

COUNCIL MEETING – 20 APRIL 2004

REPORT OF COUNCILLOR MRS. LEWIN-HARRIS – COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

CRIME AND DISORDER PARTNERSHIP

The partnership recently agreed to focus funding for 2004/05 on projects to tackle anti-social behaviour and substance misuse. Examples include:-

- Night Hoops - a scheme to provide sporting activities for young people at risk of offending during the peak offending hours in specific areas of Taunton Deane
- Validate UK – proof of age cards to all new year 11 and sixth form students
- Promise mentoring scheme – support for volunteer mentors who work with young people who are at risk
- Firebreak - a scheme run by the fire brigade aimed at young people in school years 10 & 11 providing an alternative style of learning out of the classroom based on practical training in basic firefighting skills.
- Residential project – to take young people from Taunton on a residential course designed to develop team building skills and self esteem.
- Relocatable CCTV.

This is just an illustrative list. Full details of the projects can be obtained from the Community Safety Officer.

Tone Leisure has also been successful in attracting Crime and Disorder Partnership funding to pilot a multi-sports session on Friday evenings and for work on a drug rehabilitation scheme.

Audit work to inform the 2005-2008 Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy has begun. The first consultation questionnaire has been distributed and responses are coming back. The analysis of the themes and issues coming out of the responses should be available by the end of May.

BEST VALUE GENERAL SURVEY

A summary of the analysis of the results Best Value General Survey was reported in the Weekly Bulletin on March 11. This shows that in most areas the public are satisfied or very satisfied with the service they are getting from this Council. It also shows that 84% of people are satisfied or very satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live. This is good news indeed and indicates that Taunton Deane offers, on the whole, a very pleasant environment in which to live.

It is also good news, and a credit to our staff, that in a recent benchmarking exercise involving a total of 12 participating authorities, TDBC consistently

had higher levels of customer satisfaction in almost all of the service areas when compared with the group's overall averages."

However, some of the statistics relating to crime and anti-social behaviour are not so comfortable:

- 63% think that the level of crime has got worse over the past three years
- 62% think that people being drunk and disorderly in a public place is a problem
- 51% think that people using or dealing drugs is a problem
- 46% feel that vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage of property or vehicles is a problem in their local area
- 45% of residents feel unsafe in Taunton Deane after dark

These concerns back up our decision to make Tackling Anti-social Behaviour one of four major priorities in the Corporate Strategy.

LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

The Taunton Deane Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) met on 8th March 2004 – its first meeting since a fundamental review of its role and membership was undertaken.

We had a very productive meeting. Each member of the partnership provided a short summary of their organisation's priorities for the future and this led to a wider discussion about priority areas for collective action within the Community Strategy. These priority areas were:

- Inequalities and the needs of minority and hard to reach groups
- Working with others to tackle the causes of deprivation in particular areas
- Developing better ways of sharing information about local needs and quality of life trends
- Developing a stronger local economy
- Developing safer communities, with a particular emphasis on the night-time economy and anti-social behaviour.

An officer group will bring forward proposals to the next LSP meeting, outlining ideas on how partners could work together to tackle these priorities.

NORTH TAUNTON PARTNERSHIP

I am very pleased to say that, following approaches to some key members of the LSP a partnership finance package has been secured to employ a 2-year part time community development worker for north Taunton.

This worker will be employed by the Council but be directly accountable to the North Taunton Partnership. The purpose of the post will be to support the

partnership to co-ordinate the development and implementation of a Community Development programme for the area. This post will build on the strengths of North Taunton Partnership by ensuring that it acts as the hub for community activity and assist with attracting external investment into the area.

The post holder will operate mainly out of the Priorswood Resource Centre with an office base at Wellsprings Sports Centre. Interviews have taken place and it is hoped that the new worker will be in place during May 2004.

CORPORATE STRATEGY

Further work is being done across the council to clarify the position on our priorities and to ensure that all members and staff are aware of the Corporate Strategy. This strategy is structured round the ETCHED (economy, transport, crime, health, environment and delivery) themes, with objectives under each of these headings. Four have been singled out as the Council's highest priorities for 2004-7:

- Delivering the Vision for Taunton
- Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour in our Communities
- Working with the County Council and others to tackle local transport priorities
- Housing

Details of what we intend to do to achieve these priorities are contained in the Corporate Strategy.

VOICE

Councillors should all have been sent a copy of the latest (12th) issue of VOICE, a magazine produced by young people for young people and enabled by this council. May I recommend this to you as "a good read". This edition has a crime theme with an eye-catching front cover (a stark picture of a pair of handcuffs) and has been part funded by the Police. There are some good articles in it, including a description of a mock arrest, a story about a firesetter and another one on joyriding. I very much welcome the partnership with the police in the production of this edition of the magazine.

Councillor Joanna Lewin-Harris