

Full Council Meeting – 9 December 2014

Report of Councillor John Williams – Leader of the Council

1. Town Centre Successes

- 1.1 Congratulations to all who were involved in the Christmas lights switch on and fun day. It was a great success and is to be applauded. A great big thank you to all the team involved as we sometimes forget all the work that has to go into preparing for such a major event as this. Well done all!
- 1.2 We must not forget all the Stewards and the Deane DLO who contributed so much to a safe and happy day of festivities and at the end of the day transformed the town centre back to “ready for work” mode on Monday morning including a major clean up of litter and overflowing waste bins. Within hours it was back to normal.

2. A358 and Strategic Employment Site

- 2.1 Since the last Full Council much has been happening in respect of the above as we felt there was a window of opportunity to promote the vital improvement works to the A358, Junction 25 and the Toneway into Taunton. In turn, this would allow access to the proposed much needed strategic employment site, east of the M5 Motorway.
- 2.2 With the impending Chancellor’s Autumn Statement we grasped the opportunity to lobby Ministers in respect of its “value for money” and urgently needed upgrade of overloaded and congested roads and junctions. This has been promoted on the basis of its huge economic value to Taunton but also the far wider South West Economy, as we are the closest access point to the national motorway network for many businesses and residents down to the South Coast.
- 2.3 This has resulted in the great news - announced as I write this report – that the Government has accepted the need for major investment in our road systems around Taunton. Estimated at around £250 million; the cost of dualling the A358 from Southfields Roundabout to Junction 25 on the M5 including Junction 25. A tremendous vote of confidence in our plans for economic growth in Taunton particularly when linked with projects already supported by Government, the £15 million Tangier Way project, £22 million Northern Inner Distributor Road under construction and the £4.6 million investment in upgrading the railway station. The construction alone is a huge boost to our economy but the

real benefits come from the long term return on investment that the undoubted economic growth will deliver.

3. Budget Setting

- 3.1 One thing is certain, there is always a lot more we would like to do than funds are available. Therefore it is essential to prioritise the use of scarce funds we have. Having said this, because of the proposed savings plan looking forward three years and prepared last year, we have not suffered the enormous funding gap experienced in some years. We are therefore on course to set a balanced budget whilst retaining most of the vital front line services that are important to our community.
- 3.2 A major caveat to the above is that it is all predicated on the Government Support Grants meeting the provisional amounts as previously published. The final figures will not be finalised until January 2015 so no certainty until then.
- 3.3 It is also important for Members to note that setting a balanced budget is a continuous challenge as illustrated in the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) set out below. If we do nothing, within four years our budget deficit will be over £3 million which is obviously unsustainable as not even our reserves will cover that. For the future it will continue to be very hard choices about the services we provide and how they are delivered because one thing is certain whichever party gains power nationally, the same austerity measures will apply. The Revenue Support Grant is predicted to be phased out by 2020. The following extract from our MTFP illustrates:-

Summary MTFP

	2015/16 £k	2016/17 £k	2017/18 £k	2018/19 £k	2019/20 £k
TDBC Forecast Net Expenditure	12,907	14,277	14,867	15,342	15,737
Retained Business Rates	-2,357	-2,417	-2,479	-2,542	-2,607
Revenue Support Grant	-1,901	-1,309	-720	-324	-113
New Homes Bonus	-2,782	-3,256	-3,332	-3,153	-2,935
Council Tax Freeze	0	0	0	0	0
Council Tax - TDBC	-5,323	-5,456	-5,592	-5,732	-5,875
Council Tax - Parishes & Unparished	-522	-523	-524	-525	-526
Forecast Resources Available	-12,885	-12,961	-12,647	-12,276	-12,056
Budget Gap – In Year	22	1,294	904	846	615
Budget Gap – Cumulative	22	1,316	2,220	3,066	3,681

- 3.4 A very important factor in our budget setting is the shared management and services project with West Somerset Council. This is already delivering in excess of £1.5million per year savings and the

transformation element is yet to be planned and implemented. This is already allowing us to maintain vital front line services that we might not otherwise have been able to afford and is a credit to our management and officers that have worked so hard to implement in an almost seamless manner.

4. Firepool, Taunton

- 4.1 With the Northern Inner Distributor Road progressing we are able to make tangible progress on bringing forward development of the site. We have approved the Compulsory Purchase Order process in principle which will facilitate assembly of the complete site but, as always, we try for a negotiated settlement as being far more satisfactory.
- 4.2 Acorn Blue, Housing developers for the remainder of the Priory Bridge Car Park site have now agreed terms and should take over the site and commence works in January 2015. A Planning application is under consideration for a 24 dwelling Knightstone housing site and a 99 dwelling planning application is also under consideration - these latter two are on Abbey Manor land.
- 4.3 Our development partner St Modwen have engaged in positive discussions with the Devon and Somerset Design Review Panel on a revised masterplan for the former cattle market site, which will inform public consultation early in 2015 on exciting development plans.
- 4.4 In all with dwellings already constructed and those now planned the East Goods Yard and the Firepool site and car park are planned to deliver 405 new homes with a further 123 currently under consideration and potentially a further 250 plus on the old livestock market site in conjunction with the proposed commercial development. This should be a much needed boost to footfall in Station Road and around with that number of new homes being constructed.

5. Broadband Rollout by Connecting Devon and Somerset

- 5.1 The urban centres and a number of settlements around the Deane have been enabled but there are still a lot of rural areas that feel abandoned because of lack of accurate information and lack of communication.
- 5.2 It has to be acknowledged that the whole project is an enormous engineering project. I am sure eventually it will bring great benefit to Taunton Deane as a whole, but because of the lack of information it is causing untold frustration amongst those anxiously waiting for a decent service. There is also the concern from residents that it may never

reach them and unfortunately the information shared is inadequate to resolve this question. This causes more uncertainty for those waiting.

- 5.3 I have been, and will continue to press, for much greater availability of information than we are presently receiving. Keeping residents informed stops all the misinformation and rumour-mongering that occurs so the need for up to date information on progress is vital. I will be pursuing this. I have great difficulty in understanding why it is claimed to be “commercially confidential” when the question of when, or if, somebody living in the Quantocks or Blackdowns will receive an upgraded service. It sounds more like evading the question rather than confidentiality!

6. Somerset Rivers Authority

- 6.1 Setting up a Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) forms part of the 20 Year Flood Action Plan that has been agreed by County, District and Borough Councils in Somerset and the plan has been signed off by the Government for urgent implementation.
- 6.2 Aspects of the plan have already been implemented or is work in progress. Some of these are the main river dredging, works to the Sovey River, various road works and the flood alleviation report for a proposed scheme at Bradford on Tone. A terms of reference for the SRA has also been progressed by the Flood Action Group consisting of representatives of all Councils and other interested bodies including the Government.
- 6.3 A report has already been to Scrutiny and the Executive outlining the SRA proposals as worked up by the Leaders Group so far - this is “work in progress”. It will be the subject of further reports as the detail is agreed how it should operate and be funded. It is regarded as an important element of the Somerset wide delivery of action against flooding and the Government are pressing for early establishment of the SRA.

7. The Deane House Relocation Project

- 7.1 Since the Council resolution of County Hall being our preferred option for future accommodation for the Council, work has been underway to initiate the next stage of the project. The following activities have been completed or are underway to support our move to the new site in 2017:-
- DTZ have been reappointed to provide the necessary professional services, following a competitive tendering exercise.
 - A series of customer access workshops have been initiated with staff from Taunton Deane, the County Council and Avon and

Somerset Police to consider how the new shared reception area will operate.

- Sue Tomlinson has been appointed as internal Project Manager, and a project team has been assembled. The project will be organised under a range of different work-streams for example Finance, HR, IT and Legal, with a work-stream lead appointed for each.
- Member and Staff consultation groups have been established.

7.2 As the project evolves a comprehensive communications mechanism will be established to ensure all stakeholders have up to date information on progress and project performance will be mentioned via the quarterly performance reports. However in the interim if you have any questions please route these to James Barraha who is the project sponsor.

As this is the last Full Council before Christmas may I take this opportunity of wishing fellow Members and all officers across the Council a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Thank you for your input and continued commitment in what have been difficult times, to ensure we do the best possible for the community we serve.

A sincere thank you to all.

Councillor John Williams

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Report of Councillor Jean Adkins – Housing Services

1. Housing and Health and Wellbeing Board

- 1.1 Following the Housing workshop held in July 2014 an action plan has been developed which recognises the importance of Housing to Health and Wellbeing.
- 1.2 One action agreed is that a Housing Officer should be included in care conferences and another to undertake a rural Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for Somerset with a strong emphasis on rural housing need via the Somerset Strategic Housing Group.

2. Deane Housing Development: Weavers Arms/Oaken Ground, Wellington

- 2.1 With the Phase 1 sites in West Bagborough and Creechbarrow Road, Taunton well under way, the team have been working on our next project which has been consulted on with tenants and is now being brought to Council.
- 2.2 This scheme makes use of the disused toilet block site and the empty Weavers Arms, which has been acquired by Deane Housing Development as well as 10 Woolaway type houses at Oaken Ground, one of which is void.

3. Digital Access Project

- 3.1 Housing Services have been working on a project to provide tenants with free internet access as part of our response to welfare reform, especially the introduction of Universal Credit, and to enable them to search for jobs as well as other on-line services.
- 3.2 Five kiosks equipped with touch-screen computers have been opened and a further six are planned.
- 3.3 Those at The Deane House and Priorswood are well used and further work is continuing to publicise the others and encourage use.

4. Welfare Reform

- 4.1 We continue to monitor closely the rent arrears of tenants affected by the various welfare reforms, which showed a slight increase in monetary value at the end of October, but with fewer tenants affected:-
- 1 April 2014 Welfare Reform tenant rent arrears were **£38,704.25** with **187** tenants in rent arrears;
 - 1 October 2014 Welfare Reform tenant rent arrears were **£45,222.67** with **170** tenants in rent arrears.
- 4.2 In October there were 371 tenants affected, so a significant proportion were in arrears. No tenant has been evicted for rent arrears solely attributed to changes to welfare.
- 4.3 We have enabled 69 tenants to downsize so far. Comparing our figures to Hastoe Group, a housing organisation in Scotland who have a similar number of properties to TDBC, they have only moved 32 households during the same period.
- 4.4 62 Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) have so far (October) been awarded for this financial year. Some tenants who were awarded DHP in the last year are not being successful in re-applying as they have not used the time of the previous award to improve their financial situation or move to smaller accommodation.
- 4.5 In the New Year a further effort will be made to encourage Mutual Exchange as there are none currently in the system, due to tenants' reluctance to move at this season.

5. Voids

- 5.1 As at Quarter 2, the cost of repairs and maintenance on voids is over budget. However, this is offset by the actual rent lost through voids being lower than budget as the turnaround time is efficient.

6. Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) Team

- 6.1 **Performance** - Satisfaction with the service remains high: at end of Quarter 2 the satisfaction rate was 92.3% against a target 66% of tenants who reported ASB in year to date who rated the help and advice received as good or excellent.
- 6.2 39 cases were closed during the period, of these 32 were resolved.
- 6.3 **New ASB Tools** – New legislation has come into force, with the exception of

the Injunction, it is expected that this will come into force in January 2015. The Team is working up procedures for these new tools and providing briefings/training for staff, the Tenant Services Management Board (TSMB) and the Tenants' Forum.

Councillor Jean Adkins

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Report of Councillor Mrs Vivienne Stock-Williams - Corporate Resources

1. Corporate and Client Services

Corporate Services

- 1.1 The key priorities for Corporate Services during the autumn have been the maintenance of service delivery and the consultation on and finalising of the Tier 6 structure. Both priorities have been achieved.
- 1.2 Detailed below are specific updates in respect of each of the service areas within Corporate Services.

Corporate Strategy and Performance (Lead Officer: Paul Harding)

- 1.3 This area incorporates the management of the strategy and performance functions for both Councils and includes functions in relation to the management of audit actions, complaints, local Government Ombudsman, Freedom of Information (FOI) and Data Protection. Monthly meetings continue to be held with officers from the Southwest Audit Partnership (SWAP) in order to track progress against the delivery of the Audit Plan and an update report will be made to the Corporate Governance Committee meeting in December.
- 1.4 The Quarter 2 Corporate Performance Report is currently working its way through the November and December Corporate Scrutiny and Executive Committee cycle. This indicates that we are making good progress in relation to the majority of our corporate objectives.
- 1.5 The Corporate Services Team are currently working with the Assistant Directors to assist them in the preparation of draft Service plans for 2015/2016. In due course these will be shared with the relevant Portfolio Holders.

Facilities Management and Customer Services (Lead Officer: Angela Hill)

- 1.6 There have been no significant service delivery issues in this area. The Facilities Team are in the process of preparing for changes to the Royal Mail processes in relation to pre-paid post, which will be implemented shortly. The team have also been heavily involved in the implementation of single identity and door access cards for use by staff

at both the Taunton and Williton offices. The rollout of these cards has gone very smoothly.

Human Resources (HR) and Organisation Development (OD) (Lead Officer: Fiona Wills)

- 1.7 The HR and OD service continue to be heavily involved in supporting managers in the delivery of the staff restructure elements of the Joint Management and Shares Services (JMASS) Project. Staff consultation in relation to the Tier 6 restructure has now been completed and the recruitment phase will commence in December. In addition, the OD plan has been agreed and is now in the process of being implemented.
- 1.8 The staff pay award has now been agreed and the HR Team are liaising with the Payroll Service at Somerset County Council (SCC) in order to get the award implemented from December.
- 1.9 Corporate absence continues to be closely monitored by the team. Absence rates have started to increase slightly as we get into the winter months. Based on trends to date this year, we are now predicting an outturn absence figure of 8.39 days per employee, which is above our target of 8.2 days, but still below the national average of 8.7 days. One hundred staff have taken up the offer of a flu vaccination.
- 1.10 The HR Team are continuing to work closely with the Revenues and Benefits service to understand the impact of the Government's move to a Single Fraud Investigation Service (SFIS), which will be run by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). It is anticipated that this will necessitate the transfer under TUPE of affected staff. We will be meeting shortly with the DWP to plan for this transfer.
- 1.11 In December, new legislation comes into effect which will allow parents to share parental leave entitlement and we will be implementing a revised policy to cater for this change.
- 1.12 The 'Stoptober' initiative has resulted in four members of staff giving up smoking. I congratulate them on their perseverance with a difficult challenge.

ICT and Information Management (Lead Officer: Fiona Kirkham)

- 1.13 This area incorporates the retained ICT functions for Taunton Deane, the management of the West Somerset Council ICT service,

information management for both Councils, Design and Print for Taunton Deane and website content development.

- 1.14 The team are heavily involved in managing the delivery of the ICT changes required to support the implementation of the JMASS restructure. The implementation of WIFI at The Deane House is now complete and we hope to complete at the DLO site in the near future. 'Guest' access to WIFI has not been publicised yet, because we first need to improve the speed of The Deane House internet connection and are currently in discussions with Southwest One about the price for this. The team are also presently working on providing all staff, whether they currently use the Taunton Deane or West Somerset network, with access to the systems they need to use on both networks and hope to complete this work in December.
- 1.15 A lessons learned exercise has been undertaken in respect of the Council's Computer Room power outage in August 2014 and the team are in the process of implementing a number of changes as a result. A briefing note on 'Lessons learned' was circulated to all Members following the last Full Council meeting.
- 1.16 The team are currently preparing for the annual PSN (Public Service Network) compliance review, which is due in January 2015.
- 1.17 Work has commenced to implement a new Sharepoint based Intranet site, which we are aiming to have in place by March 2015.

Southwest One Clienting (Lead Officer: Adrian Gladstone-Smith)

- 1.18 The team are continuing to closely monitor the delivery of the remaining elements of the Southwest One Contract.
- 1.19 Specifically, they are progressing concerns in relation to capacity to deliver projects and delays in the pricing of additional work in the ICT Service.
- 1.20 We are continuing to look at succession planning for contract end in November 2017 in conjunction with the other partners.

Transformation and JMASS Project (Lead Officer: Kim Batchelor)

- 1.21 A JMASS Project progress update report went to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee in November. The report indicated that the project is progressing well and is largely delivering on time and to budget.

- 1.22 The Tier 6 restructure is progressing to timetable, consultation has been completed and we are about to enter the recruitment phase. Work has also commenced to identify the non-staff budget savings.
- 1.23 The Legal Services and Building Control shared service partnerships are also progressing.
- 1.24 Site visits are continuing to enable us to learn from the experiences of other Councils. These will help to inform the development of the transformation programme.

2. Corporate Health and Safety

Tool Box Talks

- 2.1 The Health and Safety Team have delivered tool box talks to 76 Deane DLO employees as part of the health surveillance programme roll out. The topics covered are hand / arm vibration (which can result from using vibrating tools such as drills and strimmers) and skin conditions (which can result from being exposed to substances like dusts and chemicals in the work place).
- 2.2 All talks also covered the basic dynamic risk assessment process, reporting of hazards and needle stick awareness. An advisory card on discarded needles and syringes has been produced and given to all staff at risk of finding them.
- 2.3 The programme will cover noise and statutory medicals, similar to those for the asbestos team, early in the New Year.
- 2.4 A stress tool box talk was produced as part of the national Stress Awareness Day. Tips for staff were sent out by email.
- 2.5 A tool box talk has also been developed and delivered to staff in the Supported Housing service.

Asbestos Awareness Training

- 2.6 This training has been given to all Deane DLO operatives and to staff where there was a business case requirement, such as environmental health, housing and planning officers.

Asbestos Investigation

- 2.7 Following an investigation into the incident at the Priory Depot, procedures for contractors and the information given to them prior to commencing work have been tightened up.

Lone Working Service

- 2.8 Both Councils have agreed to extend the Deane Helpline Lone Worker Monitoring Service to all staff in the One Team. This will help the Councils meet their statutory duty to care for lone workers.
- 2.9 A generic Dynamic Risk Assessment was included in the November One Team Newsletter. This enables lone workers to use a traffic light system to think PAL (person, activity, location) both before and during work to help protect themselves and others.

Activities of the Health and Safety (H&S) Team

- 2.10 An update on the work of the Health and Safety Team will come to the Corporate Governance Committee on 8 December 2014.

3. Customer Contact Centre

Performance indicators

- 3.1 The service has continued to perform exceptionally well in line with its contractual performance indicators with no failures since the last update, and consistently exceeding targets.
- 3.2 There has been a significant decrease in average abandonment, which is due to the implementation of enhanced queuing functionality. Specifically, the new Contact Centre technology now allows for certain information to be presented to customers dynamically, based on business rules, which informs them of likely wait times and queue position.

New Telephony Technology

- 3.3 The implementation of the new Siemens OpenScape Contact Centre remains extremely positive news with no interruptions to service experienced. This is important because one of the primary drivers for implementing a new Contact Centre system was to reduce the amount of operational downtime, which was regularly a problem with the old MacFarlane system.
- 3.4 Whilst the new automated attendant has still not been implemented, automated payments are continuing to prove a popular channel for our customers. Over 50% of callers wanting to make a payment to the Council now choose to use the automated system.

Our World at Work

- 3.5 The Our World at Work Team, the Customer Contacts Centre's internal staff forum, continues to successfully manage staff satisfaction surveys and provides a valuable staff engagement forum for concerns and

opportunities to be discussed. The latest staff survey has just been released and results are due back on 28 November 2014. We are hoping to see another increase in satisfaction in key areas as demonstrated in the current trend. Staff satisfaction has increased during the past 12 months and short term sickness has reduced.

Operating Level Agreement (OLA)

- 3.6 Customer Contact has provided information to the Council on its current programme of work with SCC regarding the Operating Level Agreement refresh. OLA's are the non-contractual agreements in place with service lines in both authorities which provide the forum for discussion and development. It is hoped to initiate a refresh for Taunton Deane in the coming months.

2014 Service Restructure

- 3.7 The service's internal restructure is progressing in line with the original time-scale set out in the proposals. Consultation took place during July. In August, feedback was consolidated and published and Phase one commenced with selection processes for Management posts. Management posts were confirmed and in position in September.
- 3.8 Phases 2-4 commenced in November 2014, once the Workforce Management System was implemented. 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.
- 3.9 Phase 2 is now completed and work has started on Phase 3. It is anticipated that the restructure will be completed by 1 March 2015.
- 3.10 As a result of this restructure, business support staff will be able to focus on business optimisation by concentrating on projects. Advisors will be given additional training, so that a more resilient tiered structure is in place, with greater opportunity for multi-skilling and taking on complex, specialist roles.

4. Health and Wellbeing

Deane Helpline

- 4.1 Staff continue to visit GP practices to ensure Practice Managers and Doctors have up-to-date information on the service. They are also actively promoting the service to maximise take-up and giving equipment demonstrations to local organisations.

- 4.2 A defibrillator has been purchased and is awaiting delivery. The British Heart Foundation will be training staff in its use before it is carried on response vehicles to assist clients.
- 4.3 The Fire Service will also be delivering British Start (that is, fire safety risk assessment) training to front line staff in December.
- 4.4 The Telecare Services Team Manager is now Safeguarding Champion for Sheltered Housing and attends monthly review meetings with Sheltered Housing Managers.
- 4.5 Lifeline equipment for sheltered housing tenants is being upgraded to ensure access to telecare equipment in the future.

Community Leisure Team

- 4.6 The team are working with Sport England and the Amateur Swimming Association to ensure the new swimming pool at Blackbrook meets the needs of community accessibility for all members of the community.
- 4.7 The team are part of the North Taunton Get Active Community Project. This initiative is led by Knightstone Housing, following an award by the Lottery Fund, and is intended to support the community in joining sporting activity. The first meeting took place in November and the first event is due to take place in early Spring.
- 4.8 Our leisure operators, Tone Leisure, have just received Sport England Funding to deliver a more targeted and supportive approach to new participants who would prefer to exercise in a beginners group session in the gym.
- 4.9 One group specifically targets adults aged 50+ who have a BMI of over 25. A second project targets adults aged 65+ who have long term health conditions. The sessions will enable participants to take part in regular physical activity, in a group environment, and thus build up their confidence, make new friends, and improve their mental and physical wellbeing. There will be six classes a week, each lasting for 45 minutes, held in two leisure centres in Taunton Deane.

Housing and Community Project Team

- 4.10 Staff are working to develop new inter-generational dementia projects with Reminiscence Learning – specifically their award winning Archie Project. The project seeks to make towns and villages dementia friendly through their dementia awareness activities. £15,000 has been secured from SCC, Taunton Deane's Housing Revenue Account, Wellington Town Council and Rotary thus ensuring five new areas will benefit from the project (Wiveliscombe, Bishops Lydeard, Priorswood, Halcon and Rockwell Green).

Stoptober

4.11 This year, 12 members of staff signed up and were assisted with advice and encouragement from Lisa Redston together with the additional incentive of a fruit basket in the office for those making it to the second week. All 12 continued their efforts through the month and either quit or cut down the amount they were smoking. Four members of staff successfully made it through the month and will be rewarded with an extra half-day annual leave as well as the many health and financial benefits of not smoking.

Adult Social Care (ASC) – Portal

4.12 ASC are currently developing / commissioning an on-line portal that will provide support to vulnerable / elderly adults. We are working with ASC to explore the potential for Taunton Deane/West Somerset to eventually become directly involved in order to develop a co-ordinated approach to the sign-posting and referral to a range of services, including services across the voluntary and community sector. The Portal will provide the following:-

- A central library containing information and advice in relation to services;
- An online e-market place where customers can purchase or book services directly from a wide-range of providers. In addition, 'free' services and community offerings will be included;
- An online self-triage tool to identify if the customer is likely to be eligible for SCC support and what their specific needs might be;
- Self-referral tool to relevant SCC or partner services;
- A search/self-assessment tool (aimed at self-funders) to assist customers in identifying their own needs and advising them of available services to help them meet those needs; and
- SCC has recently awarded the contract to System Associates and will now begin to work with them to develop a joint implementation plan.

Smoke Free Alliance – Emerging Priorities

4.13 A stakeholder event was held during October 2014 to receive feedback on progress with current initiatives and campaigns, and to develop collective priorities for the future. There are a few key themes which emerged from the group work as to what the Alliance's priorities should be going forward. These are:-

- Young people – prevention of uptake - ‘turning off the tap’; reducing increase in uptake during transition to college; smoke free schools;
 - Smoke free environments – for example play parks; beer gardens; schools;
 - Alliance organisations acting as exemplars;
 - Alliance working as a network going forward – identifying networks; joint working; reciprocal training; identifying those still missing from the group.
- 4.14 Public Health have set up a Yammer group for Alliance members. This will allow us to work effectively as a group in between the two formal meetings a year.

5. Legal, Democratic and Electoral Services

Legal Shared Services Draft Business Case

- 5.1 A proposal to establish an initial shared Legal Service between Taunton Deane, Mendip and West Somerset Councils has been prepared and has been submitted to the respective Scrutiny Committees of the three Councils.
- 5.2 Mendip and West Somerset Scrutiny Committees have both now recommended approval. In addition, Unison and affected staff are being consulted.
- 5.3 Following consideration of any comments, the intention is for the Business Case to be further considered at meetings of the Executives/Cabinet of the three Councils in January 2015 and Full Council meetings in February 2015. If the proposal is agreed the intended implementation date is 1 April 2015.

In-house Legal Team

- 5.4 The arrangements for securing additional capacity to support the team in regard to key corporate projects are being put in place, with a view to an appointment being made for January 2015.

Joint Independent Remuneration Panel

- 5.5 Following approval in principle to join the Independent Remuneration Panel at the last Council meeting, the first meeting of the expanded Joint Panel was held on 27 November 2014. The independent representative for Taunton Deane Borough Council is to be Keith Bevan, with Tony Brown as deputy, and the appointment thereof is formally made elsewhere on the agenda.

Electoral Services

- 5.6 The new Electoral Register was published on 1 December 2014 and a copy of the new register will be provided to all Members. An additional temporary post has been engaged to join the team to assist with the work around the publication of the new Register and preparation for the 2015 Elections.
- 5.7 Work is already in process to check where voters have not been confirmed through the Individual Electoral Registration process at the first attempt, to try and ensure that the Register will be as accurate as possible. If Members are contacted by the public in this regard, please do encourage them to contact the Electoral Services Team.
- 5.8 Once again, it is worth repeating that any electors who do not match following the local data matching process will not be deleted from the Electoral Register prior to next year's elections. Nevertheless, any electors with postal or proxy votes who do not match, will lose their postal or proxy votes unless they successfully register under Individual Electoral Registration using the new application process.
- 5.9 A mini canvas is proposed in January and February 2015, whereby all households will be contacted with the current details of persons who are on the Register at that address. This will act as a further prompt to ensure that the Register will be as up-to-date as possible before the May elections.
- 5.10 The Electoral Services Officer has been working closely with the Cabinet Office, who have welcomed such proactive initiatives. They have subsequently shared some of the practices currently being undertaken by our team, for example, the process being followed to register residents of nursing homes – often recognised as a difficult area to deal with – with other Local Authorities who are experiencing problems in this regard.

Democratic Services

- 5.11 After the last Full Council meeting, the Council has said goodbye to Sharon Grant, the Civic Officer who has done sterling work over recent years in supporting the work of the respective Mayors. We wish her well in the future. The post will be filled as part of the continuing Tier 6 restructure process. In the interim, a temporary agency worker has been engaged to assist with the transition period. It is hoped that the current restructure process will be completed by late January/early February 2015.
- 5.12 The Democratic Services Team have been adapting to cover Member meetings at both The Deane House and West Somerset as part of the shared services project. To date, the transition has been smoothly managed and my thanks go to all the members of the team for their flexible and positive approach.

- 5.13 The recent Remembrance commemoration formalities were a great success, with an exceptionally large turnout at the event in Vivary Park, Taunton.
- 5.14 The team also supported another successful, well appreciated and well attended event, where Councillor Cliff Bishop received the Freedom of the Borough.

6. Resources

Procurement

- 6.1 We continue to monitor the delivery of the Procurement Transformation Project and day-to-day procurement service by Southwest One. Latest information, as at 31 July 2014, reports that £2,274,000 savings have been delivered to the Council through the signed-off procurement related initiatives. A further £1,142,000 of savings are scheduled to be delivered from these signed-off initiatives during the remainder of the Southwest One contract.
- 6.2 The Strategic Procurement Service continues to review the 'pipeline' of further possible initiatives for Taunton Deane to provide a clearer forecast of likely savings at the end of the current Southwest One contract in 2017. The current best estimate is that a total of £4,990,000 savings could be delivered.

Financial Services

- 6.3 The structure for the Finance Service is included within phase one of the Tier 6 implementation as part of the JMASS Project. All staff have been confirmed within posts in the Finance structure with no redundancies. Staff will move into their new roles on 1 December 2014, and recruitment plans are underway to fill a small number of vacancies in the new 'One team'. I would like to take this opportunity to thank staff from both Councils for maintaining the important work of the service during this period of change.
- 6.4 At this time of year, the main focus has been the preparation of budget estimates for next financial year. A progress update was reported at the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 20 November 2014, including our latest forecast of the Council's financial position for 2015/2016 and over the medium term (four further years ahead). Whilst the budget gap is relatively small for next year, the financial pressure continues in subsequent years as Government funding is expected to reduce further year on year. The team are helping managers and portfolio holders in developing budget ideas.
- 6.5 The team continues to support the ongoing work of the JMASS Project, ensuring financial information and costings for the management and

shared services structures are robust and are on track to deliver business case targets.

7. Revenues and Benefits

Customer Service Excellence

7.1 At the end of September, the service received re-certification for Customer Service Excellence. The feedback provided in the report by the independent inspector stated a number of areas in which the Revenues and Benefits Service demonstrated good practice:-

- A customer focussed approach continues to be a key driver for the service as a whole. There is good evidence to demonstrate specific improvements and an emphasis on continuous development at a time of high demand;
- Impressive compilation of data underpins customer insight and drives future planning;
- Partnership work is extremely impressive; and
- The response to the floods across the Somerset Levels was thoughtful and constructive. The provision of relief and assistance was extremely well handled and is a credit to front-line staff as well as the service as a whole.

IRRV Awards

7.2 Further success came in October when both the Revenues Team and the Benefits Team received Bronze Awards in "Team of the Year" Category from the National Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation. These awards recognise excellence at a national level and I should like to congratulate all staff on their achievement.

Localised Council Tax Support Scheme

7.3 We have been reviewing our Localised Council Tax Support Scheme for 2015/2016. The service has obtained extensive information to inform the decision to be taken by Full Council on 9 December 2014. This decision needs to seek, as far as possible, to balance the significant cut to funding for Council Tax Support and the Council's wider budget challenge, with the need to help the most financially vulnerable members of the community.

Benefit Processing

7.4 The team continues to perform well in speed of benefit processing for 2014/2015. The average time taken to reassess benefit is 6½ days from when the customer notifies the service of a change in their circumstances. Staff are working out new claims on average within 17 days of the date they are submitted.

Council Tax Collection

- 7.5 Council Tax collection at 31 October 2014 is ahead of target at 72.43%. As many businesses this year have elected to pay their Business Rates over 12 instead of 10 months, collection is running at 2% below target at 69.77%. The service is, however, confident that it will meet the full year target by 31 March 2015.

Fraud

- 7.6 A bid was submitted to the Department of Communities and Local Government to assist us in tackling non-benefit fraud. I am delighted that we have been successful and now await confirmation of the amount awarded.

Joint Working

- 7.7 Finally, good progress has been made by managers in the Revenues and Benefits Service in establishing joint working with West Somerset. Officers are now working across both authorities to maximise efficiencies, with an aim to provide excellent services to residents in both areas.

Councillor Vivienne Stock-Williams

Council Meeting – 9 December 2014

Report of Councillor Mark Edwards - Planning, Transportation and Communications

1. Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (SADMP)

- 1.1 The SADMP goes to members for approval at this meeting (9 December 2014). It has previously been considered by the Local Development Framework Steering Group, the Community Scrutiny Committee and Executive. The Plan has been two years in the making and is founded upon an extensive evidence base and several rounds of public consultation.
- 1.2 Following approval it will be placed on deposit early in the New Year before being submitted to the Secretary of State and Planning Inspectorate.
- 1.3 We anticipate that the Plan will be examined in the Summer of 2015 prior to adoption towards the end of the Year.
- 1.4 The Plan itself comprises a number of site allocations and detailed development management policies and will mean that the Council can claim to have a comprehensive and up-to-date plan coverage for its area. It is important that the Plan is adopted as soon as is practicable in order that we can boast full plan coverage.

2. Junction 25

- 2.1 Officers continue to attend monthly meetings with Somerset County Council's (SCC) Highways and the Highways Agency (HA) to progress proposals for highway improvements to Junction 25 and a Henlade bypass to accommodate the future growth proposals for Taunton and relieve existing network problems. This includes highway modelling for a strategic employment site around Junction 25 to complement the Firepool regeneration site, allocated in the Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan.
- 2.2 A Delivery Team has also been set up to progress development of the employment site. This group includes internal and external stakeholders including the potential site developers, HA, SCC and the Environment Agency.
- 2.3 A suite of wider highway modelling is also being undertaken by the HA including potential improvements to both the M5, through the Route Based Strategy and A303/A358. Consequently it is unlikely that the

HA would be in a position to 'sign-off' the strategic employment proposals until all of the modelling is complete, which is anticipated around early summer 2015.

- 2.4 It is therefore the case that the SADMP will not be in a position to include the employment proposals around Junction 25 when it is published early in 2015, although it will contain a strong commitment to progress the proposals in a forthcoming plan as a matter of priority.

3. Junction 27

- 3.1 Mid Devon District Council are proposing to publish their Local Plan early in 2015. At this stage, although not confirmed, it is unlikely to contain an allocation at Junction 27 for a major, mixed use retail, leisure and employment development.
- 3.2 Through the Duty to Co-operate requirement, a number of authorities including Taunton Deane, Exeter, North Devon and Teignbridge have expressed concerns at the potential impact of such a proposal on town and other centres and its conflict with planning policy.
- 3.3 Devon County Highway Authority, the HA and Natural England have also expressed concerns with anticipated modes of travel and traffic impacts of such a proposal.
- 3.4 Taunton Deane Officers will continue to attend working group meetings on this issue and report back to Members when the Plan is published with a view to responding if the proposal does feature in the document or if the site developers object to its exclusion in the Plan.

4. Neighbourhood Planning

- 4.1 The Government have announced a £43,000,000 fund over the next two years to support Neighbourhood Planning. Most of the funds go direct to the Neighbourhood Plan Groups, in the form of grant payments (cash) or/and direct specialist advice tailored to specific needs. The Government is also extending the grants to local authorities to assist with costs at legal stages of the Neighbourhood Plan Process.
- 4.2 Trull and Staplehay Neighbourhood Plan group are refining a draft Plan. The Council is providing technical advice around regulatory requirements and evidence for policies.
- 4.3 Bishops Lydeard and Cothelstone Neighbourhood Plan Group are producing a draft Plan. Officers and Neighbourhood Plan group aim to meet soon to workshop the policies, evidence and provide technical advice.

- 4.4 Wiveliscombe and Wellington Neighbourhood Plan Groups are not currently progressing, although the Council understands they are still intending to work towards a Neighbourhood Plan.

5. Monkton Heathfield Governance Board

- 5.1 The Monkton Heathfield Delivery Board continues to meet regularly and negotiations are continuing between the developers and key stakeholders. The receipt of valuation advice should enable the application that seeks to vary the Section 106 obligation to reduce the amount of affordable housing to ensure that the developer can fund the Western Relief Road to be brought before the Planning Committee shortly.
- 5.2 A planning application showing an alignment for the Western Relief Road has also been submitted. Tim Burton recently attended West Monkton Parish Council to update them and answer their questions. It is hoped that a decision on the Council's Large Sites Capacity Fund application will be received shortly.

6. Routes to the River Tone Project

- 6.1 The Routes to the River Tone Project, a partnership project with the Somerset Wildlife Trust, was launched at the County Museum in October this year. The two project officers have already made a good start on the agreed activity plan for the project.

7. Car Parking

Safer Parking Scheme - Park Mark®

- 7.1 The Orchard Multi-Storey Car Park has just been inspected and again has been awarded the Park Mark®.
- 7.2 The Safer Parking Scheme is an initiative of the Association of Chief Police Officers aimed at reducing crime and the fear of crime in parking facilities. Safer parking status, Park Mark®, is awarded to parking facilities that have met the requirements of a risk assessment conducted by the Police.
- 7.3 These requirements mean that Taunton Deane has put in place measures that help to deter criminal activity and anti-social behaviour; thereby doing everything they can to prevent crime and reduce the fear of crime in their parking facility.
- 7.4 For customers, using a Park Mark® Safer Parking facility means that

the area has been vetted by the Police and has measures in place to create a safe environment:-

- Quality management;
- Appropriate lighting;
- Effective surveillance;
- Clean environment.

7.5 The scheme is managed by the British Parking Association (BPA) on behalf of 'Secured by Design'. It is supported by the Home Office and Government.

Car Park Use

7.6 Figures indicate that the use of car parks across Taunton Deane is up on last year and we anticipate that during the Christmas period this trend will continue.

7.7 As in previous years, the four Saturdays prior to Christmas will see Wellington Town Centre Car Parks available free of charge.

7.8 Taunton has also supported the 'Small Business Saturday' on the 6 December 2014 with all town centre car parks free of charge from 2 p.m.

8. Communications

8.1 The importance of social media is becoming ever more apparent with the Council's Twitter account being used as a key tool in communicating quickly and simply.

8.2 The Social Media Policy is awaiting its final approval tonight and aims to be a source of advice on how both staff and Councillors can best use social media while being aware of potential pitfalls.

8.3 The number of followers on the @TDBC account is now approaching 1,000 and we are hoping to achieve that target before the end of the calendar year.

8.4 On 26 November 2014 @TDBC took part in the national #ourday initiative inspired by the LGA to let the wider world know what local authorities do and to give an idea of the length and breadth of Council services. Thanks go to everyone who provided the information for this "tweetathon."

8.5 The Council continues to provide a steady flow of press releases and reactive statements where necessary and publishes the monthly

Deane Dispatch. Recent publications are taking a closer look at the growth and development themes.

- 8.6 Communications also works to deliver the One Team newsletter for staff and Councillors and thanks must go to all involved in this key publication.

Councillor Mark Edwards

Council Meeting – 9 December 2014

Report of Councillor Jane Warmington - Community Leadership

1. Community Safety

- 1.1 Community Safety is crime prevention plus. It is the systematic acquisition and application of skills, knowledge and techniques to prevent and reduce crime, disorder and fear of crime and develop safer communities. It extends from combating drugs misuse at one end to touch on urban and social regeneration at the other. It is also the name of the services and partnerships providing it, so community safety officers and community safety partnerships of which Safer Somerset Partnership is one.
- 1.2 Safer Somerset commissions the Somerset Community Safety Strategic Assessment (of crime and disorder) which is published annually. It gathers together research, evidence and intelligence from national and regional sources, as well as drawing on the professional expertise of those working locally. It is a joint partnership document and is designed to be a point of reference and guidance to resource community safety initiatives among partner agencies across Somerset.
- 1.3 It can be found at www.somersetintelligencenetwork.org.uk (SINe website) under Crime and Community Safety then listed under Community Safety Strategic Assessment.
 - It provides a picture of current issues;
 - Reflects trends and emergence of new issues;
 - Assesses impacts on communities, identifying those most affected by issues
 - Is independent, objective and evidence-led, reflecting the needs of our communities across public service organisations, rather than those of any single partner.
- 1.4 The main aim of the document is to identify priorities which will inform a joint strategy and action plan in order to tackle these priorities in a co-ordinated approach across Somerset. It also informs the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) following the election in November 2012 and helps the development of local Police and Crime Plans.
- 1.5 The Office of the PCC also works with key partners, including the Avon and Somerset Police Constabulary (ASP), to develop the Police and Crime Needs Assessment in October each year to inform her strategic decision making as well.
- 1.6 The Needs Assessment sits alongside and aims to identify and assess the issues that are likely to impact upon local crime and community safety services over the coming years via a horizon scanning approach. It also reviews current gaps in

services in respect of these findings, and presents shared multi-agency recommendations for improvement.

- 1.7 The consultation on the Needs Assessment has just closed. Eleven of the twelve small adjustments suggested to it by the Portfolio-Holder (PfH) have been accepted.
- 1.8 The Community Safety Budget now sits with the PCC and divides into four:-
- (1) Victim Services Commissioning – for example, the newly commissioned Lighthouse Service for integrated victim support;
 - (2) Community Safety Commissioning – for example, Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC);
 - (3) Community Safety Grants - part Force wide, for example Youth Offending Teams (YOTs), part local for larger Somerset projects awarded through the Safer Somerset; and
 - (4) Community Action Fund – for small grants of up to £5,000 to tackle issues in local areas relating to the priorities in the Police and Crime Plans. These can be applied for across the year and the assessing panel meets quarterly (<http://www.avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk/Partnerships/Partnerships.aspx>).

2. New Anti Social Behaviour Legislation

- 2.1 The Anti Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 is intended to introduce simpler, more effective powers to tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB) which provide better protection for victims and communities. The new Community Trigger and Community Remedy will empower victims and communities, giving them a greater say in how agencies respond to complaints of ASB and in out-of-court sanctions for offenders.
- 2.2 The Act will also tackle irresponsible dog ownership and the use of illegal firearms by gangs and organised criminal groups, strengthen the protection afforded to the victims of forced marriage and those at risk of sexual harm, enhance the professional capabilities and integrity of the Police, amend the Port and Border Security Powers in Schedule 7 to the Terrorism Act 2000 to ensure that they strike the right balance between the need to protect public safety and the protection of individual freedoms and amend the Extradition Act 2003 to strengthen public confidence in, and the operational effectiveness of, our extradition arrangements. A good summary is available on <http://www.community-safety.info/18.html>.
- 2.3 The overarching aim of the Act is to provide more effective powers to tackle ASB, protect victims and communities and treat the underlying behaviour of perpetrators.
- 2.4 The Act replaces nineteen existing powers dealing with ASB with six broader powers, streamlining procedures to allow a quicker response to ASB. The Government envisages that these powers will make it easier for victims and communities to take action against ASB and reduce repeat violations.

2.5 [.https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/anti-social-behaviour-crime-and-policing-bill-anti-social-behaviour](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/anti-social-behaviour-crime-and-policing-bill-anti-social-behaviour)

3. New Psychoactive Substances

- 3.1 New Psychoactive Substances (NPSs) – so called Legal Highs – have been giving cause for concern for some time and were brought to wider public attention both locally and nationally with the formation of the Taunton based South West Action Group (SWAG). This was in response to an incident where a young girl was spiked by a discarded needle and how these were increasing in number in certain public areas despite regular sweeps.
- 3.2 SWAG voiced their concerns to Full Council in September particularly around two retail premises in the town which are selling them. They have received excellent support throughout from local Councillors particularly Councillor Simon Coles and the ASP Town Centre Police Team. They have now gathered over two thousand signatures on a petition, sufficient to support a debate at Full Council.
- 3.3 NPSs are now being used as substitutes by those addicted to harder drugs. However, their effects are less predictable, they are considered more addictive, the effects shorter-lived, leading to more frequent use, more ASB, associated crime and an increase in discarded needles. Unpredictable effects on users are putting an additional strain on emergency services and others needing to deal with users.
- 3.4 The Town Centre Police Team recently organised a community clean up with some basic training, equipment and supervision in four hotspots across the town. Forty or so joined in, including SWAG, Taunton Association for the Homeless, Councillors and Community Payback and searched the areas, collecting a total of 441 discarded needles as well as filling several bags with other litter. This deep clean is considered worth repeating in addition to the regular sweeps by Taunton Deane DLO staff in the parks and nearby streets.
- 3.5 Taunton Deane's Community Safety Lead and the PfH continue to work behind the scenes with the Constabulary Sector Inspector where the new legislation has already helped close a similar shop in Exeter. It would appear that one of the two shops in Taunton has agreed to stop selling these substances as a result of this closure. Activity around the other shop is currently being monitored.
- 3.6 This and other policing issues across wider Somerset, were recently broadcast on BBC1 in its short series Neighbourhood Blues, screened for two weeks every weekday morning in the middle of October. It is available to be viewed on BBC iPlayer for four weeks after screening.

4. Domestic Abuse

- 4.1 A new law on domestic violence, making it illegal for someone to exercise 'coercive control' over their partner, is about to be unveiled by the Government. The Home Secretary is expected to announce new powers allowing the Police to prosecute those who are guilty of psychological and emotional abuse.

- 4.2 It means for the first time people who control their partners through threats or by restricting their personal or financial freedom, could face prison in the same way as those who are violent towards them.
- 4.3 Campaigners have long called for a change in the law to put psychological exploitation on a par with physical violence, in the hope it will encourage more victims to come forward and report abuse in the home.
- 4.4 According to the charity, Women's Aid, only six and a half percent of domestic violence incidents reported to the Police result in a conviction, while a quarter of cases which are passed to the Crown Prosecution Service result in no action being taken. It is thought as many as 1.2 million women experience some kind of domestic abuse in Britain each year. Many do so silently, having little faith they will be believed or protected if they go to the Police.
- 4.5 Those who do find the courage to report an abusive partner often do not do so until there have been at least thirty incidents. Tragically it can be too late for some as the escalating pattern of abuse and violence sees an estimated two women murdered by a partner or ex-partner every week in Britain.
- 4.6 While the Government's definition of domestic violence recognises the impact of coercive control and threatening behaviour, this has not previously been reflected in law. Police investigating reports of domestic abuse, are often left frustrated as abusers are not prosecuted due to a lack of clear evidence or gaps in the legislation.
- 4.7 In cases where perpetrators are brought before the courts, they are often only charged with isolated crimes, with years of psychological and emotional abuse not taken into account.
- 4.8 The new law will be introduced as a series of amendments to the Serious Crime Bill, currently going through the House of Lords, and is expected to be on the statute books in the New Year. Under the terms of the Bill a person convicted of coercive control could face up to fourteen years in prison and there will be no statutory time limit for the offences, meaning abuse dating back years can be taken into account.
- 4.9 Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) were introduced in England and Wales from 8 March 2014. This follows the successful conclusion of a one year pilot in the West Mercia, Wiltshire and Greater Manchester Police Force areas.
- 4.10 DVPOs are a new power that fills a gap in providing protection to victims by enabling the Police and Magistrates to put in place protection in the immediate aftermath of a domestic violence incident.
- 4.11 With DVPOs, a perpetrator can be banned with immediate effect from returning to a residence and from having contact with the victim for up to twenty-eight days, allowing the victim time to consider their options and get the support they need.
- 4.12 Before the scheme, there was a gap in protection, because the Police could not charge the perpetrator for lack of evidence and so provide protection to a victim

through bail conditions, and because the process of granting injunctions took time.

- 4.13 The PfH is the district representative on the Police and Crime Panel and was invited by the PCC to sit on a Domestic Abuse Scrutiny Panel which questioned ASP recently about their improved response and support for victims. This followed an earlier report from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies which found Police Forces wanting in this area.
- 4.13 Contribution from the PfH asked for a concerted effort to get behind the One Team model, a sustained local area partnership approach which is reducing domestic abuse. John Hart, one of our two Housing Estate Officers with responsibility for Anti Social Behaviour accompanied the PfH on the Panel.

5. One Teams in North Taunton and Wellington

- 5.1 We are grateful to ASP for dedicating Police Inspector Shane Carey to take the lead in setting up the two emerging One Teams in North Taunton and Wellington. There is a lot to do and his working group meets regularly and things are moving on.
- 5.2 Full time co-ordinators and administrative/project support are expected to be in post in the two additional areas at the beginning of next year. In the meantime Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue have seconded an Interim Coordinator for Wellington, and the Police continue to cover this in North Taunton for the time being to support the emerging One Teams of existing frontline staff.
- 5.3 Co-locating frontline staff within the area they are working in, is still a work in progress and does not present any easy answers. Discussions across the various agencies are continuing. It is expected that staff squeezed into the Children's Centre in Halcon will move into the agency hub (with flats above) to be built in Moorland Road as part of the redevelopment. Getset Services are expanding and more of their staff will be area based in those centres designated as hubs which include Acorns, Hillside in North Taunton and Wellington.
- 5.4 All three areas have excellent bench marking reports undertaken in 2012 to inform the Priority Areas Strategy. These reveal the most pressing issues affecting each community and give a good overview for each area. These can be found on our website by searching Priority Areas Strategy, then clicking on it, scrolling down and clicking on the area Benchmarking Reports for North Taunton, Rural Taunton Deane (excluding Wellington), Taunton East and Wellington. Also available is the Taunton Deane Index of Multiple Deprivation Rankings.

6. Neighbourhood Policing Awards 2014

- 6.1 The Halcon One Team were overall ASP Force winners of the Neighbourhood Team of the Year Award, as well as winner of this category for Somerset. This is well deserved. Police Sergeant Andy Murphy QPM was there to receive this. He is now back working two days a week on a phased return in North Taunton before returning full time to Halcon. We would like to thank Fiona Phur for her nomination and for recognising the added value of working in this way.

- 6.2 I would also like to congratulate PCSO Linda Ebdon who received the individual Police Community Support Officer of the year award for Somerset. She leaves ASP in the New Year to join Devon and Cornwall Police Constabulary to begin training as a Police Officer. She will be much missed by her colleagues, local families and all the children she has helped during her seven years in Halcon. Linda also received a High Sheriff's Award a few weeks ago.
- 6.3 Another loss to the team is PCSO Ian Warren who has started his training as a Police Officer with ASP Constabulary. The Link Power Project has gone from strength to strength under his administration and leadership. It is a great benefit to Halcon and those who are part of this voluntary community workforce which helps them become work ready amongst other things.

7. Christmas Taunton Town Wardens

- 7.1 Taunton Deane Borough Council is funding a trial to provide two Taunton Town Wardens, throughout December at a cost of £5,000 which will pay for more than 350 hours of patrols on key routes and in parks. They will patrol crime and anti social behaviour hot spots and other areas as directed such as Castle Green.
- 7.2 The aim is to deter and disrupt troublemakers, support the Town Centre Police Team and the retailers' own troubleshooters. The wardens will report problems and make physical checks of key locations such as public loos and cash points. They are well trained, well equipped and able to administer first aid, as appropriate.
- 7.3 The patrols will be easily spotted in their high visibility jackets and badged as Taunton Deane Borough Council Town Wardens. They will work when the shops are open from 9am to 6pm and cover busy periods such as late night shopping.
- 7.4 The Police and South West Businesses Against Crime are fully supporting the pilot which could be extended in future.

Merry Christmas.
Councillor Jane Warmington

Council Meeting – 9 December 2014

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

1. Staffing issues

- 1.1 Carla Modley will be leaving at Christmas. During her three years with the Council, she has made a great contribution to the marketing of Taunton Deane, and has been involved in the delivery of cultural events, including the Olympic Torch Relay and two consecutive Somerfest events. We wish her every success in her new appointment.

2. Business Support

Taunton Business Incentive

- 2.1 This is the second year of this award supported by Francis Clark, Amicus Law, The Carly Press, The Castle Hotel, Word Gets Around, Somerset Business Agency, Santander, The Somerset County Gazette, Eskees and Taunton Deane. This group has created a support package worth £3,000 to help two businesses in 2015. A record number of applications have been received and 15 finalists from each category (turnover less than £100,000 and £100,000- £1m) have been chosen to go forward to the public vote.

The Fredericks Foundation

- 2.2 The Fredericks Foundation has awarded two grants to Taunton Deane residents. Details are still confidential until signed contracts are issued to applicants but the funding is going to worthy businesses.

New Business Grants

- 2.3 Seven new Business Grants have been awarded in the October round of awards. During the year to date grant support has been offered to 19 new businesses across the Borough.
- 2.4 The October awards were to the following people and businesses:-

Christopher Mockridge	Ludicris Cake Toppers	£500
Jack Council	Jacks Garden Maintenance	£500
Judith Stacey	Pass The Thyme (antique shop)	£500
Melanie Gale-Rose	Little Van Rouge	£500
Sarah Beasley-Stones	Stawley Orchards	£500
Tony Baker	Estate Agent	£500

Small Business Saturday on 6 December 2014

- 2.5 There are a number of events happening around Taunton Deane as part of the national campaign. The Council has granted free parking in the afternoons on Saturday, 6 December 2014. Wiveliscombe have a programme of events including a 12 days of Christmas shop window trail, Local Artisan craft market at The Bear Inn, Cotleigh Brewery Open Day, extended opening hours and special offers in shops by local traders and live music in The Square throughout the day. We will also promote small businesses across the area proactively through our social media channels.
- 2.6 Officers are currently researching and preparing a **business guide for Wellington and Wiveliscombe** to promote and celebrate the wealth of independent traders that exist in both towns. It is hoped that this will be published in time for Small Business Saturday. Copies will be circulated to all Members. In the Spring, a map promoting the independent shops in Taunton will be produced.

Support for flood affected businesses

- 2.7 Members will be aware that extensive efforts have been made across the Council to support those residents and businesses that were affected by the dreadful floods earlier this year. I am now able to report the following statistics for Members' information:-
- It is estimated that 325 businesses in the flood affected area were affected
 - 17 Repair and Renew grants have been issued to date to residents and businesses, at a value of £82,192. There are an additional 5 pending creating a total value of £101,799
 - 47 Business Support grants have been awarded at total value of £110,125
 - 2 Businesses have been offered Rate Relief, totalling £8000
 - 52 properties have been offered Council Tax Relief, totalling £35,975

Support for larger businesses

- 2.8 A £13,000 **Investment grant** has been awarded to IDN (Integrated Data Needs), a company providing ICT solutions to schools and the public sector. The grant has helped the company create 13 new jobs that will enable the company to expand its operations in Creech St Michael. The extension enabling the expansion has been assisted by the award of a "Gain" grant.
- 2.9 A grant of £10,000 has also been awarded to Swallowfield in Wellington. Officers have been liaising closely with the company with the aim of assisting the business to relocate and expand within the town. The

company is currently restricted by its premises, and needs to expand to enable it to invest and grow. The grant will assist the company to carry out the necessary preparatory work and studies.

- 2.10 Liaison is continuing with many other businesses in Taunton Deane to assist them to grow and create new jobs.

3. Support for inward investors

- 3.1 Kijlstra will be creating its first UK manufacturing plant in the former Tarmac plant in Thornfalcon, creating 42 jobs. The company is working with Job Centre Plus to target its recruitment at current job seekers, and has also specifically approached some of the employees that were laid off by Tarmac when it closed in 2012.
- 3.2 Advocate Consultancy Services has opened a new call centre in Taunton town centre, creating jobs for 20 people. This is a new business that has big growth plans in the town and it hopes to triple the employment number of the forthcoming months.
- 3.3 Officers of the Business Development Team are currently working on a new guide to employment sites in the Borough, which will be of use to inward investors as well as local businesses. It is expected that this guide will be available early in the New Year.
- 3.4 Discussions are well advanced with three national restaurant chains, each of which is bringing a currently redundant or under-utilised property back into use in Taunton Town Centre.

4. The Brewhouse Theatre

- 4.1 The Lease and the Annual Funding Agreement on the Brewhouse Theatre was concluded with the Taunton Theatre Association on 7 October 2014. The theatre is currently recruiting a Chief Executive Officer. The Council will have two officers and the Portfolio Holder of Economic Development as observers on the Board of Trustees.
- 4.2 Recently officers organised a meeting with “Art Taunton” (Taunton Cultural Consortium) represented by Kit Chapman and Peter Lewis, and the Arts Council South West to discuss the progression of a new **multi-purpose arts and cultural venue** in the town centre. A new centre has long been the ambition of the Taunton Cultural Consortium.

5. Taunton Town Centre

- 5.1 The Council is continuing to support town centre management in Taunton. The programmes include marketing of the town centre to

visitors through a new initiative called *Taunton Social iStreet*, maintaining the footfall counters, and supporting a diverse range of cultural events and festivals throughout the year.

- 5.2 The **Taunton Social iStreet** project is now underway, delivered under contract by the recently appointed company called Destination CMS. The 12 month project is two pronged; firstly visiting every retailer and hospitality provider in the town centre to obtain the current news stories, events and activities. The second aspect is to promote those stories and features, Regionally and nationally using traditional and social media channels as well as the Borough's new visitor website (at www.visitsomerset.co.uk/taunton). The company is also liaising/promoting with events and the providers. The company has already visited 80 businesses in the town centre.

Festive Lights and Switch on – 23 November 2014

- 5.3 I would like to congratulate Councillor Kelly Durdan for the work she has done with 'Make Taunton Sparkle' to raise the necessary funds for the Christmas lights in the town centre, enabling the annual Lights Switch on. Recognition should also be given to Pat Mayhew of TIME4 who coordinated the whole event, including the delivery once again of an excellent street market, which was self funding. The town was extremely busy on the day, and our footfall counters record that attendance was up by 3% on last year.
- 5.4 Make Taunton Sparkle raised £7,000 and Time4 has contributed £4,000 towards the lights and the switch-on event this year. The Council match funded £10,000 for the Christmas Lights, and has covered a number of other costs such as road closures.

6. Marketing and Tourist Information Centre (TIC)

- 6.1 The new destination/visitor website – www.visitsomerset.co.uk/taunton has been live since early August and to date, the site has had over 32,000 unique visitors and over 220,000 page views (this is over 1000% up on the previous Council pages it replaced).
- 6.2 A Christmas in Taunton Deane section has recently been added to the site and this is your comprehensive guide to what is happening in and around the district over the festive period – <http://www.visitsomerset.co.uk/taunton/whats-on/christmas-in-taunton>
- 6.3 The Economic Development Team are working with members from Destination Taunton and the Taunton Events Group to populate and then promote a year-long calendar of events taking place in the area. This in addition to the regular 'Tone' event feature in What's On Somerset magazine and new e-newsletters which are being circulated

in our TIC events mailing list.

- 6.4 The (trade-led) Visit Somerset Team have just launched their new 2015 promotional brochure for the county and I am pleased to report Cothay Manor is featured on the front cover, copies of this guide (which is distributed across the UK) will be available from the TICs in Taunton and Wellington.
- 6.5 Meetings have been held with the Bath Place Traders Association, Go Create, Phoenix Somerset, Taunton Flower Show and Taunton Live 2015 to discuss new ideas and events. Our social media channels continue to grow in popularity – @TauntonBusiness now has nearly 1,200 followers, @TauntonTIC over 2,800 and these have been complimented by a Facebook group 'TauntonTown' which is being used to promote the town centre and area as part of the Social i Street project.
- 6.6 The TIC is currently selling cards for over 25 national and local charities until 23 December 2015.
- 6.7 Tickets for numerous events (including all of those taking place at the Brewhouse Theatre and Tacchi Morris Arts Centre) are on sale in the centre.
- 6.8 The poster rotunda units (located throughout the town centre) continue to prove popular with event organisers and local businesses, bookings for these can be placed with the TIC Team.

Councillor Norman Cavill

Council Meeting – 9 December 2014

Report of Councillor James Hunt – Environmental Services

1. Environmental Health / Licensing

- 1.1 Licensing and Environmental Health have had another busy period. The Food Inspection Team has taken on a temporary member to ensure that it keeps on top of the very important food business premises inspection programme and will be up to date again as we go into Spring.
- 1.2 Both Licensing and Environmental Health have worked together with the organisers of Make Taunton Sparkle. All were out very early on the morning of the Christmas lights switch on identifying potential issues and getting them resolved in plenty of time. With good co-operation from all sides the event was able to go ahead safely and without incident.
- 1.3 South West Audit Partnership (SWAP) recently completed an audit of private water supplies. They gave an assurance rating of 'reasonable' and there are a number of small items recommended for improvement - some of which had been completed prior to the final assessment.

2. Deane DLO

- 2.1 DLO managers are receiving positive feedback from the introduction of the additional street cleaning staff in the town centre following the granting of additional funding by Full Council. All staff are working hard to ensure that the town centre remains an attractive place to shop in, especially as we approach one of the busiest times of the year.
- 2.2 The work to replace town centre waste bins has also been completed and now all normal waste containers in the town centre are all of the same type bringing a more uniform look to the town centre.
- 2.3 I was pleased to support a recent report from the Local Government Association calling on chewing gum manufacturers to pay for the cost of cleaning their products from the street. Something that can cost Taunton Deane several thousand pounds a year and millions across the country.

3. Somerset Waste Partnership

- 3.1 The recycle and collection trial programme is progressing well and will be ending shortly. Residents on the trial rounds will be asked to comment on their experience of the three different trial variations and the outcomes used to

help determine how Somerset Waste Partnership operations should continue in the future. I hope to give a fuller report once the data has been analysed.

- 3.2 The 'Reuse Shop' at Priorswood Recycling Centre has now been open for a year and has prevented thousands of items weighing over 119 tonnes of perfectly usable items being discarded to landfill. The shop covers the costs of its operation and makes a small surplus that is then used to support other waste minimisation projects.

4. Climate Change

- 4.1 Last year we were unable to recruit to the vacant post of a Climate Change Officer so the budget allocation was retained with a view towards implementing a particular project at some time in the future.
- 4.2 We have now identified a Solar PV solution as a way forward that will meet both the climate change agenda with the additional benefit of providing a positive return to the Council.
- 4.3 The proposal is to implement a 36kw array on the roof of the Tennis Centre at Blackbrook that would then service the new pool when it is constructed. The investment payback period would be around ten years and well in advance of the twenty five plus years that the panels will remain productive for. Modern panels can last much longer than even this and could continue to be productive for much longer.
- 4.4 It is anticipated that this would save 35 tonnes of CO2 emissions each year for the life of the panels so a minimum of almost 900 tonnes over the first twenty five years.
- 4.5 There is other significant good news relating to this. As I write the Executive meeting on 3 December 2014 has an agenda item on the possible implementation of solar PV panels being installed on a planned 350 houses in the Council's existing housing stock. This will provide savings to both residents and the Council and significant carbon savings as well. Please review the report for more details.

Councillor James Hunt

Council Meeting – 9 September 2014

Report of Councillor Catherine Herbert – Sports, Parks and Leisure

1. Parks

- 1.1 The award of Green Flags to Vivary Park, French Weir Park, Wellington Park and Swains Lane Nature Reserve was most welcomed. We are very lucky to have support from the friends groups and it is great for everyone's efforts to be recognised.
- 1.2 The Vivary Park Partnership have had a 'wash-up' meeting to discuss the 2014 Flower Show and are now looking at plans for next year's show and other matters relating to the Park.

2. Community Leisure and Play

- 2.1 The Blackbrook Pool Project is progressing on timetable and more and more people are asking about the start date and when they will be able to use the new pool! It is really great to get such positive interest from the people who will be using the pools.
- 2.2 We are updating the Council Playing Pitches and Allotments Strategy, this will be very important with all the development going on in our area. We must strive to ensure enough provision is supported through developments to meet the needs of a growing community.
- 2.3 As part of the Routes to the River Tone Project, the team are working with the Somerset Wildlife Trust to deliver a project enhancing the open space at Firepool Lock between the canal and the river.

3. Tone Leisure (Taunton Deane) Limited Activities

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

Active Lifestyles

Memory Walk

- 3.2 In partnership with the Alzheimer's Society, Tone Leisure hosted the fourth annual Memory Walk in Vivary Park at the end of September. There were 247 participants this year compared to 197 last year. The Taunton Walk is now the second largest in the South West after Plymouth.

Cades Farm Community Engagement Day - Project Wellington

- 3.3 Tone, in partnership with Wellington Children's Centre, Knightstone Housing and Somerset Skills and Learning, held a Family Fun Day with an Autumnal theme at Cades Farm in Wellington in October. Team sports, football skills, Ping and a 'make your own Smoothie through pedalling' bike were on offer from Tone Leisure. The event ran for a second year and attracted over 230 local residents compared to the 130 which attended last year.

Walk Well with Tone

- 3.4 Taunton Deane Walk Well in Taunton and Taunton Deane Walk Well in Wellington schemes have both been awarded accreditation to the National Walking for Health Scheme.

Funding

- 3.5 Tone's application to Sporta has been successful, with the Forever Active Project commencing in January 2015. The project will target adults aged 50+ who have a BMI of 25+ and adults aged 65+ with long term health conditions. There will be six gym based group sessions per week, which will run at Wellington Sports Centre and Blackbrook Pavilion for 18 months. Creating Active Communities is a joint partnership bid with Knightstone Housing Association and a number of other partner organisations. The project is focusing on North Taunton and Yeovil in the first year. A walking football group will be one of the first sessions to be delivered in North Taunton in January 2015.

Facility News

Wellsprings Leisure Centre

- 3.6 The Whirlwinds Trampoline Club has moved from its venue in Wellington and has successfully started at Wellsprings, using ten trampolines three times a week from beginners to competition standard.
- 3.7 Wellsprings Vibe youth night is now achieving attendances of 60+ young people on Friday nights. The varied programme has boosted attendances, with activities such as Parkour.

Taunton Pool

- 3.8 Following the refurbishment of Taunton Pool, Tone has extended early morning swimming slots. On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays the pool opens at 6.30 am.

St. James Street Baths

- 3.9 The Learn to Swim scheme at St. James Street Baths continues to grow. In October the site reached 1,675 swimmers; record levels for this facility. The transition to the ASA Learn to Swim framework took place in September and has been well received.

Seasons greetings to you all.

Councillor Catherine Herbert