

## Taunton Deane Borough Council

At a meeting of Taunton Deane Borough Council held in the John Meikle Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton on 8 April 2014 at 6.30 p.m.

**Present** The Mayor (Councillor Ms Lisgo)  
The Deputy Mayor (Councillor D Durdan)  
Councillors Mrs Adkins, Mrs Allgrove, Mrs Baker, Beaven, Bishop, Bowrah, Cavill, Denington, Miss Durdan, Edwards, Farbahi, Mrs Floyd, Gaines, A Govier, Hall, Hayward, Mrs Herbert, Mrs Hill, Horsley, Hunt, Miss James, R Lees, Mrs Lees, Meikle, Morrell, Nottrodt, Ms Palmer, Prior-Sankey, D Reed, Mrs Reed, Ross, Gill Slattery, T Slattery, Miss Smith, Mrs Smith, P Smith, Mrs Stock-Williams, Tooze, Mrs Warmington, Watson, Mrs Waymouth, Ms Webber, A Wedderkopp, D Wedderkopp, Williams and Wren

### 1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of Taunton Deane Borough Council held on 25 February 2014, copies having been sent to each Member, were signed by the Mayor.

### 2. Apologies

Councillors Coles, Mrs Gaden, Mrs Govier, Henley, C Hill, Mrs Messenger and Stone.

### 3. Declaration of Interests

Councillors Mrs Baker, A Govier, A Wedderkopp and D Wedderkopp declared personal interests as Members of Somerset County Council. Councillor Hunt declared personal interests both as a Member of Somerset County Council and as one of the Council's representatives on the Somerset Waste Board. Councillor Prior-Sankey declared personal interests as a Member of Somerset County Council and as her husband was now employed by A-4-E. Councillors Mrs Hill and Stone declared personal interests as employees of Somerset County Council. Councillor Tooze declared a personal interest as an employee of the UK Hydrographic Office. Councillor Wren declared personal interests as an employee of Natural England and as Clerk to Milverton Parish Council. Councillor Nottrodt declared a personal interest as a Director of Southwest One. Councillor D Durdan declared a prejudicial interest as a Tone Leisure Board representative. Councillor Gill Slattery declared personal interests as a member of the Board of Governors at Somerset College, a Patron of the Supporters of Taunton Women's Aid and as one of the Council's representatives on the Parrett Internal Drainage Board. Councillor Farbahi declared a personal interest as a local owner of land in Taunton Deane. Councillor D Reed declared a personal interest as a Director of the Taunton Town Centre Company. Councillor Mrs Herbert declared a personal interest as an employee of Job Centre Plus.

#### 4. **Public Question Time**

Mr Paul Partington asked the following questions:-

(i) Future of swimming provision in Taunton Deane

(a) Is there provision of £5,400,000 in the Council's 2014/2015 capital budget for the provision of new swimming facilities at the Blackbrook Pavilion Sports Centre to replace the St James Street Pools?

(b) What is the progress by the Council for the provision of the new swimming facilities?

(c) When will the facilities be opened to the public?

In response, Councillor Mrs Herbert stated that a Project Team was in place who were currently considering final designs for the new swimming pool. A public consultation with local residents would be undertaken shortly and work towards submitting a planning application was also being done.

(ii) Superfast Broadband in Taunton Deane

(a) What tangible work has Taunton Deane done with BT towards the provision of Superfast Broadband?

(b) The Council owned land such as open spaces, some of which has been the result of housing development. Will Taunton Deane allow this land to be used by BT for the provision of Superfast Broadband cabinets and cabling?

In response the Leader of the Council, Councillor Williams, reported that the roll out of Superfast Broadband was being undertaken commercially by way of a contractor appointed by BT. Taunton Deane had worked with BT to facilitate the works where this has been possible including the siting of new Broadband cabinets.

(iii) Station Farm Housing Development at Bishops Lydeard

What was the Council doing about the repositioning of the hedge outside the Greenway Housing Estate opposite the junction of the Station Road Housing Development and the Ash Priors Road to improve pedestrian safety?

Councillor Williams undertook to look into this matter and would send Mr Partington a written response in due course.

#### 5. **Update on The Rifles**

The Mayor introduced Lieutenant Colonel (Ret'd) Mike Motum DL who stated that it was a great pleasure to be given the opportunity to update Taunton Deane Borough Council on the progress of The Rifles.

The Rifles remained exceedingly grateful for the granting of the Freedom of

the Borough of Taunton Deane in 2007 and the support it received from all within Taunton Deane. Such support had been evident in recent times when the Band and Bugles Sounded Retreat on Castle Green last September and when it was needed most, at the funeral of Corporal Tom Gaden in early 2009. It was also clear that the same support remained ever present as The Rifles continued to serve on operations overseas.

Since 2007 Operations had been the single most important factor in the life of the Regiment. Initially deployments were focused on Iraq and thereafter shifted to Afghanistan.

Today the main effort for Defence remained operations in Afghanistan however, increasingly the focus of attention was the extraction of the force in good order.

Force levels would continue to reduce towards the end of the year. Meanwhile the national focus of The Rifles would change to the development of a new officer training academy near Kabul. A contingent from 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion The Rifles was already dedicated to that project. In addition 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion The Rifles would deploy later in the year and form the final Battle Group around which redeployments took place. With five regular Battalions and two Army Reserve Battalions the Regiment had served on operations, almost continually, since its beginning in February 2007.

This commitment had come at great cost with 62 Riflemen Killed in Action; some 30 had lost limbs; two Riflemen had been fully blinded; and, a further two were in neurological units and would remain there for the rest of their lives. There were also approximately 300 soldiers with serious injuries.

Mindful of regimental responsibilities an appeal had been launched about five years ago known as 'Care for Casualties'. Some £300,000 of regimental grants were awarded each year to those in need. The appeal was enabling The Rifles to keep pace with the requirement at regimental level while complementing the outstanding work of those much larger charities such as Help for Heroes.

Lieutenant Colonel Motum went on to say that apart from the drawdown in Afghanistan it was a time of great change for Defence. Notably 2013 saw an end to the term, Territorial Army. We now had Army Reserves and evolving policy would see a much greater reliance placed on those Reserves by 2020.

Change to both Reserves and Regulars was already having an effect on Somerset. For the first time in over a generation Somerset now had a major Army unit based within its boundaries. This was 1 Regiment Army Air Corps now forming at the Royal Naval Air Station, Yeovilton.

The proximity of Taunton to Yeovilton was a major factor in the decision to recently re-role B Company of 6 Rifles at Bishops Hull. The company had now become 675 (Rifles) Squadron Army Air Corps.

Although losing the regimental Reserve link in Somerset was a great pity, it also provided an opportunity. The new squadron retained Rifles in its title and

both Regular and Reserve Riflemen remained keen to be at the forefront of training alongside the Army Air Corps.

So what would come after Afghanistan? Clearly this was not known because so much time was spent training for the unexpected. However what was termed “forward engagement” in part to avoid problems downstream was being practiced whilst other elements prepared and trained for the unknown.

Closer to home the Army Cadets within The Somerset Cadet Battalion continued to inspire and achieve. There was no doubt that Somerset Army Cadet Force, with its Headquarters here in Taunton, was an exceptional Force.

The Rifles continued to play its part alongside colleagues within the Museum of Somerset, Heritage Services and support to Project Taunton. Many visitors from The Rifles had been to Taunton to see for themselves the outstanding example of integration of Regiment and community. All agreed that it came together to great effect.

In conclusion, Lieutenant Colonel Motum thanked the Council for its support and continued interest. The Rifles remained very proud to be Somerset’s County Regiment while furthering links with the County Town and Taunton Deane.

The Mayor thanked Lieutenant Colonel Motum for his very interesting presentation, the contents of which would be noted.

## **6. Complaint against Councillor Jefferson Horsley**

The Chairman of the Standards Committee, Councillor Wren, made reference to the minutes of the Committee’s Hearings Panel which had met on 17 February 2014 to consider a complaint made by Councillor Williams against Councillor Horsley. A copy of the minutes had been circulated to all Members for information.

The Hearings Panel had concluded that Councillor Horsley had breached the Code of Conduct and had requested that its findings should be published by way of the minutes of the meeting, that a report on the matter be made at a future meeting of Full Council and that Councillor Horsley attended a ‘coaching session’ with the Monitoring Officer to reinforce his understanding of the provisions of the Code of Conduct regarding the release of confidential information.

Councillor Wren reported that the Hearings Panel had deliberated long and hard in respect of the first complaint made against a Councillor under the new Standards regime. He regretted the fact that Councillor Horsley had chosen not to participate in the proceedings.

He went on to say that Standards was under scrutiny both nationally and locally. The current regime was the only one the Council had and, as Chairman of the Standards Committee, he would endeavor to see it operated

both openly and fairly.

Members were reminded of the seven principles of public life – Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty and Leadership – which were considered vital to the continued functioning of the Council.

**Resolved** that the report be noted.

## 7. **Written Questions to Members of the Executive**

### **From Councillor Prior-Sankey to Councillor Cavill – Opening of a new Betting Shop in Taunton**

Could the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development explain in simple English what there is to be proud of announcing under Item 1.5 of the Economic Development report to Full Council that Paddy Power “is in the process of opening a new betting shop in North Street (Taunton)” ....?

Is this a late April Fool or is he serious that encouraging a betting shop into the heart of the shopping zone of the town centre is the way forward?

Is this the best that they can do for Inward Investment for Taunton? Can they now understand why there is a need for a change at the top in our approach towards regeneration and why Taunton Forward is so badly needed to replace the tired, unimaginative and static leadership of the town? On the back of the failure of the Business Improvement District (BID) campaign to find money to promote the town centre do they acknowledge that there is a crisis around the corner stemming from the competition which is coming from Exeter, Bristol and even Junction 27 of the M5?

**Reply** - Regarding Paddy Power, had this question been made more of when the planners recommended refusal it might have added weight to their argument at appeal - an appeal which was lost. Our main argument was that it should not happen in the main retail area.

Having gained their permission we then advise them as required. Hence this is a matter of report.

As a Councillor, have you already forgotten that the Taunton Town Centre Company was a separate entity and that the BID was run by them? The businesses within the town obviously did not feel that the BID would offer value for money or the promotion required of the town centre, otherwise they would have supported it.

As to the vibrancy of the town where we are directly involved, shop vacancy rates continue to reduce and there are a number of very live enquiries that we are assisting to find premises. One such is the new main occupier of the Market House where we are on the point of agreeing a lease. The Brewhouse Theatre is up and running again with its first show going on as we

speak.

All such things help to make Taunton an attractive place of interest and value, a place to visit, do business and for some to set up their business.

With regard to the application adjacent to Junction 27, Taunton Deane is making representation against that proposed development and Exeter City Council has already done so.

## 8. **Recommendation to Council from the Executive**

### **South West Audit Partnership Governance Arrangements**

Full Council had previously supported the formation of the company South West Audit Partnership Limited.

Since then the representation on the Members Board had been undertaken by the Chairman of the Corporate Governance Committee.

Representation at officer level, as a Director on the Board, had been undertaken by the Deputy Section 151 Officer (with the Client and Corporate Services Manager acting as “Alternate”).

With the new Joint Management Team arrangements now in place the Council needed to amend this representation to reflect new roles and responsibilities.

This matter had recently been considered by the Corporate Governance Committee when it had been agreed that the Assistant Director – Corporate Services who was responsible for the audit function should now be this Council’s Director on the South West Audit Partnership Limited and that the “Alternate” should be the Assistant Director – Resources.

On the motion of Councillor Williams, it was

**Resolved** that the nominations of:-

- (a) The Assistant Director – Corporate Services as this Council’s Director on the Board of South West Audit Partnership Limited be approved; and
- (b) The Assistant Director – Resources as the Alternate Director be also approved.

## 9. **Reports of the Leader of the Council and Executive Councillors**

### (i) **Leader of the Council (Councillor Williams)**

Councillor Williams’s report covered the following topics:-

- Flooding – Recovery Action;

- The Brewhouse Theatre and Arts Centre;
- Taunton Town Centre Rethink;
- Sale of former Taunton Youth and Community Centre Site;
- West Somerset Council and Taunton Deane Borough Council Shared Services;
- COACH Project;
- Firepool, Taunton; and
- Hinkley Deal.

(ii) **Community Leadership (Councillor Mrs Jane Warmington)**

Councillor Mrs Warmington presented the Community Leadership report which focused on the following areas within that portfolio:-

- Flooding – Community Updates;
- Family Focus (Troubled Families Programme);
- Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Plan 2014-2017 – Be Safe Feel Safe;
- Voluntary and Community Sector Grants;
- Somerset Health Map;
- Children’s Centres; and
- Voluntary and Community Sector Support.

(iii) **Economic Development, Asset Management, Arts and Tourism (Councillor Cavill)**

The report from Councillor Cavill covered:-

- Business Support and Networking;
- Taunton Town Centre Company and BID (Business Improvement District);
- The Brewhouse Theatre; and
- Marketing and Tourist Information, Ticket and Travel Centre (TIC) Update.

(iv) **Environmental Services and Climate Change (Councillor Hunt)**

The report from Councillor Hunt drew attention to developments in the following areas:-

- Environmental Health / Licensing;
- Deane DLO / Flooding; and
- Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP).

During the discussion of this report, Members raised a number of questions relating to the recent closure of public conveniences in the

Taunton Deane area. Councillor Hunt undertook to follow up these concerns.

(v) **Sports, Parks and Leisure (Councillor Mrs Herbert)**

The report from Councillor Mrs Herbert dealt with activities taking place in the following areas:-

- Parks;
- Community Leisure and Play; and
- Tone Leisure (Taunton Deane) Limited Activities.

(vi) **Housing Services (Councillor Mrs Adkins)**

Councillor Mrs Adkins submitted her report which drew attention to the following:-

- Housing Enabling;
- Affordable Housing Target;
- Local Authority Housing Review : Call for Evidence;
- Estates Management - Welfare Reform;
- Estates Management – Rent Arrears; and
- Estates Management – Anti-social Behaviour.

(vii) **Corporate Resources (Councillor Mrs Stock-Williams)**

The report from Councillor Mrs Stock-Williams provided information on the following areas within her portfolio:-

- Corporate and Client Services;
- Corporate Health and Safety;
- Customer Contact Centre;
- Health and Wellbeing;
- Legal and Democratic Services;
- Resources; and
- Revenues and Benefits.

(viii) **Planning, Transportation and Communications (Councillor Edwards)**

The report from Councillor Edwards provided information on the following areas within his portfolio:-

- Planning Policy;
- St Augustine's School, Taunton;
- Revised Statement of Community Involvement;



- Monkton Delivery Board;
- National Planning Policy Guidance;
- Duty to Cooperate – Mid Devon;
- Taunton Railway Station Enhancement; and
- Communications.

(Councillors A Govier, Hall, P Smith, Ms Palmer, D Wedderkopp, Ms Durdan and Mrs Baker left the meeting at 7.18 pm, 7.26 pm, 7.34 pm, 7.40 pm, 7.45 pm, 8.19 pm and 8.22 pm respectively. Councillors D Reed, Ms Webber and Wren all left the meeting at 8.28 pm. Councillor Mrs Herbert left the meeting at 8.45 pm and Councillor Mrs Floyd at 8.53 pm.)

(The meeting ended at 10.04 pm.)