

Taunton Deane Borough Council

At a meeting of Taunton Deane Borough Council held at Shire Hall, Shuttern Taunton on 10 July 2018 at 6.30 p.m.

Present The Mayor (Councillor Mrs Herbert)
Councillors Aldridge, Berry, Mrs Blatchford, Brown, Cavill, Coles, Coombes, Cossey, D Durdan, Ms K Durdan, Edwards, Farbahi, Mrs Floyd, Gaines, Mrs Gunner, Habgood, Hall, Henley, C Hill, Mrs Hill, Horsley, Hunt, James, R Lees, Mrs Lees, Ms Lisgo, Mansell, Morrell, Nicholls, Parrish, Prior-Sankey, Mrs Reed, Ryan, Mrs Smith, Mrs Smith-Roberts, Mrs Stock-Williams, Sully, Townsend, Mrs Tucker, Mrs Warmington, Watson, Ms Webber, Wedderkopp, Williams and Wren

Mrs A Elder – Chairman of the Standards Advisory Committee

1. **Former Councillor Kenneth (Ken) Hayward**

The Mayor made reference to the recent death of former Councillor Ken Hayward following a long illness. Mr Hayward had served as a Councillor for the Norton Fitzwarren Ward between 2003 and 2015 and as Mayor of Taunton Deane during the 2007/2008 Municipal Year.

The Council stood in silence in his memory.

2. **Election of Deputy Mayor**

On the motion of Councillor Coles, seconded by Councillor Mrs Smith-Roberts it was **resolved** that Councillor Francesca Teresa Christine Smith be elected as Deputy Mayor for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

Councillor Mrs Smith made and signed the declaration of acceptance of office and retired to be robed.

3. **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meetings of Taunton Deane Borough Council held on 10 April 2018 and 23 April 2018, copies having been sent to each Member, were signed by the Mayor.

4. **Apologies**

Councillors Mrs J Adkins, M Adkins, Beale, Booth, Bowrah, Davies, Govier and Stone.

5. **Communications**

- (i) The Mayor announced that a 'Celebration of Life' service would be held in respect of Ken Hayward on Monday, 16 July 2018 at 11.30 a.m. at All Saints Church, Norton Fitzwarren. Councillors were welcome to attend.

She went on to say that Ken had benefitted enormously over the past few weeks of hot weather from a remote controlled Dyson fan. As a result the Mayor had written to the company asking it to donate some of its fans to St Margaret's Hospice

Although a reply to this request was still awaited, the Mayor asked Members to also consider making a donation in Ken's memory to enable the purchase of a number of fans for the Hospice.

- (ii) The Mayor reported that she had participated in the 50:50 Cycle Ride on 6 May 2018. She hoped to receive any outstanding sponsorship from Councillors as soon as possible.
- (iii) Lastly, the Mayor drew attention to a series of 'Tea Parties' at Mr Miles Tea Rooms in Taunton she would be hosting, the first of which had already taken place on 4 July 2018. She hoped Councillors would be able to support these forthcoming events aimed at raising money for her three charities.

The next Tea Party was scheduled for 10 October 2018.

6. Declaration of Interests

Councillor Prior-Sankey declared a personal interest as she had recently been appointed to the Somerset Waste Board as one of Taunton Deane's representatives. She also declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item No. 11 as she and her husband were hosts for the YMCA Coast's 'Nightstop' Scheme where they were paid expenses.

Councillors Farbahi, Gaines and Morrell all declared personal interests in connection with agenda No. 7 as they had all signed the petition.

Councillors Coles, Hunt and Prior-Sankey declared personal interests as Members of Somerset County Council. Councillors Brown, Cavill, Coombes, Gaines, Henley, Hunt, James, Mansell, Nicholls, Mrs Reed, Mrs Stock-Williams, Townsend, Mrs Warmington, Watson and Mrs Webber all declared personal interests as Members of Town or Parish Councils.

(The Deputy Mayor returned to the meeting.)

7. Public Question Time

- (i) On behalf of the Residents of Staplegrove Action Group (RoSAG), Jackie Calcroft spoke about the importance of making viability studies transparent to both Councillors and the public.

Too often developers were pleading that they could no longer meet the commitments they originally made despite their initial detailed Business Plans validated by numerous respectable consultants. Invariably it was the allocation of affordable housing which bore the brunt

Viability assessments must no longer be shrouded in secrecy. At the very

least they were making the role of those sitting on Planning Committees untenable. How could anyone make a genuine, considered decision without the full facts?

Councillor Beale's report later on in the agenda highlighted the fact that the provision of new affordable housing in Taunton Deane was woefully behind target. Yet at numerous meetings we hear Councillor affirmations that they do not want a reduction in affordable housing

In the case of Staplegrove the promoter's viability assessments shifted from their original planning application allocation of 25% affordable housing to just 10% before negotiations increased this to a paltry 15%. Comeytrowe had recently been reduced from 25% to 17.5%.....a total of over 300 fewer affordable homes on just two sites!

The Council applied for a £7,200,000 Government grant to build the required Staplegrove Spine Road which the promoter's viability assessment stated they could not afford without initially building some 500+ houses to fund it!

My belief was that the Council thought that should this funding be realised then the ludicrous drop down road onto Manor Road Corkscrew Lane would not happen. But this was not necessarily the case – as planning permission was granted with a drop down road!

Mrs Calcroft therefore asked:-

- (a) What percentage of affordable housing had now been re-negotiated for Staplegrove?
- (b) What recent negotiations had Taunton Deane had with the Government since May this year regarding the actual receipt of the £7,200,000?
- (c) Should this funding not reach the Council until the end of this year what robust steps would be taken to ensure there was no drop down road?

She also asked all Councillors to support the motion in agenda item No 9 relating to viability assessments.

In response, Councillor Habgood stated that there was little the Council could do in relation to viability assessments until the outcome of the Government's review of the National Planning Policy Framework had been received. It remained to be seen whether there were to be any further measures introduced to address the issues that had been outlined.

He acknowledged that the Council's affordable housing target had not been reached during the last year, however there were particular reasons for this shortfall. Taunton Deane's track record had been solid in the past three years and there was good reason to expect that future targets would be reached.

With regard to the Government funding, Councillor Habgood confirmed that this had still to be received. However, when it was it would be used to provide the Spine Road which would mean there would be no need for the drop down road to be provided.

- (ii) Mr Martin Pakes stated that in gathering over 600 signatures for a petition requesting the withdrawal of the Council's current planning application for redeveloping Coal Orchard, Taunton it was apparent that the vast majority of the public were unaware of the proposals.

In the light of this, what steps would the Council be taking to increase publicity of the proposal to ensure the electorate were better informed and better able to make their representations?

In response, Councillor Mark Edwards reported that as the application was live, he was unable to comment on the detail. However, everyone had a right to view the application and make their representations accordingly.

He went on to confirm that following the granting of outline planning permission last year, the current application sought to deal with the reserved matters.

Councillor Edwards confirmed that the Coal Orchard scheme had received a great deal of publicity through the local press and social media and was therefore surprised that so many people were unaware of what was being planned.

8. Receipt of Petition – “Stop wasting taxpayers’ money on a bad idea in Firepool, Taunton and drive inward investment first”

Mr Kit Chapman presented a petition containing over 1,500 signatures to the Council which called upon Taunton Deane “To reconsider its speculative hotel investment in Firepool and engage in consulting local businesses and the community to transform this prize site into a unique destination for high-value inward investment.

The Council was planning on borrowing £16,000,000 of taxpayers’ money to build a 120-bed hotel on Firepool.

We believed this decision by the Council to be a high-risk, speculative and irresponsible taxpayer-backed scheme. There had been no transparency to justify the Council’s decision-making process.

We can see no obvious commercial demand for this investment as there is nothing in the Firepool Redevelopment Plan that would attract new business-led investment into the centre of Taunton and nothing that would attract visiting tourists.

If the Council intended to borrow £16,000,000 of taxpayers’ money, we would expect to see the funds first deployed in a manner that would drive new business into the centre of Taunton, a plan geared to attract visiting tourists to Somerset’s County Town, and a scheme that would enhance the lives, health and well-being of its inhabitants.

With the high street retail sector in crisis, it was now vital that Taunton developed forward-looking, imaginative and innovative plans which capitalised on emerging business opportunities. Firepool must now be transformed into a

social, cultural, sporting and leisure destination. Ideas already put into the public domain by Tauntonians included:-

- A large, highly flexible space capable of hosting popular concerts, conferences, awards dinners and much more;
- A visitor centre (think Eden Project) celebrating the biodiversity and natural habitats of Taunton's unique hinterland (the Levels and Moors, the Quantocks, Blackdowns and Exmoor);
- High-tech business start-up units – a centre of innovation for Research and Development;
- A sports franchise/sporting facilities, for example a snow dome/skating rink;
- Low-rent artist studios to create a vibrant arts community; and
- A trampoline park/soft play area.

It was our firm opinion that Taunton Deane Borough Council was not only risking ratepayers' and council taxpayers' money in a highly speculative investment, but also risking its ability to fund the services the public had come to rely on.

We the undersigned call on the Council to stop wasting taxpayers' money. Engage with us and reconsider Council plans and investments to transform Somerset's County Town into a unique destination for high-value new business.

We urge the Council not to put "the cart before the horse". Work with us to establish a secure base that served the best interests of Taunton. Create the demand by attracting inward investment and visiting tourists to Firepool first."

Following the presentation of the petition, Messrs. Scott Berry and Nick Chapman addressed the Council to explain in detail why it was necessary for the Council to look again at its hotel proposal. This was followed by a debate by Councillors.

At the conclusion of the debate the following motion was proposed by Councillor Farbahi and seconded by Councillor Coles:-

"To defer the decision to build an hotel at Firepool and consult with businesses in Taunton Deane in order to safeguard public funds and to ensure the maximum return on our capital".

Referring to the four options (set out in the Council's Constitution) open to the Council as to the response to a petition, the Mayor sought confirmation from the proposer and seconder that it was option 3 – to refer the matter for further investigation - which was being requested. Confirmation was received.

Resolved that the motion, as set out above, be agreed.

9. **Motion – Viability Assessment through Section 106 Agreements**

Proposed by Councillor Habib Farbahi, seconded by Councillor Simon Coles.

“The Council notes:-

Viability assessment was a process of assessing whether a site was financially viable, by looking at whether the value generated by a development was more than the cost of developing it, with an acceptable level of financial return to a willing landowner.

This problem was exacerbated if the assessment was treated as confidential and detailed information was not available to the public and could not be discussed by the Planning Committee.

The Local Planning Authority (LPA) in recent months had received viability assessments as part of the application submission with the Staplegrove development in October 2017 and had recently accepted a reduction of 7.5% in the levels of affordable housing for 2,000 homes at Comeytrove and Trull after the developer’s submission and the original resolution to the grant of permission in January 2016.

Reducing the levels of affordable housing from 25% to 17.5% had provided the developers with an extra 150 open market homes at the expense of our struggling younger generation families in Taunton Deane who could not get onto the housing ladder.

There were now more than 2,000 people on the housing waiting list and urgent action was needed to reduce these numbers, instead of allowing them to grow.

More than 70% of Councils did not believe the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) would meet the need for low-cost homes in their local area, according to a recent survey.

The Council should take note of Shelter’s Chief Executive Officer’s warning that the lack of affordable housing was the main cause of homelessness. The figures from the Department for Housing, Communities and Local Government showed an increase of 16% of homeless people over the previous year. Indeed latest figures demonstrated that Taunton held the record in the County for homelessness.

We have no doubt that the planning process had to be transparent with all the parameters and policies clear to both developers and this authority, to ensure that our Planning Committee could make an informed decision. Clarification of process and methodology during determination of the application was required. At the moment important issues, for example the number / type / tenure and location of affordable units, were often not adequately considered at an early stage.

The local information requirements list, also known as the local validation list, needed to set out clearly the information that the Council would require to be able to register, assess and determine planning applications. The amount of information required would vary, depending upon the type and complexity of the proposed development, including any specific site constraints.

Any viability assessment should be supported by evidence informed by engagement with developers, landowners, infrastructure and affordable housing providers. Any viability assessment should follow the Government's recommended approach to assessing key factors as set out in the recently published draft National Planning Policy Guidance and be proportionate, simple, transparent and publicly available. This information should be available for public scrutiny and comment.

Applicants should also provide a summary of the financial viability assessment which outlined key findings, inputs, and conclusions to assist review by the LPA, and members of the public.

It was important that developers were accountable to communities and that communities were able to easily see where contributions towards infrastructure and affordable housing had been secured and spent. Any taxpayer's contributions towards enabling developments should be clawed back plus interest.

According to Shelter, "The damage being done by viability assessments was clear to see. Fortunately, there was a simple solution. By following through on plans to amend national planning rules in the 'planning for the right homes in the right places' consultation, the Government could deliver thousands more affordable homes every year, increase overall housing supply and make sure communities received more of what they wanted from new housing schemes.

We therefore recommend that:-

Generally the viability should be assessed through the plan-making process as set out in the new draft National Planning Policy Framework, and

- 1) Where viability factors in to development, viability assessments should be submitted at the validation stage. This would make for more complete and considered applications and would help streamline and speed up the decision making process;
- 2) All the facts and figures should be publically available wherever possible to enable an informed debate and decision to be made;
- 3) Wherever possible, the Council would seek to recover any taxpayer contribution to enable development such as Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) with interest at 3%; and
- 4) Where viability remained an issue, the Council would apply principles set out in the new draft National Planning Policy Guidance. Under these circumstances the Council would insist on:-
 - (a) An open book procedure to ensure delivery of much needed housing; and
 - (b) The levels of contributions to be assessed during and after completion

of developments. The Council must insist on the potential use of a claw back mechanism to maximize affordable housing contributions.”

During the discussion, Members expressed the view that the outcome of the recent NPPF consultation should be awaited from the Government before the detailed content and implications of the motion were considered.

The motion was put and was lost.

10. **Inter Authority Agreement and Constitutional Matters**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning a proposed amendment to the terms of the Inter Authority Agreement between Taunton Deane Borough Council (TDBC) and West Somerset Council (WSC) and, following the establishment of the Shadow Council arrangements, a proposed amendment to Taunton Deane’s Constitution.

The Inter Authority Agreement entered into between TDBC and WSC in November 2013 included the establishment of a Joint Partnership Advisory Group (JPAG) to oversee the partnership arrangements. In 2016 its terms of reference were amended to cover the overseeing of the approved Transformation Programme and the creation of a new Council.

The Somerset West and Taunton (Local Government Changes) Order 2018 which came into effect on 25 May 2018 required the Shadow Council to prepare and keep under review an Implementation Plan to ensure that the new Council was properly established on 1 April 2019.

Now that the Shadow Council governance arrangements were in place which covered the overseeing of Transformation and the creation of the new Council, JPAG had become surplus to requirements.

Noted that the Inter Authority Agreement could be varied at any time by the written agreement of the authorities and TDBC and WSC had therefore been recommended to amend the Agreement by the dissolution of JPAG, with the Shadow Executive assuming the role of facilitating Member oversight of Transformation activity.

Further reported that with the establishment of the Shadow Council and its Committees this would place further pressures of time on both Members and officers.

In particular, there were currently four Scrutiny Committees for the One Team of officers to support and there was insufficient capacity within the current structure to do this. Equally, elements of Scrutiny activity that were currently undertaken by the individual authorities such as scrutinising their respective budget proposals for the following year would now become the responsibility of the Shadow Scrutiny Committee thus reducing the need for ‘routine’ reports to existing Scrutiny meetings.

It was therefore proposed that the Constitution should be amended to facilitate the dissolution of the existing two TDBC Scrutiny Committees and the establishment of one Scrutiny Committee, consisting of 15 seats allocated

on a politically proportional basis (9 Conservatives, 4 Liberal democrats, 1 Independent and 1 Labour) to undertake the overview and scrutiny function on behalf of the Council for the period until 31 March 2019.

Resolved that:-

- (1) The Inter Authority Agreement between Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset Council be amended by the dissolution of the Joint Partnership Advisory Group with the review and monitoring of the Implementation Plan being undertaken through the Shadow Council Governance arrangements; and
- (2) Article 9 and other relevant provisions of the Constitution be amended to facilitate the dissolution of the existing two existing Taunton Deane Scrutiny Committees and the establishment of one Scrutiny committee to undertake the overview and scrutiny function on behalf of the Council for the period until 31 March 2019.

11. **Capital Loan to Somerset Coast YMCA by Taunton Deane Borough Council**

Considered report previously circulated, which sought endorsement from Members for the Council to invest in the redevelopment of the Great Western Hotel, adjacent to the southern side of Taunton Railway Station.

This investment would be delivered through provision of a capital loan to Somerset Coast YMCA (YMCA-SC) of £675,000. The loan would complete the funding package of £1,700,000 to enable the necessary works to take place.

The redevelopment of this key building which is situated in an important gateway to Taunton was part of the overall plans to redevelop the area around the station. This would be in two key elements:-

- A business hub, incubator space, collaboration space and meeting rooms; and
- A training and skills partnership utilising 15 bed boutique style hotel accommodation.

These would combine to directly deliver 10 new jobs, 12 apprenticeships, 10 traineeships and a range of volunteering opportunities.

The proposition was based on the experience that YMCA-SC had in operating similar ventures. They were developing a portfolio of sites to support operation of their business which had some resonance with the Council's own approach. The two flagship projects of comparable undertaking were the Beach Hotel in Minehead and Barley Wood House in Wrington. Both of these social enterprises were financially self-sustaining.

As with any investment this was not risk free, however the risks identified were considered to be acceptable. There were financial benefits for the Council, particularly through increased investment income.

In a wider sense the loan created leverage with other organisations which had enabled a funding package to be created through the use of a number of funding sources. The proposed scheme would therefore have a number of benefits creating wider economic benefit for Taunton Deane. It would support small businesses and enable greater collaborative working.

The Corporate Scrutiny Committee had previously considered this proposal and supported its referral for approval to Full Council.

Resolved that:-

- (1) The principle of a 25 year, secured capital loan to Somerset Coast YMCA of up to £675,000 at beneficial terms to the Council be agreed;
- (2) A £675,000 Supplementary Budget in the Council's 2018/2019 Capital Programme in respect of the capital loan which was to be treated as capital expenditure be approved, with the understanding that the principal payments would be treated as capital receipts and would offset the up-front expenditure; and
- (3) Delegated authority be granted to the Leader of the Council and Section 151 Officer to agree the final detailed terms and conditions of the loan following the principles agreed by Full Council.

12. **Approval of Redundancies (Transformation) and Technical Change to Pension Discretions Policy**

Considered report previously circulated, which sought Council approval for the redundancies of the Assistant Director Planning and Environment, the Open Spaces Area 1 Supervisor and the Housing and Community Project Lead.

Although the necessary financial approvals were already in place via the Business Case for Transformation, there was a requirement as set out in the 2018/2019 Pay Policy Statement for redundancies to be approved where severance costs exceeded £100,000 per case.

Under the Transformation project the post holders had been included in Phase 1 and, along with 19 other staff, had expressed the preference to leave the organisation. The use of voluntary redundancy had been adopted to help achieve the required 22% savings in staff costs leaving those staff remaining to compete for the new posts created in the organisation.

Further reported a technical change to the Councils' Pensions Discretions Policy following advice from Peninsula Pensions.

Peninsula Pensions had recommended the use of Regulation 16(2)(e) and 16(4)(d) – Funding of Additional Pension rather than Regulation 31 – Award of Additional Pension to allow staff to use any compensatory payment made for redundancy or retirement in the interest of efficiency of the service.

This technical change would maintain the benefit for the employee and did not increase any costs to the authority.

Although Phase 1 of the new structure created through Transformation would come into effect at the end of September 2018 discussions had been held with one of the employees to secure their services until the 31 March 2019 to ensure sufficient capacity was available to manage the workload of the Planning Service and identified risks to the service.

Resolved that:-

- (1) The redundancies of the Open Spaces Area 1 Supervisor and Housing and Community Project Lead with effect from 30 September 2018 and the Assistant Director Planning and Environment with effect from 31 March 2019 be approved in accordance with the financial details set out in the confidential appendices A, B and C to the report; and
- (2) The amended Pensions Discretions Policy be also approved as set out in Appendix D to the report.

13. Suspension of Standing Order

Resolved that Standing Order 28, Time limits for all meetings be suspended to enable the meeting to continue for a further half an hour.

14. Exclusion of the Press and Public

Resolved that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item as it included exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, and that the public interest in withholding the information outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information to the public.

15. A Proposed Commercial Loan relating to premises in Taunton

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the provision of a commercial loan to an organisation in Taunton towards costs of a redevelopment project.

Full details of the proposal were set out in the confidential report and appendices.

This loan should be seen as a commercial investment by the Council and the benefit to the revenue budget was significant. It was also recognised that the project was of wider benefit to the whole area and in particular Firepool.

Resolved that:-

- (1) A supplementary estimate to the Capital Programme be approved for a loan in the sum set out in the report to the identified organisation as part of the finance necessary for the proposed redevelopment. Final terms and conditions of the loan to be delegated to the Head of Commercial Investment and Change and the Section 151 Officer;

- (2) It be agreed that the principal repayments of the loan be treated as capital receipts and would offset the initial loan advance to the identified organisation; and
- (3) An urgent request that the identified organisation undertake appropriate consultation with the local community on this redevelopment and the improvement of key local amenities be supported.

Following the discussion of the above item, the meeting was re-opened to the press and public.

16. **Recommendation to Council from the Executive**

Financial Monitoring – Outturn 2017/2018

The Council's financial performance for the 2017/2018 financial year was recently considered by the Executive.

The revenue outturn position for the financial year 2017/2018 was as follows:-

- The General Fund (GF) Revenue Outturn position for 2017/2018 was a net underspend of £21,000 (0.1% of Net Budget), after proposed reserve transfers and carry forwards; and
- The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) which was a 'Self-Financing' account for the Council's Housing Landlord function, was budgeted to 'break even'. The HRA Outturn for 2017/2018 was a net overspend of £446,000 (1.7% of gross income).

The capital outturn position for 2017/2018 was as follows:-

- The total General Fund Capital Programme budget was £53,304,000, including continuing schemes from previous years and new schemes approved at the start of and during 2017/2018. Of this, £13,883,000 had already been spent in previous years and a further £4,869,000 had been spent during 2017/2018. The projected spend in 2018/2019 and future years was £34,259,000. A net underspend of £293,000 was reported against the overall approved budget for the Programme.
- The HRA approved Capital Programme at the end of 2017/2018 was £18,839,000. This related to schemes which would be completed over the next five years. The actual expenditure on the Capital Programme during 2017/2018 was £10,126,000 with £8,713,000 for planned investment to implement approved schemes in future years.

The General Fund reserves balance as at 31 March 2018 stood at £2,299,000 which remained above the minimum reserves expectation.

The HRA Reserve balance as at 31 March 2018 stood at £2,778,000, which was above the minimum level set within the Council's Budget Strategy and HRA Business Plan.

The total General Fund Earmarked Reserves balance as at 31 March 2018 was £21,615,000 and for HRA Earmarked Reserves was £6,990,000, representing contingencies and funds that had been set aside for specific purposes to be spent in 2018/2019 or later years.

The year-end financial statements reported that Deane DLO had made an overall deficit of £44,000 after contributing £101,000 to the GF. This deficit had been transferred from the DLO Trading Account Reserves which, together with a £200,000 contribution to Transformation, had decreased the reserve balance to £121,000.

The Deane Helpline has reported a net deficit of £64,000 for the year, which was an underspend of £53,000 against the final budget and represented the net cost of the service to the GF.

The Outturn Report had previously been considered and supported by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee.

Resolved that:-

- (1) The reported General Fund Revenue Budget underspend of £21,000 in 2017/2018 and the General Reserves Balance of £2,299,000 as at 31 March 2018 be noted;
- (2) The General Fund Revenue Budget Carry Forwards totalling £1,195,000 be approved;
- (3) A General Fund Capital Programme Budget Profile totalling £34,259,000 in 2018/2019 and later years be approved;
- (4) A Housing Revenue Account Budget Carry Forward totalling £344,000 be approved; and
- (5) A Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme Budget Profile totalling £8,713,000 in 2018/2019 and later years be also approved.

Due to the lateness of the hour, the Mayor suggested that rather than further extend the duration of the meeting, questions for the Executive Councillors in respect of their reports (details follow) could be dealt with via e-mail. This was agreed.

17. Reports of the Leader of the Council and Executive Councillors

(i) Leader of the Council (Councillor John Williams)

Councillor Williams's report covered the following topics:-

- Shadow Council – Inaugural Meeting;
- Trenchard Way, Taunton;
- Future of Local Government in Somerset;
- Bridgwater and Taunton College;
- Visit to the UK Hydrographic Office;
- Update on Refurbishment of the Great Western Hotel;
- Refurbishment of The Deane House; and

- Police Lease and Occupation of The Deane House.

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

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

- Village Agents – Helping People in Rural Areas;
- Examples of where Village and Community Agents have helped;
- Wider work of Community Council for Somerset;
- Diverted Giving – to help the homeless and reduce begging; and
- Government Grant awarded to tackle rough sleeping.

(iii) **Housing Services (Councillor Terry Beale)**

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

- Housing Enabling and Development

Development - North Taunton; Weavers Arms, Rockwell Green, Wellington; 12 Moorland Close, Taunton; 11 Belmont Road, Taunton; Laxton Road, Taunton; and Oake Woolaway Repair Project;

Enabling - Affordable Housing Open Day; Staplegrove; Comeytrove; Oake; Parmin Close, Taunton; Discounted Open Market Sites; Homefinder and Affordable Housing Partnership;

- Anti-Social Behaviour;
- Further Work Projects – Inspired to Achieve Contract; and Star Survey;
- Deane Helpline;
- Universal Credit;
- Repairs and Maintenance; and
- Lodge Close Extra Care, Wellington.

(iv) **Environmental Services and Climate Change (Councillor Patrick Berry)**

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

- Environmental Health (Staffing Update; Food Hygiene Inspections; Hinkley Point Emergency Exercise; Safety Advisory Groups; Public Health Funerals; and Process Redesign Programme);
- Licensing (Performance; Staffing; Process Redesign);
- Street Sweeping and Toilet Cleaning;
- Somerset Waste Partnership (Upgrading the Service : Recycle More; Plastics : Recycling Pots, Tubs and Trays; Kerbside knife warning); and

- Cemeteries and Crematorium (Small Projects Update; Chapel Waiting Room Expansion; and Business Figures).

(v) **Economic Development, Asset Management, Arts and Culture, Tourism and Communications (Councillor Mark Edwards)**

The report from Councillor Edwards covered:-

- Communications;
- Business Development - Taunton Deane Business Awards; Growing our Garden Town (Taunton Growth Prospectus); and Wiveliscombe;
- Events, Place, Retail Marketing and Visitor Centre – Events; Place and Retail Marketing; and Visitor Centre;
- Growth Strategy and Specific Projects – Coal Orchard Redevelopment, Taunton; and
- Asset Management Service Update – Asset Management System (Open Assets by Capita); Internal Special Health and Safety and Compliance Review; Leisure Procurement – Facilities Lease Heads of Terms; Flook House; Country Park; Annual Asset Valuation; One Public Estate Meetings; and Traveller Encampments.

(vi) **Planning Policy and Transportation (Councillor Roger Habgood)**

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

- Planning Policy;
- Garden Town Strategy and Plan;
- Highways England Consultation – Taunton to Southfields Dualling Scheme;
- Taunton Urban Realm;
- Variable Message Signage and Car Park Pay on Foot;
- Connecting Taunton Transport Strategy;
- Neighbourhood Plans;
- Major Planning – Staplegrove; Firepool, Taunton; Comeytrowe Coal Orchard; and Nexus 25;
- Resourcing of the Planning Service; and
- Heritage at Risk – Tonedale Mill, Wellington and Sandhill Park, Bishops Lydeard.

(vii) **Sport, Parks and Leisure (Councillor Mrs Vivienne Stock-Williams)**

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

- Community Leisure – Play and Recreation; Planned Works for 2018/2019; Section 106 Funding for Play, Sport, Allotments and Community Halls; Capital Grant Scheme for Voluntary Village Halls, Sports Clubs and Allotments and the Parish Play Area

- Grant Scheme; and Summer Sunday Bandstand Concerts;
- GLL (Taunton Deane) – Community Sport and Health; and Facilities;
- Parks and Open Spaces – Grass Cutting; Housing Grounds Maintenance; Vivary Park, Taunton; Vivary Park Lake; and Wellington Park; and
- Property – Blackbrook Pavilion Site, Taunton; Leisure Facilities; Station Road Pool, Taunton; Vivary Park Golf Course; Wellington Sports Centre; Wellsprings Leisure Centre, Taunton; and Wilton Lands, Taunton.

(viii) **Corporate Resources (Councillor Andrew Sully)**

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

- Corporate Services;
- Corporate Performance;
- Customer Services;
- Facilities Management;
- ICT/Technology;
- Member Case Management;
- HR and Organisational Development;
- The Mayoralty and Democratic Services;
- Procurement Team;
- Finance; and
- Revenues and Benefits.

(Councillor Nicholls left the meeting at 7.15 p.m. Councillors D and Ms Durdan left the meeting at 8.30 p.m. Councillor Mrs Gunner left the meeting at 8.41 p.m. and Councillor Morrell at 9.53 p.m.)

(The meeting ended at 9.57 p.m.)