

Council Meeting – 2 October 2018

Report of Councillor Mark Edwards - Economic Development, Asset Management, Arts and Culture, Tourism and Communications

Section 1: Events, Place, Retail Marketing and Visitor Centre

Staffing Changes

- 1.1 We have recently bid farewell to Georgie Lane, the Town Centre Marketing Assistant who has returned to University after completing her one-year industrial placement.
- 1.2 In addition Andrew Hopkins, the Marketing and Place Manager leaves after 20 years of service. He has made a significant difference over this time and has always made the extra effort to help the town flourish. I wish them both well in the future and thank them for their work.

Events

- 1.3 Taunton has enjoyed an amazing summer of great events and wonderful sunshine. It was terrific to see thousands of people enjoy the Live in Somerset concerts in July in Vivary Park and then see Fake Festivals which had returned to Longrun Meadow sell out for a successive year.
- 1.4 Taunton Live also took place during July and was a superb celebration of the arts with events taking place across the month culminating in a one day festival in Goodland Gardens. Liz Hutchin and Jenny Keogh from Go Create should be congratulated for their amazing efforts.
- 1.5 Taunton Flower Show, the Steam Rally, Eat Wellington and the Street Fair and Carnival in Wiveliscombe have all taken place over recent weeks attracting great crowds. We will continue to work together with event organisers on a vibrant and varied year-long event programme.
- 1.6 Plans for the Cricket World Cup in 2019 are still progressing extremely well and I will update Members on these in my next Full Council report.

Place and Retail Marketing

- 1.7 Positive discussions continue to take place with town centre retailers on the development of a Business Improvement District (BID) in Taunton Town Centre.

- 1.8 The procurement of consultants to look at the feasibility of a BID will start this autumn. This procurement exercise will be led by the Taunton Chamber of Commerce and will be supported by officers.
- 1.9 Taunton, Wellington and Wiveliscombe continue to be promoted through open Wi-Fi, the destination website and social media platforms:-
- Destination website (www.visitsomerset.co.uk/taunton) – 104,000 page views in July to mid-September period;
 - Visit Taunton has – Facebook: 10,150 likes; Instagram: 2,150 followers; Twitter: 7,025 followers;
 - Visit Wellington – Facebook: 1,240 likes;
 - Visit Wivey – Facebook: 780 likes.

New literature produced: Updated Independent Shop List for Taunton Town Centre.

Visitor Centre

- 1.10 The Visitor Centre Team continue to actively support all marketing activities. This includes providing content for all digital platforms, e-newsletters and updating the destination website in addition to the day-to-day job of welcoming many visitors to the office.
- 1.11 The Charity Christmas Card Shop will open for business on the 4 October and will remain open until the 22 December 2018.
- 1.12 Bookings for the banners and poster rotunda units remains healthy. Additional pennant posts will be located in East Street and are available to book from early October 2018.
- 1.13 Street trading within the town centre continues to be buoyant with currently around 30 traders using the street trading permit held by the Business Development Unit.

Section 2: Growth Strategy and Specific Projects

Coal Orchard Redevelopment

- 2.1 Detailed matters planning consent was granted on 12 September 2018. We will commence on site once the permission is issued which includes the Section 106 Agreement to deliver affordable housing on the site.
- 2.2 Site works commence with the demolition of St James Street Pool and archaeology work which is essential to comply with the permission. This will cause some part closures of the Coal Orchard Car Park but the aim is to fully reopen the car park for the busy Christmas period.

- 2.3 Marketing of the commercial units will now accelerate with our commercial agents who are working on securing pre-lets for the scheme. There is strong local interest with one pre-let already having been secured. A second pre-let is now advancing which would mean 30 % of the commercial floor area being under offer before a brick has been laid on site. There are active discussions with gym operators and national restaurant operators underway. We will also now consolidate the marketing collateral from our residential agents and commence marketing at an appropriate time in the New Year.
- 2.4 We are procuring our build partner with Invitations to Tender having been issued and with the planning consent having been secured this process can now be completed to enable a late January 2019 start on the main build.
- 2.5 We are also progressing the critical Brewhouse Theatre element of this redevelopment as a cultural heart of this important area and have been evaluating tenders and I hope to be able to update by the time of the meeting.
- 2.6 These appointments are supported by the New Homes Bonus allocations that the Council has set aside to support growth. We expect to see exciting new designs in the early part of the New Year.

Firepool Hotel Project

- 2.7 We are running a business consultation on the proposed Firepool Hotel investment in October 2018, and have prepared a 'Q & A' consultation document with an on-line survey to seek views to help us shape our approach to the hotel project and also other commercial ventures that the Council will develop in the future as part of the new transformed authority.

Business Development

- 2.8 On 12 September 2018, as well as Coal Orchard, there were two other developments being delivered by Quantum at Lyngford House and Quantock House, Taunton which were granted full planning permission. These developments will bring additional jobs to the area in the thriving health care sector.
- 2.9 Wiveliscombe Enterprise Centre should start later this year and we are waiting for Somerset County Council to confirm the start date on site as I understand there are some procurement issues slowing up the process but they are pressing ahead.
- 2.10 I want to thank Ian Timms who has recently left the One Team. I have worked closely with Ian over the last three years and have always found him to be incredibly focused and critically able to achieve a great deal bringing projects to fruition. I wish him well.

Section 3 – Communications

- 3.1 It has been a busy period for communications with plenty of positive initiatives and decisions to promote as well as keen interest in a number of Council meetings and processes.
- 3.2 Notable press interest has been generated by press releases on:-
- The approved Coal Orchard plans. Press release issued to SW media and others tailored to Planning Magazine and the Property Gazette;
 - The Park and Ride reprieve. Issued to exclusively reveal funding from Taunton Deane and resulted in an interviews including one for the BBC Sunday Politics programme;
 - There has been joint working across Communications and Marketing with the Cricket World Cup 2019 (CWC19) team. Press releases have been issued by the Council on ticket ballots and meetings are taking place with a view to promoting the Taunton matches; and
 - A comprehensive piece on Taunton's Garden Town status and the Council's plans were submitted to Planning Magazine;
- 3.3 A press release detailing the go-live of pay on exit parking and VMS signage is being issued on Tuesday, 25 October 2018.
- 3.4 The three Taunton War Memorials in Vivary Park, in the centre of The Parade and in St Mary's Churchyard have been given a clean ahead of commemorations to mark 100 years since the end of World War One. A press release has been issued.

Section 4: Asset Management Service Update

- 4.1 The Asset Data and Compliance Team recruited a new Asset Compliance Technician in July, a new Asset/Stock Condition Surveyor in August as well as another due to start in October bringing the total Asset/Stock Condition Surveyors to a much needed four. Due to Transformation, Asset Management has a high proportion of contractors.
- 4.2 The Asset Management function is looking forward to the realisation of the new management structure so that it may forge ahead with the Asset Strategy for the new Council. The new Council's Asset Management Strategy will necessarily evolve from inception of the new Council aligned with its evolving organisational strategy. The need for a property specialist representative at a senior level on the SLT/ Executive level is essential given the significant and dynamic asset portfolios.
- 4.3 Key project work updates include:-

Asset Management System (Open Assets by Capita)

- 4.4 Final amendments are being made to the Open Assets Capita Contract with updates due to be finalised by end of September for signing with SHAPE Legal.
- 4.5 Implementation kick off meetings are due to commence in early October 2018. Set up, data loading and testing will follow to include stock condition data. The implementation programme will ensure the new Asset Management System will be up and running before the new Council in March 2019.
- 4.6 The intention is to extend the Asbestos TEAMS database for another year with review prior to the end of the extension for inclusion of Asbestos data management within the Open Assets system. If possible the Asbestos data management will be integrated within the system at that point without a further extension of the Asbestos TEAMS database being required.

Property Health and Safety (H&S) and Compliance

- 4.7 Building on ongoing continuous improvement in H&S and Compliance, the Asset Data and Compliance Team provided the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) with a review of efficiency and effectiveness improvements required for the integration of all H&S and Compliance Asset related systems and processes including co-ordination of activities between key process owners across the organisation.
- 4.8 The regular (6 weekly) Property Compliance Strategy Review meeting in September highlighted the need for clearly defined responsibilities for H&S and Property Compliance in the new structure including the statutory requirement for a dedicated H&S representative at board level. It was also noted that smooth transition should be highlighted as high risk on the Transformation Risk Register. It was noted that a number of key members of this Review Group were due to leave the organisation or change job roles in the new structure. All Corporate H&S training to data logs for individuals will be transferred to Human Resources during transition.
- 4.9 A review of the Fire Risk Assessment process has been completed and improvements are being implemented.

Leisure Procurement Facilities - Lease Heads of Terms

- 4.10 Asset Management has continued to support the Leisure Procurement Team with the Leisure Procurement tender process which is at an advanced stage. Draft generic lease heads of terms were included in documents made available to bidders via the OJEU system (generic across all properties). This has reached detailed tender stage and Asset Management will join Leisure Procurement for Q&As with tenders in October 2018.

Proposed Country Park (Near Nerrols Farm, Taunton)

- 4.11 The establishment of a Country Park forms an important component of the Council's Garden Town status and adopted Green Infrastructure Strategy. Members of the Council's Community Scrutiny Committee voted to support of the purchase of the land and development of the Country Park in October 2017. Following this in August 2018, the Portfolio Decision was made for a joint ownership structure between TDBC and the Parish Councils of West Monkton and Cheddon Fitzpaine.
- 4.12 A planning application (08/17/0044) was made by Taunton Deane Borough Council and approved for the change of use of the land from agricultural to recreational uses on 11 January 2018.
- 4.13 The Parish Councils will take maintenance and management responsibility for the completed project. Joint ownership following transfer of the land from the Crown is being progressed with SHAPE Legal who are drafting a Trust and Management Agreement between Taunton Deane and the Parish Councils. All parties are aiming to exchange and complete by latest at the end of the first week in October.
- 4.14 Other ongoing service area project work:-
- **Annual Asset and Insurance Valuations** - Following completion of the Annual Asset Valuations by Wilks Head Eve of Taunton Deane and West Somerset Council property asset portfolios in March 2018 (instructed by and in close liaison with our Estates Team), a programme of Insurance Reinstatement Valuations has been prepared that will be progressed in phases and inform the re-tendering of the Asset Insurance Contract for the New Council.
 - **Landlord and Tenant Advice for Projects Managed by Development and Regeneration Teams** - In addition to ongoing Estates Case Work, Asset Management continues to provide advice if required on Landlord and Tenant matters for Council led Development and Regeneration projects.
 - **One Public Estate (OPE) Meetings** - The Asset Manager continues to attend OPE meetings with a view to maximising opportunities for local public estate efficiency opportunities.
 - **Traveller Encampments** - The Asset Management Estates Team have experienced an increase in traveller encampment incidents this summer which has taken up a lot of time and resources. The Council's Asset Management and Planning Departments are liaising with Somerset County Council on potential solutions to improving ongoing management challenges in this area.

