index at 87.6% (+0.4%) and anti-social behaviour satisfaction index at 84.4% (+0.2%).

1.7 Changes in senior staff include:-

- Chief Superintendent Nikki Watson who is now Assistant Chief Constable of Operations based at headquarters in Portishead;

- Chief Superintendent Daimon Tilley has replaced Chief Superintendent Nikki Watson as the Somerset Area Commander working out of Taunton and we welcome him back;
- Chief Inspector Paul Mogg is the Somerset West District Commander based in Taunton;
- Temporary Inspector Bob Muckett is the local Sector Inspector for Taunton Deane covering for Inspector Stuart Bell who is still on attachment at headquarters.

1.8 These changes are to support the introduction of a new operating model, a 27% reduction in the force budget and a serious complaint against the Chief Constable Nick Gargan which has resulted in his being currently suspended from all duties until this has been thoroughly investigated.

2. 2014 Health Profiles for Wards across Somerset

2.1 Public Health England has just published the 2014 Health Profiles for local authorities. These contain a summary of information on the health of the people in each local authority area and some factors that may influence their health. The profiles are available online at www.healthprofiles.info and you can find the Health Profile for each area by clicking on the 'Find Profiles' button on the left of the home page. This year the Health Profiles are being displayed using new software, as part of a process of making Public Health England's information products more consistent.

2.2 As part of the suite of Health Profiles, they have updated the online tool "Local Health" which provides information down to ward level, and have updated and enabled data to be displayed for a wider geographical area. You can find Local Health via the Health Profiles website, or using the direct link: www.localhealth.org.uk

3. Changing the lives of troubled families (Family Focus)

3.1 Families with complex problems and chaotic lives who place a huge demand on public services are being supported to change through the Troubled Families programme. They have an allocated Family Focus Worker (who might manage up to ten families) to work intensively with them for at least six months (some much longer). These families are beginning to show improvements measured against outcomes which have been set nationally. These include sustained reduced anti-social behaviour, children back regularly attending school and finding paid employment.

3.2 Somerset is the fifth best performing county in the country based on results so far. The model used in Taunton Deane and West Somerset where Family Focus Workers are based in Children's Centres is the most successful across the Districts. They are working alongside established Family Support Workers, based in the area where most of their families live (and not in District Council offices for example). The County Council (SCC) is looking to adopt this Somerset wide and are managing the programme centrally from next April.

- 3.3 The Government is intending to extend the programme for a further five years and is loosening the family attachment criteria to include any domestic abuse and if the family are at all involved in crime. This will significantly increase the number of families to be worked with (Government figures suggest over 3000 more families across Somerset). Funding to attach these families will continue although per family (attachment and subsequent successes) it will reduce by half. An announcement is expected in July/August with the revised programme starting in April 2015.

4. Early help - getset services

- 4.1 SCC has renamed their Children's Centres 'getset services' and are continuing but widening their support for families in localities by working more collaboratively. It is not just for very young children any more but from nought to nineteens, as problems may emerge at any point throughout childhood and adolescence.
- 4.2 They are working with more partners such as Health, Schools, District Councils, Housing Associations, the Voluntary and Community Sector and Private Providers to offer a range of extra support depending on what is wanted and needed in an area. Much of this help is already out there provided by different organisations and the aim is to bring it together to provide extra support so families know where to come to for services, help and advice (www.getsetsomerset.org.uk)
- 4.3 This Early Help Model has evolved through the Halcon One Team working together out of the Acorns Children's Centre and showed what could be achieved (which included soaring referrals of previously hard to reach families and a ready-made caseload for the Family Focus Workers which continues to grow).

5. Voluntary Community Workforce - getting ready to work

- 5.1 This Voluntary Community Workforce offers the opportunity for many of those who have never worked, to become work ready and offers the chance to leave the house and do something useful. Other issues can then be addressed alongside (for example means of identity, a work record, adult literacy and addiction support) when they feel more comfortable and settled. The number of repeat domestic violence incidents are also reducing and may well be linked to this work programme.
- 5.2 Link Power, Halcon's Voluntary Community Workforce, had dipped a bit and lost volunteers but under new direction (PCSO Ian Warren) they are firmly back on track with over twenty signed up working up to five mornings a week.
- 5.3 They provide support for Family Focus families and offer an initial thorough tidy of their gardens (part of the incentives to encourage a challenging family to participate in the programme). They are also able to offer this for mutual exchanges which are taken as found (an arrangement between tenants) so can be in a poor state.
- 5.4 Another volunteer driver is being sought for the donated Police van which has allowed green waste and rubbish to be collected and disposed of without waiting (and paying) to do this. The costs to the project are insurance, petrol and parts

(servicing has been secured free of charge from a local garage). The van also means they will be able to work across a wider area.

- 5.5 Jobs undertaken during the second week of July totalled 161 voluntary hours of work. This included twelve trolleys collected; five public areas of grass cut; six jobs completed for Family Focus and five for Halcon One Team referrals; ten other jobs completed, twenty six in all; one person now has a full time job with Taunton Skips; six more new volunteers have signed up.
- 5.6 The project has just been awarded a three year development grant of £17,000 from the Lloyds Foundation. This will enable it to move forwards. This includes looking into developing it into a social enterprise to become self - sufficient. The project has been supported so far in kind and is considered to be the best way of addressing unemployment in the locality alongside other issues.
- 5.7 The grant was applied for by myself and the then Community Development Officer Penny Comley-Ross on behalf of the Link Partnership (Taunton East Development Trust). We would like to thank the Lloyds Foundation very much indeed for this support.

6. North Taunton One Team

- 6.1 North Taunton One Team has started informally to meet first thing on a Thursday at Hillside Children's Centre. The PCSOs have been on attachment to Halcon for one month each to understand how it works. We await news of a bid to the Home Office Police Innovation Fund to fully develop this different way of working both here and in Wellington where it is being looked into and to continue it in Halcon.

7. Voluntary and Community Sector Support

- 7.1 The Taunton East Development Trust has received some additional help from us to support and develop both Trustees, Manager and the regular volunteers over the past twelve months. This has been delivered by the Community Council for Somerset who approach such things sensitively and is working very well. The Trust known locally as the Link Partnership are a more confident team, familiar with what is expected of them, proper processes in place, understanding why and as a result working more efficiently and effectively. From the start of the year they are entirely running their own Activity Days and Brunch Club across the school holidays and it is very good to see.
- 7.2 We recognise that similar support may benefit other local Charities or established Community Groups which may struggle with governance and good process. The Community Council for Somerset and West Somerset Engage (which stepped in to replace the loss of Taunton Voluntary Action) can help and Taunton Deane applied to for grant aid to pay for this. We are keen that established groups doing wonderful work get this help if they need it.

8. Taunton Deane Youth Network

- 8.1 There is a lot going on across Taunton Deane spread across the towns and villages. Several groups of Youth Workers have set themselves up as businesses to offer support to local Clubs or set up new initiatives. What's going on can be found on the Somerset Youth website www.somersetyouth.co.uk/ which details services for young people in Somerset including clubs and projects, volunteering and funding.
- 8.2 Youth and Community Group Grants of up to £5,000 are available for Community Groups in Somerset who are starting or developing provision for young people aged eleven to nineteen (there is more information on the Youth Funding pages of the website). The contact for this and for volunteer training is Kirstie Brown (Youth and Community Officer based at the Holway Centre in Taunton) 01823 349853 or youthservice@somerset.gov.uk

9. Education for life

- 9.1 We need to help reduce the overall demand on expensive specialist public services such as Children's Social Care, Mental Health and Adult Social Care which is increasing, difficult to budget for and becoming unaffordable into the future.
- 9.2 Education is the most important route to breaking the cycle of deprivation, making sure those children are equipped to choose a different life from their parents and supporting parents alongside who want to change.
- 9.3 Early help and intervention through the children's centres has been shown to increase significantly through their working as part of a multi-agency team based in the area they work in. This has allowed important information to be shared easily and necessary actions taken quickly to support vulnerable/troubled families to change including improving school readiness in their children.
- 9.4 More family support workers will be needed at those children's centres in disadvantaged areas with the planned extended Family Focus programme and more one team working. Early intervention works and good nursery schools are the next step to improve school readiness in these areas.
- 9.5 Primary schools in deprived areas (some without adequate investment) struggle to balance daily safeguarding, lack of school readiness in each successive intake, with the education they are expected to deliver (and are judged on). However good you make a school in these areas, lack of school readiness will always disadvantage them.
- 9.6 Any investment in schools in these areas (particularly primary schools) should include a permanent provision for parenting classes and the opportunity for parents who want to improve their literacy and numeracy but have insufficient confidence to go to the local college which may also be some way away.
- 9.7 Broadening secondary education should prepare youngsters for life outside school, providing a more rounded education, and they should expect and be able to work.

Education has relied on home upbringing for too long to provide the necessary life skills to support a child leaving school. This is now insufficient and few if any schools (including the private sector) prepare their pupils with an adequate grasp of these. Education needs to be broader and time devoted to teaching both life skills and civics over a longer secondary school day (already being talked about) which would also benefit working parents.

- 9.8 Failure to broaden education in this way is a lost opportunity, risks even more children being taken into care or registered in need, stretching Children's Social Services. In Somerset these are currently in disarray, operating in self-imposed silos, resisting working with other agencies involved with these families (for example local schools, police, district councils and health increasingly working together as one team).
- 9.9 Working better together to tackle problem families, improve their lives and reduce the burden on society is a shared responsibility, which we all have to grasp now. We cannot afford to do this piecemeal as we have in the past. We cannot continue to reduce costs without reducing the problem otherwise we fail those we are trying to help. We are making a difference in Taunton Deane already but more can be achieved through adapting and improving education, social services and health (who hold the biggest budgets) and who really could make a difference.

Councillor Jane Warmington

Council Meeting – July 2014

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

1. Staffing Issues

- 1.1 Review of the Economic Development Team is continuing, aiming for completion in November 2014.
- 1.2 David Evans is re-prioritising as Anne-Marie Spalding left in April so the team has reduced in capacity, particularly in relation to supporting inward investment proposals.
- 1.3 The Tourist Information Centre (TIC) recently recruited an additional TIC Assistant, a work placement student from Bridgwater College and secondly a University Placement Student will be appointed to support the whole team. Both will be for 6 months.

2. Business Support

Business events

- 2.1 Greening Urban Spaces – hosted by Somerset College, part sponsored by Taunton Deane and organised by the Friends of Longrun Meadows, the event brought national speakers together to discuss how to deliver good sustainable regeneration practice in urban and rural spaces.

Recent larger business support

- 2.2 Recent and continuing conversations with companies in respect of Inward Investment, funding application assistance, relocation and various other expansion and development opportunities.

Growth Sector forums

- 2.3 Taunton Deane Manufacturing Forum, which commenced operation in November 2013, now comprises 15 large manufacturers and is chaired by one of the member companies. The meeting in April considered innovation and how to support the businesses to innovate and collaborate over use of expertise and technology. The July meeting looked at support available to strengthen the group and formalise it as a forum.
- 2.4 Go Create, hosted by the Creative Innovation Centre in Taunton, is a

group which comprises 120 local individuals and businesses in the creative business sector. A series of six workshops was sponsored for the group to provide bespoke business advice and support to them.

3. Marketing and TIC

- 3.1 Business has remained buoyant over the last quarter. The temporary closure of the Travel shop at Taunton Bus Station has boosted travel agency sales.
- 3.2 Event ticket sales have increased by a growing programme at The Brewhouse Theatre and a greater range of events taking place in the area.
- 3.3 Rotundas in Taunton Town Centre - Ownership of the rotundas formerly owned by the Taunton Town Centre Company passed to the Council at the end of May 2014 and these units will now be maintained and bookings taken by the TIC Team.
- 3.4 Visit Somerset website - A new visitor website for Taunton Deane is currently under construction which will be linked to the Somerset Tourism Association's main site. This will give the Council an excellent home page to attract and provide information to visitors. It is aimed to complete this by end of July. Carla Modley continues to support the main site with technical support and content.

4. Taunton Town Centre

- 4.1 The £42,000 that was budgeted for the Town Centre Company is now to be allocated in the following manner:-
 - £6,800 to maintain footfall counters;
 - £25,000 to market the town centre to shoppers and visitors. This invitation to tender has been sent out to those marketing groups that have expressed an interest, inviting them to apply by the end of July 2014; and
 - £10,000 to support cultural events and the Deane Dragon Trail. It has been decided that the Council's Dragon will be situated adjacent to the Fountain in Vivary Park.
- 4.2 Taunton Chamber of Commerce is working with interested parties in the town centre considering the formation of a Town Centre Partnership.
- 4.3 Events in the town centre recently supported:-
 - **Family Fun Day:** This was a very successful day, delivered by TIME4 at the end of May.

- **Dragon Boat Festival:** This was a fund raiser for Headway Somerset, which was well attended by businesses and the public, including a market on St James Street Car Park.
- **Somerfest:** The Council led on this event because of the demise of the Town Centre Company. Building 2013, this year's event on 21 June 2014 attracted more visitors and was a day and evening of cultural festivities across the town centre.
- **Planned Events:-**

Santander / ISIS fun day on Castle Green at the end of July.

Parrot Fest – Support The Apple and Parrot and ISIS to put on a pop / rock music event on Castle Green in August.

Festive Lights and Switch on - Conversations are progressing between TIME4 and Make Taunton Sparkle to enable festive lighting and an event, on 23 November 2014.

- 4.4 Advertisements promoting the main events in Taunton Deane are now placed in the 'What's On Somerset' magazine, the 'Tone' publication being no longer available as it was produced by the Town Centre Company.

5. Job Clubs

- 5.1 The contract with Vista has been temporarily extended to the end of September to provide more time to agree a how the service should be delivered in the future.

6. Asset Management

- 6.1 **Market Car Park** - The temporary car park is nearing a point of Operation. There have been some changes from the originally proposed long stay Car Park to now include short stay. This of course has a potential impact on our Town Centre Car Parks. Our officers have spent a considerable amount of time on the negotiations and other considerations, to enable this parking area.
- 6.2 **Deane DLO** - The relocation plans for the DLO are now reaching the stage where the two interested companies will be asked to submit their final tenders for their respective sites.
- 6.3 **Canon Street Car Park** - The Chestnut Tree area has now been completely cleared and reinstated as part of the car park
- 6.4 **The Market House, Taunton** - Vacant possession has now been

obtained and a lease with the new occupier should be completed very shortly. The lower floor area on the Corporation Street side has for the time being been let on a tenancy at will to the Street Pastors. One of the rooms above that area has been let on similar terms to TIME 4.

- 6.5 **Coal Orchard, Taunton** - A retail led scheme is under consideration to develop part of Coal Orchard Car Park. A national restaurateur has expressed interest which would anchor the scheme.
- 6.6 **High Street, Taunton Works** - A scheme of seven benches was installed in the High Street in July, following close consultation with the public and local businesses and traders. Bollards will be installed later in the financial year.
- 6.7 **Long Run Meadow, Bishops Hull** - The work schedule is being planned for the access bridge to the park and ride car park, which will involve some river clearance and stabilising the bank, before the bridge can be installed.

Councillor Norman Cavill

Council Meeting – 22 July 2014

Report of Councillor James Hunt – Environmental Services and Climate Change

1. Environmental Health / Licensing

- 1.1 There has been quite a bit of staff movement in Environmental Services recently. This month we have said goodbye to Hannah Butcher who is moving on to a new role with Public Health England, whilst Emily Vining has gone on maternity leave. Joanne Toogood delivered baby Benjamin and both are doing well. We welcome Norman Wint back to the Food Team as cover for maternity.
- 1.2 Food Safety: In June Environmental Services promoted the Food Standards Agency's 'Food Safety Week'. This particular campaign recommended that raw chicken should not be washed as splashing during the washing process increases the likelihood of spreading campylobacter, the most common cause of food poisoning in the United Kingdom.
- 1.3 Food Inspections: The Food Inspection Team continues with the task of inspecting food establishments. The table below shows inspections by category with 'A' being those with the most risk. UN is unrated premises that are either awaiting or have only recently had their first inspection.

Quarter 1 Progress Report - Food Inspection Programme 2014/2015

Inspections remaining up to 31 March 2014		Inspections remaining from 1 April 2014 – 30 June 2014		Total Outstanding Food Inspections	
A	0	A	0	A	0
B	0	B	2	B	2
C	1	C	11	C	12
D	56	D	7	D	63
E	97	E	13	E	110
UN	22	UN	23	UN	45
Total	176		56		232

2014 Quarter 1 Food Inspections Done

Risk Rating	Number
A	1
B	6
C	12
D	10
E	21
UN	4
Total	54

- 1.4 Licensing Committee: I would like to congratulate Kelly Durdan on her appointment as Chairman of the Licensing Committee. Licensing is an interesting and ever changing area of responsibility for the Council and I would encourage all Councillors to attend the committee meetings when they get a chance.
- 1.5 Taxi Forum: The Taxi Forum met again after a bit of a hiatus on 3 July 2014 and was well attended with a variety of issues being raised by attending drivers and operators.
- 1.6 Rod Stewart: The Licensing Team have had the huge task of dealing with the Rod Stewart concert which saw the influx of 18,000 people into Taunton. The event went off without incident and I would like to congratulate the team for all their work over the eighteen months of planning and organising that went into enabling the event to take place.
- 1.7 Inspections: The team have also been inspecting pet shops, animal boarding, breeding and riding establishments. The programme of work is well underway and, so far, no licensing issues have been identified.
- 1.8 License Applications: Application levels continue to be high and the team are preparing for the effective delivery of the Licensing Service in West Somerset through the shared services project
- 1.9 M5 Inquest Coroner Findings: The Coroner has completed his meetings following the tragic deaths on the M5. This involved professionals from many different areas including Government Departments and industry experts. Full recommendations will follow in due course.

2. Deane DLO

- 2.1 Spring Clean: Thanks should be given to Richard Hopkins's team who

worked hard to get the town centre looking neat and tidy in time for our high profile town events in June. As requested they put in extra effort with limited resources to keep the town swept and free of litter with a special effort ready for the very popular Rod Stewart Concert and Somerfest.

- 2.2 North Town Bridge: I would also like to congratulate Executive Councillors Catherine Herbert and Jane Warmington for their efforts in cleaning the North Town Bridge. While Somerset County Council initially frowned upon their early endeavours there followed a productive meeting with John Williams, the leader of Somerset County Council John Osman, Jane Catherine, myself and County officers. A safe and acceptable way has been agreed with the supervision of County Highways and the DLO that will allow Catherine, Jane and a team of volunteers to continue with the cleaning.

3. Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP)

- 3.1 At the June SWP meeting I received the Annual Performance and Outturn Reports. Whilst there were no major issues reported it is clear more work needs to be done to encourage recycling, especially of food waste where as much as is recycled is still placed in regular waste bins. However this needs to be set against the prevailing economic conditions.
- 3.2 SWP will be carrying out some High Diversity Trials in some parts of our area during the summer as part of the drive to meet the 50% recycling rate target of household waste by 2020. This will involve changing the frequency and mix of collections and will provide information on potential longer term savings.
- 3.3 Trials are already underway in Wellington to try and increase the amount of food waste recycling.
- 3.4 There have been some issues with contract performance since KeirMG took over the collection contract, although these issues are in areas other than Taunton Deane. They seem to be caused by lack of staff and poor vehicle performance and are being addressed.
- 3.5 SWP is discussing with KeirMG the best method of financing the replacement of the entire collection fleet which is in line with normal operational requirements.
- 3.6 As part of its commitment to improve its service and be innovative SWP is working with Viridor on proposals to divert waste from landfill to reduce treatment and disposal costs beyond 2016/2017.

Councillor James Hunt

Council Meeting – 22 July 2014

Report of Councillor Catherine Herbert – Sports, Parks and Leisure

1. Parks

- 1.1 Following lots of work by the Taunton in Bloom Committee the judging took place on Thursday, 10 July 2014. It was a beautiful day and the floral displays looked their best in the sunshine, the judge who had travelled from Cornwall was very impressed.
- 1.2 The bandstand concerts are again a great draw for Vivary Park. So far we have heard the Lazy River Band, Apple County Chorus, Chard Brass band, Wellington Silver Band, Taunton Concert Band and Wiveliscombe Town Band. See if you can catch Right Side of the Turf, Stoke Sub Hamdon Band or Kingsbury Episcopi Band before the end of the series. Or, of course, try Wellington Park for their bandstand concerts.
- 1.3 Our parks and open spaces are being used by an increasing variety of events. We have already seen Coach awareness day in Longrun Meadows, Actiontrack music in the town centre, Race for Life in Vivary Park and Hamilton Park Fete. Still to come are - NCS funding /awareness day – Samba Band Fundraising event based in town centre, Lyngford Park Summer Youth Activity Days, Stand Against Violence Charity Fun Day – Castle Green, Muddy Boots c/o Friends of French Weir /Longrun Meadow, Living Light Church Meeting – Vivary Park, Fun In the Park (Friends of French Weir), Extreme Stunt Show – Moorfields and Memory Walk (in aid of the Alzheimers Society) – Vivary Park.
- 1.4 To support the Taunton Flower Show with publicising the new expanded show we had a press briefing to explain the changes and restrictions to Vivary Park that will be put in place this year. The show is so important to the town we hope the new set up will prove worthwhile and allow the show to evolve and thrive.

2. Community Leisure and Play

- 2.1 Station Road Pool Refurbishment – Our project managers continue to tie up the last pieces of the contractual issues and as previously discussed we will carry out a de-brief for Members once this is complete.
- 2.2 Blackbrook Pool Project – Awaiting planning decision.

3. Tone Leisure (Taunton Deane) Limited Activities

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

Active Lifestyles

Community Flexercise at Lane Estate, Taunton

- 3.2 In partnership with Taunton Deane, Tone was able to offer an extended period to the Community Flexercise sessions at Newton Hall, Newton Road, Lane Estate, Taunton. A number of sheltered housing residents are accessing this service and benefitting from the increased physical activity levels of the sessions and the social interaction with tea and biscuits afterwards. Extension of the activity has been agreed until the end of July 2014 when it will be reviewed again.

Rockwell Green Community Event - Project Wellington

- 3.3 Tone, in partnership with Wellington Children's Centre, Knightstone Housing and Somerset Skills and Learning, held a community day on Wednesday, 16 April 2014 at Rockwell Green Primary School. The project was aimed at engaging with targeted families and offering a physical activity orientated, intergenerational inclusion day to encourage family health and wellbeing through interaction and activities. Approximately 130 people attended the day.

Active Somerset

- 3.4 Funding has been sourced from Somerset County Council to enable Tone to deliver a 'stand-alone' Active Somerset course. The courses are identified as being in demand/needed by the local community and funding is offered for 12 weeks for coaching fees and venue hire, to enable the course to get up and running and remain sustainable after the 12 week period has finished. A needs analysis has been completed with netball looking high up on the requests.

Tone Volunteers

- 3.5 Two of Tone's volunteers, Joy and David Boaden, were recognised at the Mayor's Citizenship Awards in April for outstanding service to their community. Joy has been volunteering as a Health Walk Leader in Taunton for about 10 years and David has been a Communications Volunteer for Tone's three Walking for Health schemes for the last three years. It is thought that they may have been nominated by people who have benefitted from the walks and by fellow volunteers.

Cancer Patient Wellbeing Clinics

- 3.6 Tone has begun supporting the Musgrove Beacon Centre's Wellbeing Clinics.

The clinics, which are being held in village halls around the district, are for patients that have received treatment for cancer. The Wellbeing Clinic provides them with information so that they can move on from the hospital and live their lives fully beyond cancer. Tone promotes Walking for Health (WfH) because the national WfH programme is funded by Macmillan Cancer Support.

Facility News

- 3.7 Tone Leisure launched their new Values: 'Fun', 'Fresh' and 'Simple' on Friday, 9 May 2014, with an 'It's a Knockout' staff event at Blackbrook Pavilion, followed by an official launch event at Wellsprings Leisure Centre, Taunton attended by the new Mayor.

Wellsprings Leisure Centre

- 3.8 A new online box office has now gone live on Tone Leisure's website. Events available include: Sally Morgan, Roy Chubby Brown, Jimmy Car, Sleeping Beauty and Jethro.

Blackbrook Pavilion

- 3.9 Blackbrook Pavilion held a charity Insanity! Class (the new high impact fitness class sweeping the country) in the Sports Hall attended by 80 people. Due to the success of this session a weekly class has now been put on in the centre.

Wellington Sports Centre

Section 106 Refurbishments

- 3.10 Wellington's new modern and customer friendly reception area is fully operational and Tone has received fantastic feedback from customers. Part of these works included the installation of Fast Track Kiosks allowing members speed of entry to the gym, swimming and classes. This has taken 72% of member traffic away from the front desk.
- 3.11 The final phase of works was due for completion on or around 1 July 2014, with the vending and customer viewing area being fully modernised.

Taunton Pool

- 3.12 Taunton Pool re-opened to the public on Friday, 23 May 2014. With the opening date not clear until a few days before, Tone had to rely heavily on social media and other digital marketing to spread the word. It worked and an amazing 4,031 people used the pool for casual swimming within the first week.

- 3.13 The official re-opening took place on Sunday, 1 June 2014 with Mark Foster cutting the ribbon. This event was organised by Taunton Deane Borough Council with the help of Tone staff. The site was closed for public swimming until Noon when customers had the chance to come in and meet Mark and have their photos taken with him.
- 3.14 Tone Leisure and Taunton Deane continue to press for the snagging works to be completed by the contractors.

Vivary Adventure Centre - Golf

- 3.15 Season ticket renewals have been strong year to date despite the damage to the course during the latter part of the winter. Taunton Deane has gratefully assisted Tone Leisure in removing the trees and the greens are now all fully recovered. Further works are planned by the Council to the badly damaged boundaries, while Tone are completing a full tree survey to determine which other trees need to come down before next winter.

Councillor Catherine Herbert

Council Meeting – 22 July 2014

Report of Councillor Jean Adkins – Housing Services

1. Changes to Enhanced Right to Buy

- 1.1 The Housing Order 2014 states that the Right to Buy discount will increase the cash caps amounts annually by the Consumer Price Index. The Right to Buy maximum discount will therefore increase from £75,000 to £77,000. This will come into force from 21 July 2014.
- 1.2 The change will apply immediately to all live applications, regardless of where they are in the process.

2. Right to Buy Applications

- 2.1 There are currently eight applications in the pipeline which will be affected by the changes with the discount on each being increased by £2,000.
- 2.2 Most applications do proceed to sale, the dropout rate being around 25%.
- 2.3 Last year, we sold 47 properties (of which 10 were flats and 37 houses). To date, we have received 19 applications since April 2014. We have completed on 11 properties so far this year, however, all of the 11 are from applications submitted in 2013.

3. Tenant Services Management Board (TSMB) Election

- 3.1 The TSMB is coming to the end of its term of office, extended until September 2014, and elections will be held shortly. Most of the current members are offering themselves for re-election and nine applications have been received at the time of writing.
- 3.2 I would like to thank the current members for their efforts and look forward to working with the new Board.

4. Tenants' Forum

- 4.1 The Forum's Annual General Meeting was held on 8 July 2014 and cheques were presented for the grants made by the Forum for Youth Initiatives.

- 4.2 My thanks go to the Forum members who are very active in carrying out void inspections, helping to select units and tiling choices for the new refurbishment programme etc.

5. Affordable Housing Open Day

- 5.1 This has become a very successful annual event, becoming even more popular following its change of venue to the County Cricket Ground .
- 5.2 Not only do the public have the opportunity to seek advice on all aspects of Affordable Housing, including Low Cost Open Market, Shared Ownership etc but it is a very useful networking event for providers and other organisations.

6. Deane Housing Development

- 6.1 This is the new name for the development arm of the Council's Housing department which will appear, with its logo, on the boards at our building sites.
- 6.2 Deane Housing Development has also joined the Affordable Housing Partnership as a full member, taking the place of Magna who have chosen to drop to 'tier 2' membership.

7. Housing Development and Enabling Manager

- 7.1 I am pleased to report that Jo Humble has been appointed to this new post.

Councillor Jean Adkins

Council Meeting – 22 July 2014

Report of Councillor Vivienne Stock-Williams - Corporate Resources

1. Corporate and Client Services

Corporate Services

- 1.1 The prime focus over the past couple of months for Corporate Services has been the recruitment to the tier 4/5 management structure. This process has gone well and the majority of the positions in the new structure have been filled. The key priorities for the next quarter are to implement the new tier 4/5 structure (which has already started), finalise the recruitment to the tier 4/5 structure and design a structure for the remainder of the staff in the services (tier 6).

Corporate and Client Team

- 1.2 The recruitment and implementation of the tier 4/5 structure has been achieved to date without a significant impact on day-to-day service delivery. The Corporate and Client Services Team continue to provide vital support services to both Councils in the areas of Corporate Performance, Strategy, Customer Services (West Somerset Council (WSC)), Facilities Management (including Corporate Administration and Word Processing), HR, ICT, Southwest One contract management, Complaints, Ombudsman, Freedom of Information and Data Protection.

Shared Services

- 1.3 Corporate Services continues to provide key support to the Shared Services project and specifically project management, HR and ICT expertise. Under the new tier 4/5 structure, Programme Management support will be provided to develop and implement the forthcoming transformation programme. The ICT link between The Deane House and West Somerset House is now live and working. This is essential to our ability to work in partnership, provides secure e-mail between the two sites and allows officers at both sites to view Outlook calendars.

2. Corporate Health and Safety

Corporate Health and Safety Strategy

- 2.1 Since 1 April 2014, the Health and Safety Strategy and key performance monitoring arrangements have been in place. This strategy document has now been formally approved and adopted by the Corporate Governance Committee. As a result, the programme of audits of workplaces by the Health and Safety Team is now underway and the accident reporting and investigation policy is in place.

Health and Safety Inductions

- 2.2 The induction information for new employees had been reviewed and refreshed both to provide up-to-date Health and Safety information and ensure it reflects the Joint Management and Shared Services (JMASS) project. A corporate Health and Safety induction was delivered to new starters within the organisation on 11 June 2014. This included employees of WSC who are now working for the shared service organisation. An induction for new starters at Deane DLO was carried out on 19 May 2014.

Voids Audit

- 2.3 An initial audit was carried out of the work of the Deane DLO Voids Team, including site visits to four properties undergoing refurbishment. A report has been provided to the Voids Manager.

Deane DLO Stores Audit

- 2.4 An audit has also been carried out of the Deane DLO Stores and the audit findings reviewed with the Service Manager.

Health Surveillance Assessments

- 2.5 Health surveillance for at risk Deane DLO employees has been progressed with HR and Devon County Council as a service provider. Catrin Brown and Kate Woollard undertook training to allow them to carry out basic initial health surveillance assessments for employees.

3. Customer Contact Centre

Best Shared Services Initiative Award

- 3.1 I was delighted to learn earlier this month that our Customer Contact Centre had won the Best Shared Services Initiative at this year's South West Contact Centre Forum annual awards.
- 3.2 I believe that this award reflects the success of the team's collaborative and joined up approach in the handling of customer contact during the severe weather situation in January to March 2014 across all partners.

- 3.3 It is also reflective of the hard work of everybody involved in the response across Taunton Deane, Somerset County Council and Southwest One (SW1) which minimised the impact to our customers during these challenging months.
- 3,4 I congratulate all members of staff in the Customer Contact Centre on their achievement and the well-earned recognition of their daily commitment in all circumstances.

Service Highlights

- 3.5 The service continues to be high performing, with all performance indicators achieved or exceeded during the past quarter.
- 3.6 The new technology implemented in 2013 has directly reduced customer abandonment rates from an average of 4.5% to 1.5%. This is as a direct result of functionality now available to advise customers of their position in the queue.

Overview of service performance

- 3.7 Client Customer Satisfaction results showed that between 78% and 87% of client responses rated our services as good or very good.
- 3.8 92% of external customers rated the service they received to be good or very good.
- 3.9 98% of contacts received were resolved at 1st Point Of Contact.
- 3.10 During the year 2013/2014, four complaints were received from a total of 394,798 transactions across all channels.

Industry comparison

	UK Public Sector Average	SWOne Average 2013/14
% of calls abandoned	5.2%	3.8%
Speed of answer (Secs)	30 seconds	21 seconds
Customer Satisfaction	63% positive	92% positive
Contacts resolved at 1st POC	80%	98%

Service Development – Technology

- 3.11 In the 2013 telephony refresh programme, the following new technology was implemented to enhance the overall customer experience:-
- 3.12 New ACD (Automated Call Distributer) - This is the core inbound contact management technology which allows telephone, email, SMS, social media and web chat contacts to be routed into the Contact Centre in a blended environment.
- 3.13 Automation systems - This technology allows for low complexity transactions to be moved into an automated environment if appropriate. For example, payment transactions with the direct benefit of increasing access hours and enhanced Payment Card Industry Standard compliance.
- 3.14 Quality Management system - This technology enhances the overall quality monitoring framework by allowing self-assessment and online collaboration between Team Leaders, Advisers and Quality Assurance Leads.
- 3.15 Workforce Management system - This technology provides intelligent workforce planning and supports overall resource planning strategies allowing the Contact Centre to flex up and down depending on predicted demand.

Successes

- 3.16 There has been no downtime since implementation.
- 3.17 There has been around 50% take-up of automated payments, with no negative feedback.

4. Health and Wellbeing

Health and Wellbeing Audit

- 4.1 The Taunton Deane Health and Wellbeing Strategy and action plan were developed and taken through the Community Scrutiny Committee and approved by the Executive in April 2014. The documents have now been approved and commended by the Somerset Health and Wellbeing Board. The action plan is due to be adopted by the Joint Management Team to ensure its delivery during 2014-2015.
- 4.2 Work towards delivering the Health and Wellbeing Strategy is already progressing.

- 4.3 Both Taunton Deane and WSC are well on the way to becoming Dementia Friendly organisations and 154 Dementia Friends have been created by training staff in Supported Housing, Allocations, Repairs, Wellington Community Office, as well individuals from a range of Taunton Deane and WSC departments and Council Members.
- 4.4 Customer Services, Deane DLO and Estate Officers need a focused approach supported by management to ensure staff are trained.
- 4.5 Discussions have begun in North Taunton and Wellington to support communities to become Dementia Friendly. Work is due to start in the autumn.
- 4.5 The Council also continues to support Reminiscence Learning's Archive Project to deliver training in schools in Wellington around dementia awareness and prevention and to work with Dementia sufferers.
- 4.6 Taunton Deane has now designated many of its children's play areas as No Smoking Zones. Signs are in place to discourage adults from smoking around young children while they play.
- 4.7 This year, between the Voluntary and Community Sector Grant Fund, the Tenants Forum, and the Taunton Unparished Fund, £87,000 has been awarded to 35 organisations to deliver a wide range of activities aimed at improving the Health and Wellbeing of individuals and communities in Taunton Deane. These included dance groups for older people to reduce isolation and improve mobility, sporting activity sessions to be held in local parks for young people, the provision of healthy food parcels for people in need, drug and alcohol awareness training in schools and many more.
- 4.8 Looking ahead, the Assistant Director for Housing and Community Development is due to co-ordinate and deliver a Housing workshop on 17 July 2014 to the Somerset Health and Wellbeing Board to make the case for investment in Housing and the links to Health and Wellbeing.
- 4.9 He will also be attending the Somerset Mental Health Summit meeting to support a presentation on the benefits of the Halcon One Team model and to discuss how the Council can improve working arrangements with the Mental Health teams to ensure people in our most vulnerable communities are receiving the support they need.

5. Legal, Democratic and Electoral Services

Legal Shared Services

- 5.1 Following the undertaking of an exploratory piece of work by the Somerset Monitoring Officers Group on behalf of the County Wide Task and Finish Group, a detailed business case is being prepared with a view to establishing an initial shared Legal Service between Taunton Deane, Mendip and West Somerset Councils.
- 5.2 The intention is for the three Councils to consider the business case in the autumn, so that the new arrangements could be implemented in late 2014 or early 2015. This initiative will not prevent the continued close collaboration in respect of Legal Services with the other three local authorities in Somerset and any/all of them joining the shared service at a later date should it suit all parties concerned.

In-House Legal Team

- 5.3 The Legal Services Manager has designed and introduced a more formal allocation of casework process to enable work flow to be more accurately co-ordinated and monitored. The Manager will also be integral to developing an implementation plan in respect of the shared Legal Services project referred to above during the next few months, whilst continuing to manage the priorities/casework for the in-house Legal Team and undertake casework and attend meetings as Solicitor to the Council.

Joint Independent Remuneration Panel

- 5.4 The possibility of Taunton Deane joining the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel which currently serves SCC and WSC was discussed at the meeting of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee held on 29 May 2014, when it was agreed not to support this proposal due to uncertainties in respect of whether the change would deliver sufficient financial savings and concern at the composition of the Panel.
- 5.5 These issues have been reported back to the Joint Panel and no further action will be taken pending a response to these matters. In the meantime, Mendip District Council has agreed to join the Joint Panel.

Electoral Services

- 5.6 The European Elections were held on 22 May 2014 with the count being undertaken on Sunday, 25 May 2014. I am pleased to say that everything went smoothly with the verification and count producing accurate results, which is a great credit to the new Elections Team. The Electoral Commission has subsequently confirmed that all required standards were met.
- 5.7 Individual Electoral Registration (IER) has now gone live. The Shared Electoral Services Team are accepting applications to register in paper format, over the telephone and on-line.

- 5.8 The Confirmation Live Run was on 26 June 2014, when all of the data from the Electoral Register for Taunton Deane was uploaded to the Department of Work and Pensions for matching. The upload went very smoothly and the records were ready to be downloaded by Tuesday, 1 July. The matching results were better than the results of the dry run that was undertaken in October last year (79.31% for Taunton Deane). A total of 81.90% for Taunton Deane were matched green, so these people will receive a letter to confirm they are on the Electoral Register without having to do anything.
- 5.9 Local data matching will be undertaken on the remaining records (those matched amber and red), which will hopefully result in more records being matched and confirmed. After local data matching, any electors with an amber or red match will automatically receive an Invitation to Register form, which will be followed up with two reminders and a personal visit to encourage registration.
- 5.10 It is worth pointing out that any electors who are not matched will not be deleted from the Electoral Register prior to next year's elections. Any electors with postal or proxy votes who do not match, however, will lose their postal or proxy vote unless they successfully register under IER using the new application process. If you have any detailed questions on this new process, please contact the Electoral Services Team.

Democratic Services

- 5.11 A successful and well attended Annual Council meeting was held at Taunton Rugby Club, Bathpool, Taunton on 8 May 2014, with many tributes for the out-going Mayor, Councillor Libby Lisgo, and a warm welcome for the new Mayor, Councillor David Durdan. I thank the Democratic Services Team for their excellent behind-the-scenes support that was vital in ensuring this event ran smoothly.

6. Resources

Procurement

- 6.1 The Resources Team continues to monitor the delivery of the Procurement Transformation Project and day-to-day procurement service delivered by SW1. As reported in the Quarter 4 monitoring report to Executive and Scrutiny this month, £1,967,000 savings have been delivered to the Council through the signed-off procurement related initiatives.
- 6.2 A further £1,211,000 of savings are scheduled to be delivered from these signed-off initiatives during the remainder of the SW1 contract.

- 6.3 The Strategic Procurement Service is reviewing the 'pipeline' of further possible initiatives for Taunton Deane in order to provide a clearer forecast of likely savings at the end of the current SW1 contract in 2017. The current best estimate is that a total of £4,970,000 savings could be delivered.

Finance Services

- 6.4 The Finance Service has been focusing on the financial year-end and has successfully produced the 2013/2014 Statement of Accounts, approved by the Director of Operations (Section 151 Officer) on 30 June 2014 in line with the statutory deadline.
- 6.5 The external auditor is currently scrutinising the accounts prior to formal approval by Corporate Governance Committee in September this year.
- 6.6 In addition to the year-end work, which is significant, the team continues to support the continuing work of the JMASS Project, ensuring financial information and costings for the management and shared services structures are robust.

7. Revenues and Benefits

Local Council Tax Support Scheme Consultation

- 7.1 The Authority's consultation on changes to the Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) scheme ended on 23 May 2014. A total of 475 responses to the consultation document were received. A report on suggested changes to the scheme is currently being prepared, together with an analysis both of the effect the current scheme has had on customers receiving LCTS and the impact the scheme has had on our service.

Council Tax and Business Rates

- 7.2 'In-year' collection of both Council Tax and Business Rates is above target at the end of Quarter 1 2014/2015.
- 7.3 Speed of processing new claims and changes of circumstances remains at 7 days. More customers are making use of our 'There and Then' service, which has resulted in a further reduction in avoidable contacts.
- 7.4 Demand for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) and Discretionary Council Tax Assistance (DCTA) to help with shortfalls between benefit has remained stable. For the period up to 30 June 2014, £20,000 of our £133,000 budget has been spent on DHPs and

£10,000 of DCTA has been paid out to 80 customers – which is comparable to last year's figures.

IRRV Annual Awards

- 7.5 I am delighted to report that the service has been shortlisted in three categories of the Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation (IRRV) Annual Performance awards.
- 7.6 Both the Revenues and Benefits Teams have been shortlisted in 'Team of the Year' categories for Revenues and Benefits respectively. The service is also shortlisted in the 'Excellence in Innovation' category, where the team's work in reducing avoidable contacts was showcased.
- 7.7 Inspections of the service from leading professionals from the IRRV will take place in August and September. The winners will be announced at the annual IRRV Conference Performance Awards Gala on 8 October 2014. I congratulate all members of staff in the Revenues and Benefits Team on their achievement in reaching the national finals and the well-earned recognition of their daily commitment in all circumstances.

Councillor Vivienne Stock-Williams