

You are requested to attend a meeting of the Council to be held in The John Meikle Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton on 15 December 2015 at 18:30.

Agenda

The meeting will be preceded by a Prayer to be offered by the Mayor's Chaplain.

- 1 Minutes of the meetings of the Council held on 29 September 2015 and 10 November 2015 (attached).
- 2 To report any apologies for absence.
- 3 To receive any communications.
- 4 Declaration of Interests
To receive declarations of Disposable Pecuniary Interests or personal or prejudicial interests, in accordance with the Code of Conduct. The usual declarations made at meetings of Full Council are shown on the attachment.
- 5 To receive questions from Taunton Deane Electors under Standing Order 15.
- 6 To receive any petitions or deputations from Taunton Deane Electors under Standing Orders 16 and 17.
- 7 Proposed changes to Constitution – Amendments to recommendations at Planning Committee. Report of the Solicitor of the Council (attached).
- 8 Council Fees and Charges - Parking. Report of the Assistant Director – Operational Delivery (attached).
- 9 Swimming Pool Project at Blackbrook Pavilion Sports Centre -Update on Capital Budget. Report of the Community Leisure Manager (attached).
- 10 Part I - To deal with written questions to, and receive the following recommendations from, the Executive:-
 - (i) Councillor John Williams - Recommendations relating to :-
 - (a) Fees and Charges 2016/2017 (attached).

(b) New Homes Bonus – Funding towards Growth and Regeneration Priorities (attached).

(ii) Councillor Terry Beale - Recommendation relating to Sheltered Housing Service and Charges (attached).

(iii) Councillor Mark Edwards - Recommendation in respect of the Proposed Sale of Land at Greenbrook Terrace, Taunton (attached).

(iv) Councillor Roger Habgood - Recommendations relating to:-

(a) North Taunton Framework Plan and Development Brief (attached).

(b) The use of Local Development Orders for development sites in the Taunton area as an alternative to a review of the Town Centre Area Action Plan (attached).

(v) Councillor Richard Parrish - Recommendations relating to:-

(a) Review of Council Tax Support Scheme for 2016/2017 (attached).

PLEASE NOTE: Members are required to read all documentation when / before making a decision in respect of this item. Therefore, it is important that you read the separate Appendix 1 - Taunton Deane Borough Council - Council Tax Reduction Scheme and consider the implications detailed in the Equality Impact Statement (Appendix 4). A hard copy of Appendix 1 can also be found in the Members' Room.

(b) Financial Monitoring – Quarter 2 2015/2016 (attached).

11 Part II - To receive reports from the following Members of the Executive:-

(a) Councillor John Williams - Leader of the Council;

(b) Councillor Richard Parrish - Corporate Resources;

(c) Councillor Jane Warmington - Community Leadership;

(d) Councillor Terry Beale - Housing Services;

(e) Councillor Patrick Berry - Environmental Services and Climate Change;

(f) Councillor Mark Edwards - Business Development, Asset Management and Communications;

(g) Councillor Roger Habgood - Planning Policy and Leisure; and

(h) Councillor Catherine Herbert - Sports, Parks and Leisure.

Bruce Lang
Assistant Chief Executive

17 August 2016

Members of the public are welcome to attend the meeting and listen to the discussions.

There is time set aside at the beginning of most meetings to allow the public to ask questions.

Speaking under “Public Question Time” is limited to 4 minutes per person in an overall period of 15 minutes. The Committee Administrator will keep a close watch on the time and the Chairman will be responsible for ensuring the time permitted does not overrun. The speaker will be allowed to address the Committee once only and will not be allowed to participate further in any debate.

Except at meetings of Full Council, where public participation will be restricted to Public Question Time only, if a member of the public wishes to address the Committee on any matter appearing on the agenda, the Chairman will normally permit this to occur when that item is reached and before the Councillors begin to debate the item.

This is more usual at meetings of the Council’s Planning Committee and details of the “rules” which apply at these meetings can be found in the leaflet “Having Your Say on Planning Applications”. A copy can be obtained free of charge from the Planning Reception Desk at The Deane House or by contacting the telephone number or e-mail address below.

If an item on the agenda is contentious, with a large number of people attending the meeting, a representative should be nominated to present the views of a group.

These arrangements do not apply to exempt (confidential) items on the agenda where any members of the press or public present will be asked to leave the Committee Room.

Full Council, Executive, Committees and Task and Finish Review agendas, reports and minutes are available on our website: www.tauntondeane.gov.uk



Lift access to the John Meikle Room and the other Committee Rooms on the first floor of The Deane House, is available from the main ground floor entrance. Toilet facilities, with wheelchair access, are also available off the landing directly outside the Committee Rooms.



An induction loop operates to enhance sound for anyone wearing a hearing aid or using a transmitter.

For further information about the meeting, please contact the Corporate Support Unit on 01823 356414 or email r.bryant@tauntondeane.gov.uk

If you would like an agenda, a report or the minutes of a meeting translated into another language or into Braille, large print, audio tape or CD, please telephone us on 01823 356356 or email: enquiries@tauntondeane.gov.uk

Council Members:-

Councillor V Stock-Williams	(Chairman and Mayor of Taunton Deane)
Councillor H Prior-Sankey	(Deputy Mayor)
Councillor J Adkins	
Councillor M Adkins	
Councillor T Aldridge	
Councillor C Appleby	
Councillor T Beale	
Councillor P Berry	
Councillor J Blatchford	
Councillor R Bowrah, BEM	
Councillor W Brown	
Councillor N Cavill	
Councillor S Coles	
Councillor W Coombes	
Councillor D Cossey	
Councillor T Davies	
Councillor D Durdan	
Councillor K Durdan	
Councillor C Edwards	
Councillor M Edwards	
Councillor H Farbahi	
Councillor M Floyd	
Councillor J Gage	
Councillor E Gaines	
Councillor A Govier	
Councillor A Gunner	
Councillor R Habgood	
Councillor T Hall	
Councillor C Herbert	
Councillor C Hill	
Councillor M Hill	
Councillor J Horsley	
Councillor J Hunt	
Councillor G James	
Councillor R Lees	
Councillor S Lees	
Councillor L Lisgo, MBE	
Councillor S Martin-Scott	
Councillor I Morrell	
Councillor S Nicholls	
Councillor R Parrish	
Councillor J Reed	
Councillor S Ross	
Councillor R Ryan	
Councillor Miss F Smith	
Councillor F Smith	
Councillor P Stone	
Councillor A Sully	
Councillor N Townsend	

Councillor C Tucker
Councillor J Warmington
Councillor P Watson
Councillor D Webber
Councillor D Wedderkopp
Councillor J Williams - Leader of the Council
Councillor G Wren

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 29 September 2015 at 6.30 p.m.

Present The Mayor (Councillor Mrs Hill)
 The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Mrs Stock-Williams)
 Councillors Mrs Adkins, M Adkins, Aldridge, Appleby, Beale, Berry,
 Bowrah, Brown, Coles, Coombes, Davies, D Durdan, Miss Durdan,
 Mrs Edwards, M Edwards, Farbahi, Mrs Floyd, Gage, Gaines, Govier,
 Mrs Gunner, Habgood, Hall, Mrs Herbert, C Hill, Horsley, Hunt, James,
 R Lees, Mrs Lees, Ms Lisgo, Martin-Scott, Morrell, Nicholls, Parrish,
 Prior-Sankey, Mrs Reed, Ryan, Miss Smith, Mrs Smith, Stone, Sully,
 Townsend, Mrs Tucker, Mrs Warmington, Watson, Ms Webber,
 Williams and Wren

Mrs A Elder – Chairman of the Standards Advisory Committee

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of Taunton Deane Borough Council held on 8 September 2015, copies having been sent to each Member, were signed by the Mayor.

2. Apologies

Councillors Cavill, Ross and Wedderkopp

3. Communications

The Mayor reminded Councillors of the forthcoming Charity Masquerade which would be held on the evening of Friday, 23 October 2015 at Oake Manor Golf Club. She hoped as many Members as possible would join her at this event.

4. Declaration of Interests

Councillors M Adkins, Coles, Govier, Hunt and Prior-Sankey declared personal interests as Members of Somerset County Council. Councillor Beale declared personal interests as a Board Member and Director of Tone FM, Chief Executive of the 'Think Amy' Charity and as a Governor of the South West Ambulance NHS Trust. Councillor Stone declared a prejudicial interest as a Tone Leisure Board representative. Councillor Edwards declared a personal interest as the Chairman of Governors of Queens College. Councillor Mrs Herbert declared a personal interest as an employee of the Department of Work and Pensions. Councillor Ms Lisgo declared a personal interest as a Director of Tone FM. Councillor Farbahi declared a personal interest as the owner of land in Taunton Deane. Councillor Coombes

declared a personal interest as a Stoke St Mary Parish Councillor and as the owner of land at Haydon. Councillor Hall declared a personal interest as a Director of Southwest One.

5. **Public Question Time**

(a) Mr Alan Wedderkopp asked the following questions:-

- (1) The monitoring of Nitrous Oxide and other harmful gases was discontinued in 2007 when the apparatus at The Deane House was removed and monitoring in East Reach also ceased. I raised this at the time but did not receive a satisfactory explanation. Can I have one now?
- (2) In light of recent car emissions revelations, what does the Council do regarding the monitoring of pollution throughout the town and surrounding areas? What recordings were now taken at East Reach? When were the last recordings made and what were the results?
- (3) In addition, in 2010 'Climate Change' was dropped from the Taunton Deane's Core Strategy at the time when the Council was pushing for pedestrianisation of Taunton Town Centre because of the effect of car exhaust fumes and particulates on local people. Councillor Williams said at the time that this would make it difficult for businesses to cross the town. Has he had any fresh thinking on pedestrianisation since that time? Will any attempt be made to clean-up the air in Taunton?

Councillor Williams thanked Mr Wedderkopp for his questions and promised that a full written reply would be sent to him in due course.

- (b) Mr Bob Symons stated that he had worked for the United Nations during the Kosovo War in the late 1990's. He therefore had some experience of refugees both as they left the country and when they returned. Refugees faced a dilemma as they mostly did not want to flee a country they loved but needed to find a place of safety. He urged the Council to find the means to assist refugees from the current conflict in Syria.
- (c) Mr Sigurd Reimers said that many people in Taunton are concerned at the suffering of Syrian refugees. What kind of help is the Council prepared to offer and to how many?
- (d) Fran Hicks asked whether it was better for refugees to arrive legitimately, with structures in place to support them and enable them to contribute, than illegitimately where they will either be exploited by unscrupulous individuals, housed in crowded unsanitary dwellings, subjected to what amounts to slave labour, or where excluded from legitimate means of earning a living and contributing to society, they become the exploiters, working criminally. Which sort of society do we want?

Councillor Williams commented that the refugee issue was a sensitive subject but agreed that it would be better for people to arrive legitimately. The

Council was currently working within a group to ensure we were ready and waiting to assist. There was a need to ensure the Council could handle the arrival of any refugees and their proper integration.

6. Motion – Taunton Deane opens its arms to refugees

Moved by Councillor Coles, seconded by Councillor Miss Smith.

“We have all witnessed the turmoil and human distress that has arisen from the flight of the refugees through Eastern Europe. We note also that the humanitarian response from Taunton Deane residents has been huge as illustrated by the work of the People to People Solidarity Group - Taunton Deane. We thank the administration for the promise of storage to assist with the hundreds of donations received from local residents and businesses.

We also welcome the statement from the Prime Minister that the United Kingdom (UK) will take some 20,000 Syrian refugees over the next five years and we understand that this will help reduce the refugee problem in Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan.

The overwhelming nature of this humanitarian crisis calls for an immediate response, especially as there is no sight of a long term political and diplomatic solution from the European Union or even worldwide.

We therefore urge Taunton Deane Borough Council to join the over 40 other local authorities who have offered support to meeting this humanitarian need and work towards providing accommodation and whatever other help by showing solidarity with our fellow human beings.

We move that Taunton Deane Borough Council be at the forefront of Councils looking to help relocate a minimum of 25 individuals and families under the UK Home Office's Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme.”

Councillor Williams, seconded by Councillor Mrs Warmington moved amendments to the wording of the final three paragraphs of the Motion which would read as follows:-

“We have all witnessed the turmoil and human distress that has arisen from the flight of the refugees through Eastern Europe. We note also that the humanitarian response from Taunton Deane residents has been huge as illustrated by the work of the People to People Solidarity Group - Taunton Deane. We thank the administration for the promise of storage to assist with the hundreds of donations received from local residents and businesses.

We also welcome the statement from the Prime Minister that the United Kingdom (UK) will take some 20,000 Syrian refugees over the next five years and we understand that this will help reduce the refugee problem in Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan.

The overwhelming nature of this humanitarian crisis calls for an urgent response to receive those most in need and especially work towards

implementing long term political and diplomatic solution from the European Union and worldwide.

Taunton Deane Borough Council remains ready and willing to provide accommodation and the necessary resources as necessary to welcome the numbers as determined by the Local Government Association as our representatives to Government. All as set out in Councillor Warmington's report to Full Council as contained later in this agenda.

We move that Taunton Deane Borough Council officers be authorised to respond quickly to any request for accommodating those referred to us under the UK Home Office's Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme."

The amendments were put and was carried.

The substantive motion was put and was carried.

7. Report of the Joint Independent Members' Remuneration Panel

Reference Minute No 9 from the meeting held on 31 March 2015, reported that following further discussions, the Joint Independent Members' Remuneration Panel had set out its conclusions and recommendations of a fundamental review of the Taunton Deane Scheme of Members' Allowances which had been carried out by the Panel.

Mr Ian Partington the Chairman of the Panel and Mr Julian Gale the Panel's Advisor were in attendance to answer questions and queries from Members.

The comprehensive report submitted had taken into account the following matters:-

- (a) The statutory task of the Panel was to make recommendations to a Council before it made or amended a Scheme of Members' Allowances. The Council had to have regard to the Panel's recommendations before agreeing or amending a Scheme.
- (b) The report was based on comprehensive data, information and evidence obtained from internal and external resources including the Office of National Statistics, the Bank of England, the Local Government Association and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. The survey undertaken with Members earlier in the year had also been taken into account.
- (c) The Panel had used the latest available data but, unavoidably, this has not always been up-to-date.
- (d) Since 2008 the real value of the Basic Allowance (BA) had declined with the rate of inflation. The decision in December 2013 to increase the BA to £4,344 where it has remained, although welcomed by the Panel, had only slightly compensated for the loss of real value. By 2012, before the increase in 2013, the real value of the BA had fallen to £3,792 and by

2015 the real value was still only £3,644 - less than its value in 2008. An inflation-adjusted nominal BA that returned today to the real value of 2008 would need to be around £5,194 rather than its current value of £4,344.

- (e) Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) payments had also been suppressed over recent years alongside the BA but were within the range paid by comparable Councils. The Panel was not proposing significant amendments to levels of SRA payments at this stage noting that they would increase on an annual basis in line with the annual increases proposed to the BA. This would start to bring SRAs up to an appropriate level.
- (f) The report also embodied previous decisions taken by the Council in response to recommendations made by the Panel including an agreed list of approved duties and contained relevant evidence, data and the detailed recommendations.

The report set out in detail the methodology as to how both the BA and SRAs had been assessed leading to the recommendations being made by the Panel. Travel and Subsistence Allowances and Carers' Allowances had also been reviewed by the Panel.

As a result, the Council had been recommended:-

- (i) To accept the report of the Joint Independent Members Remuneration Panel;
- (ii) To approve the Taunton Deane Scheme of Members' Allowances for 2015/2016 (Appendix 2 of the Panel's report) which included the specific recommendations set out for:-
 - (a) A new Basic Allowance for Members of £4486 for 2015/2016 and the proposal for annual increases for a six year period;
 - (b) A new Special Responsibility Allowance structure;
 - (c) Revised Travel and Subsistence Allowance provisions; and
 - (d) Revised Carers' Allowance provisions; and
- (iii) To agree to backdate the payment of the new allowances to the relevant date of appointment following the Borough Council Elections in May 2015.

If the Taunton Deane Scheme of Members' Allowances for 2015/2016 was agreed in full, reported that a supplementary estimate from the General Fund Reserves in 2015/2016 for £10,163 would need to be approved, with the costs for future years being built into the Medium Term Financial Plan.

During the ensuing discussion various points were made including (i) the difficulty of accepting an increase in allowances for Councils at a time when the officers were facing changes to their Terms and Conditions to save in the region of £100,000; (ii) the need to set allowances at a level to attract younger

people to become Councillors; and (iii) the greater difficulty of addressing the real value of Members' Allowances if the issue was not grasped soon.

Councillor Morrell proposed, seconded by Councillor Prior-Sankey, that the recommendations in the report be agreed.

Resolved that the recommendations of the Joint Independent Members' Remuneration Panel be **not** accepted.

8. **Written Questions to Members of the Executive**

(1) Questions to the Leader of the Council from Councillor Simon Coles

(a) Could the Leader of the Council explain why the Executive took so long to deliver the full (and final) South West Audit Partnership (SWAP) report dated 9 September on Business Grants to the Corporate Governance Committee for its meeting on Monday 28 September?

Why was the administration trying to hide the facts that the public should be aware of, of its inept handling of the processing and granting of both Investment Grants and small business grants and try to wriggle past the role of scrutiny by its underhand and glib approach to this important misuse of public money? His group had to concede at the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 17 September that it would have to suspend all grants given in this key area of financial support until it had implemented the proposals of the Auditors.

My colleague Habib Farbahi is asking further questions on this topic of the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and I have to congratulate my deputy Leader Federica Smith for establishing the significance of this report from the Chief Executive and the Section 151 officer and getting it to be part of the Corporate Governance meeting Agenda to be held later today (Monday). No doubt he will comment on the outcome of the Corporate Governance meeting.

Is he aware of the reputational damage that this can cause to the Council both from the early failure to release this document in full and also by what appears to be clear examples from the SWAP report of some of the cases reported on of fraud and cronyism?

Reply

The Level 4 recommendation was included in the SWAP report to the Corporate Governance Committee in line with standard practice. The full report was provided as requested by Councillors following consultation with the Committee Chairman.

My understanding is that the issues around the investment grants have been debated a number of times at Scrutiny Committees, at Corporate Governance last night and in this Chamber. I am struggling to see how this number of

debates is underhand and glib. The facts have been fully debated on a number of occasions.

I understand that Councillor Horsley raised a number of questions around a specific section of the report. I am advised that as he requested sight of invoices which have now been submitted to the Council and of course he will be provided with copies of them.

I do not believe the audit has been subject to any delay. The Lead Officer met the Shadow Portfolio Holder to brief them shortly after the report was finalised. The high level recommendation is in the Corporate Governance report and the audit has been shared. There are a number of improvements recommended in processes which are being addressed but not the substance of what we are trying to achieve.

The audit report recommends changes to process – we have to learn from this – and I know Economic Development is already on top of this with their team. We have to also accept that if we are to invest and support ‘new’ businesses – there will be an element of risk. We cannot guarantee that a business will not go bust again.

(b) We understand that a meeting was held recently with 17 Council Leaders in the area to discuss the response to Central Government’s discussion on Devolution.

As we understand it there has been no discussion whatsoever with the Members of this Authority. Nor, indeed is there even a mention of this in his report. Why not? What are you hiding from all Members? What “deals” have you agreed? When will you bring something to the Members to discuss and agree or otherwise?

Reply

The local authorities of Devon and Somerset have submitted a devolution ‘Statement of Intent’ to the Government and this was circulated to all Members of the Council on 4 September 2015. This was prepared in a very short space of time and there is clearly a long way to go to move from what is an early statement of intent to any full devolution ‘deal’. There will be engagement with all Members as discussions move forward and endorsement sought for any final deal that might be proposed. Members have also been advised of a briefing session on 1 October 2015 where devolution is included on the agenda.

(c) We understand that Trudi Grant the Local NHS Director of Public Health in Somerset, has been in discussions with Council Leaders across Somerset discussing the best use of monies from Central Government regarding Public Health issues arising from any refugees who might be accommodated in Somerset.

Why is there no mention of this in his report?

Why are you not fully engaging with partners as to the best way forward to

assist refugees during this crisis?

Reply

All Chief Executives are working together to ensure a co-ordinated solution. Simon Lewis is now the nominated Lead Officer to report to the Council on this. We await further information from the Government on allocations, funding, placings, family sizings etc, after which we will ensure an appropriate response. All of our services are on standby and preparing for this.

(2) Questions to the Leader of the Council from Councillor Habib Farbahi

(a) Can the Leader inform me whether Taunton Deane has taken any further advise on the EU procurement law as Firepool predominately was meant to be a scheme with an employment (office buildings) lead and a small retail park? We were constantly reminded by Joy Wishlade (the then Director responsible for Economic Redevelopment in 2011 and 2012) that any changes we make to the proposal would mean going back to the EU and the process could take up to a further 18 months!

(b) In light of this, is there a possibility that the Council might be challenged by the other contractors/developers in bidding both nationally and regionally for the original tender for not following the rules?

Reply (to questions (a) and (b))

The proposed redevelopment plans for Firepool as proposed in the Taunton Rethink, will work within the parameters of the original Development Agreement for the site, thereby minimising the risk of any procurement challenge.

(c) Could he also inform us what evidence does he have that there is operator demand for the current scheme? Has Waitrose really committed itself to going ahead?

(d) Do the numbers really stack up?

(e) With the infrastructure cost escalating on a daily basis, not to mention the compulsory purchase of adjoining properties costing some millions, how is Firepool going to stack up commercially?

(f) Would Taunton Deane tax payers ever get a return on their capital?

(g) What get out clause do we have with St Modwens?

(h) Would he agree with me that overall the influence that Taunton Deane has exercised on the past six years is little more than adjusting to the wishes of St Modwen as contractors and part landowners and that the Council is

reneging on all its promises to make this a sustainable site and make Taunton a true Sub-Regional Centre for the South West?

Reply (to questions (c) to (h))

There is evidence of demand from a variety of operators, as well as evidence that the scheme is commercially viable and deliverable, with a return to the Council as primary landowner, taking account of all known costs and projected returns. Until such time as a planning permission for the scheme is in place, there is a potential risk with any development that occupiers currently expressing an interest will fall away.

Even with planning permission, commercial realities are such that no occupier can be considered as completely 'secure' until contracts are exchanged and units are built. St Modwen's efforts at the present time are therefore focussed on submitting a planning application for the scheme that is consistent with the Taunton Rethink proposals, and there is no intention or appetite to hinder St Modwen in this task – quite the opposite.

The Taunton Rethink was commissioned and endorsed by the Council, primarily as a result of major changes in commercial demand following the worst recession in living memory. It is the Taunton Rethink – led by this Council – that has led to the proposals now coming forward from St Modwen. Along with our other growth plans, the Firepool scheme will enable Taunton to take a major step forward in its ambitions as a regional centre for retail, leisure, business and culture.

(3) Questions to Councillor Mark Edwards from Councillor Habib Farbahi

With the Assistant Director Ian Timms, Councillor Edwards briefed me and handed me the Final Report of the South West Audit Partnership (SWAP) on the way the Council had handled Business Grants at the Portfolio Holders meeting on Tuesday, 15 September 2015.

Sadly little happened after that and there was a brief reference to this report in the Economic Development Officer's report that went to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee two days later on 17 September when reviewing Small Business and Investment Grants. However, it did not reveal the contents of the report and the bad news therein.

It was a shock to me when the agenda for the Corporate Governance Committee was published for its meeting on 28 September 2015 with no mention of the SWAP report. Fortunately my colleague Federica Smith and deputy leader of the Liberal Democrats was able to persuade the Section 151 Officer that the publication of the report was in the public interest and it was circulated in full to all Members of the Committee for its consideration. No doubt the Portfolio Holder will inform the meeting of the outcome of the Corporate Governance Committee's deliberations.

What I would like to know is why he had not taken action earlier to ensure its publication? Was it because its contents were unpalatable and revealed too much about the shoddy and unacceptable facts that SWAP have given the Council only 'partial assurance' on its processes in this report and highlighted two particular cases where there have been blatant lack of due diligence and following of rules that have cost the Council at least £30,000?

Was he aware that the outcome of the Corporate Scrutiny discussions had been the Economic Development Officer being unable to advise the Executive on how to take forward its policy on business growth and investment, particularly business grants, as it had to await the scrutiny by Corporate Governance of the proposals in the SWAP report?

Was it not trite of him to try and dismiss the recommendations of the SWAP in a single sentence (paragraph 3.5) particularly as the ruling group have had to suspend all Investment Grants as a result of this fiasco?

Reply

Firstly I did not brief you.....Ian Timms briefed us both. I saw the report at the same time as you as an indication of my openness to share the conclusions. I am therefore more than a little irritated by this flagrant unnecessary attack on my integrity. Nothing was being hidden quite the opposite.

I understand the Committee raised an issue around the Level 3 rating of one of the audit recommendations. Clearly we are in the hands of the auditor with regards to rating of the actions. I also understand Councillor Horsley requested the invoices relating to a specific grant and as stated at the meeting he will of course be provided with them for his consideration. The report was finalised on the 9 September 2015. As you are aware we met to discuss it on the 15 September to ensure that you were aware of its contents. The report does identify a number of items that require action and a clear plan has been agreed to deliver the identified improvements that are required.

However I understand that the normal practice is for Level 4 recommendations to be reported to the Corporate Governance Committee and this was indeed the case as part of last night's auditors report. Level 3 and below are normally dealt with at service level.

As already stated we have an agreed an action plan to tackle the audit recommendations. In terms of this assertion that there is a lack of due diligence the money relating to the grant to ACS has been added to the Council's top twenty debts and we intend to pursue this through our Debt Collection Team. This amounts to £24,000.

As mentioned above there is a plan in place to address all of the actions and I am confident that officers will follow this through fully.

The report itself was not being hidden but officers needed some time to assess how they dealt with the issues in hand and it would have made its way through the necessary channels. My reference to the existence of the report (in my Council report) was written not long after we received the report. It was purely a matter of timing. I accept that the outcome of the audit is of concern

and need to be dealt with, which is why we have taken it so seriously but we also have to accept there will be risk in any investment and support of new business.

As for being trite...at the last Full Council I was dancing the 'hokey cokey' now I am trite!! I await the next Full Council insult with interest.

(4) Questions to Councillor Mark Edwards from Councillor Habib Farbahi

(a) Notwithstanding the long term nature of the bid for the major upstream flood alleviation project, what contingency plan does he have should our Local Enterprise Partnership Growth deal bid not be successful? What would be the implications for the Firepool development and Taunton Town Centre?

Reply

The Council is working closely and constructively with the Environment Agency on a range of interim measures – specific to individual sites – that will enable development in Taunton (including Firepool) to come forward in advance of any large scale alleviation scheme upstream of Taunton. The alleviation scheme now in place at Longrun Meadow already enables key developments to come forward in Taunton Town Centre and we will continue to pursue alternative funding options should the current bid to the Local Enterprise Partnership for longer term additional flood protection be unsuccessful.

(b) In light of Somerset County-wide research outcomes identifying health and social work along with Scientific, Technical and Professional industries as the largest growth sector, can you please tell us why none of these sectors will be represented at Firepool? Is it time yet again to rethink the Rethink?

Reply

The Taunton Rethink showed clear demand for the mix of uses now being proposed at Firepool, and there are no signs of any reduction in this demand at the current time. All sites are different however, and we will be looking to accommodate demand from other sectors at other sites, including the proposed strategic employment site adjacent to Junction 25 of the M5 Motorway. All sectors are an important part of the mix in stimulating a thriving Town Centre and wider economic growth and prosperity.

(c) I am absolutely delighted with the new Town Visitor Centre and know it is already attracting many more people than the former site adjacent to the Library. Would the Portfolio Holder please also acknowledge the role played by one of his predecessors, Councillor Fran Smith for initiating the project and Councillor Norman Cavill and officers for completing it?

Reply

I am happy to acknowledge anyone involved in particular Andrew Hopkins and his team whose efforts have been exceptional and my thanks go to him and his team.

(d) Am I correct in assuming that the marketing of the former Mike Chedzoy premises at the end of Greenbrook Terrace means the end of this as a commercial site?

By turning a commercial site to a residential one, is he not setting a precedent for others to follow? How seriously did he consider the bid from the team known as the Somerset Medieval Centre to continue the use of the site for community and cultural purposes which could have brought thousands more visitors to the town and would have been so complementary to the Somerset Museum and really given some boost to economic and cultural growth for Taunton?

Reply

The former Mike Chedzoy premises is allocated for residential within the Taunton Town Centre Action Plan. The allocation of such a site is a planning matter but nevertheless interest through marketing has been received for both residential and non-residential uses, with the significant difference in values which you would expect. Discussions took place prior to marketing with individuals behind the proposed Medieval Centre and we welcomed them to make an offer alongside others, which they have now done.

Once there has been an assessment of the offers we will come forward for discussions with Scrutiny but I will always consider a priority as deliverability and best value for the Council tax payer as this is a key site which I don't want to stand undeveloped for any further length of time.

We are challenged to get best value for our assets and the receipt on this site could be significant so we need to carefully consider.

(e) When does he anticipate having a dedicated team in place to look at our assets of £65,500,000 that is generating very little revenue?

Reply

The Asset Management Service are delivering the General Fund Asset Strategy through a dedicated temporary agency Asset Strategy Surveyor post. This dedicated work stream commenced in early 2015 and we are now beginning to see the results of this additional capacity. A significant revenue is generated from the portfolio and we are constantly looking at and taking forward new opportunities to enhance the financial and non-financial return

(5) Questions to Councillor Terry Beale from Councillor Simon Coles

(a) What has he done to ensure that Community Schemes are exempt from this reduction in Feed In Tariff?

Reply

The recent announcement by the Government of its intention to reduce the Feed in Tariff is now subject to consultation until 23 October 2015. I am sure the Government will seriously consider any representations received in connection with Community Schemes.

(b) Does he just not understand that smaller local installation companies are now likely to go to the wall as it will now be uneconomic to fit these panels?

Of course....and that is regrettable. However, we need to await outcome of the consultation.

(c) Why has he not been leading in this very important carbon saving initiative?

Reply

We have given our full support to the programme and we continue to support it. However as a responsible authority it is right and proper that we await the outcome of the consultation and then assess the financial viability of continuing with the project.

(d) This Administration's lack of perceivable effort has wasted opportunity after opportunity to take a lead on photovoltaic panels on our own properties. Why?

Reply

The system was introduced in late 2010. This Authority began a feasibility study in 2012 including asking Western Power to identify suitable properties for installation. It is their decision as to suitability - not ours. 700 such properties were identified in the first instance and a proposal was put to Council and agreed.

We have had a 25% refusal rate; tenants mostly saying we should be spending money on improvements and therefore they were not going to help us by agreeing to PV. They are informed they get the electricity generated at zero cost to them but they are also aware the Council receives the Feed in Tariff. Some have said "no" due to not wanting the 4 hour installation time, mostly the elderly.

A handful do not like the agreement they have to sign and say it only favours the Council. As the installation and panels can cost in the region of £4,500 per property we are keen to ensure the tenants do not damage or remove them.

(e) What steps is he taking to arrest the rise in rent arrears?

Reply

As can be seen by the figures the amount of arrears varies from month to month but remains broadly the same so there is no perceivable increase. However, any level of debt arrears is not acceptable and we work very closely with our tenants to identify issues which can be resolved. In many cases these can be complex and prolonged such as mental illness, family and job issues and education and medical problems.

(f) What practical assistance is he offering to tenants?

Reply

Our Estate Officers work with the tenants to resolve issues. We have a number of partners we can call upon to assist in many areas including medical, social and debt management and the One Team approach has proved extremely successful in coordinating response to tenant issues including ASB and damage.

(g) Do we discuss the issue with our tenants before instigating action? If so when?

Reply

Officers will make every effort to discuss matters with tenants and offer whatever support is needed. Only as a last resort would we proceed to Court action for recovery or eviction. To put someone out of their home is a huge burden to bear and we would only contemplate that action as an extreme measure of last resort. Having said that I believe firmly that people must take responsibility for their own actions and where all help is refused and it is clear no cooperation is forthcoming then action will be taken if deemed necessary.

(h) What level of arrears is permissible before any action is started?

Reply

There are no specific figures which generate action. We endeavour to deal with the problem early so that the debt does not spiral out of control. Officers will make contact with tenants as soon as it becomes clear there is a problem.

(i) Who decided on this figure?

Reply

See above.

(j) What is the actual figure for rent arrears as opposed to only the Welfare Reform rent arrears?

Reply

The reported rent arrears are within the area of Welfare Reform. The current

arrears as of the 27 September 2015 stands at £446,827.91p. Although that figure is high the amount is only a snapshot of the day. We have monthly direct debits for example which may not have been included. We have tenants who are paying their rent and arrears at a reduced rate and we have tenants on Housing Benefit and Universal Credit both usually dealt with monthly. We are working hard with our tenants to reduce the arrears levels.

(6) Questions to Councillor Roger Habgood from Councillor Simon Coles

(a) What steps has he taken to provide a “five year supply” of site for Gypsy Traveller and Show people’s sites?

Reply

The following response was recently compiled for the Independent Inspector for the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan. It covers what steps the Council has taken to try and provide a “five year supply” of site for Gypsy Traveller and Show people’s sites.

Inspector’s Question/Observation: The Core Strategy states in paragraph 3.68 the Site Allocations DPD (that I take to mean the SADMP) will make allocations for Gypsies and Travellers. However, there are none. Why is that?

Council Response:

7.1 The Council had intended to make allocations for the provision of gypsy and traveller pitches through the SADMP. Unfortunately, despite repeated efforts to identify suitable land for development no land has been put forward by willing landowners that could be considered suitable for provision. It is on this basis that the Council has been unable to allocate sites through this [SADMP] Plan.

7.2 Since 2011 the Council has publicised through the SHLAA review process, a call for sites, as part of which landowners have been actively encouraged to put land forward for gypsy and traveller accommodation. Comparatively few landowners have even been prepared to put their sites forward for these uses and in the few occasions where land has been offered up it has not met with the criteria established by DM3 of the Core Strategy. In most cases sites put forward have been in unsustainable locations extremely remote from services and facilities where housing would not be acceptable.

7.3 Having failed to identify land through general SHLAA call for sites, the Council has also independently written to landowners and agents who have previously promoted sites for inclusion in the SHLAA for general housing which were not identified for development under the SADMP. Again, this trawl failed to yield any sites which could be reasonably considered as allocations for gypsy and traveller accommodation.

7.4 Discussions have been had both with the Enabling arm of the Council as well as Registered Providers to consider the delivery of pitch provision as part of affordable housing requirements. None of the local Registered Providers have any experience of the delivery of gypsy and traveller accommodation and consequently they did not wish to enter this part of the market.

7.5 Having failed to identify suitable land for development up until now the Council has joined a Countywide Gypsy and Traveller Working Group. This Working Group has been tasked with the identification of sites for residential and transit accommodation and comprises officers from each Somerset local authority, the County Council and Homes and Communities Agency. Options for provision on public land holdings are being considered as well as the scope for joint provision across local authority boundaries.

7.6 Whilst the Working Group has yet to report its findings and recommendations, to-date the project has established search criteria and an assessment pro-forma. It is now in the process of reviewing land holdings and undertaking a desktop assessment of any potentially suitable sites.

7.7 Despite the lack of identified sites in the SADMP, it is considered that policy DM3 of the Core Strategy provides an appropriate basis to assess applications for gypsy and traveller provision against.

I understand that the previous administration had a similar experience in site provision.

(b) Does he not care about the risk of unauthorised sites springing up and being given permission on appeal due to the lack of sites?

Reply

Short answer - Yes he does care!

Full answer - There is always a risk of unauthorised Gypsy or Traveller sites. There are generally two types of unauthorised sites, travellers who are passing through on their way to somewhere else, particularly around traditional travelling periods and holidays, for events such as Bridgwater Fair, and those looking for permanent residency. The former required a transit or temporary stopping point for short periods of time and the latter a site in a sustainable location. Both require different solutions.

The risk of unauthorised sites was compounded when the County Council no longer had a statutory duty to provide sites and took the decision to dispose of its public provision, which included a residential site and a transit site in the Parish of Otterford in the Borough of Taunton Deane. Full Council took the decision to purchase the transit site at Otterford to assist with transit provision for emergency and unauthorised purposes. The purchase of the site has taken longer than hoped, because of unauthorised occupation of the site by someone who is not from the gypsy or travelling culture. The purchase is

progressing and will provide the Council with access to a public sites for emergency use (unauthorised sites, homelessness).

Granting planning permission on appeal is always a risk where there are no suitable sites to allocate. Government recently amended the national Policy for Travellers Sites. This will make it more difficult for planning permissions to be granted on appeal for gypsy or traveller provision where an occupant/s have been in unauthorised occupied of the site, where they have ceased traveling and where it is in an area of landscape sensitivity. The aim is to bring policy for travellers residential sites in line with policy for settled housing thereby reducing permissions by appeal which would otherwise be unacceptable.

A clear direction of travel has been set here by Central Government.

Unauthorised sites and identification of suitable sites for temporary stopping points, transit and residential sites is not just an Executive Membership issue nor is it the sole responsibility of planning. There are no easy solutions to the controversial and sensitive nature of gypsy and traveller sites, be they authorised or unauthorised. Effective solutions require pro-active involvement and support of the corporate, the cross-departmental and the cross-party Elected Membership of The Council. I look forward to that collaborative approach should the need arise.

(c) Would he please tell the members the actual cost to Taxpayers of the Northern Inner Distributor Road and how that figure compares with the original estimate?

Reply

This is a Somerset County Council Highways Authority matter. I ask Councillor Coles to therefore refer his question to his County Colleagues and officers across the road.

Be assured however that this Council is engaged and is working with the County Council to do all we can to apply appropriate encouragement to get the works delivered.

(7) Questions to Councillor Jane Warmington from Councillor Chris Appleby

(a) Money was set aside (£25,000) to help fund specialist provision for those addicted to legal highs working alongside Taunton Association for the Homeless, Citizens Advice Bureau, Turning Point and others. Has this money been spent? If yes, how successful has it been? How many people have benefited from the support? If the money has not been spent, why not? Is there a plan in place?

Reply

No, the money has not been spent yet. We are not specialist providers of training so look to support (and challenge) services provided by others. We are doing this to some extent already through the One Teams established in our most disadvantaged areas to better support those in most need. Where there are gaps, the One Teams have stepped in with local initiatives (such as Chill and Chat, Link Power, Supported Sports). This is a more holistic approach to an individual's or family's problems which seems more effective and can address more than one problem at a time which is often necessary to make a difference.

Somerset Drugs and Alcohol Service has Turning Point delivering part of its re-commissioned service and is the main provider of support along with Taunton Association for the Homeless.

The Community Safety Lead has already been asked to share our experiences on legal highs both across the County and further afield, next to a Health Protection Forum, passing information to other Safety Officers. Although there are other towns which share our problems, we have found ourselves a bit further ahead of them along with Lincolnshire where we both shared a platform together recently.

Is there a plan in place? Not as such but we have now had a summer free from shops in our town centre trading in legal highs and anti-social behaviour in the vicinity has significantly reduced. However most of us are aware that legal highs are still being used although not as convenient to get hold of as they were. By next summer the new legislation to ban these should be in place. Health issues remain a concern.

(b) The motion submitted to Council last year in respect of 'legal highs' also stated that Taunton Deane would work with Somerset County Council to implement education programmes in schools and colleges. This is not mentioned within the report. Can we have an update on this please?

Reply

The first meeting with the Cabinet Member for Children and Families has taken place and this is planned every two months when we will talk about this. I understand PHSE (Personal, Social, Health and Economics) is not mandatory so not all schools include this as part of their curriculum although this is almost certainly where it would sit. I will also ask about free schools and academies and what influence the Local Authority has with these.

(c) There is a big increase in young people asking for help with money problems. Citizens Advice says more than 100,000 17 to 24-year-olds have come to them in the last 12 months. That is up 20% on the year before. The charity says more people are using bank loans, payday lenders and family members, often on top of student loans. The average debt level is around £12,000 per person, compared to 10 years ago when it was almost £4,000. This problem is not limited to just young people and will affect people of all ages within Taunton Deane, especially those on low

incomes. What measures have been put in place to address this issue within Taunton Deane and in particular, the three One Team areas?

Reply

Thank you for the interesting statistics provided. Preparing young people for work was important particularly in a home environment where few, if any, family members had been employed. Link Power had been set up several years ago to provide experience of work and the routine associated with it. Because this was locally based, the scheme had been particularly successful in addressing the issue.

The Job Centre was working closely with the One Team and Link Power had an arrangement with the Department of Work and Pensions whereby those working through Link Power had no effect on their benefits.

It was recognised that there was a need for the One Team to continue to be proactive to start people on the journey to work providing them with the confidence and the training to move forward into employment.

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:-

- Congratulations to Her Majesty the Queen Elizabeth II;
- Town Centre Vibrancy;
- Northern Inner Distributor Road (NIDR) Progress;
- Junction 25 (M5) and A358;
- Strategic Employment Site Adjacent Junction 25;
- Junction 26 – Westpark, Wellington;
- Crown Estate Housing Changes;
- Ongoing Major Projects; and
- Refugee Crisis.

(ii) Community Leadership (Councillor Mrs Jane Warmington)

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

- Response to the Refugee Crisis;
- Councillor Federica Smith's Local Initiative to Help Refugees and Migrants in Europe;
- Support for Mental Health;
- Employability;
- One Teams Estate Housing Staff;
- Community Safety;

- Taunton's Experience with 'Legal Highs'; and
- Read Easy.

(iii) Housing Services (Councillor Beale)

Councillor Beale submitted his report which drew attention to the following:-

- Deane Housing Development;
- Photovoltaic (PV) Solar Panels Scheme;
- External Wall Insulation Scheme to a selection of Cornish type non-traditional properties;
- Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan; and
- Welfare Report.

(iv) Environmental Services (Councillor Berry)

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

- Licensing / Environmental Health;
- Climate Change;
- Somerset Waste Partnership;
- Deane DLO; and
- Crematorium.

(v) Planning, Transportation and Communications (Councillor Edwards)

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

- Growth Deal Bids;
- Supporting Business Growth;
- Supporting Inward Investment and Fulfilment;
- Place Based Regeneration;
- Cultural Events;
- Marketing the Borough to Visitors; and
- ASSET Management Service General Fund Activities.

(vi) Planning, Transportation and Communications (Councillor Habgood)

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

- Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (SADMP);

- Specific Site Activity;
- Local Development Order;
- Gypsies and Travellers;
- Sport, Recreation and Open Spaces;
- Neighbourhood Planning;
- Transportation Schemes and Funding;
- Northern Inner Distributor Road;
- Car Park Operations;
- Car Parking Strategy; and
- Taunton Rethink.

(vii) 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.

(viii) Corporate Resources (Councillor Parrish)

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

- Corporate Strategy and Performance;
- Facilities Management and Business Support;
- Human Resources and Organisational Development;
- ICT and Information;
- Transformation Programme Management;
- Southwest One (SW1) Succession Planning;
- Additional Priorities;
- Council Tax Support;
- Customer Contact;
- Law and Governance – SHAPE Partnership Services;
- Electoral Services;
- Democratic Services;
- Code of Conduct Training for Town and Parish Councils; and
- Finance and Procurement.

(Councillors Govier, Miss Durdan, Ms Webber, Mrs Edwards, Durdan, Wren and Coombes, Mrs Gunner, Davies, and Aldridge left the meeting at 7.35 pm, 7.45 pm, 7.54 pm, 8.25 pm, 8.44 pm, 8.51 pm, 9.02 pm, 9.04 pm, 9.05 pm and 9.09 pm respectively. Councillors Mrs Floyd and Horsley left the meeting at 9.21 pm).

(The meeting ended at 9.25 pm.)

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 10 November 2015 at 6.30 p.m.

Present The Mayor (Councillor Mrs Hill)
Councillors Mrs Adkins, M Adkins, Aldridge, Beale, Berry, Bowrah, Brown, Cavill, Coles, Coombes, Davies, D Durdan, Miss Durdan, Mrs Edwards, M Edwards, Farbahi, Gage, Gaines, Govier, Habgood, Hall, C Hill, Horsley, James, R Lees, Mrs Lees, Ms Lisgo, Martin-Scott, Morrell, Nicholls, Parrish, Prior-Sankey, Ryan, Miss Smith, Mrs Smith, Stone, Sully, Townsend, Mrs Tucker, Mrs Warmington, Watson, Wedderkopp, Williams and Wren

1. Apologies

The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Mrs Stock-Williams) and Councillors Mrs Blatchford, Mrs Floyd, Mrs Herbert, Mrs Reed, Ross and Ms Webber.

2. Declaration of Interests

Councillors M Adkins, Coles, Govier and Prior-Sankey declared personal interests as Members of Somerset County Council. Councillor Beale declared personal interests as a Board Member and Director of Tone FM, Chief Executive of the 'Think Amy' Charity and as a Governor of the South West Ambulance NHS Trust. Councillors Gage and Stone declared prejudicial interests as Tone Leisure Board representatives. Councillor Edwards declared a personal interest as the Chairman of Governors of Queens College. Councillor Ms Lisgo declared a personal interest as a Director of Tone FM. Councillor Farbahi declared a personal interest as the owner of land in Taunton Deane. Councillor Coombes declared a personal interest as a Stoke St Mary Parish Councillor and as the owner of land at Haydon. Councillor Hall declared a personal interest as a Director of Southwest One.

3. Public Question Time

- (i) Mr Michael Oliver referred to the recent Planning Committee meeting he had attended where he had been alarmed to hear the Assistant Director (Planning) asserting that de facto a Masterplan for the Comeytrowe proposals was in place. He was also disturbed to hear from a Councillor that a last minute change had been made concerning the provision of a primary school whereby the developer now intended to facilitate a serviced site, rather than a complete school.

The planning application was in outline except for access, which was not a reserved matter. The report was recommending access details were included within a Section 106 Agreement. There appeared to be no clarity as to even what type of junction the development would be served by.

I believe that any subsequent planning permission granted on this basis would be defective because of how the issue of “access” had been addressed.

In these circumstances, could an assurance be given that as much as possible of the future decision making process of the application was kept in Councillor’s control and not delegated to officers?

In addition, would serious consideration be given to seeking external expert legal advice on the current status of the planning application and your officer’s recommendation to have its access proposals deferred to a Section 106 Agreement?

- (ii) Referring to the same meeting, the Chairman of Comeytrowe Parish Council, Mr Brian Larcombe, asked the following questions:-

“Does the Council have an adequate master-plan for the impact and needs of the current developments across the whole Town of Taunton and the infrastructure issues they would create? One that actually joined up all the issues in a way that would deliver what this town was looking for and for the kind of growth this town was inviting?”

Councillor Habgood thanked Messrs. Oliver and Larcombe for their questions and promised them full written responses in due course.

4. **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

Resolved that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item because of the likelihood that exempt information would otherwise be disclosed relating to Clause 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972 and the public interest in withholding the information outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information to the public.

5. **Proposed Relocation of Deane DLO Facilities**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the proposed relocation of Deane DLO facilities.

The report followed the Council decision in January 2015 to sell Priory Way, Taunton, subject to vacant possession and planning approval and the subsequent Executive Report of June 2015 identifying short-listed sites and a preferred site including approval to conduct due diligence and negotiate Heads of Terms and commercial negotiations with the preferred vendor (Option ‘A’ Monkton Heathfield) and reserve sites (Options ‘B’ West Monkton and ‘C’ outskirts of Wellington).

Following extensive due diligence on the short-listed sites and building / compound brief, specification and area requirements there had been a change in the preferred site for the reasons outlined in the report.

Support was therefore requested to move to the next stage of the project covering planning, detailed design, land acquisition and construction of the new facility.

The report sought:-

- Approval for the relocation of the new purpose built facilities to accommodate the Council's Direct Labour Organisation at the preferred site Option 'C' Wellington; and
- Permission and funding to conclude commercial negotiations with the preferred developer in line with this final Business Case to progress and complete on the land purchase and construction phase at Option 'C' Wellington.

The proposed relocation had been considered by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 22 October 2015 and the recommendations set out in the report were endorsed by Members.

A number of concerns which UNISON had raised in connection with the proposal were brought to the attention of the Councillors.

Noted that the report constituted the final decision to progress this site and detailed clear funding information for consideration by Members in the confidential appendices.

Resolved that:-

- (a) The purchase of land at the Option 'C' site in Wellington together with the entering into development agreement contracts to deliver a new Deane DLO facility, subject to contract and planning, be approved;
- (b) A non-refundable forward payment be approved which would be made by the Council to the vendors as outlined in the report to accelerate planning and design;
- (c) Senior Officers be authorised to progress and conclude commercial discussions and legal matters;
- (d) Final approval and sign-off of the purchase be delegated to the Leader, Portfolio Holder of Assets, the Chief Executive and the Section 151 Officer, who would be granted authority to conclude a purchase of land and to enter into a development agreement contracts, to deliver a new facility on the Option 'C' site.
- (e) A total budget for the project as outlined in the report be approved, to be funded from ring-fenced receipts from the sale of the current depot site, unallocated capital receipts and the remainder derived from the Growth Fund reserve.

(f) The appointment of the owner of the Option 'C' site be approved to carry out the design and build as an exception to the Council's Contract Procedure Rules on the basis of the special circumstances; and

(g) The interim borrowing facilities up to the value of the total budget for the project, as outlined in the report, be approved.

(The meeting ended at 8.43 pm.)

Usual Declarations of Interest by Councillors

Full Council

- **Members of Somerset County Council – Councillors M Adkins, Coles, Govier, Hunt, Prior-Sankey and Wedderkopp**
- **Employee of the Department of Work and Pensions – Councillor Mrs Herbert**
- **Clerk to Milverton Parish Council – Councillor Wren**
- **Tone Leisure Board representative – Councillor Stone**
- **Director of Tone FM – Councillor Ms Lisgo**
- **Councillor Beale declared personal interests as a Board Member and Director of Tone FM, Chief Executive of the ‘Think Amy’ Charity and as a Governor of the South West Ambulance NHS Trust.**
- **Councillor Edwards declared a personal interest as the Chairman of Governors of Queens College.**
- **Councillor Farbahi declared a personal interest as the owner of land in Taunton Deane.**
- **Councillor Hall declared a personal interest as a Director of Southwest One.**
- **Councillor Coombes declared a personal interest as a Stoke St Mary Parish Councillor and the owner of an area of land at Haydon, Taunton.**

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Full Council - 15 December 2015

Proposed changes to Constitution – Amendments to recommendations at Planning Committee

Report of the Solicitor to the Council

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Habgood)

1. Executive Summary

This report seeks the Council's approval of changes which are being proposed to the Council's Constitution, which if ultimately approved, will allow the Planning Committee to propose that applications for planning permission be determined contrary to the officer recommendation.

At present, the Constitution's definition of "amendment" does not allow this.

2. Background

- 2.1 Following recent meetings of the Planning Committee, officers have been considering possible changes to the procedures under which Members of the Committee consider applications for planning permission, as set out in Part 4 of the Council's Constitution (Rules of Procedure).
- 2.2 At present, Part 4 paragraph 6 limits the range of potential amendments to substantive motions which may be proposed at Planning Committee. In particular, paragraph 6 states that amendments as proposed "*shall not have the effect of introducing a significantly different proposal or of negating the motion*".
- 2.3 The current arrangements within the Council Constitution in Part 4 operate well at Full Council and at most of the Council's Committees. However, it is arguable that they do not align satisfactorily with the decision making process under which the Planning Committee determines applications for planning permission, where a decision which is entirely contrary to the "motion" (or recommendation) is entirely possible.

- 2.4 Specifically, paragraph 6 prevents Members from proposing that an application should be refused where the officer recommendation is that planning permission should be granted. (Obviously it also prevents Members from proposing that permission be granted where the officer recommendation is for refusal).
- 2.5 Accordingly, the Constitution in its current form has the effect of limiting the Planning Committee's ability to debate applications in a flexible and responsive way (and in this regard differs from virtually every other local authority Planning Committee, including West Somerset).
- 2.6 On at least four recent occasions in the last four months, Members have voted against an officer recommendation for approval. However as the discussion up to that point had effectively been framed by the officer recommendation, no potential detailed reasons why the applications should/could be refused had been identified. There had also been no detailed debate on whether any such reasons were viable as a justification for refusal, or whether they had a reasonable prospect of being upheld on appeal.
- 2.7 As a result, Members – having voted down the recommendation to grant permission - were placed in a position where they then had to identify reasons which would support the refusal to which they had effectively already committed themselves.
- 2.8 In the view of officers, this current arrangement creates the potential for situations in which Members are placed under pressure to come up – almost retrospectively - with reasons for refusal to justify their rejection of officer recommendations (often in a situation in which the applicant or their agent is in the room). It also deprives the Committee of the opportunity to discuss in detail (and debate) potential reasons for refusal of the application – and if necessary obtain officers' advice on the issues – prior to (rather than after) the point at Members have still to reach an overall view on the application i.e. at a time when a discussion on the viability of a decision contrary to officer recommendation can still have a meaningful influence on the Committee's ultimate decision.
- 2.9 Officers' view is that such difficulties can be avoided in future by a straightforward amendment to paragraph 6 of the Rules of Procedure, insofar as it applies to Planning Committee.
- 2.10 The effect of the proposed change would be to allow Members to propose a determination of any application in a manner contrary to the officer

recommendation, subject to (a) any proposal being seconded and (b) the Member/s making the proposal indicating possible planning reasons for the proposal at the time that their proposal is made.

2.11 This proposal was reported to the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 12 November 2015, and the Committee was fully in agreement with the changes as proposed. At its meeting on 27 November 2015, the Constitutional Sub-Committee also confirmed its agreement to the proposed changes, and issued a recommendation to Full Council that the Constitution should be amended accordingly).

2.12 On this basis, the proposed amendments to paragraph 6 of the Constitution would take the following approach (with the detailed changes to wording as set out in Appendix 1 to this report) :

- a. The changes would only have effect in relation to Planning Committee and the determination of applications.
- b. Full Council and all other Committees would still be subject to paragraph 6(1) to (6), with the arrangements relating to amendments remaining entirely unchanged
- c. Members of Planning Committee will be able – subject to seconding and the identification of reasons – to propose any of the following (all of which are precluded by paragraph 6 currently):-
 - i. Refusal where the officer recommendation is for approval
 - ii. Approval where the officer recommendation is for refusal
 - iii. Deferral in any case
 - iv. The addition of further conditions or the amendment of proposed conditions where there is an officer recommendation for approval (at present, it is necessary for officers, on hearing any points being made by Members, to amend their own recommendation in response if they see fit)
- d. If any amendment is voted down, then the Committee would return to consideration of the officer recommendation as originally advanced (subject to consideration of any further amendments).

3. Finance Comments

None

4. Legal Comments

Contained in main body of report

5. Links to Corporate Aims

Officers' view is that the proposed change will improve the process followed during meetings of the Planning Committee, with resulting benefits for all the Council's corporate aims.

6. Environmental Implications

None

7. Community Safety Implications

None

8. Equalities

No specific impacts

9. Risk Management

Officers' view is that the proposed changes will make the Planning Committee's decisions even more robust and secure from legal challenge or appeal

10. Partnership Implications (if any)

None

11 Recommendations

That the Council approves the amendment of Part 4 paragraph 6 of the Constitution as proposed in this report

Contact:	Officer Name	Roy Pinney, Solicitor to the Council
	Direct Dial No	01823 356409/01749 341257
	<u>e-mail</u> address	roy.pinney@mendip.gov.uk

APPENDIX 1

PROPOSED CHANGES TO PLANNING COMMITTEE RULES OF PROCEDURE

AMENDMENT TO CONSTITUTION PART 4 PARAGRAPH 6

REF	CURRENT	PROPOSED New text bold and underlined, text to be deleted struck through
Paragraph 6 Amendments	<p>(1) An amendment shall be either</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(a) to leave out words;(b) to leave out words or add others; or(c) to insert or add words <p>but shall not have the effect of introducing a significantly different proposal or of negating the motion</p> <p>(2) Before moving an amendment a Councillor shall ensure that there is likely to be a seconder for that amendment</p> <p>(3) When an amendment has been moved and seconded no further amendments shall be moved until the first amendment has been voted upon</p> <p>(4) If an amendment is carried, it shall be incorporated into the motion which shall become the substantive motion upon which further amendments may be moved. If an amendment is voted down, further amendments may then be moved on the motion</p> <p>(5) With the agreement of any seconder and with the assent</p>	<p>(1) <u>With the exception of an amendment to an officer recommendation that planning permission be either granted or refused as contained in a report to the Council's Planning Committee (which shall be dealt with in accordance with sub paragraph (7) below) an</u> An amendment shall be either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(a) to leave out words;(b) to leave out words or add others; or(c) to insert or add words <p>but shall not have the effect of introducing a significantly different proposal or of negating the motion</p> <p>(2) Before moving an amendment a Councillor shall ensure that there is likely to be a seconder for that amendment</p> <p>(3) When an amendment has been moved and seconded no further amendments shall be moved until the first amendment has been voted upon</p> <p>(4) If an amendment is carried, it shall be incorporated into the motion which shall become the substantive motion</p>

	<p>of the Council, given without comment, a councillor proposing a motion or amendment may:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Withdraw that proposal; or (b) Alter its wording; or (c) Accept an amendment <p>(6) If there is to be an amendment to the proposed budget then it must be received by the Democratic Services Manager by 12 noon the day before the Council meeting</p> <p>(7) In consideration of application for development under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) where an amendment is suggested in order to make the development more acceptable then the application will be deferred to the next scheduled meeting of the Planning Committee in order to ensure that all implications of the proposed amendment can be considered</p>	<p>upon which further amendments may be moved. If an amendment is voted down, further amendments may then be moved on the motion</p> <p>(5) With the agreement of any seconder and with the assent of the Council, given without comment, a councillor proposing a motion or amendment may:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Withdraw that proposal; or (b) Alter its wording; or (c) Accept an amendment <p>(6) If there is to be an amendment to the proposed budget then it must be received by the Democratic Services Manager by 12 noon the day before the Council meeting</p> <p>(7) In consideration of applications <u>for planning permission or other form of consent</u> for development under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) where an amendment is suggested in order to make the development more acceptable then the application will be deferred to the next scheduled meeting of the Planning Committee in order to ensure that all implications of the proposed amendment can be considered</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) <u>Sub paragraphs (2) and (5) of this paragraph 6 shall apply</u> (b) <u>Sub paragraph (3) and (4) of this paragraph 6 shall not apply</u> (c) <u>An amendment to the motion (with the term “motion” in this context being the officer recommendation in respect of the application) may have the effect of introducing a significantly different proposal or of negating the motion and maybe:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) <u>That the application be determined as</u>
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		<p><u>proposed in the officer recommendation but with the addition of further conditions and/or the removal or amendment of recommended conditions; or</u></p> <p>(ii) <u>That the application be refused (where the officer recommendation is for approval) or approved (where the officer recommendation is for refusal) PROVIDED THAT any proposer of such an amendment shall when making such a proposal identify the planning reasons for the amendment; or</u></p> <p>(iii) <u>That determination of the application should be deferred PROVIDED THAT any proposer of such an amendment shall when making such a proposal identify the reasons for the proposed deferral</u></p> <p>(d) <u>When an amendment has been proposed and seconded in accordance with sub paragraph (7)(c) it shall at that point become the substantive motion (on which further amendments may be moved in accordance with this sub paragraph (7))</u></p> <p>(e) <u>Where an amendment which has been proposed and seconded in accordance with this sub paragraph (7) is voted down, then at that point (and subject to any further amendment made pursuant to this sub paragraph (7)) the original officer recommendation shall be restored as the substantive motion</u></p>

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Full Council – 15 December 2015

Council Fees and Charges - Parking

Report of the Assistant Director – Operational Delivery

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Habgood)

1. Executive Summary

This report sets out proposed changes to the charging process that supports traffic management of the urban areas of Taunton Deane by seeking to influence driver behaviour with the following outcomes:-

- Remove the incentive for long stay in the most central car parks freeing up space for shorter term stays; and
- Long term investment in the parking assets.

It seeks approval for increasing pay and display charges, implementing Blue Badge charges and Sunday charging.

It seeks approval for changes to car park tariffs; removal of the zero tariff if a valid Blue Badge is displayed and the introduction of a Sunday tariff.

2. Background

Parking charges have not been amended since 2011 but the costs of operation have been increasing.

Parking assets have not had an adequately funded programme of maintenance for some years and the maintenance of assets has become reactive through reports of damage / issues, or the maintenance inspection program via Deane DLO's Highways Inspector. Some car parks are receiving regular temporary reinstatement maintenance due to the overall condition of the surface of the car park, this increases the risk of claims against the Council.

There are a number of strategic projects that are being considered but as yet are unfunded. These are pay on exit and variable message signage. This fees and charges report sets in place a funding stream to support these enhancements.

As part of JMASS Phase One the roles of Parking Services Managers were combined across the two Council areas into a single role which also incorporated the civil contingencies functions. Increased use of the parking assets and new projects have placed this team under significant pressure.

3. The Proposals

Car Park Tariff – It is proposed to change the parking charges to a set hourly rate, using multiples of this rate for the number of hours required. This is a change to the current practice. At present the longer someone parks the cheaper it becomes on an hourly basis. Appendix 1 shows the current and proposed charges across the car parks. The rationale behind this change is to make the charging profile clearer and removes the saving which is higher in the central car parks freeing up space for shorter stay and higher turnover of bays. The proposal does not exclude longer term stays in those car parks for those where the convenience is worth the additional cost. The income modelling is based on the full year 2014/2015 with a reduction of 10% being made to allow for changes in driver behaviour.

Removal of Blue Badge zero tariff – It is proposed to remove the zero tariff but if a valid Blue Badge is displayed and payment is made, an allowance of an additional 60 minutes will be provided. This will be against the standard car park tariffs as identified in Appendix 1. There is no customer data and therefore Blue Badge income is taken from the number of spaces at 25% occupancy. Whilst the number of disabled spaces is not being increased at this stage there will be a need to consider the impact of charging and the level of disabled bays that are considered necessary.

Sunday tariff – It is proposed to implement Sunday charging across all of the car parks that are currently chargeable. This charging is on the basis of the new tariffs identified in Appendix 1. There is no customer data and therefore the income estimates for this are based upon the whole of the parking assets only taking £1,500 for each Sunday of operation, and then removing the estimated costs of enforcement and cash collection.

4. The Investment

Increased allocation to the maintenance budget – It is proposed that there will be an increase to the maintenance budget of £150,000 per annum taking it from £144,000 to £294,000 in the first three years increasing to £488,000 thereafter.

Contribution to pay on exit infrastructure and variable message signing – There are projects being explored for pay on exit and variable message signage. These will improve the customer experience and may have a positive impact on length of stay. It is proposed to set aside £150,000 per annum for this project. The total cost is not yet known but likely to be in the region of £450,000.

Project resources – Due to the complexity of this project there is a need to have some dedicated project resources to deliver it. Therefore further investment of £40,000 per annum will be needed over the duration, estimated at three years.

Team resources – The team resources are not sufficient to deliver the increased level of maintenance works and the level of parking income modelling being requested by the Council. The team is currently made up of 1.6FTE covering both Councils. There is a need to increase the resources to support the investment but also the increasing use of the car parks and demands upon the service. This proposal increases resources by one Grade D employee (£25,000 inclusive of employment costs).

CCTV – it is proposed that the CCTV systems that were switched off a number of years ago should be reconnected (6 no.). In order to reconnect these six cameras there are one off costs of £22,500 and continuing costs of £4,000 per camera.

5. Risks

Parking income fluctuates through-out the year and is subject to external influences such as weather, road works and town centre events. The figures used within this report are based on modelling of the occupancy levels within the car parks where this data exists. As we do not currently charge for Blue Badge holders or Sunday charging no data exists and officers have had to use their knowledge to produce a model that is conservative.

There is uncertainty in the level of enforcement that Somerset County Council (SCC) operate for on-street parking on a Sunday. There are two proposals that may impact on the on-street parking arrangements and traffic management.

Sunday charging – At present Residents' Parking Permits are not required on a Sunday, therefore members of the public / commuters may, in an attempt to avoid paying parking charges in our car parks, use side streets that are normally protected by residents permitting. Parking permits are in place in a number of streets around the town centre and were put in as a means of preventing commuters taking up residential parking spaces.

Blue Badge charging – Holders of Blue Badges are able to park on double yellow lines at any time, subject to any other restrictions that might be enforce. This is free to them and therefore they may choose to park on street rather than pay to park in Council operated car parks. This could have some implications for traffic management and may see an increase in on-street parking.

The discussions with SCC are not far enough advanced to determine their view on this. SCC may need to extend the scope of their Resident's Permits to cover Sundays to mitigate this risk. Ultimately this is an SCC decision.

6. Finance

The package of proposals provides funding to support some immediate maintenance to ensure there is a long term investment plan as well as support for two interconnected projects to deliver pay on exit and variable message signage for five car parks. These being Paul Street, High Street, The Crescent, Wood Street and Canon Street, Taunton.

Once the above projects are completed the project funding will be moved into the general maintenance budget.

Despite the amount of work required to deliver these changes, officers will have time to achieve this for the 1 April 2016

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Pay & Display	800k	800k	800k	800k
Blue Badge	60k	60k	60k	60k
Sunday Charges	60k	60k	60k	60k
Subtotal of income	920k	920k	920k	920k
Maintenance	150k	150k	150k	340
Projects	150K	150k	150k	0

Project resource	40k	40k	40k	0
Team resources	25k	25k	25k	25k
CCTV	22.5k	0	0	0
On-going	24k	24k	24k	24k
Subtotal of investment	411.5k	389k	389k	389k
Income less investment	509k	531k	531k	531k

7. Recommendations

It is recommended that Full Council supports the proposals set out in Section 3 of this report.

Contact: Chris Hall
Assistant Director – Operational Delivery
01823 356499
c.hall@tauntondeane.gov.uk

Appendix 1 - The Council's current and proposed charges across the car parks

Appendix 1 – The Council’s current and proposed charges across the car parks.

Shopper 1	Up to	Current	Proposed
Canon Street Coal Orchard	1 Hour	£1.20	£ 1.20
Crescent (maximum stay 4 hours) High Street	2 hours	£2.00	£ 2.40
Orchard Levels 1, 1A, 2, 2A, 3 and 3A	3 hours	£2.70	£ 3.60
	4 hours	£3.40	£ 4.80
	5 hours	£5.70	£ 6.00
	6 hours	£6.10	£ 7.20
	7 hours	£7.00	£ 8.40
	Over 7 hours	£7.60	£ 9.60

Shopper 2	Up to	Current	Proposed
Ash Meadows (maximum stay 3 hours)	1 Hour	£1.10	£ 1.00
Belvedere Road	2 hours	£1.80	£ 2.00
Castle Street	3 hours	£2.10	£ 3.00
Elms Parade	4 hours	£2.60	£ 4.00
Fons George (maximum stay 6 hours)	5 hours	£3.70	£ 5.00
Orchard Levels 4, 4A, 5 and 5A	6 hours	£4.40	£ 6.00
Wood Street	7 hours	£5.20	£ 7.00
	Over 7 hours	£5.90	£ 8.00

Commuter Car Parks	Up to	Current	Proposed
Enfield	1 Hour	£1.10	£ 1.00
Kilkenny	2 hours	£1.80	£ 2.00
Tangier	3 hours	£2.10	£ 3.00
Victoria Gate	4 hours	£2.60	£ 4.00
	5 hours	£3.50	£ 4.50
	6 hours	£4.30	£ 5.00
	7 hours	£4.60	£ 5.50
	Over 7 hours	£5.10	£ 6.00

Wellington	Up to	Current	Proposed
South Street	1 Hour	£0.70	£ 0.70
	2 hours	£0.90	£ 1.00
	3 hours	£1.30	£ 1.50
	4 hours	£1.80	£ 2.00
	All day	£2.30	£ 2.50
Longforth Road	2 hours	£0.90	£ 1.00
North Street	3 hours	£1.30	£ 1.50
	4 hours	£1.80	£ 2.00
	All day	£2.30	£ 2.50

Unchanged tariffs	Up to	Current	Proposed
Whirligig	1 hours	£1.60	£ 1.60
	2 hours max	£3.00	£ 3.00
Tangier Coach Park	All day	£6.00	£ 6.00

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Full Council – 15 December 2015

Swimming Pool Project at Blackbrook Pavilion Sports Centre - Update on Capital Budget

Report of the Community Leisure Manager

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Catherine Herbert)

Executive Summary

This report shares an update on the construction project at Blackbrook Sports Centre and makes requests to Members for additional funding. This is largely to deal with fitting out the new facility, and to progress some design change opportunities that have arisen for the Council during the construction phase.

The construction project itself continues to be managed within budget by our construction partners BAM and they are making excellent progress on site.

2. Background

- 2.1 In May 2013 Full Council agreed to the closure of St James Street swimming pools to replace it with new swimming facilities and a health & wellbeing spa at the existing Blackbrook Sports Centre site in Taunton. A capital construction budget of £5.353m was approved – funded from a combination of resources from the Growth Reserve, General Fund Reserve and borrowing.
- 2.2 In December 2014 following detailed design and market testing work, Full Council approved a further budget of £0.398m to provide sufficient capital to enter into the construction contract.
- 2.3 In February 2015 a Design & Build contract was signed with BAM Construction for the value of £5.723m. A Design and Build contract essentially means that the majority of the design is done up front by the Client (the Council and its appointed consultants) which is given to the contractor to provide a contract price to deliver. This provides certainty over costs as this is known and agreed from the outset, but means any changes requested incur cost. BAM construction are proceeding with the works on this basis. Construction began on site on the 31st March 2015 and BAM are making excellent progress to date.

3. Areas of Spending Pressure To Date

Unplanned Costs

- 3.1 During the construction period to date, the Council and Tone Leisure have met regularly on site with BAM and all advisors to discuss progress and to deal with any issues emerging from the programme.
- 3.2 There have been some minor unplanned costs that we have had to deal with to date – these total £26k and have been met from the construction contingency budget.

Design Choices

- 3.3 There have also been opportunities at these meetings to review design choices and to, where appropriate, make changes. Not all opportunities have been progressed – due to affordability issues – but there have been some where it made sense to do so (when it improved the Councils “asset” and improved the offering to the Community for a marginal cost to the construction contract).
- 3.4 The timely nature of such decisions (ie often needed within days due to construction programme implications) meant they have been made by the Project Board (which includes the Councils Asset Management Service as well as our advisors and our operator partner Tone Leisure) with regular briefings shared with the PFH and Leader. The changes to date amount to £71 k and have been funded from the construction contingency budget.
- 3.5 Whilst we have “managed” these issues and opportunities to date from our construction contingency – this is now fully utilised. In order to continue the construction project in a safe and risk appropriate manner we need to re-instate the construction contingency budget.
- 3.6 Very recently we have been given the opportunity to view the finishes of the new spa facility. Whilst generally the proposed design and brand image is coming together positively, the quality of the changing rooms is disappointing. It is imperative as part of the spa experience that the guests can identify a discernible difference in quality between the swimming pool changing facilities and those in the spa. For example, push button showers and coin operated lockers are not acceptable in a spa environment. It is our view that it is necessary to upgrade the shower facilities and changing areas/lockers to match the expectation of the spa business plan. The cost of doing this is £20k and we currently do not have any funding to progress this. If the Council approves this funding request we can build this into the construction project within the required timescale.

Fitting Out Costs

- 3.7 In addition to these design choices, we are now in a position where we better understand the requirements for “fitting-out” the new facilities. We made some estimates earlier in the project but always expected to come back for

funding for this when we better understood the total requirement, how the facility would be used (e.g. the programming plan), and what equipment could be transferred from the existing St James Street site and reused.

- 3.8 Together with Tone Leisure we have conducted a full audit review of the St James Street site fittings to ascertain what items can be brought over to the new facility. Much of the equipment isn't suitable to be transferred (as it is in imperial sizing as the new facility will be metric).
- 3.9 Other items are either at / or approaching the end of their functional life and not in keeping with a brand new facility or the new programming opportunities for different activities provided for at the new facility.

Transition Costs

- 3.10 As we get closer to the closedown of the existing site, we are better able to plan the actual transition. With our partner Tone Leisure we have started the detailed planning necessary to carry this out safely – to ensure the impact on our community is minimised, and our staffing arrangements are planned safely.
- 3.11 We need to plan to manage the closedown of a much loved local facility (and celebrate its life and impact on the community of Taunton Deane) alongside the opening of a brand new facility. The logistics need to be carefully thought through and expectations managed to ensure we do this to our best advantage.
- 3.12 Inevitably there will be a period of "interrupted" business, as this will be necessary to ensure the smooth and safe transition of staff and customers from St. James Street to Blackbrook Pavilion and Taunton Pool. We are working closely with Tone to produce a 'transition plan' that will minimise disruption, although this will to some extent be predicated upon no 'unplanned' delays in project completion. For the purpose of the report we have estimated a period of 2 weeks' business interruption. These four issues (unplanned costs, design changes, fitting out costs and transition costs), form the basis of our request for further funding as summarised in the table below.
- 3.13 A full list of each category is set out in **Appendix A**.

Table 1 - Summary of Funding Request

	£'000
Contingency (to re-instate contingency used to meet Design and unplanned changes)	98
Design Changes - SPA	20
Fitting Out – Estimate	100
Additional Capital Resources Needed	218
Transition Costs - Estimate	24
Additional Revenue Resources Needed	24
TOTAL REQUEST	242

- 3.14 This request will allow the construction to continue on plan (by effectively reinstating the contingency budget) and the site to be fitted out in a cost-effective way.

4 Overall Project Position

- 4.1 The overall project budget (expenditure) is set out below together with a reminder of the funding plan. Members have supported requests for capital funding for the construction element, and below is a reminder of the overall project position and funding.

	Current £k	Request In This Report £k	Projected Total £k
Project Expenditure:			
Construction Contract (BAM)	5,722	20	5,742
Professional Fees	236		236
- Architectural			
- Mechanical & Engineering			
- Structural Engineering			
- CDMC			
- Cost Consultancy			
Clerk of Works	10		10
M&E Advisor	9		9
Temporary Reception Works	21		21
Existing works – planned maintenance	68		68
Fitting out	42	100	142
Project Contingency	98	98	196
TOTAL CAPITAL EXPENDITURE	6,206	218	6,424
Funded By:			
Capital Approvals (march 13 and Feb 15)	5,751		5,751
Leisure Maintenance Reserve	218		218
Virement of Underspends 2014/15	157		157
Climate Change Fund (PV Panels)	80		80
New Homes Bonus Reserve		218	218
TOTAL	6,206	218	6,424

- 4.2 The one-off additional transition costs of £24k, as revenue expenditure, is not included in the above table, but is included in the recommended additional funding request – see 3.13 and 6.7.
- 4.3 The existing Leisure Maintenance reserve has been partly used, as planned, to part fund the overall project (instead of being used on works on St James Street site and other sites).
- 4.3 Our project management support, Gleeds and costs consultants, and MACE

have worked closely with BAM construction to review, verify and obtain best value costs for the Council. Both teams have worked flexibly to accommodate and minimise the costs impacts as much as possible whilst ensuring the programme continues to be delivered.

- 4.4 We still have some way to go on the project but we feel the estimates above are reasonable to completion. Our Cost Consultants Mace have provided us with a robust figure for contingency funds required between now and the end of construction of £98,000 based on the project risk register. Their advice is “The register now includes such risks as one in ten year weather events, issues with design coordination, supply chain management, building control approval and latent defects. Whilst the total figure is high at £98,000 bear in mind that is highly unlikely that all project risks would occur, therefore only a small proportion of the £98,000 may get spent – or maybe not at all”

5. Asset Management

- 5.1 The Councils Asset Manager has been part of the Project Board and has helped ensure the Council keeps focus on the “end product” delivered by this project. The Council will have a significant asset and it rightly needs to ensure it is getting the best it can for its funding, that the asset will have a reasonable lifespan, and that we are ensuring the choices we make on the asset now are sensible for the operation of the asset during its life.
- 5.2 The Council needs to be mindful of the contract with Tone Leisure ending in 2019 and the importance of utilising this current opportunity whilst we have contractors on site to ensure that we have an asset which puts the Council in the best possible position when the future of Leisure Services is being considered.
- 5.3 Now that the Council is clearer on Tone Leisure’s programming schedules and due to concerns generally around lack of parking at this facility, it is considered appropriate to review the transport assessment to ensure that with the building, the site itself is designed to enable both use in short term but also provide for growth. If the need for further permanent parking is deemed to be necessary, there would be a request for further funding. The pool facility will already have capacity for growth in user numbers but perhaps not the site itself and the parking arrangements.
- 5.4 It is important that the spa facility is fitted out to such standard that it can deliver a successful service in its own entity and not rely on operational or financial support from the wider Leisure Centre. This is important not only through to 2019, but potentially beyond.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 The main financial implications are set out within the report, and are summarised here.

Project Budget and Funding

- 6.2 The current approved total budget for the new pool and spa is £6.206m. The additional budget requested is £0.218m, an increase of 3.5%, which would increase the total approved budget for the investment to £6.424m.
- 6.3 The council has a number of options to normally consider to fund capital expenditure. These include:
- Capital reserves: capital reserves include capital receipts and grants. Uncommitted capital reserve balances are low and therefore not available at this point to support this project.
 - Borrowing: The council can borrow to fund capital costs. This has ongoing revenue implications through debt repayment and interest costs.
 - Revenue Contributions: Capital spending can be funded through contributions from the revenue budget (traditionally known as “RCCO”). There is no current budget approval to support a contribution to this scheme, and whilst there is currently an underspend forecast on the General Fund (per Q2 financial monitoring report) the position could vary before the financial year end.
 - Revenue Reserves: Capital costs can be supported through use of general reserves and/or earmarked reserves.
 - External funding: There is no external funding available to support the proposed change to the capital budget for this scheme.
- 6.4 Based on the current funding availability and the aim to mitigate the impact on the affordability of the business case, it is recommended that the increase to the capital budget is funded from New Homes Bonus Reserve. The current unallocated balance on this reserve, taking into account grant received to date and already approved commitments against this reserve, is £2.1m. This indicates that the funding is available and affordable from current balances, and it is therefore a matter of prioritising resources. The funding for the project is therefore summarised as follows:

Capital Costs and Funding

	Current Budget £k	Additional Requirement £k	Updated Budget £k
Capital expenditure	6,206	218	6,424
<i>Funded by:</i>			
New Homes Bonus	1,898	218	2,116
General Reserves	1,500	0	1,500
Borrowing	2,353	0	2,353
Virement from Climate Change reserves (for Solar PV)	80	0	80
Leisure Reserves and Underspends	375	0	
Total Funding	6,206	218	6,424

- 6.5 Members are advised that proposals for future commitments of New Homes Bonus are included in the Budget Update and Savings Options report presented to Corporate Scrutiny on 17 November 2015, to inform budget setting and MTFP expenditure projections. This set out a significant range of investment areas in support of growth and infrastructure developments. Whilst

the amount of New Homes Bonus income beyond the current year is not confirmed – this will be subject to annual funding announcements from Government – the current projections indicate that the approval of the amount requested in this report will not adversely impact on other identified priorities (if approved).

- 6.6 By funding this from existing unallocated reserves there is an ‘opportunity cost’ in terms of interest on investments but this is not material to the previously approved business case or the Council’s MTFP projections.

Revenue Costs and Funding

- 6.7 The additional funding request includes an amount of £24k for transition costs. This would be a revenue expenditure item, and as such it is proposed to fund this from revenue underspends in the current financial year. It is therefore proposed to transfer £24k in the current year to the leisure assets earmarked reserve, and then withdraw this sum in 2016/17 to add to the leisure services budget to fund the transition costs.
- 6.8 Tone Leisure have also continued to review their operational business plan and the overall position remains very similar to previous assessments therefore there are no material issues to report in terms of viability or risk. The proposed investments in improved facilities will feasibly reduce risks regarding the commercial assumptions included within their business plan, which also benefits the Council by reducing risk of increased funding requirement for our key leisure partner.

7. Link to Corporate Aims

- 7.1 This project aligns to the Corporate Aims of ‘A vibrant social, cultural and leisure environment’ and objective 7 ‘Facilitating and supporting cultural and leisure opportunities

8. Equalities Impact

- 8.1 The new building at Blackbrook will significantly improve and fully address access issues of the current pool provision at St James Street. With the refurbishment of Station Road the community will have access to two quality pools that meet modern day customer expectations and provide opportunity for balanced provision. An equalities impact assessment has previously been undertaken for this scheme.

9. Partnership Implications

- 9.1 The progression of this project requires continued partnership working with Tone Leisure as our Leisure Operators (and their Group Company GLL). Continued consultation with the swimming clubs, schools, Sport England and Taunton Disability Group will also be essential to the success of this project and the eventual running of the new facility.

10. Conclusion

- 10.1 The Council is part way through a significant project that will deliver an exciting new swimming pool facility and a community spa at Blackbrook Sport Centre. Although this is a “no frills” facility, we want to do the very best we can within the funding constraints of the Council.
- 10.2 The construction of the new facility is costing what we said it would. That isn't the issue. The issue is we want to progress some affordable design changes (to the benefit of the Council) whilst we have the opportunity (it's too late once it's built!).
- 10.3 We always recognised we would need to “fit-out” the new facility and would need to request funding for this when we knew more what we needed and what we could reuse from St James Street site.
- 10.4 Should this request be supported we are confident we can progress to project end (barring any construction risks emerging in the second phase of the project!).
- 10.5 The only outstanding issue for the Council to consider on this site is that of car parking. A transport study was carried out in the earlier stages of the project, and we now wish to revisit this in light of a more detailed plan emerging for use of the facility (e.g. programme plan). At this stage we don't know what the outcome of this will be. Should we need to report back to Councillors on this we will commit to do so when all the relevant facts and data are available.

11. Recommendations

- 11.1 Full Council is requested to note the update in this report and:-
 - a) Approve the supplementary capital budget of £218,000 for the New Blackbrook Pool and Spa Pools Project, increasing the total capital budget to £6,424,000;
 - b) Approve the transfer of £218,000 from the New Homes Bonus (Growth) Reserve to add to the Revenue Contribution to Capital (“RCCO”) budget to provide the funding for the capital supplementary estimate above;
 - c) Approve the transfer of £24,000 from 2015/2016 underspend to the Leisure Maintenance earmarked reserve, to fund the additional one-off transition costs in 2016/2017 financial year.

Contacts:

Alison North - Community Leisure Manager
01823 356 576
a.north@tauntondeane.gov.uk

Chris Hall, - Assistant Director, Operational Delivery

01823 356 499

c.hall@tauntondeane.gov.uk

Shirlene Adam – Director, Operations

01823 356 499

s.adam@tauntondeane.gov.uk

Tim Child – Asset Manager

01823 356 356

t.child@tauntondeane.gov.uk

Juliette Dickinson - Managing Director, Tone Leisure

01823 217091

j.dickinson@toneleisure.com

Appendix:

Appendix A – breakdown of costs and requested funds by category

Appendix A - breakdown of costs and requested funds by category				
Item	Budget	Actual (expenditure to enhance / improve	Extra / over Cost	Information
Design Changes				
SPA audio system	£ -	£ 9,958	£ 9,958	Provides greater flexibility for audio sound throughout the spa to enhance the customer experience
CCTV	£ 3,500	£ 9,872	£ 6,372	Enhanced CCTV provision internally and externally
Showers	£ -	£ 5,732	£ 5,732	Design adjustments providing additional showers for use with shampoo
Learner Pool Glazing	£ -	£ 11,217	£ 11,217	Enhanced viewing area for customers
Temporary Reception	£ 21,130	£ 38,147	£ 17,017	To ensure as minimal disruption to the customer as possible
Additional vending	£ -	£ 2,684	£ 2,684	Provision of hot drink vending to be provided requiring additional drainage
Pool Plant	£ -	£ 3,735	£ 3,735	Upgrade to pool plant gor floc dosing arrangement
Lighting upgrade spa	£ -	£ 1,264	£ 1,264	Upgraded lighting feature in the SPA reception
Poolside door	£ -	£ 2,100	£ 2,100	An additional door on the poolside for H & S provision
Wash-down point	£ -	£ 737	£ 737	An additional wash down point to make cleaning easier
Radiator	£ -	£ 262	£ 262	Addition of a radiator in the reception area
Wet spa feature	£ -	£ 3,788	£ 3,788	To enhance the wet spa further for the best possible customer experience
Catering provision	£ 15,000	£ 20,322	£ 5,322	Additional catering features to provide maximum revenue generating opportunity
Total	£ 39,630	£ 109,818	£ 70,188	
Unplanned Costs			£ -	
Insulation upgrade	£ -	£ 7,000	£ 7,000	Building control requirement for additional insulation to the ground floor

Principal Designer (PD) role (CDM regulations) 2015	£ 750	£ 8,900	£ 8,150	Changes to the CDMC (H & S) legislation has required the appointment of a new role
Carparking survey works		£ 1,500	£ 1,500	To obtain data analysis to support the future proofing of the site as it grows
Temporary car park lighting		£ 2,500	£ 2,500	Identified additional lighting for customer parking
Building control fees	£ -	£ 6,718	£ 6,718	
Total	£ 750	£ 26,618	£ 25,868	
Fitting Out			£ -	

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Council Meeting – 15 December 2015

Part I

To deal with written questions to, and receive recommendations to the Council, from the Executive.

(i) Councillor John Williams

(a) Fees and Charges 2016/2017

The Executive has given consideration to the proposed fees and charges for 2016/2017 for the following services:-

- Cemeteries and Crematorium – It was proposed to increase the main cremation fee by £50 to £700 and make minor increases for other charges within the service. This was likely to increase income by £75,000;
- Waste Services – The Somerset Waste Partnership proposed to increase its charges for the Garden Waste Service Charge from £48 to £53 as well as a modest increase to the cost of garden waste sacks. It was anticipated this would generate additional income of £50,000;
- Housing Services – In accordance with the 30 year Housing Business Plan, it is proposed to increase housing (non-rent) fees and charges by applying Retail Price Index (RPI) inflation as at September 2015 (0.8%). The increases were likely to generate £2,800 for the Housing Revenue Account;
- Court Fees - Due to a recent High Court Case Local Authorities are required to review and detail the breakdown of how costs are calculated. The proposal is a single charge added at the point the summonses are issued, where previously a separate Liability Order fee was added at the date of the hearing. The implementation of the new fee of £74.15 would take effect from 16 December 2015 and will generate additional income of £3,500.

No increases to the fees charged by Land Charges, Licensing, Planning, Environmental Health, Promotional 'Rotunda Units', Building Control and Freedom of Information are proposed.

The results of previous public consultation events have clearly indicated that the public prefer to see increases in fees and charges, rather than in Council Tax, as a way for the Council to raise income.

Therefore, where possible, fees have been increased to take these views into

account.

The Corporate Scrutiny Committee also considered this matter at its meeting on 19 November 2015 and its comments have been taken into consideration.

It is therefore **recommended** that the fees and charges for 2016/2017 in respect of Cemeteries and Crematorium, Waste Services, Housing Services, and Court Fees be agreed.

(b) New Homes Bonus – Funding towards Growth and Regeneration Priorities

Growth remains a top priority for the Council. This commitment has been reflected over recent years, by Members' allocation of New Homes Bonus (NHB) funding, primarily for growth and regeneration purposes.

In 2013, Members approved the following list of growth schemes that were intended to have 'first call' on NHB growth funding:-

- Firepool infrastructure and planning (£3.5m);
- Toneway Corridor Transport improvements (£23m);
- Junction 25 Improvements (£9.2m);
- Taunton Strategic Flood Alleviation works (£15m).

Although it was accepted that NHB receipts would not be sufficient to fund these schemes in total, the NHB funding could nevertheless provide an important 'match funding' contribution towards them, with support from other funding partners increasing the likelihood of delivery.

Since 2013, the Council has achieved significant success with partners in taking forward its growth priority. Examples of success include:-

- Joint agreement (with Somerset County Council) of a *Growth Prospectus for Taunton*, establishing a clear vision for Taunton's economic success and a list of key growth projects to accelerate delivery.
- Funding awards for major transport schemes, including Taunton Rail Station enhancement (£4,600,000), Junction 25 improvement (£12,000,000) and dualling of A358 between A303 and J25 (c. £275,000,000).
- Roll-out of Superfast Broadband to at least 90 per cent of properties through phase 1 of the *Connecting Devon and Somerset* programme in a £52m contract by end 2016.
- Development of an alternative and commercially viable proposal for the Firepool site, consistent with the *Taunton Rethink*, which will bring forward

an exciting mixed use scheme.

- Approval of a Delivery Strategy for the redevelopment of the Coal Orchard site, and appointment of consultants to progress the next phase.
- Transformation of the landmark Market House Building, providing a new home for the Taunton Visitor Centre as well as a new high quality restaurant.
- £1.2m funding for Wiveliscombe Enterprise Centre.
- Shared commitment of key partners to delivery of a major new strategic employment site adjacent to Junction 25, providing up to 4000 jobs and stimulating growth in higher value business.
- Government funding for a dedicated delivery team for the Monkton Heathfield Urban Extension, providing 4,500 new homes.

Having made significant progress, it is now appropriate for the Council to renew and refresh its plans for allocation of NHB, so that spending plans are aligned as far as possible with current and emerging growth priorities.

A number of growth spend categories are proposed, reflecting the priorities established in the Taunton Growth Prospectus and aligned with the relevant plans and priorities of key partners. Having such funds allocated will enable the Council to respond quickly to commercial and funding opportunities to support growth, which in turn will facilitate the realisation of Taunton's economic vision and key economic benefits - as defined in the approved Taunton Growth Prospectus.

The following table outlines a number of proposed growth spend categories, the NHB commitment proposed for each category over the period 2016/2017 – 2020/2021 the NHB balance remaining in each of the financial years shown. The current projected closing balance (end 2015/2016) for unallocated NHB is an estimated £1,960,000.

Proposed NHB Allocation and Indicative Spend Profile

Growth project / category	2016/17 £	2017/18 £	2018/19 £	2019/20 £	2020/21 £	Total NHB allocation £
Taunton Strategic Flood Alleviation			1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	3,000,000
Major transport schemes	400,000	800,000	1,000,000	300,000		2,500,000
Town Centre regeneration	500,000	750,000	750,000	500,000		2,500,000

Employment site enabling and innovation to promote Growth		2,000,000	2,000,000			4,000,000
Urban Extensions		1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	4,000,000
Marketing, Promotion and Inward Investment	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	500,000
Preparation of LDOs	50,000	50,000				100,000
Total NHB allocation	1,050,000	4,700,000	5,850,000	2,900,000	2,100,000	16,600,000
Estimated NHB receipt	3,890,106	4,014,306	3,882,741	3,711,974	3,651,974	
Less allocation to annual GF budget	392,000	392,000	392,000	392,000	392,000	
Indicative year end unallocated NHB balance (rounded)	4,410,000	3,330,000	970,000	1,390,000	2,550,000	

The following are proposed as principles that will guide the spending of allocated NHB funds. These have been updated to reflect views expressed by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 17 November 2015 where the proposals were generally supported:-

- A Business Case for funding should be provided to the Director and relevant Portfolio Holder, justifying the proposed investment in terms of contribution to growth and regeneration priorities and/or potential for financial return.
- NHB contributions for physical infrastructure projects should normally be used as match funding, or to attract match funding, from other sources as part of a total funding package.
- NHB funding in the above categories can be used to fund specialist expertise and project related costs that will be required to deliver key schemes, as well as costs associated with 'hard infrastructure'.
- The NHB funding allocation and indicative profile will be refreshed annually, to ensure that spending plans remain aligned with an evolving picture of external funding secured, opportunities for new funding and new growth priorities.
- The profile of spending shown is indicative. With approval of the Director and relevant Portfolio Holder, spend may fall outside of the indicative years shown, within the overall sum allocated for the category and subject to sufficient NHB balance being available.

- The principles for NHB spend do not apply to the Community Infrastructure Levy, for which separate governance arrangements have been established.
- Decisions on project spend within allocated budgets will be taken by the Director – Growth and Development, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the relevant Portfolio Holder.
- The Growth Steering Group will have an overview of all major spending on growth projects and additional monitoring by Councillors will occur through Budget Monitoring reports.
- Any significant single items of expenditure (with a value of more than £250,000) will be published in the Weekly Bulletin and therefore subject to the usual ‘call in’ process.

The request to support the above prioritisation of NHB will enable these outline plans to be factored into the Medium Term Financial Plan, with initial requests in respect of 2016/2017 being included in the final budget proposals for next year.

The medium term proposals are predicated on the NHB funding regime remaining in its current form. However, the Government’s Autumn Statement has thrown some doubt on the long term availability of NHB funding.

It is therefore **recommended** that:-

- (1) The principles of spending be approved;
- (2) The proposed allocation of New Homes Bonus in 2016/2017 budgets (as part of the Budget approval process) be also approved; and
- (3) The growth spend categories and proposed New Homes Bonus commitment for 2017/2018 to 2020/2021 be incorporated within the draft Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Programme (subject to annual review).

(ii) Councillor Terry Beale

Sheltered Housing Service and Charges

Taunton Deane Borough Council currently owns, manages and provides housing related support services to a total of 880 Sheltered Housing Council Tenants.

The Council’s Sheltered Housing is currently comprised of two separate but highly related elements:-

- ‘Designated accommodation’ – This is a flat or bungalow, which is equipped with an interactive alarm system. The accommodation is paid for by tenants in the form of rent and service charges. Tenants on low incomes can claim

Housing Benefit to assist with both the rent and 'Housing Benefit eligible' service charges; and

- 'Housing related support' – This can include regular and occasional welfare checks that provide reassurance and a minimal level of social contact. The support can also help with basic household tasks too. The housing related support service is paid for by Somerset County Council grant – formerly Supporting People funding.

Over the last few years the Council's contract with Somerset County Council (SCC) to provide housing related support to its Sheltered Housing Tenants has reduced significantly. In 2012/2013 the overall contract value was £244,223.48, reducing to £229,570.07 in 2013/2014.

Following a comprehensive review of commissioned services by SCC throughout 2013/2014 a new contract was entered into by the Council to provide housing related support to its Sheltered Housing Tenants. The overall value of the new contract is £153,046.71 per year for the period October 2014 to October 2018.

In addition, SCC's review has also redefined key elements of its service contract specification, such as:-

- Limiting the provision of support to people with higher level support needs;
- Providing support that is focussed on helping people to develop ways of coping with the things they are finding difficult and will be increased, reduced or stopped according to their needs at any given time; and
- Providing support only where the person has no other means of meeting their needs.

As a direct consequence, Taunton Deane is having to make changes to the housing related support service it currently delivers to its Sheltered Housing Tenants which seeks to promote independence and supports all tenants to achieve economic wellbeing, stay safe, be healthy, enjoy and achieve and make a positive contribution.

The service is generally well regarded by all Sheltered Housing Tenants achieving consistently good levels of satisfaction ratings over many years.

The proposed new sheltered housing service for tenants will continue to respond to the aging population on our Sheltered Housing schemes. The service will have a positive social impact, helping tenants to lead active and independent lives.

Listed below is what a tenant should expect from the proposed new Sheltered Housing service which is a base line service that every tenant will receive:-

(1) Additional housing management – To include:-

- Help on entering the service;
- Preventing tenancy breakdown;
- Help with maintaining security; and

- Help with moving on;
- (2) Community development;
- (3) Tenant involvement and empowerment;
- (4) Housing related support service; and
- (5) Deane Helpline and Emergency Response service.

At present, the amount of weekly service charge a tenant pays for their Sheltered Housing service depends on the type of Sheltered Housing scheme on which they reside.

In the existing service charges, a tenant residing on a 'low level scheme' would receive less regular contact from staff and this would be classed as the baseline service. However, a tenant residing on a more 'standard Sheltered Housing scheme' may require more regular visits and increased contact.

The usual current service charges applied to Sheltered Housing Tenants rent accounts for 2015/2016 are shown below. However some tenants have a tenancy that has 'protected rights' in relation to the sheltered component of their service charge:-

Type of service	Current weekly charge
Sheltered housing	£12.59
Low level sheltered housing	£ 4.47
Current average sheltered service cost	£10.93

In the proposed new service a new single rate service charge will be applied to all sheltered housing tenant rent accounts from April 2016:-

Type of service	Proposed new weekly sheltered housing service charge
Additional housing management; Community Development and Tenant involvement and empowerment.	£10.93

The housing related support element of the proposed new service will continue to be grant funded by SCC and subject to a formal contractual agreement.

The actual cost of providing the Deane Helpline and Emergency Response services to Sheltered Housing Tenants is £4.43 per week at 2015/2016.

It is proposed that this cost should be applied as a charge to all Sheltered Housing Tenants rent accounts (unless they are exempt due to being in receipt of Housing Benefit), with the financial consequences being taken account of as part of the current review of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.

This issue was discussed at the meeting of the Community Scrutiny Committee held on 1 December 2015. Although Members supported the recommendations, an amendment was agreed whereby it was proposed that the above £4.43 per week charge would not be available to tenants in receipt of Attendance Allowance, Disability Living Allowance or a Personal Independence Payment.

Subsequently, legal advice had been obtained that, if the amendment was adopted there would be a substantial risk that it would be successfully challenged on the grounds of discrimination under the Equalities Act 2010.

In the circumstances, it is **recommended** that:-

- (1) The proposed new Sheltered Housing Service model be adopted;
- (2) A flat rate Sheltered Service charge of £10.93 / week be approved; and
- (3) The inclusion of a service charge of £4.43 / week for the Deane Helpline Service be also approved with those in receipt of Housing Benefit receiving full subsidy via the Housing Revenue Account.

(iii) Councillor Mark Edwards

Proposed Sale of Land at Greenbrook Terrace, Taunton

The Executive has previously considered a confidential report, concerning the proposed sale of 0.47 acres of land/buildings at Greenbrook Terrace, Taunton. The Council owns the freehold interest of the land.

The site was put up for sale on the open market from 25 August to 25 September 2015 with a large 'For Sale' sign erected on site for the duration of the marketing period. The site was also marketed within the 'Home Life and Property' section of the Somerset County Gazette for a two week period.

Eight offers were received based on a number of different uses including residential development, mixed use development, garage use and community use. Full details of these bids had been circulated to all Councillors.

A preferred bidder had been identified who had made an unconditional offer for the purchase of the freehold interest of the site.

It was **recommended** that:-

- (1) The proposed sale of land at Greenbrook Terrace, Taunton to the

preferred bidder identified in the confidential report considered by the Executive on 11 November 2015 be approved; and

- (2) If the preferred bidder was to withdraw its bid, the second highest offer as deemed appropriate by the Asset Manager and Portfolio Holder be proceeded with.

(iv) Councillor Roger Habgood

(a) North Taunton Framework Plan and Development Brief

The Executive considered a report concerning the North Taunton Framework Plan and Development Brief at its November meeting.

The Council has been in discussions with the promoters of two major areas of land to the north of Taunton that had been allocated as a 'broad location' for future development in the Council's Core Strategy (adopted in 2011).

Since adoption of the Core Strategy, the Council has included the site for development in Policy TAU2 in the Council's Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (SADMP). The SADMP has reached an advanced stage and was subject to initial hearing sessions scheduled for the 1 and 2 December 2015 which had considered this proposed allocation.

As required by Policy SS6, the promoters had prepared a 'Framework Plan' to co-ordinate the planned development of North Taunton which they wished the Council to endorse as a basis for future development of the area.

A copy of the draft North Taunton Framework Plan and Development Brief had been circulated to all Members for their information.

The Framework Plan had been consulted upon earlier in the year and the latest version included amendments in a number of areas to take account of views expressed by the local community and key stakeholders.

The Executive acknowledged that engagement with the developers needed to continue to ensure the development desired was obtained which included the provision of affordable housing and sufficient mitigation to limit its impact.

The proposed use of Manor Road and Corkscrew Lane as a means of providing access to the new development until the proposed Spine Road was constructed was one particular issue the Executive was unable to support.

In the circumstances, Full Council is **recommended:-**

- (1) To agree the North Taunton Framework Plan and Development Brief as the basis for development with the strong preference for the northern alignment of the Spine Road noted, subject to the detailed alignment changes referred to in the report, and agreement of the precise location and design of the

junction between the Spine Road and Kingston Road; alignment of the Spine Road to be agreed prior to the submission of any planning application; and

(2) To agree that officers write to the site promoters outlining the need for the following matters to be addressed as the site came forward:-

- (i) Proposals should demonstrate how the proposed Spine Road accorded with Policy TAU2 by providing for a future eastward extension to complete an orbital route around North Taunton, and the detailed alignment and design of the Spine Road should be agreed by the Council who had already indicated a strong preference for the northern alignment;
- (ii) The design of the proposed Spine Road to demonstrate conformity with *Manual for Streets 1* and *Manual for Streets 2*, including provision for buses and cyclists;
- (iii) The portion of the West Deane Way within the development should be upgraded for shared use by pedestrians and cyclists, and similar consideration given to other existing rights of way within the development area;
- (iv) The promoters should agree with the Council what the sub-areas or 'neighbourhoods' within the development would be, and how a locally distinctive design treatment would be achieved for each one;
- (v) The promoters/developers be required to prepare detailed layout plans and design codes for each of the agreed sub-areas, and submit these to the Council, prior to the first reserved matters application for residential development;
- (vi) Strong evidence would be required to justify any reduction in the size of the proposed Green Wedge compared with that shown in the Council's Site Allocations and Development Management Plan;
- (vii) The indicative location of the local centre, school and employment areas be agreed, the precise locations to be dependent on the final alignment of the Spine Road and its junction with Kingston Road;
- (viii) Provision should be made within the proposed employment areas for small units suitable for business start-ups;
- (ix) The proposal should demonstrate compliance with Site Allocations and Development Management Plan Policy TAU2 in terms of the scale and mixture of uses in the proposed local centre; and
- (x) The electricity lines across the western part of the site (between the A358 and Whitmore Lane) be required to be placed underground.

(b) The use of Local Development Orders for development sites in the Taunton area as an alternative to a review of the Town Centre Area Action Plan

Local Development Orders (LDO's) were introduced as a planning tool by the Labour Government as part of the suite of planning reforms outlined in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Order Act of 2004. Up until fairly recently however, take up of LDOs has been quite limited across the Country.

An LDO is a means by which of bringing forward land for development without the need for an individual planning permission to be issued. Instead, development which meets the criteria set out in the Order (which would cover matters such as location, development type and design) would automatically be allowed. LDOs therefore represent an important planning tool which can act as a catalyst to bring forward development and investment by providing certainty - particularly useful in the redevelopment of complex brownfield opportunities.

The process for preparing a LDO is rather complex. The Local Planning Authority must undertake informal consultation outlining the policies it proposes to implement, the development permitted and the area to which the Order would relate. It must also set out a 'statement of reasons' that establishes the reasons for making an Order based upon sound evidence.

LDOs cannot be required to provide Section 106 obligations which means that sites covered cannot be obliged to provide affordable housing or other financial contributions in order to make development acceptable in planning terms. However, the Community Infrastructure Levy is still applied.

There is no definitive process for putting an LDO in-place once preparatory work on the Order and public consultation has been carried out. However, many Councils have already resolved to adopt LDOs at Full Council meetings since the Orders are effectively Council policy. It is proposed that Taunton Deane follows the same route following detailed consultations with Members and the public.

It would appear that LDOs are a tool which the Government will increasingly expect Local Planning Authorities to use, particularly in relation to brownfield opportunities. As such, the Executive considered a proposal to use LDOs for some of the brownfield redevelopment sites currently identified in the adopted Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan (TTCAAP) as well as an alternative to the single issue plan proposed for the Strategic Employment site.

As the TTCAAP is several years old there is a need to review the assumptions made regarding key sites. However, by preparing LDOs for such sites the Council can reduce the amount of work involved when compared to a review of the Plan, whilst at the same time accelerating the redevelopment of key sites.

In addition to those sites in the TTCAAP, The Deane House site is also considered to be a site suitable for an LDO should it become available for redevelopment. With the site being in a single ownership, this will make preparation of an Order simpler and increases certainty of delivery. Further, in the Council's capacity as landowner there would be a desire to see the site brought forward for redevelopment as expediently as possible should it become available and therefore preparation of an LDO seems a logical option for consideration.

The preparation of an LDO for the Strategic Employment site would not only accelerate the process, but would also have the advantage of being a marketing tool for potential occupiers who will have greater certainty over the appropriateness of their use and a quicker and easier process for resolution. The LDO route will still enable the local communities to be involved through consultation and to influence the outcome as would be the case if this site were to be brought forward through the preparation of a development plan as has previously been envisaged.

It is proposed to use the Homes and Community Agency Procurement Framework to procure consultants to undertake further scoping associated with the preparation of LDO's. This will enable the in house resource to concentrate on a review of the Core Strategy, although there will be clearly still be some work involved for the team who will need to client the projects, be involved in consultation and taking them through Council for adoption.

It is therefore proposed to allocate £100,000 of New Homes Bonus towards the cost of preparing a series of Orders.

In the circumstances, it is **recommended** that:-

- (a) A series of Local Development Orders be prepared for a number of town centre sites as an alternative to reviewing the Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan and to seek specific authority to prepare Local Development Orders for the Strategic Employment site and The Deane House site (should it become available for redevelopment);
- (b) It be agreed that £100,000 of New Homes Bonus be allocated to support the preparation of Local Development Orders; and
- (c) The Portfolio Holder for Planning Policy and Transportation be authorised to approve the programme for the preparation of further Orders for Taunton Town Centre sites.

(v) Councillor Richard Parrish

(a) Review of Council Tax Support Scheme for 2016/2017

On 1 April 2013 Council Tax Benefit (CTB) was abolished and replaced with a locally designed "CTS" (CTS) Scheme. The Government provided each billing authority with a grant and expected Councils to design a CTS scheme to help those on low incomes to meet their Council Tax liability. Initially, 90% of funding previously granted by the Government for CTB was provided for localised CTS.

Whilst the Council has discretion on the rules for CTS for people of working age, the Government has stipulated that pensioners should be fully protected under the same criteria that previously applied to CTB. The Government has also stipulated that, as far as possible, CTS for vulnerable groups should be protected too.

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) provides funding through the annual Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA) to help meet the cost of localised CTS schemes. Each of the major precepting authorities in Somerset received the initial funding based on their share of Council Tax receipts.

In Taunton Deane, the initial grant for precepting authorities was £6,110,080, with this Council's share being £587,775 (based on a 9.62% share in 2013/2014). From 1 April 2014, funding for localised CTS was merged into the Revenue Support Grant and Business Rates Funding Baseline and is not separately identified, but the SFA has reduced by 26.1% in cash terms in the two years up to 2015/2016, and is projected to continue to reduce significantly over the next four years.

A reduction of 26.1% will result in an overall budget of £4,423,358. If there is no change to the existing CTS scheme, it is estimated the Council will award CTS of £5,515,725 in 2016/2017. This will mean a budget shortfall of £1,092,367, with Taunton Deane's share of that shortfall being £105,086.

Full Council had adopted the current local CTS Scheme at its meeting on 11 December 2012. For people of working age, the scheme for 2015/2016 had a number of key elements namely:-

- Maximum support was 80% of Council Tax - everyone of working age had to pay something; Increased non-dependant deductions;
- No second adult rebate;
- Earned income disregards are at increased levels than those offered under CTB; and
- Exceptional Financial Hardship fund of £35,000, through Discretionary Reduction in Council Tax Liability for short term help.

On 9 December 2014, Full Council had decided to continue the 2014/2015 CTS scheme for 2015/2016 with an amendment to disregard maintenance received for children.

However, with the reduced level of funding from the Government through the SFA, the Council has worked in collaboration with Somerset County Council and the other Somerset District billing authorities to develop options to revise Taunton Deane's CTS scheme for working age applicants from 2016/2017.

Any local scheme has to be agreed with the major precepting authorities such as the Somerset County Council, Avon and Somerset Police and Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority by 31 January 2016.

Consultation with the precepting authorities and the public has taken place in respect of the following five options:-

Option 1 – The Council to work out CTS in the same way as we do now. Any shortfall in the funding we get and the CTS we pay in 2016/2017 would need to be met from other Council budgets. Response – 32% in favour;

Option 2 - Applicants with capital of over £6,000 would not be entitled to CTS.
Response – 71% in favour;

Option 3 – The Council to use a Minimum Income figure for those who are self-employed. This Minimum Income would be in line with the UK minimum wage for 35 hours worked. We would not apply this Minimum Income for a designated start-up period of one year to allow the business to become established. If a self-employed person is limited in the hours they can work by circumstances such as having to provide child care, then we would work out the Minimum Income proportionately. This proposal would align our treatment of income for self-employed people with that used to work out Universal Credit. Response – 67% in favour;

Option 4 – The Council to change the scheme to pay CTS at a level that would be no more than for a Band D property. This would not disadvantage any applicant that lives in smaller or lesser value property. Response – 69% in favour;

Option 5 - The Council to apply a taper of 65% to the income of applicants with no earnings and apply a taper of 20% to people in work. This would mean two applicants on similar income levels, but where one is in work, would receive different levels of support. The applicant with no earnings would get less CTS, compared to an applicant with earnings receiving the same weekly income. Response – 53% in favour.

Any of the options to reduce the level of support the Council offer through CTS will have an adverse or positive impact on certain applicants or groups of applicants. If the support offered through the CTS scheme is cut, the Council will need to consider a careful selection of options for our particular demographic. There is no single option or change to the CTS scheme that can deliver sufficient savings to meet the predicted budget gap from the reduced Revenue Support Grant and Business Rates funding in 2016/2017.

The reality is that any revised scheme that reduces the amount of rebate awarded, needs to establish which applicants are more able to pay an increased level of Council Tax with the reduction in their CTS. The decision will be to choose what options are acceptable to the Council bearing in mind the overall level of finance available.

The welfare changes announced in the Summer Budget would have had a significant impact on the Council's CTS scheme. However, the Chancellor has since announced in the Autumn Statement, that proposals on Tax Credits to increase the taper and reduce the threshold will not now go ahead. As a result:-

- the tax credits income threshold (the point at which the taper starts to be applied) will remain at £6,420 from April 2016; and
- the tax credits taper will remain at 41% of gross income.

8,514 people initially moved from the CTB Scheme to the localised CTS Scheme. As at 31 March 2015, this had reduced to 7,749. It is accepted this is primarily due

to the gradual improvement in economic conditions as well as increases in the pension age.

The net collectable amount for Council Tax in 2014/2015 increased by 6.2% in comparison to 2012/2013. The collection of Council Tax in year was at a similar level, with additional income for Taunton Deane of £303,000 based on its preceptor share of 9.66% in 2014/2015.

While it has been possible to maintain in-year collection of Council tax at 98% since the introduction of CTS, this has entailed significant extra work for Revenues Officers. For many customers, having to pay Council Tax has caused them budgeting issues, not least because many were also affected by other welfare reform impacts, such as the removal of the spare room subsidy.

While working age CTS recipients represent 8% of households, the value of their debt is equivalent to 33% of all Council Tax outstanding at 31 March 2015 (£1,137,340).

Although, the collection rate has remained the same as the previous year, it has become clear that the volume of recovery action has again increased to ensure collection levels remain high.

While working age CTS recipients represent 8% of households, the value of their debt accounts for nearly 33% of all Council Tax arrears.

Within the 2013/2014 Local Government Finance Settlement, the Government included funding for CTS that included a proportion relating to parishes and Special Expenses. The Council previously decided to pass on a proportion of this funding to parishes to reflect their reduction in funding as a result of CTS. For 2013/2014, a grant was given to parishes based on the tax base reduction attributable to CTS in each parish multiplied by their 2012/2013 Band D Charge.

Since 2014/2015 the Funding Settlement has not separately identified the proportion of funding for CTS for any preceptors - including Taunton Deane and parishes so the Council has approved the principle of applying the same formula used in the previous year. This has meant each parish's grant for CTS is calculated as CTS Tax Base Adjustment x 2013/2014 Parish Band D Tax rate.

In view of the significant financial pressures the Council needs to make difficult decisions in order to balance the budget and provide a sustainable financial future. It is therefore suggested that careful consideration is given to the level of grant funding that is affordable in 2016/2017 and subsequent years to mitigate CTS impact on parishes, whilst recognising the impact on parish budgets and potential local tax requirement. If funding is reduced parishes will have the opportunity to consider whether to take action to reduce their costs and/or adjust the amount of precept levied on the local tax payer.

The amount of grant funding provided to parishes and the Unparished Area in 2015/2016 totals £45,000. The Council therefore needed to determine the policy

for providing any CTS Grant funding to parishes for 2016/2017. The following options for 2016/2017 existed:-

Option (a) - Use the same formula that was used for 2015/2016, so each parish's grant for CTS would be calculated as:-

CTS Tax Base Adjustment x 2013/2014 Parish Band D Tax rate

This would reduce the budget requirement for CTS Parish Grants by approximately £420, to a total of approximately £44,580.

Option (b) - Use the same formula that was used for 2015/2016 as the baseline, but phase out the funding over two years, so each of the parish grants for CTS would be calculated as:-

- 2016/2017: CTS Tax Base Adjustment x 2013/2014 Parish Band D Tax rate x 66%;
- 2017/2018: CTS Tax Base Adjustment x 2013/2014 Parish Band D Tax rate x 33%;
- 2018/2019: Nil – CTS grant funding ceases.

This would reduce the budget requirement for CTS Parish Grants by approximately £15,300 in 2016/2017, £30,150 in 2017/2018 and by £45,000 in 2018/2019.

It is also recommended that the same funding principle agreed for parishes should be applied to the Council budget for the Unparished Area Fund.

The above proposals and options were considered by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 22 October 2015. Members had recommended to amend the current CTS scheme to reduce support offered to working age applicants in 2016/2017 by:-

- removing entitlement to applicants with capital over £6,000;
- applying a Minimum Income for Self-Employed applicants; and
- paying CTS at a level that would be no more than for a Band D property.

The Committee had also indicated its preference to support Option (a) in terms of providing support to the Parish Councils.

Following careful consideration, the Executive decided at its recent meeting to agree the proposed amendments to the CTS scheme. However, option (b) – set out above – was the preferred option for the continuation of support over the next two years to the parishes.

In the circumstances, it is **recommended** that:-

- (1) Having regard to the consultation responses and the Equality Impact Assessment (a copy of which – notated as Appendix 4 to the report considered by the Executive – is attached), the Council Tax Support scheme be amended to that shown in the separate Appendix 1 – and illustrated in Model 9 – to reduce support for working age applicants in 2016/2017 by:-
 - removing entitlement to applicants with capital over £6,000;
 - applying a Minimum Income for Self-Employed applicants; and
 - paying the Council Tax Support scheme at a level that would be no more than for a Band D property.

(A copy of Appendix 1 has been e-mailed to all Councillors, with a hard copy also available for inspection in the Members' Room);
- (2) It be agreed that Option (b) be used in providing and calculating CTS Grant funding for Parish Councils in 2016/2017; and
- (3) It be noted that the 2016/2017 Council Tax Support Scheme was recommended for 2016/2017 only.

(b) Financial Monitoring – Quarter 2 2015/2016

The Executive has recently considered the Council's financial performance for Quarter 2 of the financial year 2015/2016.

Effective financial management forms an important part of the Council's overall performance management framework.

A summary of the Council's Financial Performance during Quarter 2 is as follows:-

General Fund (GF) Revenue - The GF Revenue Outturn position is currently projected as a net underspend of £186,000 which is 1% below budget.

One of the main variances to budget related to Rent Rebates. This service is reporting an underspend on budget of £114,000. This is a demand led service and the underspend represents less than 1% of the annual expenditure. It is proposed that £100,000 is transferred into an earmarked Benefits smoothing reserve to mitigate against the effects of anticipated changes in the funding of the Pathway for Adults (P4A) service in 2016/2017.

The GF reserve balance at the start of the year was £2,109,000. The 2015/2016 Budget includes a one-off transfer of £105,000, and the Council also approved an allocation of £222,000 to the Business Rates Smoothing Reserve through the 2014/2015 Outturn report in July 2015.

The Council also received New Burdens Grant amounting to £81,000 for property searches in November 2015. The Council has already set aside from revenue

£101,000 for the repayment of personal searches and the Government has paid an interim grant to help mitigate the cost. It is proposed to transfer this sum to the GF reserve to offset the sum set aside. This would take the current budgeted balance to £1,863,000 as at 31 March 2016.

If the current outturn forecast remains accurate and the Council takes no corrective action in the year, the potential underspend of £186,000 would also be transferred to this reserve, increasing the projected balance to £2,049,000 at the end of the financial year. This remains above the current minimum balance of £1,500,000 required in the Council's financial strategy.

General Fund (GF) Capital - The GF approved Capital Programme is currently £12,543,000. This relates to schemes which will be completed over the next five years. Of this, Budget Holders are projecting that £8,412,000 is planned to be spent during 2015/2016 with £4,126,000 due to be spent in future years. The Council is supporting this investment through the use of Capital Grants and Contributions, Capital Receipts, Revenue Funding and Borrowing.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA) - The current forecast outturn for the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is an overspend of £102,000 (0.4% of budget).

The HRA Reserves ("working balance") at the start of the year were £3,484,000, and the Council approved an allocation of £776,000 for a number of initiatives and investment in services through the 2014/2015 Outturn report in July 2015. This reduces the current budgeted balance to £2,708,000, and is forecast to be £2,606,000 at the end of the current financial year based on current projected outturn. This is above the minimum recommended reserve level of £1,800,000.

As part of the continuing HRA Business Plan Review, a large piece of work is underway to look at the investment needed in our homes over the next 30 years. However, this has identified that further work, in the form of specialist surveys, is needed to update our current stock condition data.

The cost of commissioning these surveys, along with fully updating the Council's stock condition system to ensure that it is fit for purpose, is expected to be in the region of £250,000.

It is therefore proposed that a supplementary estimate is added to the 2015/2016 budget, funded from general reserves.

This will reduce the HRA general reserves balance to £2,458,000 with a forecast of £2,356,000 at the end of the financial year.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital - The approved HRA capital programme is £23,459,000, of which £12,927,000 relates to works on existing dwellings and £10,532,000 for the provision of new housing through development.

Deane DLO Trading Account - The DLO is not forecasting an over/underspend/over recovery after contributing £101,000 to the General Fund. Any surplus will be transferred to the DLO trading reserve.

The Trading Account Reserves Position balance brought forward of £679,000 relates to a retained trading surplus of £314,000, plus capital reserves set aside to support investment in the service.

Deane Helpline Trading Account - The Deane Helpline is currently underspent on budget, forecasting a year end outturn net deficit of £40,000.

It is **recommended** that:-

- (1) The request to transfer the £81,000 New Burdens Grant income on Property Searches to the General Reserve be approved;
- (2) The request to transfer the £100,000 underspend on Rent Rebates to a Benefits smoothing reserve to cover the potential effects on Housing Benefits of Pathway for Adults (P4A); and
- (3) A supplementary estimate in 2015/2016 of £250,000 be also approved, funded from Housing Revenue Account reserves to commission a survey of the housing stock and the updating of the stock condition database.

Appendix 4

Responsible person	Heather Tiso	Job Title Revenues & Benefits Service Manager
Why are you completing the Equality Impact Assessment? (Please mark as appropriate)	Proposed new policy/service	
	Change to Policy/service	
	Budget/Financial decision – MTFP	
	Change to policy or service ✓	As a result of the continuing reductions to the Settlement Funding Assessment, we are considering options to amend our Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme for 2016/17
What are you completing the Equality Impact Assessment on (which, service, MTFP proposal)		Council Tax Support Scheme – Revenues & Benefits Service
Section One – Scope of the assessment		
What are the main purposes/aims of the policy/decision/service?	<p>Background</p> <p>From 2013/14 district councils have operated localised Council Tax Support (CTS) schemes to provide assistance to people on low income. CTS replaced the previous Council Tax Benefit scheme that was administered by the council on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). Councils are responsible for the design and implementation of these schemes and need to consider if they are to be revised or replaced on an annual basis. The subsidy reimbursement for CTS reduced nationally by 10% in 2013/14 with councils having the option of funding the shortfall or designing a CTS scheme that is cost neutral. The Government state any CTS scheme must protect pensioners at the existing level of support. That decision means the burden falls disproportionately upon those of Working Age.</p> <p>From 1 April 2014, funding for localised CTS is incorporated in Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA) and not separately identified. The SFA has reduced by 26.1% in cash terms in the two years up to 2015/16. If we reduce the CTS budget by the same amount (26.1%), it will result in a budget of £4,423,358. If there is no change to the existing CTS scheme, we estimate we will award CTS of £5,515,725 in 2016/17. This will mean we have a budget shortfall of £1,092,367, with TDBC's share of that shortfall being £105,086. The financing risk of the scheme is shared with other precepting Authorities through the tax base calculation. Taunton Deane's share of the collection fund in 2015/16 is 9.62%.</p>	

Taunton Deane's Council Tax Support Scheme

On 11 December 2012, the Council adopted the Local Council Tax Support scheme for 2013/14. While those of pension age receive support of up to 100% of their Council Tax liability, from 1 April 2013, the maximum support for those of working age was set at 80%.

On 10 December 2013, the Council decided to continue the 2013/14 CTS scheme for 2014/15.

Taunton Deane Borough Council's Local Council Tax Support scheme is designed to retain the majority of features of the CTB scheme. The CTB scheme recognised the additional financial burden of disability through a system of additional allowances/premiums within the means test. The authority's scheme continues to include the allowances/premiums that featured in the CTB scheme and, as such, the scheme positively recognises disability.

The CTB scheme recognised the additional financial burden those with children have, through a system of additional allowances that recognise each child, child care costs and enhanced premiums for Lone parents in the means test. TDBC's CTS scheme continues to include the allowances/premiums that featured in the CTB scheme and, as such, the scheme positively recognises those with caring responsibilities.

In designing our CTS scheme, we considered customers' ability to pay and the collectability of the resultant Council Tax liability. The key changes between our local CTS scheme, for working age claimants, and the former CTB scheme are set out below. Dependent on household circumstances, more than one of these proposals may apply simultaneously to a household.

- Maximum support is 80% of Council Tax - everyone of working age has to pay something;
- Non-dependant deductions will be increased;
- Second adult rebate to cease;
- Child maintenance to be counted as income;
- Earned income are at increased levels than those offered under CTB;
- Exceptional Financial Hardship fund of £35k, through Discretionary Reduction in Council Tax Liability for short-term help (this is a Collection Fund commitment and not fully funded by TDBC).

In December 2014, the Council decided to continue the 2014/15 CTS scheme for 2015/16 with an amendment to no longer treat maintenance received for children as income.

As a result of the continuing reductions to the Settlement Funding Assessment, we have worked in collaboration with the County Council (as the major preceptor) and the other Somerset District billing authorities of West Somerset, Sedgemoor, Mendip and South Somerset to develop options to revise our CTS scheme for working age applicants from 2016/17.

Continuing to allow the same level of CTS in 2016/17 for working age recipients could impact negatively upon the authority's budget and the budget of those that levy a precept to it (TDBC, County Council, Fire, Police Authorities and Parish Councils). An adverse effect on service provision might result in us, and the other major preceptors, having to stop, reduce or seek additional charges for services with a disproportionate effect on the most vulnerable.

On 4 June 2015, the Corporate Scrutiny Committee agreed on the options to take to public consultation for our CTS scheme for 2016/17. Public consultation on proposals to change the CTS scheme in 2016/17 started on 1 July 2015 and ended on 7 September 2015. Every Council Taxpayer had the opportunity to comment on the proposals. The options on which we consulted are as follows:

Option 1 - No change we would work out CTS in the same way as we do now. Any shortfall in the funding we get and the CTS we pay in 2015/16 would need to be met from other Council budgets.

Option 2 - Applicants with capital of over £6,000 would not be entitled to CTS (under our current scheme, the capital limit is £16,000).

Option 3 - We would use a Minimum Income figure for those who are self-employed. This Minimum Income would be in line with the UK minimum wage for 35 hours worked. We would not apply this Minimum Income for a designated start-up period of one year to allow the business to become established. If a self-employed person is limited in the hours they can work by circumstances such as having to provide child care, then we would work out the Minimum Income proportionately. This proposal would align our treatment of income for self-employed people with that used to work out Universal Credit.

Option 4 - We would change our scheme to pay CTS at a level that would be no more than for a Band C property. This would not disadvantage any applicant that lives in smaller or lesser value property.

Option 5 - We would apply a taper of 65% to the income of applicants with no earnings and apply a taper of 20% to people in work. This would mean two applicants on similar income levels, but where one is in work, would receive different levels of support. The applicant with no earnings would get less CTS, compared to an applicant with earnings receiving the same weekly income.

In addition to considering the impact of the proposed options, the welfare changes announced in the Summer Budget on 8 July 2015 will also have a significant impact on our CTS scheme. As some of changes will reduce claimant income, they will equivalently increase entitlement to CTS. This is because our scheme provides more help for people on lower incomes. The most significant change affecting our CTS scheme will be the reduction in Tax Credit income. From April 2016, the income a household can earn before the tax credits they receive start to fall, will reduce from £6,420 to £3,850. For every £1 the household earns above that threshold, their tax credits will reduce by 48p, compared to the current rate of 41p. The Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS) estimate an average loss of £1,000 in Tax Credit income for affected households from April 2016. This will result in increased entitlement to CTS of £200 a year (assuming a taper rate of 20%).

From April 2016, while the Family Premium will be abolished for new HB claims, it will continue to apply for new CTS applications. In addition, HB claims will be backdated for a maximum of 4 weeks, whereas our CTS scheme will allow for backdating for up to six months. The benefit cap restricts the amount in certain benefits that a working age household can receive. Any household receiving more than the cap has their Housing Benefit reduced to bring them back within the limit. The Benefit Cap will be cut from £26,000 to £20,000 for households living in the West Somerset area. This will be phased-in gradually during 2016/17, but we estimate up to 50 households will be affected. This reduction in income may mean Council Tax is more difficult to collect from those households affected.

Our CTS scheme's premiums and personal allowance are linked to the rates set by the DWP. Except for pensioners and the disabled, these rates will be frozen in cash terms for four years. For pensioners, premiums and personal allowance will rise by the higher of price inflation, earnings growth or 2.5%. Disability allowances will rise in line with the CPI.

The National Minimum Wage will be "rebranded" as the National Living Wage and will be increased to £7.20 an hour for those 25 or over from April 2016. It will reach £9.00 an hour by 2020.

<p>Which protected groups are targeted by the policy</p>	<p>Our localised CTS scheme affects <u>all claimants</u> who are of working age (and those of working age currently not in receipt of CTS but who may apply in the future). Limited equality data is held within TDBC's CTS computer system (as the collection of such information has not been necessary for administering CTS) given the caseload can come from all sections of the community it is likely there will be claimants (and their household members) that contain the full range of protected characteristics as defined within the Equalities Act 2010 and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age • Disability • Gender • Gender Reassignment • Marriage and Civil Partnership • Pregnancy and Maternity • Race • Religion and belief • Sexual orientation <p>The Government expects local authorities to establish schemes that minimise the impact on vulnerable groups. The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) Regulations 2012 include provisions for those of working age but none of those prescribed requirements set out the level of Support to be given.</p>
<p>What evidence has been used in the assessment - data, engagement undertaken – please list each source that has been used</p>	<p>We have obtained data relating to people affected from our Council Tax Support processing system. The data available has allowed us to analyse impact on people according to their age, disability, family circumstances and level of income. We have modelled options on scenarios with “live” data based on actual entitlements and CTS recipients at that point in time. We asked general diversity questions as part of the consultation exercise.</p> <p>In addition, we have undertaken debt profiling against the Council Tax Support (CTS) customer base (Appendix 5) and also against those customer groups impacted most by the key elements of our localised scheme.</p>

Citizen Engagement

To raise awareness of our proposals and to encourage participation in the consultation process the following activities took place:

- Dedicated web page created on TDBC website with online survey;
- Consultation document for options and proposals for the CTS scheme for 2016/17 sent to households during July and August 2015;
- Representatives from TDBC Revenues & Benefits Service at Taunton Flower Show and at Farmers' Market to promote consultation and encourage participation
- Met with representatives from RSLs;
- Presentation and discussion on options and proposals for the CTS scheme for 2016/17 at Taunton Deane's Customer Forum;
- Consultation forms in Deane House, Wiveliscome, Wellington, Priorswood and Halcon offices.

The impact of the local Council Tax Support Scheme on each of the protected groups, is considered further below:

Equality Impact Assessment (by protected characteristic)

Age

The proposed scheme for 2016/17 is subject to some national prescription relating to protecting pensioners' entitlements. Therefore we have no discretion about whether or not to follow this principle. The Government is committed to protecting pensioners on low incomes and therefore have prescribed a scheme for pensioners through legislation. This means that pensioners will not see any reduction in their Council Tax Support in comparison with their former levels of Council Tax Benefit. Pensioners will still be entitled to claim up to 100% of their Council Tax liability through CTS.

The Council's general equality duty is lessened to an extent with regard to older people as Government has prescribed that pensioners are not to be affected by Council Tax Support. However, we have a responsibility to foster good relationships between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. There is a risk of harming the relationship between pensioners and working age claimants of CTS as pension age claimants are not affected and working age claimants have a greater reduction to their CTS to cover the shortfall in funding. Implementing Option 5 to apply an income taper of 65% instead of 20% to the excess income of applicants with no earnings, could disproportionately affect older working age recipients who receive an occupational pension. In mitigating such an effect, officers could apply a discretionary reduction in Council Tax liability through exceptional hardship as appropriate and in accordance with our policy.

The minimum age for receiving Council Tax Support is 18 and so people under the age of 18 will not be impacted directly by the CTS scheme. Indirect impact has been considered as people under the age of 18 are included as part of a claimant's household and the Council has a duty to prevent child poverty as outlined in the Child Poverty Act 2010.

The CTS scheme retains the majority of the former Council Tax Benefit assessment rules, including the use of applicable amount and personal allowances. The personal allowances and applicable amounts used to calculate CTS are the amounts deemed necessary to provide for basic needs based on household composition and disability. These allowances and applicable amounts take the claimant's circumstances into account and mean they are awarded more support if they have children or dependents under the age of 18.

The Council Tax Support scheme for 2016/17 will continue to disregard Child Benefit and maintenance received for children in income calculations meaning that the added income these provide will not reduce the CTS that an applicant receives.

Disability

Disabled people have a limited ability to work and are likely to have higher level disability related living expenses. This group in particular find it difficult to access and sustain employment and therefore improve on their current financial situation. This group of people is less resilient to the impact of recession and unemployment and are often living in poverty. These further impacts on the individual's mental health. The personal allowances and applicable amounts currently used to calculate CTS, are the amounts deemed necessary to provide for basic needs based on household composition and disability.. These allowances and applicable amounts already take the claimant's circumstances into account and mean that they are awarded more support if they or anyone in their household has a disability than if the household had the same income but contained no-one with a disability.

In common with other working age recipients, people with disabilities will receive less CTS under the localised scheme than they did under CTB. However, the limited changes between CTB and our local CTS scheme are not such as to introduce disproportionately adverse effects on people based on disabled people as a specific group. Outside of CTS, the Council Tax scheme itself recognises disability by exempting those with a severe mental impairment, the CTS scheme will not impact upon that exemption and it will continue to apply where appropriate. Additionally, the Council Tax scheme also recognises disability where a dwelling occupied by a disabled person has a room that is adapted or additional to meet the needs of that resident. In those cases the band attributable to that dwelling for the purposes of Council Tax is reduced in advance of any further reduction under CTS.

Analysis of the effect in implementing Options 2 – 5 do not demonstrate a disproportionate negative impact on this group. The average level of debt for working age CTS recipients in 2014/15 receiving the disability premium is £275.53 - greater than the scheme average of £232.66 for working age claims. However, only 13% of CTS recipients with a disability premium were in arrears with their Council Tax – significantly less than the scheme average of 30%.

Table 1

	Number of claims	Cases with debt	% of cases with debt	Average debt for those in arrears	Total Debt
Pension Age	4,134	54	1%	£124.56	£6,726
Working Age Employed	2,246	581	26%	£284.12	£165,075
Working Age Other	3,213	1,044	32%	£204.02	£212,999
Total for CTS recipients	9,593	1,679	18%	£229.18	£384,800
Working age	5,459	1,625	30%	£232.66	£378,074

Table 2

CTS recipients with disabilities	Number of claims	Cases with debt	% of cases with debt	Average debt for those in arrears	Total debt
Working age (employed)	174	23	13%	£270.74	£6,227
Working age (other)	240	30	13%	£279.20	£8,376
Total	414	53	13%	£275.53	£14,603

Gender

There are a greater number of female recipients of CTS within our caseload (either single, lone parents or part of a couple) than male recipients. Consequently more females will be impacted by changes made to our CTS scheme than males. This is not deliberate but is simply a product of the makeup of our caseload. However, gender will not be a direct factor in any part of the assessment of CTS as it is not considered to be a characteristic that requires a higher applicable amount when assessing support.

The majority of lone parents in receipt of CTS are female. Lone parents in employment are quite often low earners on part time hours. Many in this group have said they would like to be working more hours but are restricted because of difficulty with childcare.

Analysis of the effect in implementing Options 2 - 5 do not demonstrate a disproportionate negative impact on this group.

Analysis of debt carried out in reviewing the implement of our CTS scheme shows the average debt for lone parents is greater than the scheme average of £232.66.

Table 3

Lone parents	Number of claims	Cases with debt	% of cases with debt	Average debt for those in arrears	Total debt
Working age (employed)	904	239	26%	£252.18	£60,272
Working age (other)	1,062	303	29%	£249.95	£75,734
Total	1,966	542	28%	£250.93	£136,006

Gender Reassignment

We hold no data on our Council Tax system to identifying the names or numbers of current CTS applicants who share this protected characteristic. Gender reassignment is not a factor in any part of the assessment of CTS and it is not considered to be a characteristic which requires a higher applicable amount when assessing support. In common with other working age CTS applicants, transgendered people will receive less CTS under the proposals for change in 2016/17. However, these are not such as to introduce disproportionately adverse effects on transgendered people as a specific group.

Marriage and Civil Partnership

Marital or civil partnership status is not currently a factor in determining CTS as it is not considered to be a characteristic that requires a higher applicable amount. Our CTS scheme will continue to recognise and retain the treatment rules for those in Polygamous marriages.

Options for changing our CTS scheme for 2016/17 do not introduce disproportionately adverse effects on people based on their marriage or civil partnership status.

Pregnancy and Maternity

For the purposes of CTS, pregnancy and maternity must be considered as two separate characteristics as while the applicants is pregnant, her applicable amounts and personal allowances are lower (as for a person without children). Once a child is born, it becomes part of the household composition and increased allowances are applied. Pregnancy alone is not a factor in the current assessment of CTS as it is not considered to be a characteristic that requires a higher applicable amount.

Providing that the child (or children) forms part of the mother's household composition once it is born, the application for CTS will then include the child (or children) as part of the household and the applicable amount will increase which, once other income changes have been taken into account may provide for a more generous assessment of CTS and reduced Council Tax payments.

The CTS scheme will retain the current disregard of Child Benefit in income calculations, meaning the income that Child Benefit provides will not reduce the amount of CTS that a recipient receives as a result of having a baby. We have not identified any disproportionate impact in implementing Options 1-4 of this policy in relation to pregnancy and maternity. Implementing Option 5 to apply an income taper of 65% instead of 20% to the excess income of applicants with no earnings, could disproportionately affect working age recipients receiving maternity allowance.

Race

Race is not a factor in the assessment of CTS and it is not considered to be a characteristic that requires a higher applicable amount.

Some people of all races, will receive less CTS under the proposals for change in 2016/17. However, these are not such as to introduce disproportionately adverse effects on people based on their race status.

Religion and Belief

We do not gather data on religion or belief as part of the CTS application process; we do not hold full data specific to religion or belief within our caseload.

Religion and belief is not a factor in any part of the assessment of Council Tax Support as it is not considered to be a characteristic which requires a higher applicable amount.

Some working age CTS applicants, people of all or no religion or belief, will receive less CTS under the proposals for change in 2016/17. However, these are not such as to introduce disproportionately adverse effects on people based on their religion or belief status.

Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation is not be a factor in any part of the assessment of CTS as it is not considered to be a characteristic which requires a higher applicable amount when assessing support.

Some working age CTS applicants will receive less CTS under the proposals for change in 2016/17. However, these are not such as to introduce disproportionately adverse effects on people based on their sexual orientation.

Children and duties under the 2010 Child Poverty Act

There are 2,904 working age CTS recipients with children, accounting for 53% of all working age CTS recipients. Of those with children, 31% (903) have debt totalling £217k with these arrears making up 57% of all Council Tax debt for those of working age getting CTS.

Table 4

Working age claims <u>with</u> children	Number of claims	Cases with debt	% of cases with debt	Average debt for those in arrears	Total debt
Working age (employed)	1,704	432	25%	£299.92	£129,567
Working age (other)	1,200	471	39%	£185.85	£87,534
Total	2,904	903	31%	£240.42	£217,101

Other Groups (non-statutory)

The number of working age CTS recipients in employment is 2,246, accounting for 41% of all working age recipients. Those CTS recipients without employment are 6% more likely to have Council Tax arrears, although the average value of their debt (£204.02) is less than for those with employment (£284.12).

Table 5

	Number of claims	Cases with debt	% of cases with debt	Average debt for those in arrears	Total debt
Working Age Employed	2,246	581	26%	£284.12	£165,075.00
Working Age Other	3,213	1,044	32%	£204.02	£212,999.00
Total for working age	5,459	1,625	30%	£232.66	£378,074.00

Couples in employment with responsibility for children, have the greatest average debt at £359.04, while non-working applicants with children, have the lowest average debt of £70.24.

Average debt for those in arrears	Average for all CTS claims	Couples with children	Couples, no children	Single, no children	Lone parent	Disabled
Working Age Employed	£284.12	£359.04	£330.33	£266.60	£252.18	£270.74
Working Age Other	£204.02	£70.24	£342.89	£278.43	£249.95	£279.20
Total for working age	£232.66	£224.64	£336.33	£274.52	£250.93	£275.53

Carers

Larger families or people with disabilities may be in larger properties to cater for disability needs and so carers are able to stay overnight.

Armed Forces

Veteran Benefits will continue to be fully disregarded in the means test for Council Tax Support. Our scheme does not appear to have a differential impact but we are aware some ex veterans experience mental health issues and have physical disabilities

General Conclusion:

In considering options to change our CTS scheme we have tried hard to balance the reality of a significant cut in Central Government funding to protecting the most vulnerable members of our community as far as practicable.

The proposals acknowledges that recipients of CTS need to contribute more to meet the funding shortfall but also looks to protect people with protected characteristics as much as possible.

I have concluded that there is/should be:	
No major change - no adverse equality impact identified	
Adjust the policy/decision/service ✓	In mitigating any disproportionate effect through implementing any of the proposed options to change our CTS scheme, officers could apply a reduction in Council Tax liability through exceptional hardship as appropriate and in accordance with our discretionary policy
Continue with the policy	
Stop and remove the policy/decision/service	
Reasons and documentation to Support conclusions	
Section four – Implementation – timescale for implementation	
1. Consult on the proposals during the period 1 July 2015 to 7 September 2015 2. Consider responses to the consultation 8 September 2015 to 21 October 2015. 3. Present report on proposed scheme and consultation analysis to Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 22 October 2015. 4. Present report on proposed scheme and consultation analysis to the Executive on 3 December 2015. 5. Make a decision on the scheme at Full Council on 15 December 2015 6. Publicise the scheme 7. Implement the scheme for Council Tax Billing purposes 8. Issue Bills for the financial year 2016/17 (From late Feb/early March 2016).	
Section Five – Sign off	

Responsible officer Heather Tiso Date 21 October 2015	Management Team Date
Section six – Publication and monitoring	
Published on	
Next review date	Date logged on Covalent

Action Planning

The table should be completed with all actions identified to mitigate the effects concluded.

Actions table					
Service area	Revenues & Benefits		Date 21 October 2015		
Identified issue drawn from your conclusions	Actions needed	Who is responsible?	By when?	How will this be monitored?	Expected outcomes from carrying out actions
Less Support available for low income households, including those with protected characteristics, to meet their Council Tax.	Application of a discretionary reduction in Council Tax liability through exceptional hardship fund	Principal Benefits Officer	On-going	Weekly monitoring of expenditure	To provide short-term help for instances of hardship.
Less support will mean more low income households having to pay Council Tax, including those with protected	Proactive approach to debt management	Principal Revenues and Corporate Debt Officer	On-going	Bad debt data (caseloads etc)	To attempt to intervene at an early point and avoid additional costs being incurred for late payment wherever possible

characteristics. limited means could result in late payment /non- payment					
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Identified issue drawn from your conclusions	Actions needed	Who is responsible?	By when?	How will this be monitored?	Expected outcomes from carrying out actions
Less Support available for low income households, including those with protected characteristics, to meet their Council Tax.	Publicity and promotion of changes being introduced by new scheme	Revenues & Benefits Manager	January to March 2016		To help citizens plan and budget.
Low income households, including those with protected characteristics will be affected by the proposed changes	Monitoring of impacts post April 2016	Revenues & Benefits Manager	Throughout 2016/17	Applications for hardship, complaints, & general correspondence from public.	To identify unexpected impacts of the local CTS scheme with a view to making adjustments to the scheme the following year, if practicable.
Less Support available for low income households, including those with protected characteristics, to meet their Council Tax.	Promotion of other available welfare benefits, discretionary payments and Council Tax discounts	Revenues & Benefits Manager	Throughout 2016/17		To lessen financial impact on citizens through either increasing income or reducing Council Tax.

Full Council Meeting – 15 December 2015

Report of Councillor John Williams – Leader of the Council

1. Thank You to All Our Staff

- 1.1 It was November 2013 that as an Authority we took the momentous final decision to set up a single management team to run both Taunton Deane and West Somerset Councils. A tremendous amount has happened since then but I must offer sincere thanks to all our staff who are working really hard to keep our services the best we can and achieving great results. We have been through a period of significant change, our staff have done a great job of coping with this and ensuring our community still receives quality services. Well done to all.
- 1.2 It is important that these supreme efforts do not go unnoticed so I am sure all Members will join with and support our appreciation being formally recorded in the minutes of this meeting.
- 1.3 I would also take this opportunity of wishing all staff a very merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

2. Refugee Aid from Taunton (RAFT)

- 2.1 What an incredible effort and congratulations to Councillor Federica Smith and her team of volunteers for the tremendous work done. In conjunction with other aid organisations across the country they have sorted and packed 10 loads of essential items to various overseas hotspots for refugees and working hard for another five loads by Christmas.
- 2.2 I was invited along to the Auction House on the old Livestock Market site to see for myself the incredible operation under way. The building had been left by the previous occupiers with various cubicles and partitions and far from being an impediment it was of great benefit. It provided cubicles for the enormous variety of items so generously donated to sort and ensure suitability for onward transmission. If not all items were suitable for refugees then alternative organisations benefited and I was assured, absolutely nothing was wasted, all recycled in one way or another.
- 2.3 I am pleased that Taunton Deane Borough Council has been able to provide such a useful building and may I reiterate my sincere thanks to the team led by Councillor Smith who give so unstintingly of their time to verify the suitability of articles and the packing of them ready for transit. Of course, none of this could happen but for the incredible

generosity of the community in Taunton Deane. We must also extend our sincerest thanks to them, your kindness is helping a lot of people in very difficult circumstances.

3. Taunton Deane Business Conference

- 3.1 I believe it was an incredibly successful Business Conference with its content, organisation and number of delegates attending. All credit must go to the Taunton Deane Team that put this together, producing first class publications and ensured it ran like clockwork, a sincere thanks to you all.
- 3.2 A total of twelve speakers and 150 invited delegates, with a near full house, covering a wide range of issues that are, or will be, benefiting the regeneration and development of Taunton. We were very fortunate the keynote speaker was Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, Sajid Javid MP, who gave a wide ranging and informative talk on how the Government was focussed on economic growth and addressing the skills shortage to support this.
- 3.3 The Secretary of State took questions from the floor and complimented Taunton Deane on its innovative approach in organising such a well attended conference to promote our growth and regeneration plans. Our Taunton Deane MP, Rebecca Pow, also spoke, being very supportive of our growth plans and shared stupendous breaking news with us as it was arriving by email. This being, the UK Hydrographic Office, which has been under threat of relocation, was to remain in Taunton which is fantastic news and received extremely well by the assembled delegates.
- 3.4 At the close of the conference many delegates expressed extremely positive comments and appreciated the sharing of so much good news for Taunton. It was welcomed that this was now going to be an annual event aimed specifically at local businesses and inward investors and more importantly that progress could be checked against the major projects highlighted.
- 3.5 One very important theme that came out of the presentations was the very successful team work evident amongst the partners which has to be applauded. We had Highways England, Network Rail, Somerset County Council, Hearts of the Southwest Local Enterprise Partnership, developers Summerfield to name some but it was evident everybody was focussed on delivery, not process!

4. Firepool Regeneration Plans

- 4.1 Great news that our partners, St Modwen, have now submitted an outline planning application covering the whole of the old livestock

market site and the undeveloped areas on the old Priory Bridge Road Car Park. This application has now been validated so will be subject to the normal consultation process. Please do get involved as this is probably one of the most important applications in respect of Taunton's redevelopment we have ever considered. We do need to ensure it is right but equally it has to be viable so it will attract the necessary investment whilst regenerating a longstanding eyesore in this important gateway to the town.

- 4.2 Consultation will now run until mid-January 2016 with a planning decision probably around April 2016. As I have said please do let us have your views.
- 4.3 Key to this development will be the completion of the Northern Inner Distributor Road which at last we have some news about. I hesitate to say good news as the present projected time for completion is by the end of 2016 is an unbelievable length of time!
- 4.4 However, the good news, provided this is now achieved - it should not impact on the programme of the Firepool redevelopment - it will be ready before the first potential occupier. What is regrettable is our community and visitors will be denied the use of this vital road link throughout the course of this intolerable delay.

5. Devolution Update

Background

- 5.1 The Government wishes to devolve powers and budgets from Westminster to local authorities, using Local Enterprise Partnership geographic areas. The area under consideration is coterminous with the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Area. The Chancellor of the Exchequer is particularly interested in devolution as a driver of:-
 - Increased productivity;
 - Skills and employment;
 - Housing; and
 - Reducing the cost of the public sector.
- 5.2 Many devolution deals have been agreed by consortia of local authorities and their Local Enterprise Partnerships, mainly in metropolitan areas such as Greater Manchester, Sheffield, and Tees Valley, but also in Cornwall.
- 5.3 During August 2015, leaders of all authorities in the 'Heart of the South West' area – comprising Devon and Somerset including the Unitary Councils of Plymouth and Torbay - agreed to produce a Statement of Intent outlining a high-level set of ambitions and stating our desire to negotiate a devolution deal with the Government, where we would

make improvements to our area in return for increased powers and responsibilities.

- 5.4 The Statement of Intent, signed by all 17 Heart of the South West Local Authorities, both National Parks, and the Local Enterprise Partnership, was submitted on 4 September 2015 and was circulated to all Members. It focused on:-

- Productivity and economic growth;
- Health, social care and wellbeing;
- Improved connectivity, infrastructure and resilience; and
- Governance

- 5.5 The Government praised the Statement of Intent for its clarity and ambition and asked us to move forward swiftly to produce detailed, formal proposals and begin negotiation with them on a formal deal.

Developing the Devolution Bid

- 5.6 Based on partners' desire to move forward swiftly, we expect to complete draft devolution proposals by the end of 2015, seek approvals via the democratic process from all partners and submit to Government in January 2016. Formal negotiation on a devolution deal for the Heart of the South West can then take place in the first quarter of 2016.

- 5.7 It is important to emphasise that the document to be submitted in January will represent the *start* of a process of negotiation and, based on the experience of other devolution deals around the country, is likely to change significantly during negotiations before any 'deal' is finalised.

- 5.8 One Chief Executive and one Leader have led on different themes of the emerging draft devolution bid, driving development of proposals and liaising with other partners. The themes are as follows:-

- Health, social care and wellbeing;
- Skills and employment;
- Business support;
- Resilience and connectivity;
- Housing and planning; and
- A Governance theme will ensure that governance for the devolution deal is acceptable and equitable to all partners.

- 5.9 A Programme Management Office has overseen delivery of each chapter and maintained communications between partners. Regular email updates from the Programme Office have been circulated to all member authorities.

- 5.10 The emerging bid brings the above themes together under 'Place' and 'People' headings. The overall objective is to increase productivity across the Heart of the South West.
- 5.11 A presentation of the emerging draft bid has been developed and has been shared with all Members in advance of this Full Council meeting. In addition, the full draft bid document is currently being finalised and will be also circulated for all Members' attention before Christmas.
- 5.12 The draft bid will then be subject to Scrutiny and Full Council approval, prior to submission to the Government by the end of January 2016. I emphasise again that this will mark the start of a negotiation process that is expected to take place during the first quarter of 2016. Any final devolution deal emerging from negotiation with Government will also be subject to further approval by this Council.
- 5.13 It is our intention to hold a Members Briefing on this important issue as soon as we have a more finished bid so that Members can better understand the implications.

6. Strategic Employment Site Adjacent Junction 25

- 6.1 This is now moving forward apace and I am pleased that the principle of a "Local Development Order" (LDO) has been accepted by Members and is before this meeting tonight for final consideration. Hopefully it will have been approved.
- 6.2 Approving an LDO for the site should make the site far more attractive to businesses wishing to expand or inward investors because it provides certainty as to what can be developed and speed of decision making.
- 6.3 There is concern raised by some that the LDO process does not allow proper consultation thus scrutiny. I would offer reassurance that before an LDO is implemented it will be subject to full public consultation with the same standards to be met in respect of the environment, ecology, transport and infrastructure issues so providing ample opportunity to input.
- 6.4 In respect of highways provision, the early upgrade of Junction 25 on the M5 Motorway has always been deemed a pre-requisite to achieving access to the employment site. I am pleased to report that work on the design of the upgrade of Junction 25 and the access road to the site is well advanced and the proposed scheme should be available for consultation in early 2016.

7. UKHO (UK Hydrographic Office)

- 7.1 As mentioned above under my article about the Business Conference, it has now been formally announced that the UKHO is to remain in Taunton and redevelop on its own site at Admiralty Way, Taunton. This is incredible news as we were advised in confidence some time ago that as an organisation they needed to upgrade their premises to meet the challenges of the charts going digital and develop modern and efficient premises for the 21st century.
- 7.2 They were charged by Government to review what would be the best and most economical solution within a 40 mile radius so that ruled out automatic re-development in Taunton. Many partners came together to ensure we presented the best possible case for development on their existing site or on the Strategic Employment site at Junction 25, our officers and partners worked tirelessly to provide all information to UKHO to allow them to fully assess the merits of the two sites and we were also ably assisted with lobbying in Parliament. I thank everybody involved for their hard work and input.
- 7.3 The final decision was made at Ministerial level based on the information provided and assessment of whatever bids were made but I am delighted that as announced by our MP, Rebecca Pow, at the Business Conference, Taunton won through. Great news for our community and our economy that such a high value, 'high tech' business remains located here in Taunton.

8. Autumn Spending Review

- 8.1 All Councillors have been issued with the Local Government Association and Arlingclose "on the day" briefings. Paul Harding has recently shared a more comprehensive review of the Autumn Statement that shares details of the policy changes the Government are likely to bring forward for consultation over the coming months.
- 8.2 We are expecting – as forecast – significant cuts to our grant funding and expect the detail on this later this month when the settlement details are published. Updates will be shared with Councillors as soon as possible after the publication date. We will ensure we are ready to review the consultations on policy change as they emerge.

9. Budget Setting 2016-2017

- 9.1 The Medium Term Financial Plan has been shared with Members and some early ideas on savings plans through Scrutiny. We want to ensure we offer the opportunity for any comments and that ideas from Scrutiny are heard. I look forward to hearing any ideas and comments on those shared already.
- 9.2 Members can once again look forward to the Christmas Budget Pack being issued over the festive season. This will share what you need to know to fully participate in the budget process over the coming months.

10. Swimming Pool Project

- 10.1 I welcome the unanimous support to this issue offered by the Community Scrutiny Committee earlier this month. This will be a fantastic facility for our community – not only with two new pools, but with a community spa facility encouraging us all to improve our health and wellbeing.
- 10.2 Thanks to Members who took the time to visit the construction site recently. I did make it later and was certainly impressed with progress to date. There will be other opportunities as the construction progresses. And well done to our leisure operator Tone Leisure who are continuing to run services from Blackbrook during this construction period. In all, a great testament to Tone and our construction contractor BAM.

11. Taunton North “Read Easy” Group

- 11.1 I was pleased to recently attend an inaugural meeting of a North Taunton Read Easy Group. It is part of the national “Read Easy” Group which has been set up with the aim of helping non-readers to learn to read. This is against the background that it is estimated that one in 20 adults in England has a reading age at or below the level expected of a 5 year old.
- 11.2 Many with reading difficulties are far too embarrassed to seek help if it means joining a class hence I see the real value of setting up this “Read Easy” group which offers one to one flexible learning for anyone struggling. Catherine Berry is the local organiser and I really commend her for tackling this most difficult issue that for the most part goes under our radar as those afflicted are generally good at concealing it.
- 11.3 The “Read Easy” group is hoping to put together both a Management Committee and a reserve of reading coaches that are drawn from a good mix, a broad cross-section of our community. It is particularly hoped to attract a few more males to either join the Committee and/or become a reading coach
- 11.4 Obviously with a one to one system of tuition this needs a lot of voluntary support and individual rooms discreetly located to accommodate sessions. I appeal to Members to consider if they might be able to help with tutoring rooms in North Taunton that offer privacy for the sessions and last but not least financial contributions as “Read Easy” is a charity and relies on charitable donations to fund its operations.
- 11.5 A worthwhile venture to support - For more information please do contact Catherine Berry on 07792 570303 or email Northtaunton@readeasy.org.uk

12. Refugee Crisis

- 12.1 Councillor Jane Warmington will cover this but I would just like to reaffirm that we are ready and willing to accept refugees and to thank all those involved in working out what we need to support families on arrival. It is not just a question of finding them a home, we have to ensure all other facilities are in place to ensure they can resume life in as normal a way as possible.
- 12.2 This has meant working with many partner organisations and congratulations to all for having the will to make it happen. It is the least we can do for those in such a tragic and desperate situation.

13. The Last Full Council before Christmas

- 13.1 I again take this opportunity of wishing all Members and Staff a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and thank you for your support and help over the past year.

Councillor John Williams

Council Meeting – 15 December 2015

Report of Councillor Richard Parrish – Corporate Resources

1. Corporate Strategy and Performance

- 1.1 Joint Management and Shared Services (JMASS) 2 Corporate Visioning and Priorities - The 'Making a Difference' workshop which focused on the statutory /non statutory split has been completed with Members in order to shape the next stage of engagement for Members.
- 1.2 Affordability of Phase 2 - The next steps are to identify detailed financial savings targets for both Councils. Members will recognise the importance of potential savings needed to secure the financial viability for both Councils.
- 1.3 Project Planning - A Team Workshop was held on the 4 November 2015 to brief the team on the progress of planning for the next stage of the programme in detail. I intend to report further on this in the New Year.
- 1.4 Customer Access Strategy – The Improvement and Efficiency Social Enterprise (iESE) have undertaken a focused piece of work to examine the existing arrangements and to produce a draft Customer Access Strategy.
- 1.5 ICT Delivery Plan - iESE have also reviewed the draft delivery plan and their formal response is awaited before taking further action.
- 1.6 Project Resourcing - Officers are in the process of appointing temporary support posts for finance, communications and administration functions.
- 1.7 Quarter 2 Performance Reporting - The outturn figures were reported to Corporate Scrutiny and Executive in November 2015.
- 1.8 Risk Management - The updated Risk Register was considered by the September Audit Committee and Joint Management Team in November.
- 1.9 Two cases were referred to the Ombudsman and the Council was asked to issue letters of apology although complaints were not upheld / considered.

2. Facilities Management and Business Support

- 2.1 Members will be aware that the lift at The Deane House was out of service due to a mechanical fault which caused some inconvenience to all. This has reinforced the need for an alternative accessible ground floor meeting venue. The lift is now serviceable again.

- 2.2 A First Aid risk assessment has been carried out for both Councils and the need for more trained first aiders identified.
- 2.3 Bomb Evacuation Drill - This has not been undertaken as yet but is still in the planning stage. Consultations with the Emergency Services are being undertaken.

3. Human Resources (HR) and Organisational Development

- 3.1 Health and Safety Stress Survey - A further meeting has taken place with the Health and Safety Officer to agree the next steps and the progress reported to the Joint Management Team.
- 3.2 Absence Management - We are currently projecting that the target of 8.2 days per employee will be maintained although this will greatly depend on the effects that the Winter months may have. Flu inoculations have been offered to all staff. At the time of this report I am unable to comment on the uptake. Absence management remains a very high priority.
- 3.3 Terms and Conditions Review - The HR Team are continuing to support this process and detailed negotiations are continuing with staff and UNISON.
- 3.4 Learning Pool - The Learning Pool was launched to the Management Team in September 2015 and is in the process of being launched to all other staff.

4. ICT and Information

- 4.1 ICT Strategy - As reported above we are awaiting the outcome of the review of the draft delivery plan undertaken by iESE.
- 4.2 Intranet Project - The Project Team is now in place and development is progressing well but the 'go live date' has been put back to allow more time for development to take place.
- 4.3 WIFI Extension Project - This is anticipated for delivery by the end of the year with a phased switch between both Councils. The Revenues and Benefits system migration is supporting this project.
- 4.4 Deane DLO Relocation - Research is being undertaken to identify ICT requirements for the DLO and to build these into the overall ICT Delivery Plan.

5. JMASS Project and Transformation Programme Management

- 5.1 JMASS Phase 1 - Terms and Condition Review - The consultation process is now complete with minor changes proposed. The next target is to conclude discussions with UNISON.

- 5.2 Building Control Shared Service - The detail for this service has now been agreed and is scheduled to go live on 1 April 2016. The Partnership Manager has now been appointed.
- 5.3 All aspects of the Transition Plan continue to be closely monitored to ensure delivery of the outstanding actions from Phase 1.

6. Southwest One Succession Planning

- 6.1 There are no specific issues to report on in terms of day to day client service.
- 6.2 Succession Planning is still under consideration.

7. Additional Priorities

- 7.1 Corporate Business Continuity Planning - The tactical (silver) level plans have been drafted for key areas including communications, accommodation, ICT, staff, and fuel shortages.
- 7.2 New Sharepoint based templates have been created for operational (bronze) level plans and are being trialled with Corporate Services prior to being rolled out to the wider organisation. The aim is complete the trials by Christmas.
- 7.3 Budgets / Governance - Budget savings options for 2016/2017 are under further consideration.
- 7.4 Service Quarterly Performance Reporting - A new quarterly budget monitoring report is under development as is a new quarterly Key Performance Indicator report.

8. Council Tax Support

- 8.1 A decision on our Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme for 2016/2017 will be made by Full Council on 15 December 2015. This decision follows public consultation and extensive consideration by Members of the various options for change. Under the proposals announced in the Summer Budget, households receiving Tax Credit income would see that income reduce by an average of £1,000 a year from April 2016. As CTS is based on household income, we had estimated an overall additional cost to our scheme of £184,000. However, in the Autumn Statement on 25 November 2015, the Chancellor announced that proposals on Tax Credits will not now go ahead. This is positive news not just for Tax Credit recipients, but for all Council Tax precepting authorities.
- 8.2 Capita has completed their review of entitlement to Single Person Discounts for Council Tax. This has resulted in the withdrawal of 717 discounts raising additional Council Tax estimated at £239,000 for 2015/2016.

- 8.3 Council Tax collection at 30 November 2015 was 81.3% - just under our target of 81.5%. While Business Rate Collection at 76.9% is also below our target of 77.5%, the gap has reduced since my last report and we are predicting to meet the annual target by 31 March 2016.
- 8.4 In November, the South West Counter Fraud Partnership (SWCFP) delivered training to staff on the Threat of Fraud, Theft and Bribery. Further training is planned for Taunton Deane's Members in early 2016.
- 8.5 On the 7 December 2015, I spent the morning with the Revenues and Benefits Team as an observer. This has given me a highly valuable insight into the complexity of their job and to witness customer contact first hand. I would like to thank the Team for the courtesy shown to me and for taking time out of their busy schedule.

9. Law and Governance, SHAPE Partnership Services

- 9.1 Records from the first six months of the new partnership demonstrate that Taunton Deane is making good use of the service with the main client areas being Property, Planning and Housing.

10. Electoral Services

- 10.1 On 1 December, 2015, the 2016 Electoral Register was published and electronic copies have been forwarded to all Councillors.
- 10.2 The final claims for the Parliamentary and County Council Elections have been submitted and invoices have been sent in respect of all contested and uncontested Parish / Town Council Elections.
- 10.3 Electoral Review of Taunton Deane Borough Council - On 24 November, 2015, the Local Government Boundary Commission confirmed that they would be undertaking an Electoral Review of the Council and representatives of the Commission will be providing a briefing for all Members on a date to be arranged in late February / early March 2016.

11. Democratic Services

- 11.1 The various Remembrance events ran very smoothly and were well attended and the build up to Christmas is, as usual, a very busy time for the Mayor.

12. Finance and Procurement

- 12.1 Since my last update to the Council, our Statement of Accounts for 2014/2015 was given a 'clean bill of health' by our external auditor – Grant Thornton LLP – and has been approved on 28 September 2015 at the Corporate Governance Committee. This is the culmination of a significant 'project' over several months and it is pleasing that the accounts have again been prepared on time and to a good standard.
- 12.2 The Council's management of its resources remains on track and through the budget monitoring process, coordinated and support by the Finance Team, the performance against budget remains within acceptable tolerances. For the General Fund our forecasts at the half-way point of the year suggest we are heading for a net underspend of approximately £186,000 which is within 1% of budget. For the Housing Revenue Account there is a projected overspend of £102,000 which is just 0.4% over budget. Our total capital programme spending remains on track. Details of the financial position were reported to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 17 November 2015.
- 12.3 As well as closing down last year's accounts and keeping an eye on progress in the current year, the service continues to support management and Members through the budget process, with a budget progress update and initial savings options shared with Members through Corporate Scrutiny also on 17 November 2015.
- 12.4 Behind the scenes, the Finance Team have also implemented a more efficient process for preparing and controlling the detailed budget estimates directly within the Finance System in SAP. This has saved a lot of time which is essential in being able to meet the overall demand on the service.
- 12.5 A very useful Members Briefing was held on 26 November 2015, including presentations and discussions from the Council's Treasury Advisor (Arlingclose) on the economic outlook and credit conditions and the risks and opportunities our Finance Team – with excellent support and advice from Arlingclose – have to manage on a daily basis to safely protect the Council's cash and investments as well as keep our borrowing costs as low as possible.
- 12.6 In addition, there was a presentation and discussion on Business Rates with our Relationship Manager at the Valuation Office covering the rating process, our own Principal Revenues and Debt Recovery Officer covering the billing and collection process and various reliefs available to ratepayers, and our Assistant Director covering the Business Rates Retention funding system and explaining how part of the money we collect is retained by us to help fund local services. Thank you to our guests and officers who provided this support and to those Members who were able to attend.

Council Meeting - 15 December 2015

Report of Councillor Mrs Jane Warmington - Community Leadership

The strategic vision for Taunton Deane's most disadvantaged areas, is that residents lives will improve significantly and that these priority areas will look better, feel safer and in the future place a more proportionate demand on public services. These services will be delivered in urban areas through integrated, front line, problem-solving, multi-agency teams based in each area. Rural parishes with more scattered communities will be helped to access services through local village agents identifying, signposting and supporting isolated residents to get the help they need. Urban priority areas need excellent local education and health facilities which are then accessible to all, if we are to build independence, resilience and raise aspirations in individual people, families and communities, to sustain improvements and continue to reduce the need for intervention in the future.

1. Safer Somerset Partnership

1.1 Safer Somerset Partnership is the County's Community Safety Partnership. It has recently agreed six priorities, each with its own Member Champion and Lead Officer. These are:-

- Improve links to other partnerships, inter-agency collaboration and understanding services;
- Prevent the escalation of violent crime and abuse by supporting victims and working with perpetrators;
- Focus on targeted anti-social behaviour;
- Focusing on families through early help;
- Identify opportunities and approaches which improve mental wellbeing and emotional resilience; and
- Break the cycle of offending/ abuse through an engaged multi-agency response to targeted / identified groups.

1.2 These aim to strengthen the partnership and tap into Members interests/expertise/ experience to pull together shared outcomes. The Portfolio Holder (PfH) has offered to be the Member Champion for the priority focusing on families through early help.

1.2 The PfH sees effective early help as problem solving support, seamlessly stepped up and down between agencies working closely together, sharing information to understand each family really well. This is exemplified by One Team working, now in five disadvantaged areas in three districts in Somerset.

2. Data Sharing

2.1 Information sharing between partners such as frontline One Teams in high demand areas is essential. It enables families to be supported early on, recognising all their

difficulties and responding quickly to problems. Crises can be avoided and a number of issues can be addressed at the same time, sometimes quickly making a real difference and family's lives start to improve.

2.2 Local data sharing agreements between regular One Team partners were established early on in the Halcon Pilot. However some agencies were reluctant which has held them back.

2.3 The need to share information is well documented though and invariably cited in Serious Case Reviews when the various agencies fail to do so early enough on.

2.3 However data sharing has now been addressed to the satisfaction of all parties. The recently appointed One Team coordinator for the Sydenham and Bower Together Team, Kristy Blackwell and Somerset's Troubled Families Lead, Gill Bawler have compiled two tiers of data sharing agreements:-

Tier 1 - Multi-agency Overarching Information Sharing Protocol; and
Tier 2 - One Team Information Sharing Agreement

2.4 We are fortunate that the six month lead-in Kirsty had before the team started working together enabled her and Gill to do this for the benefit of all the One Teams. The majority of partner agencies are already signed up to these.

3. Continued One Team Working

3.1 From April 2016, Taunton Deane's Housing Service, the Police Force, Fire and Rescue Service and other partners have agreed to pool funding and staffing contributions to allow us to continue the One Team model into the future.

3.2 We were fortunate to receive the Police Innovation Fund of £750,000 to fund the enhanced project for two years from 2014 and need to be self-reliant from next year to be able to afford to continue this. This is a huge challenge in the context of the budget cuts which all the partner organisations have had and continue to face.

3.3 It is a testament to the success, credibility and increasing profile of the One Team model which has allowed us to collectively arrive at this arrangement for the next two years. The fact that the model has such support is down to the success of One Team working and the dedication of all of our staff who are engaged with and supporting this model.

3.4 From next year the pooled One Team budget for Taunton Deane is sufficient to retain the existing co-ordinator posts in Halcon and North Taunton and a part-time coordinator in Wellington; two administrative support officers working across the three One Team areas; part-time analyst post for a further one year only (with the potential to extend this if further funding can be identified); £10,000 per annum working budget for each of the three One Team areas.

3.5 Unfortunately this means that we will need to reduce our capacity down from three administrative support officers to two and we are in discussions with affected staff who are seconded across to these posts to ask for their expressions of interest to extend these secondments. The Sector Inspector whose remit the One Teams fall

under, is also in dialogue with the analyst and other relevant Police staff to find a way forward on a reduced basis for providing important analyst support.

- 3.6 Discussions are still continuing with other partners to seek further funding to allow us to bolster and expand the above offer if possible, but at this point, this is the financial assumption we need to progress with.
- 3.7 We would like to thank Paul Chamberlain who was seconded from Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service for twelve months to coordinate the Wellington One Team. He returns to a new role in the Fire Service. Wellington has strong local partnerships and his dedication and determination has meant much has been achieved in the last year. Wellington is not without its social problems although it benefits from a great community spirit and dedicated local Councillors. The Wellington One Team continues to meet as new arrangements are being agreed.

4. Taunton Town Centre Police Team

- 4.1 The Taunton Town Centre Police Team recently received an Avon and Somerset Community Policing Award. This is well deserved after their terrific work last summer gathering evidence of anti-social behaviour and irrefutably tracking this back to the two head shops selling legal highs, which resulted in one shop stopping selling them and the other to close down under the then new anti-social behaviour legislation. There has been a marked reduction in anti-social behaviour.
- 4.2 Police Sergeant Neil Kimmins and Police Constable Jim Brakewell worked closely in partnership with the community, local Councillors, Deane DLO, the Community Payback Team, Scott Weetch, our experienced Community Safety Lead and the PfH. We are absolutely delighted that their success has been recognised.

5. Resettlement of Syrian Refugees in Taunton Deane

- 5.1 Somerset is initially proposing to offer to resettle six families under the United Kingdom Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme. The County will then contact the Home Office before Christmas to make an offer on the districts' behalf. Taunton Deane will resettle two of the six families, all of whom would be expected to arrive in the Spring.
- 5.2 The local authorities in Somerset have been making steady progress in order to be in a position to offer to resettle some Syrian families in the New Year to ensure that they will have the wrap around support they will inevitably need.
- 5.3 The Syrian Resettlement Working Group was established with representatives from the County and District Councils, with input from other relevant organisations including the Clinical Commissioning Group. It has assessed six families as the viable initial number which will not put existing services under undue pressure but will enable us to establish confidence and expertise in our support systems. The local authority costs will be covered by Government funding and so be cost neutral.

- 5.4 It is proposed that a panel is set-up to scrutinise applications to ensure a match between known needs and capacity of local support systems. A group would also be established to monitor the adequacy of funding, impact on services, evaluate success of the resettlement scheme within Somerset and consider extension of the scheme to additional families.
- 5.5 Public Health have now submitted a detailed paper to the County Council's Cabinet for their approval on the proposed way forward.
- 5.6 This measured, seemingly cautious, approach is so that we get it right. We have information from other unitary local authorities and housing providers who already have some experience of resettlement and what it entails. The voluntary sector and local communities are vital to this but initially it is the statutory authorities who need to arrange housing, health, education, benefit income, individual family support and interpreters.
- 5.7 Recently church representatives, church members and Citizens UK met in order to establish how they could help the resettlement programme. This is a welcome initiative from the local churches who are at the heart of so many communities and help so many. Their knowledge of their local communities and contacts should be invaluable. Three members of the working group (Public Health, Taunton Deane and PfH) and our Council Leader will be attending the next churches meeting.
- 5.8 £460,000,000 of the Overseas Aid Budget will be used by 2019/2020 across the Government to resettle up to 20,000 of the most vulnerable Syrian refugees, covering the full first year costs to ease the burden on local communities. The Government will provide around a further £130,000,000 by 2019/2020 to local authorities to contribute to the costs of supporting refugees beyond their first year in the UK.

6. Refugee Aid from Taunton

- 6.1 Councillor Federica Smith who, with the help of generous people across the area, has now sent eighteen lorry loads of items to people in Calais, Syria, Greece and Turkey in the past twelve weeks. Volunteers at RAFT are hoping to fill at least another five lorry loads of aid for refugees in the camps before Christmas, with a special plea for warm clothes and blankets. Again, huge thanks to her for this amazing initiative and for her invitation to Councillors and staff to visit the warehouse at Firepool.

Councillor Jane Warmington

Council Meeting - 15 December 2015

Report of Councillor Terry Beale – Housing Services

1. Deane Housing Development

Creechbarrow Road

- 1.1 First handovers are expected in January 2016. This will be for 10 units – 4 x 2 bed-flats, 2 x 2 bed houses, 2 x 1 bed general needs flats, 2 x 1 bed wheel-chair adapted flats. This first tranche of handovers will accommodate two returning decants from the original scheme.
- 1.2 There has been a change of site management team and this is reflected in an increase in work output on site.
- 1.3 The foundations for the One Team Hub will commence this week with anticipated completion in late summer 2016. Discussions are continuing with the Police, other agencies and our own Housing Management to progress the development of the internal space within the Hub.
- 1.4 A meeting has been held between the directors of Galliford Try South West, Knightstone and Taunton Deane to discuss progress on site.

Moorland Close, Taunton

- 1.5 The Council is seeking to secure the purchase of a property in Moorland Close, Taunton from Somerset County Council. Future development options are being explored which could include the relocation of the Link Centre and provision of additional affordable homes.

Weavers Arms, Rockwell Green, Wellington

- 1.6 Contractor selection is underway with scheduled tender opening on 15 December 2015. It is anticipated following the relevant assessments and interviews that a contractor will be selected in February 2016 with start on site in the Spring.

Extensions

- 1.7 Planning Consent has been granted for two extensions to existing Taunton Deane properties to accommodate two overcrowded families both of whom have additional needs/disabilities to contend with.
- 1.8 The next stage is to gain Building Regulation approval and tender a contractor. We

will be working with the families to meet their interim needs with possible temporary decants while the works are undertaken.

Scooter Storage

- 1.9 We currently are in the process of completing four individual scooter storage projects, providing secure storage/charging facilities for four tenants in properties across north Taunton.
- 1.10 We are at the design stage for the repurposing of bin stores at Kilkenny Court to provide scooter storage and also to provide new secure waste storage facilities to accommodate normal waste and clinical waste.

Car Parking

- 1.11 A planning application is being prepared for the proposed additional parking at Bulford, Wellington. This follows a final consultation event for the residents following discussions that have taken place over the previous 12 months.

External Wall Insulation (EWI)

- 1.12 The final nine properties are due to be completed by the first week of December 2015. It was hoped to be by the 27 November but inclement weather has slowed completion. In total 48 Cornish units have received EWI.

Photovoltaic (PV) Solar Panels Scheme

- 1.13 The final two properties are yet to be installed with PV. Delays in securing the last two properties has been due to tenant refusals requiring more applications to Western Power Distribution and one property needing a new tenancy before PV could be fitted.
- 1.14 Training to front line staff is to take place on the 14 December 2015 in the John Meikle Room. This will be from the two installers and The Low Carbon Exchange who are remotely monitoring the electricity generated and any repairs needed. The aim of the briefing is to inform staff on how PV works, how it is fitted and who to call if a repairs call comes into the Council instead of Low Carbon Exchange.

2. Affordable Housing Delivery

- 2.1 As at the end of Quarter 2, 131 affordable homes were completed. It is anticipated this will rise to approximately 175 affordable homes by the end of Quarter 3 with over 200 homes by Year End. Discussions are underway with Housing Association partners and developers to establish the effect of recent Government announcements on Taunton Deane Affordable Housing pipeline.
- 2.2 As outlined above the Weavers Arms development was approved through the

Planning Committee on the 12 August 2015. The scheme will deliver 26 affordable units and we are currently tendering for a contractor. There is now only one decant and we are hopeful that will go through very soon.

- 2.3 With regard to the implications of the Autumn Statement on Housing and affordable housing in particular, we are currently studying the implications which will be circulated in the future. As always the devil is in the detail which we await with interest.

3. Welfare Reform Visits

- 3.1 The number of tenants affected this month are 330, however this is subject to change on a daily basis due to tenants moving in and out of employment.

- 3.2 The breakdown of tenants that have now downsized are:-

- 2 Direct Match approved and completed;
- 47 Successful moves on CBL completed;
- 1 Successful bids pending a move on CBL;
- 0 Mutual Exchanges being processed;
- 23 Mutual Exchanges completed; and
- 1 Moved to private sector.

4. Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)

- 4.1 All affected tenants are being offered advice on Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP's) and assistance to help them complete the application form. Since the start of this financial year 69 DHP's have been awarded to tenants.

5. Benefit Cap

- 5.1 The Benefit Cap is currently affecting two Taunton Deane tenant households.

6. Rent Arrears

- 1st April 2015 Bedroom Tax rent arrears were £41,483.73 with 179 tenants in rent arrears;
- 1st May 2015 Bedroom Tax rent arrears were £44,874.09 with 192 tenants in rent arrears. With an increase in rent arrears of £3,390.36 on the previous month;
- 1st June 2015 Bedroom Tax rent arrears were £41,762.32 with 184 tenants in rent arrears. With a decrease in rent arrears of £3,111.77 on the previous month;
- 1st July 2015 Bedroom Tax rent arrears were £38,152.16 with 162 tenants in rent arrears. With a decrease in rent arrears of £3,610.16 on the previous month;
- 1st August 2015 Bedroom Tax rent arrears were £38,765.54 with 164 tenants in rent arrears. With an increase in rent arrears of £613.38 on the previous month;

- 1st September 2015 Bedroom Tax rent arrears were £37,920.78 with 167 tenants in rent arrears. With a decrease in rent arrears of £844.76 on the previous month;
- 1st October 2015 Bedroom Tax rent arrears were £34,660.97 with 149 tenants in rent arrears. With a decrease in rent arrears of £3,259.81 on the previous month;
- 1st November 2015 Bedroom Tax rent arrears were £35,663.44 with 170 tenants in rent arrears. With an increase in rent arrears of £1,002.47 on the previous month.

7. Universal Credit (UC):

- 7.1 To date Taunton Deane have 18 tenants who have submitted a claim. I have been working closely with these tenants and the level of help and support needed is substantial and needs to be tailored to each of their personal circumstances.
- 7.2 Currently only single newly unemployed people are able to make claims for UC, which accounts for the small number of affected tenants at this time. However as the roll-out of UC becomes wider and involves families the number of our tenants claiming UC will increase significantly.

8. Pathway for Adults - P4A

- 8.1 We continue to work closely with TAH and partners to find solutions to the cuts from Somerset County Council (SCC) and to ensure that we are able to provide sufficient levels of service for vulnerable adults at risk of homelessness in Taunton Deane.

9. Refugees

- 9.1 The Council is working very closely with colleagues at SCC and is in dialogue with other agencies to progress our ambitions to accept Syrian refugees in early 2016. We still need to undertake further work with partners to agree the numbers and ensure that the appropriate support will be available and ready to support these families.

10. Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

- 10.1 We continue to develop the HRA Business Plan to arrive at a clear way forward for the 30 year business plan that tenants need.

11. Pre-Void inspections and Tenancy Enforcement

Background

- 11.1 Vanessa Flook started work on the 12 October 2015. The brief below provides initial feedback and commentary on progress being made with the project. Initially Vanessa's work was focused on pre-void inspections, although towards the end of this initial period she has begun to engage in Tenancy Enforcement tasking.

Period covered - 14 October – 14 November 2015;

Total inspections completed – 40 (37 Pre-void, 3 Tenancy Enforcement);

Breakdown of inspections pre-void Inspections

- 11.2 Ten inspections were commissioned as the result of either the death or the tenant moving into residential care. We have not found any issues with these properties as the family and friends have ensured the properties came back in a good condition and had been emptied of all belongings.
- 11.3 Nine inspections were on properties that were either neglected or contained a large quantity of belongings. We believe that had we not inspected these properties there was a risk that the tenants may have returned the properties to us in a poor condition.
- 11.4 We have provided potential recharge costs that would have been incurred and therefore the potential savings to either our tenant or the HRA have been calculated. The approximate cost or potential re-charges were £3,778.00 including administration costs of 15% and VAT.
- 11.5 Five properties have required re-visits to monitor progress and ensure work was completed as agreed.
- 11.6 To date no tenants that have been contacted, have refused to carry out the work requested.
- 11.7 To date one next of kin refused to agree to an inspection.

Tenancy Enforcement Inspections

- 11.8 In addition to the pre-void inspections conducted we have also been working with three households where the properties are being neglected largely due to hoarding. These households will require longer term support which is aimed at bringing the property back to a more manageable condition in line with the tenancy agreement, and also ensuring that the tenant can sustain their tenancy in a more tenant like manner over the longer term.

Financial Summary

- 11.9
 - Potential pre-void inspections savings on void budget to date £3778;
 - Potential tenancy enforcement re-charges avoided to date £2626.40;
 - Expenditure on Lettings contingency budget to date £150.00
- 11.10 The first month has proven to be very busy for Vanessa. The initial focus of work was to conduct pre-void inspections, but this has now expanded to include some limited tenancy enforcement activity. This will increase once an additional officer is in post. Area Community Managers (ACMs) have been asked to provide a list of potential tenancy enforcement properties. These will be prioritised with ACMs and work will begin to target these households in December/January.

12. Rent Arrears

- 12.1 We are in the process of putting together a media campaign to encourage tenants not to be caught out by rising bills at Christmas and to engage with us at an early stage if they have financial difficulties. We will work with them and partners to manage and reduce debts and to reduce the likelihood of tenants going into arrears over the festive period.

Councillor Terry Beale

Council Meeting – 15 December 2015

Report of Councillor Patrick Berry – Environmental Services

Environmental Health / Licensing

Environmental Health

Food Safety

- 1.1 Taunton Deane Borough Council is required by law to inspect food businesses in the area. These are undertaken at intervals set out by the Food Standards Agency and according to the risk rating of the premises. Where applicable, officers will then provide a Food Hygiene Rating or a 'scores on the doors' assessment as a result of the conditions found at the time of the inspection. The information gathered at the inspection includes the type of food that is handled or produced, the number of people served and the standards of hygiene and structure found at the time of the inspection.
- 1.2 Food Safety Audits of Taunton Deane and West Somerset have been carried out by the South West Audit Partnership to check whether the processes and procedures that underpin the service are safe and timely and that adequate checks and measures are in place to ensure this. The team achieved substantial assurance – what we used to call comprehensive assurance.
- 1.3 This is a significant achievement by the whole team. Obviously this also gives considerable reassurance to the businesses that we visit and the general public that there is a high quality service being delivered in times of significant change, helping to protect public health.

Environmental Health Service

- 1.4 The Environmental Health Team receive an average of 40 new service requests per week regarding a wide range of issues on top on all of our ongoing cases and workload. These include complaints about noise, odours, drainage, infectious diseases, accidents at work, pests and dog fouling.

Public Health Funerals

- 1.5 Since April 2015 officers have made the arrangements for 12 public health funerals in the Taunton Deane area. If somebody dies in Taunton Deane and it appears that no suitable arrangements have been made, we have a responsibility to make sure that a person receives a funeral, usually involving a cremation under Section 46 of the 1984 Public Health Act. This happens when someone dies with no known next of kin or has relatives who cannot or

do not want to be involved. Officers normally act on instructions from the Coroner's Office.

Dog Action Day

- 1.6 Early in 2016 a Dog Action Day is being planned to highlight the issues associated with dogs. A recent Dog Action Day in West Somerset was a great success and was well received by dog owners. The team issued countless dog waste bags, leaflets and talked to over 40 dog owners over the course of the day. It is planned to target areas where we have received complaints regarding dog fouling in the Taunton Deane.

Public Health

- 1.7 Officers in the team are currently involved in two public health projects including one focusing on tattoo and body piercing establishments and another to provide in house training to Council officers on Alcohol and Drug Awareness.

Staff News

- 1.8 Joanne Toogood has been successful in securing the Senior Environmental Health Officer post which represented the last part of the Joint Management and Shared Services restructure. We congratulate her on this significant achievement.
- 1.9 As part of the same process, Sarah Khan has decided to take redundancy from the Council after 10 years' service. We wish her well in her new career. Leanne Spice has left the Food Team but will be replaced early in the New Year by Chris Lewis. Chris has a strong background in this area of work and is keen to hit the ground running!

Licensing

Animal Licensing

- 1.10 A forum for the proprietors of our animal licence businesses (animal boarding, dog breeding, pet shops and horse riding establishments), has been set up to respond to criticism from the trade that there has not been enough communication from the service in the past over issues such as fee increases and the frequency compliance visits (particularly in light of a 50% fee increase in 2014/2015 and failing to fulfil the level of compliance expected).

Taxi Licensing

- 1.11 The implementation of the 'out of area driver' policy continues to have an impact on the number of applications made and enquiries taken from people living outside Taunton Deane. Of those that have made recent applications, four have been refused licences at the interview stage on the grounds that

they cannot demonstrate that they are or will be working fully or predominantly in the district.

- 1.12 A further 27 'out of area drivers' have chosen not to renew their licence or withdrawn their applications, since the policy was introduced.
- 1.13 Although we do not have any data to support this, there has been a decline in numbers of telephone enquiries. A more accurate survey regarding the back log is in process, however the team is convinced that the new policy has made a huge difference.

Staffing News

- 1.14 John Rendell continues to be Acting Licensing Manager. Recruitment for that post will start in earnest in the New Year. Backfill for John's post of Licensing Officer will be taken by Mark Banczyk-Gee. Mark is an ex-Police Officer who has some Licensing experience both as a businessman and in his Police role.
- 1.15 He has been with the Council for seven weeks prior to this as a temporary member of staff but has impressed with his 'can do' attitude and willingness to get on. As a result of this and the cutting short of another temporary placement, the Licensing Team will reassess what – if any – additional resources are required going forward.

2. Somerset Waste Partnership

- 2.1 Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP) met on 25 September 2015 and will meet again on 18 December 2015.
- 2.2 A workshop was held in November 2015 to ascertain Members' preferences with regard to the various options (practical and financial) surrounding the entire recycle and waste disposal activity. Collection frequency, bin and crate sizes and additional materials to be recycled were all reviewed. Publicity and special measures that may be necessary when the arrangements change, were also discussed.
- 2.3 SWP has also announced other trials (not affecting Taunton Deane) and are now executing a detailed analysis of the Recycle More trials carried out around Somerset for recycling of additional materials.
- 2.4 The commercial analysis, which involves the collection truck configuration as well as the processing and packaging facilities, is ongoing.

3. Deane DLO

Street Sweeping and Toilet Cleaning

- 3.1 The preparation of the tender documentation for a possible combined contract (West Somerset and Taunton Deane) for street sweeping and toilet cleaning is proceeding.
- 3.2 A litter bin replacement programme is now going ahead for Wellington.

4. Crematorium

- 4.1 The Cemeteries Department is expecting to open the new burial ground extension in the New Year.
- 4.2 Minor maintenance works at the Crematorium, which as Members may know is a listed building, are in progress:-
 - a. A periodic inspection of the copper sheathed roof is required and visitors will see temporary scaffolding in place for the next few of weeks.
 - b. A major upgrade of all fire-doors is continuing to ensure full compliance with the latest legislation.
 - c. The chapel flooring has just been treated and new curtains and veil are being installed.
- 4.3 Full Council approval is being requested to change the basis of charging for cremations to include a discount for those clients who do not make last minute changes to the music at chapel services.

Councillor Patrick Berry

Council Meeting – 15 December 2015

Report of Councillor Mark Edwards - Business Development, Asset Management and Communications

1. Supporting Business Growth

Taunton Deane Business Conference

- 1.1 The first Taunton Deane Business Conference was held on Thursday, 3 December 2015 at The County Ground, Taunton. Attended by 120 businesses and partner organisations, we were honoured to be addressed by the Secretary of State for Business, Investment and Skills, The Right Honourable Sajid Javid MP.
- 1.2 The Business Secretary spoke about the Government's policy context for supporting business growth and investment, and he recognised Taunton's ambitious growth agenda and strong, pro-business attitude. The conference also heard from Highways England, Great Western Railway and Somerset County Council on planned improvements to connectivity and from Summerfield Developments, Somerset College, and EDF Energy on investment opportunities for businesses in the near future. Rebecca Pow MP and the Chief Executive of the Heart of the South West LEP also spoke about Taunton's positive future.
- 1.3 Around 500 businesses were invited to the event, including local businesses as well as potential inward investors and their commercial property agents.
- 1.4 It was with regret I could not attend as the date had to be moved from the original date agreed to secure the Secretary of State to attend. I am delighted it was such a huge success I have had a great deal of very positive feedback and consideration is being given to making this an annual event.

UK Hydrographic Office (UKHO)

- 1.5 It was wonderful news that the UKHO has concluded it will stay in Taunton and we look forward to working with them to strengthen the organisation within the area and will do all we can to assist them in progressing their plans.

New Marketing Publications

- 1.6 In preparation for the conference earlier this month officers worked extensively to put together new marketing material for local businesses and investors. The new material includes an inward investment prospectus and a Pocket Guide, both of which spell out the advantages of investing in Taunton

Deane. Copies of the new publications, as well as investment folders to collate the documents, will be circulated to Members.

- 1.7 A copy of the pack will be mailed to commercial property agents in the South West, and will be issued to prospective inward investors in the Borough.

Inward Investment Video

- 1.8 The Economic Development Team has worked closely over recent weeks with a professional film producer on a new inward investment video for Taunton Deane. The video draws upon interviews with some of our successful business leaders, such as Claims Consortium, Viridor, Mundy Veneer and Somerset County Cricket Club, plus the Taunton Chamber of Commerce. It describes Taunton's advantages as a business location and the support provided by the Council to secure their own recent investment.
- 1.9 The video will be available on social media channels and through our dedicated investment website at www.taunton.uk.com.

Investment enquiries.

- 1.10 The Economic Development Team has received a handful of interesting potential inward investors recently, including a large data control centre, an office for an software and digital media company that would create around eight jobs, and a potential Foreign Direct Investor from Canada looking for small office space. Members will appreciate that commercial confidentiality restricts me sharing more details on these enquiries.
- 1.11 Working alongside officers I continue to liaise with local businesses to understand their growth needs and to try to marry them up with potential property providers. One such company is Property Consortium at Culmhead, who have very strong ambitions to grow over the next few years. The company has recently purchased a large office property on East Reach, Taunton and is continuing to look for property to enable its continued local expansion.

Taunton Visitor Centre

- 1.12 The new centre is performing extremely well, and visitor numbers are significantly up since we moved the service to the Market House. Officers receive many compliments from the public on the fit out and location of the new service, and this month we have turned the centre into a Christmas Shop selling cards and local Christmas gifts and produce. In November the new counter and till systems were installed, and overall the centre is going extremely well.
- 1.13 In November the centre welcomed the Children in Need Rickshaw Challenge which ended outside of the office and a new counter has just been installed to enhance the operation.

Christmas Events

- 1.14 Much time was spent in the past few months supporting Make Taunton Sparkle and TIME4 to put on a good season of Christmas events during December in Taunton. These plans came to fruition, thanks mainly to TIME4 and Fuse Performance, and we now have a really strong offering of events between 20 November and 24 December 2015.
- 1.15 The activities include the traditional market as well as new events, funded by Taunton Deane, on Castle Green and in Bath Place. Officers also assisted extensively in the promotion and marketing of the events which has included a series of promotional banners hung in the town centre, delivering a coordinated programme of messages via traditional and social media in conjunction with Destination CMS who we employ to market the town centre.
- 1.16 Although the original lights switch on date was postponed due to poor weather on 28 November 2015, through effective event management, supported by effective marketing, the event was successfully deferred by a week.
- 1.17 It is important that for next year and beyond we have firm plans in place early on in the year, delivered by third parties and with a sustainable funding plan in place.
- 1.18 The Council again contributed financially towards the lights displays in Wellington and Wiveliscombe.

Small Business Saturday and the Taunton Deane Business Awards.

- 1.19 A programme of events was delivered, supported by advice and funding by the Economic Development Team, in our three towns to encourage the public to shop in local retailers on Saturday, 5 December 2015.
- 1.20 The Taunton Deane Business Awards were also launched on the same day. They will be open to any business within Taunton Deane, and there will be six categories within the competition.

Somerfest.

- 1.21 In October the Council invited local arts organisations to tender for the delivery of Somerfest, which would be run again in June 2016, subject to securing the necessary budgets. I am pleased to report that we awarded the contract to FUSE Performance, who delivered it very successfully this year. A Service Level Agreement will be completed to deliver it over the next three years, albeit subject to annual funding being found by the Council and from third parties.

Coal Orchard

- 1.22 Officers are currently working on an outline planning application which represents the next phase of the delivery strategy. This is in line with the

report agreed by the Executive.

Town centre Wi-Fi

- 1.23 An invitation to tender was issued on 8 December 2015 for the contract to install the Wi-Fi scheme, and it will be evaluated early in the New Year.
- 1.24 Officers plan to let the contract with a mid-February commencement date. We then plan for the Wi-Fi to be available by early Summer.

Staffing.

- 1.25 Finally, Nadine Ackland left the team in early December to go on maternity leave. Managers within the team are currently recruiting to replace her on a temporary basis. I would extend my thanks and appreciation to Nadine for her work over the past year, since she joined the team.
- 1.26 We have recently recruited two Casual Assistants to work in the Taunton Visitor Centre. Having this extra staffing capacity will free up the time of senior staff to enable more focus on marketing activities.

2. Communications

- 2.1 Communications is now a team as Becky Howat has taken up the post of Assistant Media and Communications Officer. Becky worked as the Press Officer for the Council some 10 years ago - so it's very much "welcome back!"
- 2.2 The team provided support for the hugely successful business conference on 3 December which attracted widespread media coverage, increased traffic on social media and a springboard for further positive news on Taunton's Growth Programme.
- 2.3 Deane Dispatch has now returned to its monthly slot in the Somerset County Gazette with recent editions focusing on the Council's Growth Programme and the Christmas Campaign.
- 2.4 Christmas in Taunton prompted a number of targeted press releases and radio interviews to make sure people know what is happening – and a great deal is happening in the festive season.
- 2.5 In addition to Deane Dispatch, the Council is contributing a weekly business-focused column in the newly re-launched Gazette.
- 2.6 The Council's twitter account continues to increase its following – we are now approaching 2,000 – and @TDBC took part in the Local Government Association's "Our Day" campaign. This encouraged local authorities to tweet about the work they do for their communities.

- 2.7 As we approach the New Year, the annual budget-setting will be a major focus for communications as well as the many initiatives being undertaken by the Council such as the new pool at Blackbrook, housing, community development and economic development.
- 2.8 We continue to work on the internal One Team newsletter and always welcome contributions, particularly from elected Members.

3. Asset Management

- 3.1 Delivery of the General Fund Asset Strategy is picking up pace with a number of option appraisals having now taken place and recommendations being prepared.
- 3.2 In the case of the former Mike Chedzoy premises at Greenbrook Terrace, Taunton this surplus property has now been marketed and a significant offer provisionally accepted which will not only create a capital receipt, but also generate residential development on this site and the benefits to the Council and to Taunton that arises from such developments.
- 3.3 We are also now progressing smaller disposals of surplus land such as that plot beside 139 South Road, Taunton where despite the receipt not being very significant, a low level receipt is delivered along with the removal of (in this case) quite a significant maintenance liability. There will be a number of these smaller type disposals being progressed over the next few months.
- 3.4 A similar low value transaction being explored, but of a leasehold interest in this case, is that of the pavilion at Vivary Park where the Council is exploring a possible letting to a private operator to operate a café / take-away type facility - whilst also providing for the public conveniences to remain open but be operated by a commercial operator. In this instance, this will generate a revenue income as well as enabling a saving to be made in running costs.
- 3.5 Alongside the delivery of the strategy type activities, Asset Management continue to manage approximately 200 live estate management projects relating to lease renewals, rent reviews, lettings, estate management queries and valuations.
- 3.6 A significant exercise has taken place over the past two months to review and capture electronically the current position in respect of General Fund statutory compliance (asbestos / gas / electricity / fire risk assessment etc). Further work will be undertaken over the next few months to ensure all information is captured and alongside this, there is a robust process to ensure this is routinely updated and works prioritised based on a structured risk appraisal.

Councillor Mark Edwards

Council Meeting - 15 December 2015

Report of Councillor Roger Habgood – Planning Policy and Transportation

1. Planning Policy

Site Allocation and Development Plan (SADMP)

- 1.1 The Taunton Deane SADMP, is now at examination. Initial hearing sessions in respect of Staplegrove and Comeytrowe sites (to address heritage and ecological matters) were held on the 1 and 2 December 2015.
- 1.2 The Inspector has indicated he is likely to write back to Taunton Deane with initial findings on these matters before Christmas. Thereafter he will indicate any further matters, that he feels should be explored through hearing sessions that have yet to be arranged.
- 1.3 It is likely that any such further hearing sessions will be scheduled for February or March time next year.

Local Development Orders (LDO's)

- 1.4 LDO's are an existing legislative tool. They have been around since 2009. They are flexible and consistent with local determination, part of a move to remove bureaucracy and redefine the issues where planning really makes a contribution to the local area. LDOs are a means for the planning system to incentivise development in a way that meets a whole range of locally specific policy objectives.
- 1.5 The Council is in the process of passing a resolution which authorises the preparation of Local Development Orders for two key sites. A Strategic Employment Site east of Junction 25 of the M5 and, subject, to the site's availability, the Council's Deane House site.
- 1.6 Some Members, perhaps those who have not attended the LDO training or who are not yet familiar with LDO's, have raised concerns about the LDO process. All members will have the opportunity to input and shape any LDO that comes before this Council.
- 1.7 The Leader has given his assurances - and I add mine - and I look forward to working with Members in bringing LDO's through the Council in order to deliver appropriate sites with and for our residents.

Neighbourhood Planning

Plans ready submitted for inspection.

- 1.8 Taunton Deane Borough Council, with the approval of the respective Parish Councils, has appointed John Mattocks to examine the Bishops Lydeard and Cothelstone Neighbourhood Development Plan and Nigel McGurk for the examination of the Trull and Staplehay Neighbourhood Development Plan.
- 1.9 Mr Mattocks is an experienced Planning Inspector having carried out Examinations in Public for many Development Plan Documents (including the Councils own Core Strategy in 2012), and Independent Examiner for Neighbourhood Plans. He has a wealth of experience and knowledge which are ideally suited to examining the Bishops Lydeard Neighbourhood Plan.
- 1.10 Mr McGurk's is one of the country's most experienced neighbourhood plan independent examiners and is an experienced Planning Inspector. His wealth of experience and knowledge is vital for examining the range and breath of topics contained in the Trull and Staplehay Neighbourhood Development Plan. He has also worked with Planning Aid England and Wales developing material for Neighbourhood Plan Groups, is a regular contributor to Design Panels and has experience of large developments and infrastructure matters.
- 1.11 The Independent Examiners will set the timescale, scope and form of the Examination, which the Council hopes will be early next year. As part of the Examination the Independent Examiner will assess whether the respective Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) complies with the legislation and whether it can progress to referenda and ultimately be capable of adoption as local planning policy.

New Neighbourhood Development Plans forming.

- 1.12 The Council has designated the area for the joint West Monkton and Cheddon Fitzpaine Neighbourhood Development Plan. The group are compiling a questionnaire to send to residents and businesses in their area and planning an exhibition to explain Neighbourhood Planning and get valuable information from the community about its development and what is needed to support the community as it grows.

Major Applications: Housing

Staplegrove

- 1.13 The Staplegrove Framework Masterplan has now been recommended

for adoption by the Council's Executive and will be considered by Full Council on 15 December 2015.

Trull and Comeytrowe

- 1.14 This application was heard at the Planning Committee and determination deferred. The applicant, a consortium, is currently considering what next steps they wish to take.
- 1.15 Early indication from their agent suggests that they will request the application to come back to Committee in January 2016 for determination. A formal response from the applicant is awaited.

Regeneration - Firepool

- 1.16 As the Leader has announced, St Modwen, have submitted an outline planning application. The application has been validated and will now follow through the consultation process which will run until mid-January with a Planning determination sometime in April 2016.
- 1.17 Firepool is an important application for Taunton. It has been a long time coming for reasons that have been well understood. We are now enjoying beneficial economic conditions that have enabled the market to respond. We now need to shape this application to ensure it is viable and that it is delivered turning an eyesore into a regenerated asset for Taunton Deane.
- 1.18 It is timely that an application has also now been received from McCarthy and Stone that comprises development of the remainder of Firepool, FP1 of the Town Centre Area Action Plan. More action to deliver Taunton's Vision.
- 1.19 I will also mention the Northern Inner Distributor Road here - two ways of looking at this - glass half empty, and glass half full.
- 1.20 Yes it is late and the County Highways Authority, no doubt remain concerned, but hopefully, they will deliver to the date just announced. On the positive side, when it is complete, it represents a major investment in Taunton and will be a step forward in relieving the town of some of the congestion we experience.

Strategic Employment - Site Adjacent to Junction 25

- 1.21 Another important vision that is moving forward through partnership working with the developer, County Council colleagues, Highways England, the Local Enterprise Partnership and of course in consultation with all of the community stakeholders who are adding value with constructive contributions.

- 1.22 The Leader has announced the proposed planning treatment for the site. Members can be actively involved in delivering this very important development for the benefit of residents of Taunton Deane, of Somerset and the wider South West. I look forward to the consultation, which is likely in Spring 2016.

UKHO - The Hydrographic Office

- 1.23 Rebecca Pow announced last week that the UKHO is to remain in Taunton and redevelop on its own site at Admiralty Way. Great news following intense lobbying from our MP, our Leader and others. This decision demonstrates confidence in Taunton Deane's vision for the future.
- 1.24 Great news for our community and our economy - a high value, 'high tech' business remains located here in Taunton. We look forward to receiving the application for the regeneration of the whole site.

Planning Team Activity

- 1.25 Fee income is holding up but coming with that there is a lot of work to be done. We face the usual issues with staff turnover and staffing. We have a short-term solution to any shortfall whilst the recruitment process looks to settle the long-term solution. I would like to take this opportunity to applaud the work of our Planning Team. They undertake planning work with professionalism coping with all sorts of challenges they meet on the way.

2. Transportation

Car Parking

Refurbishment

- 2.1 The programme to refurbishment and refresh the stairwells in the Orchard Shopper Multi-storey Car Park is now complete, ready to welcome customers during the Christmas season.
- 2.2 During November the Orchard Shopper Multi-storey Car Park was inspected and achieved the standards of the Safer Parking Scheme and was granted "The Safer Parking Award". This award demonstrates that the facility provides accredited parking.

Seasonal Concessions

- 2.3 The seasonal concessions for free parking across Taunton Deane's

pay Car parks are in place and are being enjoyed by residents and visitors alike.

Activity

- 2.4 From April 2015 until October 2015 Taunton Deane's Car Parks have on average seen over 160,300 transactions per month (either parking sessions purchased at the Pay and Display machines or via Phone and Pay). This is estimated to reach over 175,000 transactions during December.

Fees and charges

- 2.5 Fees and charges are before Members this evening. Taunton Deane Car Parks are important assets, they need to be managed. They require investment with which to forward plan and deliver over a long timeframe.
- 2.6 I have therefore put forward revised fees and charges appropriate to that challenge, in order that we can manage these assets in a proactive way rather than in a reactive manner.
- 2.7 Getting the Car Parking Strategy right for Taunton Deane means ensuring many threads come together. Foremost amongst them is interdependence with County Highways On Street and Park and Ride facilities. Work continues with Economic Development and County Highways colleagues to improve provision and wayfinding for the benefit of residents and visitors.

Councillor Roger Habgood

Council Meeting - 15 December 2015

Report of Councillor Mrs Catherine Herbert – Sports, Parks and Leisure

1. Community Leisure and Play

Hudson Way

- 1.1 This project is now complete and after being formally opened by our Mayor has had great feedback from the children and parents. There have been some helpful ideas received on how we can improve the site even more, such as fencing, and we will be working these up in due course.

Blackbrook Pool

- 1.2 The Blackbrook Pool project continues on schedule and I see from the latest newsletter that quite a few of you have visited the site which I am sure you found interesting.

2. Tone Leisure (Taunton Deane) Limited Activities

Tone continues to develop and support a number of community outreach programmes:-

Health Development

Walk Well with Tone

- 2.1 1,377 walkers took part in the Taunton Deane and Wellington Walk Well in September and October. Since April 2015, 162 new walkers have joined the Walk Well programmes.

Active Lifestyles

Alzheimer's Memory Walk

- 2.2 This Memory Walk was held on 3 October 2015 with Somerset Care Home (Lavender Court, Roman Road). 20 residents and family members took part.

Autumn Fun Day

- 2.3 An Autumn Fun Day was held at Cades Farm, Wellington on 28 October 2015, organised in partnership with Wellington One Team. Tug of War, Rush

Hockey and Health Checks were delivered. 103 children and families attended.

Ghost Walk

- 2.4 A Ghost Walk was held in Wellington on 30 October 2015, organised in partnership with Wellington One Team. Games, activities, fancy dress and face painting were followed by a 'haunted walk' at Wellington Cricket Pavilion. 81 children (0-12 years) and families attended.

Walking Football

- 2.5 Weekly Walking Football sessions have been running successfully in Wellington for the last four weeks. An average of 10-15 men aged between 40 and 80 years have been attending.

Community Boot Camp Circuit Classes

- 2.6 These classes are running in St. Peter's Hall, Priorswood, from September to December. An average of 5-10 participants in the 20s-50s age group have attended.

Community Pounds Weight Loss Programme

- 2.7 This 12 week programme is running in Priorswood Community Centre from September to December. There are 29 participants on the programme.

Facility News

Wellsprings Leisure Centre and Wellington Sports Centre

- 2.8 At the end of October the gyms at these two centres underwent a major refurbishment, which saw all the fitness equipment replaced with state of the art Technogym kit.
- 2.9 Additional machines which were not already housed at the centres include two top of the range Watt Bikes (the Trainer and the Pro) which will benefit all those budding and professional cyclists out there as well as those who play a sport such as Rugby. Also, both gyms now have a hand bike; something a little different to incorporate into your fitness workout!
- 2.10 Several of the new machines are IFI (Inclusive Fitness Initiative) accredited, enabling members to utilise the machines to suit their own needs to help them on their fitness goals.

Wellsprings Leisure Centre

- 2.11 Vibe Youth Nights continue to run at Wellsprings on Friday evenings between 6 pm and 8 pm. The cost is £1 per head and there are a wide range of activities including football, parkour, basketball, trampolining, table tennis, pool, gym and dance mat sessions. There are an average of 53 boys and 41 girls attending each Friday night.

Taunton Tennis Centre

- 2.12 Ivor Griffiths won the LTA's National Disability Coach Award for 2015. Ivor attended a National Conference in London to receive this prestigious award from Greg Rusedski. The award recognises Ivor's enthusiasm and hard work in disability tennis at Taunton Tennis Club and around the county.

Councillor Catherine Herbert