

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