

COUNCIL MEETING 24 FEBRUARY 2004

REPORT OF COUNCILLOR MRS LEWIN-HARRIS – COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

Corporate Strategy 2004-07

Members of the Executive and the Community Initiatives Manager have worked hard over the past few months to develop the Corporate Strategy. The draft strategy was considered by the Review Board before the Executive agreed the final version of this important document earlier this month. There was a strong feeling among officers and members alike that hitherto this Council has tended to have too many equal priorities and that a serious effort had to be made to be more robust in identifying where our real priorities lie. Progress has been made here, and you will see that Delivering the Vision for Taunton is now our top priority, with Tackling Anti-social Behaviour, Transport and Housing also designated as high priorities. A considerable amount of public consultation has informed this process and I am confident that we have focussed on areas that members of the public have told us are important for them.

It is worth noting that what we have done so far is just the beginning of the process. We need to keep working to ensure that we have clear and meaningful priorities. We also need to ensure that the priorities are embedded in the culture of the Council and that they drive the allocation of resources.

Local Strategic Partnership

The Local Strategic Partnership was formed 2 years ago, and its first remit was to develop a Community Strategy to show how people, communities and organisations will work together to improve the quality of life of those living and working in the area. This Community Strategy has now been published and, I think it is fair to say, has been well received.

The Local Strategic Partnership now needs to move on to deliver the priorities in the Strategy. Considerable consultation with partners has taken place as to how this can best be achieved, particularly with officers from the County Council, the Learning and Skills Council, the Primary Care Trust and the Community Council for Somerset. It has now been agreed that a smaller core of 11 representatives of local agencies will meet regularly, and a much wider 'associate membership' will be kept informed, and involved as appropriate, providing advice and support on specific issues. An early task for the new, slimmed down, LSP to tackle at its next meeting (March 8th) will be to determine a limited number of shared priority areas/issues where the LSP can direct its combined effort and resources.

As agreed between the County Council and this council, the LSP will next year be the vehicle through which the extra funds raised by lowering the

Council Tax discount on second homes will be spent. The commitment is to spend this money in line with the priorities in the Community Strategy.

Crime and Disorder Partnership

Taunton Deane Crime and Disorder Partnership have allocated almost all of their 2003/04 allocation (£128,455) under the Building Safer Communities funding received from the Home Office. This money has to be spent by the Partnership on projects that will help to deliver the targets in the Crime and Disorder Strategy.

Around 16 projects will benefit from a financial contribution. Several of the schemes offer diversionary activities for young people, including a programme of multi-sports sessions at Wellsprings Leisure Centre on Friday evenings. There is also a proof-of-age card scheme, security equipment for victims of racial crime, work with young offenders, help for Taunton Retailers Against Crime and support for the Promise Mentoring scheme. Full details of all schemes that have been awarded funding are available from the Community Safety Officer.

I have taken on board comments that members feel they do not have enough information about the work of the Crime and Disorder Partnership. Firstly, I have asked that regular reports on meetings of the Partnership are included in the Weekly Bulletin. Further, the proposal that the Community Leadership Panel should take on responsibility for reviewing all aspects of the Crime Corporate Priority will give members an very good opportunity to get more involved with and informed about the work of the Police and other agencies who work with them. The Chief Superintendent of Somerset West District is due to attend the next meeting of the panel and I am sure that, following on from this, invitations to attend will be extended to others who have a role in helping to reduce crime. I hope these meetings will lead to a shared understanding of the problems of each organisation and to finding ways in which we can help each other.

Community Planning

The results of the consultation event held in Wellington last December have been collated, together with the information gained from the launch event held earlier in the year. The Steering Group will meet again in March to discuss emerging issues and to establish priorities with the help of a range of agencies and community representatives and one further consultation event will be held in Wellington to expand the opportunity to get involved and build on what we have already learnt. Further consultation will also be undertaken in the surrounding parishes and Nynehead will be able to feed their parish plan into the process.

The Diary Room

The Diary Room is a mobile consultation tool to aid the development of this Community Plan. People are invited to answer simple questions on what they

like and don't like about the area in which they live, plus how they would improve it.

Somerset Film and Video provided the hardware and also the expertise for the use of the equipment. The trailer was deployed around public areas and local people invited to give their views. Extra information was gathered through a questionnaire outside the trailer while people wait to take part.

The trailer visited several sites in Wellington and over 150 young people took part in the consultation and gave their views.

Councillor Joanna Lewin-Harris