

Council Meeting – 22 February 2018

Report of Councillor John Williams – Leader of the Council

1. Formation of a Single Council

- 1.1 As members will recall, the Secretary of State announced his 'minded to' decision on 29 November, 2017 in regard to the creation of a new Council.
- 1.2 This triggered a period to enable representations to be submitted to the Secretary of State in relation to the proposal. The representation period finished on 19 January, 2018 and the next stage is for the Secretary of State to confirm, or not, his original 'minded to' decision.
- 1.3 Discussions are continuing with the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government to ensure that prompt action can be taken once a decision is made.

2. Budget Setting 2018/2019

- 2.1 The all-important annual budget setting process is now nearing conclusion and will be considered by Members at this Full Council, hopefully now approved.
- 2.2 Can I thank all officers and Members for their hard work and commitment in delivering a sound balanced budget which I am proud to say has been achieved without the use of reserves and without any reductions in the frontline services so valued by our community.
- 2.3 We have made it clear that we want to see Taunton Deane grow, prosper and develop a thriving and resilient economy, providing the jobs and essential infrastructure that is needed such as transport improvements, schools and employment land that go hand-in-hand with new housing.
- 2.4 Taunton is one of the fastest growing towns in the South West and our Garden Town status is testament to our growth plans, bringing welcome additional funding to support the plans and bring our ambitions to life.
- 2.5 We are continuing to invest in our £16,600,000 Growth Programme which is delivering crucial investment in major growth and regeneration schemes, funded through the New Homes Bonus (NHB) that follows our delivery of new housing. This is supporting schemes such as the Coal Orchard Regeneration and improvements to Junction 25 of the M5. We know we cannot fund these major schemes on our own but by providing funding from NHB we can attract match-funding and pump-prime projects to achieve our ambitions.
- 2.6 The Government has confirmed the Final Settlement and this is reflected in the budget proposed at this meeting. This confirmed the opportunity for districts to increase Council Tax by £5 instead of being limited at 2.99%. We

have accepted this as we believe it is the right thing to do for our financial sustainability and to protect services. As a result our Council Tax for a Band D property will increase to £154.62 per year – which includes £1.74 collected on behalf of the Somerset Rivers Authority. This means the Band D tax payer will receive all Borough Council services for £2.97 per week.

3. Housing Infrastructure Funding - Successful Bid

- 3.1 The Government announcement last month to award the £7,200,000 for the Staplegrove Spine Road is a great vote of confidence in our ability to deliver the key infrastructure needed to deliver the growth ambitions.
- 3.2 The money will help towards the early delivery of the £8,000,000 “spine road” to connect the A358 Staplegrove Road and Kingston Road, enabling over 1600 homes, more affordable housing and the delivery of a much needed new primary school.
- 3.3 We are discussing the arrangements for delivery of the road with Somerset County Council and the developers and will confirm details as soon as possible.

4. Firepool, Taunton

- 4.1 Following the rejection of previous plans for the Firepool site, our development partner St Modwen has been working closely with planners on an alternative design for the scheme, whilst also resolving a number of detailed technical matters that have been raised in relation to traffic impact. The final proposals for this key Town Centre site are scheduled to come to Planning Committee in March.

5. Lisieux Way Business Park, Taunton

- 5.1 Following the approval of Full Council in October 2017, discussions are nearing completion for the Council to consolidate its ownerships of land at Lisieux Way Business Park in Taunton. Bringing the site entirely under the Council's ownership will enable the retention and growth of important hi-tech employers in Taunton, with opportunities for wider uses on other areas of the site.

6. The Deane House Accommodation Project

- 6.1 Midas are on site and are progressing well with their programme. The works are to be carried out in three phases with the Police area being handed over at the end of Phase 2.
- 6.2 Other available space within The Deane House will be marketed in due course.

7. Nexus 25

- 7.1 The Local Development Order for Nexus 25 Strategic Employment Site was approved by Council in December 2017, subject to the approval by Somerset County Council of plans to improve the capacity of Junction 25 of the M5.
- 7.2 The County Council Regulation Committee will consider the planning application for Junction 25 in the very near future, which will pave the way to the creation of over 3000 jobs in Taunton, in a high quality environment and superbly connected regional location.

Councillor John Williams

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Report of Councillor Patrick Berry – Environmental Services

1. Environmental Health

Dog Warden Services

- 1.1 This service has recorded significant reductions in the number of stray dogs having to be collected and dealt with.

Dog Warden Services- Records for dogs collected by the Warden

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18 to date
To kennels	143	110	67
Collected by Owner	95	67	52
Put up for Adoption	48	43	13
Returned directly to owner by warden	44	47	33

- 1.2 It is considered that the reason for the reductions could be the requirement for compulsory micro-chipping of all dogs from April 2016.

Public Health Funerals

- 1.3 Since 1 December 2017 the Environmental Health Team has already taken referrals for 14 public health funerals where a person has died in the district with no next of kin available or willing to make the arrangements for the funeral.
- 1.4 So far during 2017/2018 the team have dealt with 27 cases. In previous years this number has been 34 for 2016/2017 and 30 cases in 2015/2016. This work involves liaison with the Bereavement Office at Musgrove Park Hospital, the Coroner's Office, Crematorium, funeral director, other family members and solicitors where a will has been found. This is an extremely complex and delicate area of work and officers take every care to ensure that each funeral is carried out in accordance to any wishes that the deceased may have had.

Food - New Registrations

- 1.5 The total number of new food registrations received so far this financial year for Taunton Deane is 127. A food business is legally required to register when they open for the first time or when a change of ownership takes place. A new registration will trigger a food hygiene inspection being carried out, ideally within 28 days of the local authority receiving the registration. In 2016/2017 we received 170 new registrations and the number for 2015/2016 was 160.

Tattoo Safety

- 1.6 During 2017/2018 the Environmental Health Team has undertaken a project to provide advice to Tattoo premises in Taunton Deane and West Somerset. The team wrote to all registered premises in order to ensure our database was accurate. A questionnaire was then issued and the team is now arranging follow-up advisory visits to a range of premises to provide general hygiene advice. Information regarding the detection and reporting of Child Sexual Exploitation was also provided.

2. Licensing

Staffing

- 2.1 The Licensing Manager, John Rendell, has returned from supporting the Accommodation Team and a period of paternity leave, bringing to an end the temporary management arrangements. Now he is back, John is looking to press on and complete some large projects within the service, such as reviewing the Council's Licensing Act 2003 statement of licensing policy and introduce a practical driving test for taxi and private hire vehicle drivers.

Performance

- 2.2 98% of all applications received between the 1 October and 31 December 2017 were completed within a 14 day timescale, meaning the service achieved its performance target.

HM Revenues and Customs (HMRC)

- 2.3 HMRC is consulting on proposals to introduce new legislation which would introduce tax checks into licence processes, including taxis and street traders. Taunton Deane Licensing has been working with HMRC to shape these proposals and there are plans to help them 'test' how data collection and verification might work.

3. Street Sweeping and Toilet Cleaning

- 3.1 The cleansing contract continues to be monitored carefully with regular street inspections being undertaken by the Manager of Idverde and the Open Spaces Manager. Where standards have not been met, quick remedial action has been applied to bring this back up to the level we stipulate in the contract. Fly tipping has taken a slight upturn with 131 incidents reported between October and December 2017.
- 3.2 Our team has been hard at work over the winter getting Taunton Deane in shape for the coming growing season and has cleared all the streams that are under our responsibility to improve flow and reduce the risks of flooding a wet winter or spring can bring. The tree surgeons have been busy with several mature trees coming down in recent storms in addition to their normal workload and the Grounds Team has replaced a number of litter and dog bins on our ongoing programme of replacement and checked and maintained the various pumps and drainage culverts across the Borough.

4. Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP)

New Resource Recovery Centre

- 4.1 Somerset's waste services system took another big step forward this month with the formal launch of construction of a new £252,000,000 Resource Recovery Centre (RRC) in Avonmouth.
- 4.2 Once complete in 2020, the RRC will take all of Somerset's household rubbish and convert it into energy for thousands of homes through the national grid.
- 4.3 As well as switching tens of thousands of tonnes of rubbish from costly, wasteful and polluting landfill, Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP) is launching a new collections contract in 2020 with extra materials – including a range of plastic packaging – taken every week at the kerbside using a brand new fleet of vehicles.
- 4.4 SWP Managing Director Mickey Green welcomed the construction launch as signalling the opportunity to give waste a new life as a valuable resource.

He added: "SWP manages the waste from more than 250,000 Somerset homes, with one of the highest recycling rates in the country and recycling in the UK 94% of what we collect.

The Avonmouth RRC forms the cornerstone of our ambitions to help Somerset residents to waste less, recycle even more and – for whatever is left over – switch from a reliance on landfill to resource recovery from 2020."

Food Waste

- 4.5 One of our major areas of recycle is the collection and recycling of food waste. 15% by weight of all household waste in Somerset is food waste. Most of this waste occurs through cooking and preparing too much or not using food in time. People are getting more food wise, but there is still more that we can do to make better use of food and save money too. We throw away more food from our homes than packaging in the UK every year. If we all stop wasting food that could have been eaten, the benefit to the planet would be the equivalent of taking 1 in 4 cars off the road.
- 4.6 The UK throws away 2.5 billion single-use coffee cups a year, while less than 1% of coffee cups are recycled. These cups and cartons are a complex construction of layered plastic and paper, which are difficult to recycle and are dealt with at a specialist facility in Halifax.
- 4.7 Plastic-lined paper cups for hot drinks can now be recycled at 12 Somerset recycling sites including Priorswood, Taunton and Poole, Wellington. These sites already have skips for Tetra Pak-style food and drink cartons. Cups and cartons are not yet taken in Somerset kerbside collections but this will change when the new Recycle More service is rolled out from 2020.
- 4.8 The cup initiative is the result of a collaboration between industry body the Alliance for Beverage Cartons and the Environment – which pays for the skips at recycling sites – and High Street firms, including Cafe Nero, Costa, Greggs, McDonald's, Nestlé, Pret A Manger and Starbucks.

4.9 It should be made clear that while single-use cups can be recycled at the dozen Somerset sites, plastic items, such as straws, cup lids and stirrers cannot, so these should be added to residents' rubbish, but Recycle More will enable residents to recycle much more plastic waste at the kerbside.

5. Cemetery and Crematorium:

5.1 The Cemetery and Crematorium have been busy this winter. It is a period when the staff have been fully engaged with cremation, burial and plot allocation. The last six weeks have been exceptionally busy with the flu like bug that has been about.

5.2 Our previously approved projects are now beginning to take shape:-

- The Children's Garden project has now started in earnest but poor weather has hampered this slightly. The new memorials for this area will be ready for delivery in June. The hard landscaping should be complete in time for their installation.
- The Natural Area Boardwalk is 80% finished. The next step will be installation of the wheel stops to the edges of the boardwalk for pram and wheelchair users.
- Since the information regarding the proposed enlargement of the Waiting Room became public knowledge, the feedback we have received regarding these proposals has been welcomed and positive remarks received from both the public and funeral directors alike. Subject to Full Council approval, we are looking forward to starting this project.

5.3 The New Grave Spaces at St Mary's, Taunton and Wellington will be ready for interments at the start of summer 2018 due to ground settlement and mapping.

5.4 About six months ago, our service switched from plastic urns to a more environmentally friendly cardboard based products.

Councillor Patrick Berry

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

Section 1 : Communications

- 1.1 Communications continues to seek to improve use of social media and the number of followers/likes is growing.
- 1.2 We are looking to improve skills through training being made available with partners in neighbouring authorities which provides the benefit of networking plus a reduced cost to the Council.
- 1.3 At this time of year, the focus is on the budget-setting process with help being provided to the media to understand how the increasingly complex system works. Considerable time is also spent on responses and information to the media on a wide range of issues from open spaces to housing.
- 1.4 Looking back, we worked closely with colleagues involved in the Christmas festivities, with partners on Nexus 25 and on Broadband provision among many other projects.
- 1.5 Currently we are working closely with the Growth and Development Team on managing communications around a variety of high profile key projects.
- 1.6 Looking forward, we will continue to work with colleagues across the authority to promote the Council and to protect its reputation through improving how and when we undertake communications activities - and evaluating outcomes.

Section 2 : Business Development

Productivity Strategy

- 2.1 The Heart of the South West (HotSW) Area Productivity Strategy is now ready for adoption by the Joint Committee which has now been established and will meet regularly over the coming year. As a reminder the Productivity Strategy is a response to the Government's industrial strategy and lays out how at a strategic level what we intend to target. The strategy is a collaboration between all local authorities across Devon and Somerset in conjunction with the LEP, Dartmoor and Exmoor National Parks and the Clinical Commissioning Groups.

Taunton Deane Business Awards

- 2.2 This year`s Taunton Deane Business Awards have been launched and I would urge all businesses to enter. The Council is one of the key sponsors and this shows a commitment to supporting and celebrating excellence in our business community. Closing date for entries is 30 March 2018 so please encourage any businesses you are aware of too apply.

Section 3 : Events, Place, Retail Marketing and Visitor Centre

Events

- 3.1 2018 is starting to shape up to be a great year for events. The Marketing and Visitor Centre Team continue to work with and assist event organisers to bring their ideas to reality and promote these (when confirmed) through our promotional channels. Training continues to be provided to organisers on the event booking portal. New events coming to the area include: the Elderberry Fair at Wellsprings Leisure Centre, Taunton Gin Festival at the Museum of Somerset and a Family Fun Day at Moorfields in March; The Glitter Run at the Racecourse in June; A 60th anniversary Guide Dog Gala Day in Castle Green and an inflatable theme park at Moorfields in July.
- 3.2 It has also been encouraging to see plans develop for Eat Taunton in May and Eat Wellington in September, Somerfest in June and Taunton Live through the month of July.
- 3.3 I was also delighted to see the return of Live in Somerset – three nights of live music taking place in Vivary Park, Taunton in July. The nights are headlined by Paloma Faith, Billy Ocean and the Kaiser Chiefs; another night of live music will take place in September when The Pretenders, Simple Minds and KT Tunstall come to the Racecourse.
- 3.4 Discussions have also begun with the English Cricket Board on the Cricket World Cup in 2019 when Taunton will be among 11 host venues, I will update Members as these plans develop.

Place and Retail Marketing

- 3.5 Taunton Town Centre continues to perform positively compared to other town centres in the region. Vacancy rates in the primary shopping part of the town are currently 2.55%.
- 3.6 The team continues to work with town centre businesses and the Chamber of Commerce on the promotion of the town. A meeting was recently held with the large retailers attended by Ojay McDonald (Acting Chief Executive) of the Association of Town and City Management who gave an informative presentation on Business Improvement Districts.
- 3.7 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) –
48,974 unique users in November to January period

Visit Taunton has - Facebook: 9,400 likes
Instagram: 1,500 followers
Twitter: 6,750 followers

Visit Wellington – Facebook: 1,000 likes

Visit Wivey – Facebook: 700 likes

3.8 New literature produced:-

- The Deano (providing ideas for the half term holidays in February); and
- The new Visitors guide for 2018 will be launched in March

Visitor Centre

3.9 The Visitor Centre Team continue to actively support all marketing activities this includes providing content for all digital platforms in addition to the day-to-day job of welcoming many visitors to the office.

3.10 The team organised another very successful Advent competition on the Visit Taunton Facebook platform with 24 days of individual competitions, culminating in a hamper competition between Christmas and New Year. All prizes were sourced from local businesses and the hamper was presented to the lucky winner by the Mayor.

3.11 Online booking forms have been created for booking advertising space on our banners, pennants or rotundas around the town and promotional spaces in Fore Street and High Street using the new events portal. An agreement has also been made with Taunton PubWatch that the Visitor Centre Team will now maintain their rotunda unit outside of Vodaphone as an in-kind support for the night-time economy.

3.12 Throughput in to the Market House office continues to remain healthy with customers coming in to buy tickets and collect new 2018 literature.

Section 4 : Growth Strategy and Specific Projects

Coal Orchard Redevelopment, Taunton

4.1 We are now moving this project at pace and have signed off RIBA Stages 2 known as the concept design phase. This means that we are now working on RIBA 3 which will bring us to a final design and lead to the submission of the reserved matters planning application.

4.2 Our marketing partner is working on branding and the strategy to sell the site. We do expect to engage local specialists for the residential market and have a target list of restaurants and retailers for the ground floor units. We will also begin the process of contracting with a builder in the next few months.

- 4.3 We are progressing The Brewhouse Theatre element of this redevelopment scoping out further detail on timescales and funding approach. I would expect to share details of timescales and budgets with Members in early summer. The Taunton Deane Team has been working with the Taunton Theatre Association to establish more detailed design briefs which will enable us to engage advisors for the net phases of this work. This is similar to the process we followed on the Coal Orchard.

Lisieux Way Site, Taunton

- 4.4 As Members will be aware, the Council agreed the purchase of this site to consolidate ownerships of the land at Lisieux Way Business Park in Taunton. We are now working on the exchange of contracts with Thales which as previously reported will support economic growth, by retaining local jobs, securing new employment opportunities and attracting new businesses to this strategic employment site. This is an ongoing negotiation and we hope to be in a position to exchange shortly.

Crown Industrial Estate

- 4.5 I was glad to hear that a speculative development of a vacant plot of land at this estate is occurring. This will create around 30,000 sq. feet of Industrial Warehouse units.

Taunton Vale (Throup's Site)

- 4.6 A planning permission for B1 uses has been granted on one of the allocated employment sites associated with the Monkton Heathfield Garden Town Community. This will commence work on this site providing new space for business growth.

Wiveliscombe

- 4.7 Permission has been granted to enable conversion of the old Karro slaughterhouse to B1, B2 and B8 uses. We expect this to provide much needed space for expansion of local businesses. This will also complement the enterprise centre which is adjacent to the site and is expected to be constructed through 2018.

Asset Management Service Update – February 2018

- 4.8 In December 2017 approval was given to implement Open Assets alongside the roll-out of the Council's new Universal Transaction Portal (UTP). A Project Delivery Group is now in place and progressing this work stream.
- 4.9 This is a key milestone as this project had been on-hold for the past few years pending corporate transformation and selection of the new UTP. Selection of this Open Assets software will enable integration with the existing Assets Open Suite, elements of which are already embedded into the Housing

Revenue Account in terms of repairs and for which there are already some of those necessary interfaces in place.

- 4.10 Over the course of the past 12-18 months significant asset data has been gathered relating to stock condition of all General Fund assets, cost profiles for all assets and asset performance profiles of those key assets. In addition, the Council now holds updated Fire Risk Assessments and Asbestos Surveys and all this data along with other existing data will be held within Open Assets as the new repository and will enable much 'smarter' working moving forward through management reporting, benchmarking and availability of data. This is expected to take 18 months to be rolled out.
- 4.11 A new Asset Strategy for the period 2018-2020 was adopted by Full Council in December 2017. This, alongside a new Decision Making Framework will enable assets to be managed more proactively, disposing of poorly performing assets, acquiring new assets where supported by a strong business case, managing the let portfolio more commercially through maximising incomes and recovery of costs, along with ensuring more informed and proactive investment decisions. This new strategy is predicated on the data now available and moving forward Open Assets will make using that data and ensuring it is current, more straightforward.
- 4.12 An example of how we are already applying this new commercial approach is with Blackdown Business Park. In April 2017, the Council had three vacant units and a very limited amount of interest being received from our former agents, with many units having sat empty for an extended time. However since instructing our new agents Lambert Smith Hampton to do our marketing, the Council has seen a threefold increase in enquiries and now have all but one unit Under Offer.
- 4.13 On completion, these two leases will result in a total of £17,000 per annum of additional rental income and £1,000 per annum towards the service charge, to help maintain the buildings structure and its common parts. Having these occupied will also relieve current rates liabilities. A new grounds maintenance regime has now been approved and instructed, which in turn should help to improve the look of the Estate and help maintain ongoing relationships with our tenants and make new lettings easier.
- 4.14 With the Council's Asset Manager leaving in early February, his interim replacement Monique Clarke took up post in December 2017 enabling a comprehensive handover. At the time of writing Tim Child was just leaving us and I want to take this opportunity to thank him for all his hard work in particular driving through the Asset Strategy to its conclusion and to welcome Monique.

Councillor Mark Edwards

Council Meeting – 22 February 2018

Report of Councillor Roger Habgood – Planning Policy and Transportation

1. Planning Policy

- 1.1 Work is now well underway on compiling the evidence base to inform a future review of local planning documents for Taunton Deane. This is particularly important as the Government places an increased emphasis on ensuring plans are reviewed every five years, something which will be enshrined in changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which will be consulted upon next month.
- 1.2 Several key studies have been completed or are in the advanced stages of publication; these include the Green Infrastructure Strategy published last month and a new joint Retail, Leisure and Employment Study. We will shortly go out to tender on a new Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.
- 1.3 It is anticipated that a new updated Local Development Scheme (project plan for the production of the local plan) will be presented to Members in late Spring/early Summer.

2. Garden Town Strategy and Plan

- 2.1 Members will recall that the Policy Team has been co-ordinating the work on a Garden Town Plan for Taunton. This document will set a long-term vision for the town and guiding principles to inform planning and much of the Council's future activity in Taunton. A visioning event with key stakeholders will be held towards the end of March. The findings of which will be shared with Members in due course and prior to the document going out to wider public consultation.
- 2.2 The Plan will also need to identify the key activities, priorities and proposals for Taunton in a living, dynamic action plan. Our intent is to host the plan on a web platform providing up to the minute information on things like projects and progress towards delivery.
- 2.3 Much of the background work to inform the Garden Town Plan is common to the Local Plan. As part of this work Atkins have been commissioned to prepare a River Tone Strategy. Members will recall Atkins prepared the award-winning Bath Waterspace Strategy, which was shared in autumn of last year. There will be opportunities for Members to engage with this important project in the months to come.
- 2.4 A Members' Briefing regarding the Council's Green Infrastructure Strategy was held in October 2017. The Green Infrastructure Strategy

has subsequently been signed off. Work has been commissioned to take forward and develop more detailed project plans for each of the Strategy's priority projects. The first of the priority project plans will be taken through Full Council very soon to deliver the Green Country Park.

3. Nexus 25

- 3.1 The formal consultation on the Local Development Order (LDO) for the Strategic Employment Site took place in July / August 2017. The responses and comments were reported to Community Scrutiny and Full Council subsequently approved the LDO in December 2017.
- 3.2 This development will deliver significant employment opportunities for Taunton Deane in line with Council policy meeting the aspirations of our community.
- 3.3 The final making of the LDO is dependent on planning permission for the M5 Junction 25 Improvement Scheme being in place.

4. Junction 25 (J25) Upgrade – Somerset County Council Highways Authority

- 4.1 The proposed upgrade involves full signalisation and widening of the carriageway at J25, including widening the eastern exit from the junction, improving pedestrian and cycling facilities and updating signage. This scheme aims to improve journey times, ease congestion, improve Park and Ride journey time reliability and create a more attractive gateway from the M5 to Taunton, Yeovil and the A303. The improvements will also unlock access into the proposed strategic employment site at J25.
- 4.2 SCC as the Highways Authority is seeking further feedback on elements of the scheme, which potentially sets the timescale back three to four months.

5. Highways England Consultation - Taunton to Southfields Dualling Scheme.

- 5.1 Highways England (HE) is consulting on their new revised proposals to dual the A358. The previous consultation on a single route was not received well in our community. Following concerted efforts by Parish, Borough and County representatives working with our MP, discussions were held with appropriate Ministers and a rethink took place.
- 5.2 Many Councillors at Parish Borough and County have engaged with this HE consultation. If you have not yet been along to the consultation there is a final opportunity on the 21 February 2018 at Stoke St Mary Village Hall and Ruishton Village Hall. Details can be found on the HE

website www.highways.gov.uk/Taunton-to-Southfields. There are also public information points regarding the scheme in County Hall and in Taunton Library.

- 5.3 The Taunton Deane formal response awaits more technical data from HE relating particularly to projected traffic flows for all three routes (Blue Orange and Pink). The additional data that TDBC and County colleagues seek will enhance our understanding of the benefits and disbenefits of the proposals.
- 5.4 The Public Consultation ends on 27 February 2018. HE will then analyse the feedback and make a decision on the choice of the preferred route. As the scheme is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) under the Planning Act 2008 HE are required to make an application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) to gain authorisation to construct the scheme.
- 5.5 HE have committed to another round of consultation on their preferred route before the DCO is submitted. The Planning Inspectorate will then hold a public examination before making a recommendation to the Secretary of State who will decide whether or not the scheme will be built.

6. Taunton Urban Realm

- 6.1 The consultation has been undertaken, the scheme is being developed and taken forward with County colleagues the Highways Authority. Implementation dates have yet to be confirmed and are dependent on County confirmation of the necessary traffic orders, traffic light amendments and signage being in place. Discussions are on going with County colleagues and WSP to finalise the scheme details.

7. Car Park Pay on Foot (POF) and Variable Message Signage (VMS)

- 7.1 The contracts have now been let to the VMS sign manufacturer and to the POF supplier. Members are aware that a delay was encountered as the POF civil elements of the project had to be retendered. Elements of the civil ground works will commence shortly. The completion date for the project is now planned for June 2018. The delay is regrettable.
- 7.2 There is a necessity to amend elements of the charging structures as a result of POF. A cost neutral option has been developed for Council consideration.

8. Neighbourhood Plans

- 8.1 As a reminder, the Bishops Lydeard and Cothelstone and the Trull and

Staplehay Neighbourhood plans are made.

- 8.2 Ann Skippers Bsc MRTPI recently completed her examination of the West Monkton and Cheddon Fitzpaine Neighbourhood Development Plan. The report has been agreed and accepted. The planned date for the referendum is the end of April.
- 8.3 The Council continues to support the Creech St. Michael and Ruishton and Thornfalcon Neighbourhood Plans.
- 8.4 The plan area for Oake Parish Council has been designated. The Parish Council is continuing with its work of the plan.
- 8.5 Wiveliscombe and Wellington have both had their Neighbourhood Plan areas designated. Both Councils have their plans under review.

9. Major Planning

Staplegrave

- 9.1 Members are aware that the planning applications were passed at Planning Committee. As detailed at the Committee an Infrastructure Grant application had been made.
- 9.2 Following a considerable amount of work in conjunction with SCC colleagues, our MP and Government Ministers the £7,200,000 Spine Road Funding has been granted. This is a significant success for the Council providing a superior outcome for the community. The drop down road will now no longer be required and the affordable housing quota now returns to 25%. The promoting agents are in discussion with the developers.

Firepool, Taunton

- 9.3 Our officers continue to work with all stakeholders to bring forward a Planning Application for this important strategic development site.
- 9.4 The majority of technical issues relating to the development have now been satisfactorily resolved. An application will be made and brought to the Planning Committee in the very near future.

Tonedale Mill, Wellington

- 9.5 Members will be aware that a confidential item was presented to the Executive on 8 February 2018. The item is also before us on pink confidential papers at this evening's Full Council.
- 9.6 I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Dr Joanne O'Hara, Wellington Heritage at Risk Project Manager for the work she has done to date. In short order clear and demonstrable progress is being made.

- 9.7 This site is of national significance and this Council continues to collaborate in order to protect it.
- 9.8 We are working hard, firstly to protect the building and secondly with our consultants, Ingham Pinnock, on a larger regeneration strategy for the area. At this stage there are a number of legal and financial issues relating to the site which remain confidential.
- 9.9 We will release information relating to the sites in Tonedale as soon as we are able and without prejudice to our ongoing efforts to secure the future for these very important buildings.

Councillor Roger Habgood

Council Meeting - 22 February 2018

Report of Councillor Mrs Vivienne Stock-Williams - Sports, Parks and Leisure

1. Community Leisure

Play and Recreation

1.1 Improvements have been made to the Council's play areas and playing fields with Section 106 Agreement funding. The following works have taken place:-

- Lyngford Park, Taunton – a table tennis table and gym trail;
- French Weir Park, Taunton – cableway and replacement Hip Hop seesaw;
- Dobree Park, Wellington – table tennis table and outdoor gym equipment;
- Wellington Recreation Ground – basketball hoop and outdoor gym equipment;
- Hamilton Gault Park, Taunton – Mission Glide cableway;
- Wellington Playing Field – goal posts and drainage works;
- Victoria Park, Taunton – American Football goals; and
- Hawthorne Road, Taunton – outdoor gym equipment has been installed with Section 106 funding and a grant from the Unparished Fund.

1.2 The tender process has been completed for works to provide additional play facilities at Cotford St Luke Recreation Ground which are due to start during February.

1.3 The tender process has also been completed to provide new skate facilities at Hudson Way, Taunton. The old half-pipe has been removed and the base works ordered ready for the arrival of the new equipment towards the end of February / beginning of March 2018.

1.4 From 1 April 2014, when the Council adopted the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) off-site, Section 106 contributions have only been applicable for children's play. The amount of Section 106 contributions available for outdoor recreation, allotments and community halls are historic and therefore reducing annually.

1.5 Works have also taken place to replace equipment with Taunton Deane funding at:-

- Bacon Drive, Taunton – See Saw;
- Corner Close, Wellington - Springer and rotor; and

- Priorswood Park, Taunton – new swings.
- 1.6 There are further works planned for Westford Play Area, Wellington and Comeytrove Park.

Summer Sunday Bandstand Concerts

- 1.7 A successful Summer Sunday Bandstand Concert season took place in both Vivary and Wellington Parks. Works are currently underway to provide this year's concerts.

Council's Capital Grant Scheme for Voluntary Village Halls, Sports Clubs and Allotments

- 1.8 Grants have been made under this scheme to the following:-
- Ash Priors Village Hall – replacement timber beams to support the floor;
 - The Trident – new kitchen and toilet replacement; and
 - Galmington Allotments – ride on mower.
- 1.9 Halls are continuing to come forward requesting to apply for funding in the next financial year.

Parish Play Area Grant Scheme

- 1.10 Under this scheme, awards were made to Trull Parish Council towards a youth shelter and Corfe Parish Council towards a Rotor Bounce.
- 1.11 Applications are currently being accepted for the 2018 round of capital grants which closes on 30 June 2018.

2. GLL (Taunton Deane)

Community Sport and Health

2.1 North Newton Primary School

Key Stage 1 children from North Newton Primary School enjoyed an energetic morning at Blackbrook Leisure Centre and Spa recently, taking part in short tennis, gymnastics, curling and a circuits class. For many pupils, this was the first time that they had experienced these sports and it was a great introduction. Feedback from the children and staff proved the event was a real success. Further sessions have been confirmed for 2018.

2.2 Tennis Festival

Adults from Learning Disability groups across Taunton enthusiastically enjoyed participating in the Annual Christmas Tennis Festival held in

the Main Tennis Sports Hall at Blackbrook on 13 December 2017. Favourite tennis practices and games were played involving everyone - players, staff and coaches - with plenty of fun, laughter plus various 'miss hits'. The Festival was led by GLL Blackbrook coach, Wendy, ably assisted by coaches Andrew and Ivor together with Learning Disability staff.

2.3 Winter Wildlife Walk

This walk took place on 5 December 2017, with 11 people attending. The group met with Olivia Dullaghan from Somerset Wildlife Trust and enjoyed a sunny stroll along the banks of the River Tone. Participants spotted a variety of wildlife, as well as learning more about the local area. The next Wildlife Walk is planned for March 2018.

2.4 Walk Leader Training

Seven new volunteers participated in the health walk training on 12 December 2017. Four of these volunteers will be supporting the launch of a new programme at Kingston St. Mary, whilst the others will support the Taunton and Creech St. Michael healthy walks.

The Kingston St. Mary short walks group held their first walk on 10 January 2018. This group have produced a series of short 20-30 minute walks and are hoping to encourage local residents to become more active in their area.

2.5 GLL Sports Foundation 2018

The GLL Sport Foundation funding window opened for a two month period on 20 December 2017. The GLL Sport Foundation is an athlete-focused support programme providing athletes across the United Kingdom with tangible support to aid their sports performance. Support can include access to facilities, access to physiotherapy and injury rehabilitation support. Financial awards can be up to the value of £1,250. Since its inception, the Foundation has provided over 13,000 athlete award bursaries, totalling over £7,600,00 of support.

21 top level athletes who train in the Taunton Deane area benefited from financial awards in 2017, with an additional nine receiving training memberships. GLL would like to support even more athletes in the area in 2018.

Facilities

2.6 Taunton Swimming Pool

New pre-school swimming classes have been launched at Station Road swimming pool on Thursday mornings. Adult and Toddler sessions are also being introduced into GLL's 'Learn to Swim' programme.

2.7 Taunton Deane Water Polo Club has increased bookings on a Sunday evening to four hours per week and the pool has now been the host site for a number of club matches.

2.8 Likewise, the Synchro Club will be holding competitions at the pool, starting in the next couple of months.

2.9 **Wellington Sports Centre**

Wellington Sports Centre took part in the Christmas Sparkle event, which is a project run by the community for the community. Christmas presents were given to children aged 0-18 years who are living in difficult circumstances in the Taunton and Wellington community.

2.10 **Blackbrook Leisure Centre and Spa**

The gym facility at Blackbrook had an end-of-year makeover. New equipment, new flooring, wall protection, new mirrors and decoration throughout have made very positive improvements, so that the gym is now ready for the 2018 post-festive newcomers. The feedback from GLL's regular customers has identified that the investment has been very well received.

2.11 **Vivary Golf Course**

Unfortunately, due to a very wet month, Vivary Golf Course has been closed for the majority of January. The ground has been saturated, which has resulted in the course being left unplayable. The staff at Vivary have been successfully re-deployed into other roles across the partnership which has helped mitigate costs.

3. Parks and Open Spaces

Grass Cutting

3.1 It has been a busy year for Open Spaces with the weather creating a very long growing season. The team has, however, managed to maintain the areas under our care to a high standard and we are now in preparation for the new season.

Streams

3.2 In recent weeks, all streams owned by the Council have been cleared.

Vivary Park

3.3 Work to de-silt the lake in Vivary Park is due to begin this month and may continue until the end of March. Thus, before the bird nesting season starts, scrub on the central island will be cut back and laid down to form a protective bund around the perimeter. Once removed,

the silt will be deposited in the centre of the island, which will help enhance the quality of the soil. This operation will act both as a flooding precaution and will vastly improve the water quality and appearance of the lake. We should see the popular model boat club back in operation this summer.

- 3.4 The pavilion near the train tracks is undergoing work in preparation for the opening of a new 'Station Café' this spring, which is expected to become a significant attraction in the park.

Wellington Park

- 3.5 Wellington Park has historically been plagued by vandalism but, under the auspices of the Wellington One Team, the Open Spaces Team has been working closely with the local Police and carried out a number of initiatives to challenge this anti-social behaviour.
- 3.6 Contact has been made with the parents of children caught damaging the park and seven youths have subsequently been banned from entry to the park: six for 6 months and one for 12 months. In three cases, bills for the damage caused have been issued. This has had the desired effect and vandalism in the park has dropped to virtually nothing during the past few weeks.

4. Property

Wilton Lands

- 4.1 An order has been placed for work to be carried out this Spring to renovate the well-used bridge at Wilton Lands. A temporary scaffolding bridge will be erected alongside so that replacement seasoned oak balustrades and decking can be installed.

5. Transition Town Wellington (TTW)

Working in Partnership

- 5.1 The Transition Town group in Wellington has been working on community fruit and vegetable projects for almost 10 years. Their aim is to make the town more sustainable in the food we eat, increase our food security and lower our carbon footprint. They also want to improve the beauty of the town and help build cooperation and friendships in our communities.
- 5.2 The group has summarised some of the lessons they have learnt from their experiences to help the process run smoothly for other interested communities. These are:-
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- 5.3 *Always speak to the local Council.* Projects struggled before TTW built a relationship with local Councillors, who have proven to be extremely helpful and supportive. Swains Lane Nature Reserve is a superb example of long-term partnership working between Deane DLO and a local community working group.
- 5.4 *Seek permission first.* Once you have your idea, before undertaking detailed project planning, first try to get permission - find out who the land belongs to and any guidance available from the authorities.
- 5.5 *Involve the local residents.* It is really helpful to make sure the residents and groups locally are supportive of the project.
- 5.6 *Work with other groups.* It is really good to find out who is doing similar projects in your area, so you can work more effectively together.
- 5.7 *Have a group of people behind you.* A project like this is often carried by one very keen person. It is, however, helpful to have a team of people involved, partly as moral support and practical help, but also to ensure the project is sustainable into the future.
- 5.8 *Speak to people face to face, rather than over the telephone.* This saves time in the long run, and helps build better relationships.
- 5.9 *Know a bit about gardening.* It may be obvious, but having some knowledge of what plants are suitable for different soil, their height and different species is essential when doing some "public" gardening.
- 5.10 *Have a plan of ongoing maintenance.* Obviously, when planting on a public site it needs to be maintained. This is where having a group of people in a team, working with other groups and the local residents is invaluable, or one person will end up doing all the work!
- 5.11 TTW hopes these tips help to inspire others to start their own community projects. Members are passionate about including edibles in their planting schemes and have just produced a foraging map for Wellington. This guide shows where each fruit patch is and what varieties there are for anyone to pick and enjoy.
- 5.12 We look forward to seeing the trees grow and sitting under a mature Cherry Tree in about 20 years, admiring the blossom, and knowing that tree, and others, are there because local, knowledgeable enthusiasts played a part in planting them.

Councillor Vivienne Stock-Williams

Council Meeting – 22 February 2018

Report of Councillor Richard Parrish – Corporate Resources

1. Revenues and Benefits

- 1.1 We are taking action to try to increase payments in the run up to the end of the financial year for Council Tax and Business Rates and are confident we will meet our annual targets by 31 March 2017.
- 1.2 As advised in my last report, we are reviewing entitlement to Single Person Discounts for Taunton Deane residents. Letters have been sent to 2,929 people currently receiving a discount on their Council Tax bill based on their sole occupancy of the property.
- 1.3 In accordance with the decision taken by Full Council we will soon contact every customer who will receive reduced assistance under our Council Tax Support Scheme for 2018/2019. We are inviting those people with protected characteristics to submit a claim for extra help through our discretionary scheme. Hope is that in contacting customers in advance of annual billing, we can assist them in preparing for the change to come, as well as helping us to manage the expected annual spike in enquiries as people receive their annual Council Tax bills.
- 1.4 So far we have distributed £139,000 in Discretionary Housing Payments to residents requiring extra help towards their housing costs. This leaves a balance of £58,000 from the funding provided by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to use before 31 March 2018.
- 1.5 The combined average speed in working out new claims and changes in circumstances for Housing Benefit recipients remains at less than 9 days from the start of the financial year to 31 January 2018. We rely on receiving information from the DWP on Universal Credit entitlement for our working age Council Tax Support recipients, so the combined time in processing new claims and changes in circumstances for these customers is greater, with an average time of 12 days.

2. Corporate Services

- 2.1 The key priority is around maintaining staff engagement and morale as we start to go through the transformation restructure. In practice this means regular team meetings, one to ones and ad hoc discussions with staff.
- 2.2 Linked to this is an increased focus on priorities and on managing resource.

Key priorities have been identified for each area of Corporate Services which have previously been advised to all Councillors by email.

3. Corporate Performance - GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations)

- 3.1 A detailed GDPR Compliance Action Plan has been produced which will be reviewed by the Corporate Governance Committee on 19 March 2018. Officers are currently identifying the resourcing and technology requirements for delivering the Action Plan. We will also be delivering training for officers and Members on associated regulatory changes.
- 3.2 Corporate Risk Management – We are maintaining a regular review and updating of the risk register during a period of significant change.

4. Customer Services

- 4.1 Councillors will be aware that the Council's Customer Services Team returned from Somerset County Council on 1 December 2017. The service return has worked well with no impact on service delivery to customers.
- 4.2 Officers are currently progressing service improvements that can be made now to help support the delivery of Transformation. We are also looking at improving the performance data we collect to help feed into the future development of service delivery.
- 4.3 I have commenced a regular series of meetings with Ruth James to assist where required with the development of this service. Councillor Richard Lees has been invited to attend these meetings in his capacity of Shadow Portfolio Holder.
- 4.4 We are also looking at improving the performance data we collect to help feed into the future development strategy of the service delivery.

5. Facilities Management

- 5.1 The Team continue to work closely with the Accommodation Project Team to support The Deane House refurbishment. Members will be aware that this is a time-consuming task and I congratulate both teams for their efforts and success in enabling the services of the Council to run.
- 5.2 They have undertaken a lot of work to ensure we have adequate fire procedures in place during the refurbishment – these procedures have recently been tested to ensure effectiveness.
- 5.3 Refurbishment works continue throughout The Deane House and it is

anticipated that the Reception Area works will be completed in June 2018.

6. ICT/Technology

- 6.1 Resource management is a key focus now to ensure we have enough resource to both deliver business as usual and the Transformation Technology projects.
- 6.2 We are currently identifying the technology requirements to deliver GDPR compliance and to align with our broader information management requirements for Transformation. The outcome will be a matter for a future report.
- 6.3 The Allpay system implementation is planned for 31 March 2018 to support the removal of the cash machines from The Deane House and the Wellington Community Office.

7. Members Case Management

- 7.1 A temporary Members Case Manager is now in post and I welcome Dianne Blackmore. The purpose of the role is to:-
 - (a) Provide additional resource for supporting officers and Members during the implementation of the Transformation Programme;
 - (b) Provide a single point of contact for Member enquiries;
 - (c) Allow us to trial a case management approach and collect data about Member enquiries in order to inform future service delivery design; and
 - (d) We are currently working with Members to help develop the role before we formally go live.

8. HR and Organisational Development

- 8.1 Payroll : We continue to embed the new payroll systems. Having piloted Absence, Expenses and Overtime modules on iTrent, we have now launched these to all staff. This has meant that line managers and employees now can manage and upload information themselves. Managers now have access to real time reporting and can scrutinise sickness analytics. User guides were produced in-house for all three modules.
- 8.2 HR continues to support staff with the various moves in The Deane House due to the start of the Accommodation Project. We also issued 115 vouchers for free flu jabs to staff.
- 8.3 Recruitment : Recruitment levels remain steady, however the majority of posts have been filled by secondments internally or agency staff rather than external applicants in anticipation of the Transformation Project.

- 8.4 Temporary Staff : The majority of temporary staff continue to be placed through Matrix and there are currently 51 active placements.
- 8.5 Transformation : The team has been busy designing and job evaluating the new posts for the One Future Model and organising the recruitment process.
- 8.6 Chaplaincy Service – The service provided by Reverend Ewen Huffman has been well received by staff and we will be conducting a three month review with the Taunton Chaplaincy Service shortly and anticipate that this service will continue.

9. The Mayoralty and Democratic Services

- 9.1 The Mayor, Councillor Hazel Prior-Sankey, was particularly busy pre-Christmas with the usual round of Carol services, seasonal events and celebrations across the Borough. This culminated in the Christmas Day morning goodwill visits to the local emergency services, The Samaritans, a local Care Home and the Maternity Unit at Musgrove Park Hospital to present the first born 'Christmas Baby' with a soft toy.
- 9.2 Traditionally, January is a quiet month allowing the Mayor to 'draw breath'. However, the past month has been busier than usual with the Mayor being invited to a wide range of events ranging from a 100th Birthday celebration to attending the Pantomime at The Brewhouse Theatre.
- 9.3 Since moving upstairs in late November, Democratic Services have settled well into their new office in Room 251. The move – by necessity – resulted in a major clear out of files and documents that were no longer needed and many old Minute Books and other civic artefacts and documents have been placed into store at the Somerset Heritage Centre at Norton Fitzwarren or other locations.
- 9.4 One artefact found a new home was the HMS Hecate Bell which had been on display near the main entrance to The Deane House. The bell had been presented to the Council in 1990 on the decommissioning of the survey vessel which had undertaken many voyages on behalf of the United Kingdom Hydrographic Office (UKHO).
- 9.5 In the knowledge that the bell – which was hung from a substantial wooden 'A-frame' – was likely to end up permanently in store, an approach was made to the UKHO to see whether they would be interested in receiving back the 'Hecate Bell'. The response was swift and positive and I, accompanied by the Democratic Services Manager – Richard Bryant – were invited to the UKHO on the 31 January 2018 to formally hand over the bell to the UKHO.
- 9.6 The bell is currently on display in the entrance to the main building but it is likely to be transferred to one of the new office blocks being constructed on

site, particularly if the suggested name of the 'Hecate Building' is accepted by the Royal Navy.

10. Procurement Team

- 10.1 The Procurement Team continue to provide support across a wide range of projects and business usual activities:
- 10.2 Michael O'Halloran is working on a number of key strategic projects including North Taunton Master Planning, the Firepool development, Lisieux Way and the new Leisure Contract. In respect of Lisieux Way and the Leisure Contract the procurement design is in advance stages and close to release
- 10.3. David Carpenter is beginning initial design work in respect of the procurement of professional services that may be required for the Brewhouse Theatre project. In respect of the Coal Orchard project the procurement focus moves to the award of the associated works contract.
- 10.4. Contracts recently awarded include:-
 - ICT – Remote Access Solution;
 - Professional Services - West Somerset Design Guide;
 - Professional Services – Taunton Waterways Action;
 - Works – Pool Filtration Services; and
 - Works – Pay on Foot Parking Solution.
- 10.5 The Team continue to support South Somerset District Council on several projects as well as providing general procurement advice
- 10.6. Work is underway to develop a range of updated procurement template documents. The aim being to facilitate a greater degree of self service and general procurement skills/understanding amongst staff.
- 10.6. Work is underway to develop bespoke procurement reports within the E5 system.
- 10.7. Other live projects include a material supply solution for the Depot based services, asbestos survey and removal contracts.

11. Finance

- 11.1 I welcome Andy Stark as Financial Services Manager to the Team. Andy replaces Jo Nacey who has moved from the area.
- 11.2 The budget setting process has been completed and a number of reports have been presented to Scrutiny and the Executive on the budget position. This has also included an update to the Medium Term Financial Plan including updated forecasts of future funding and any potential budgetary gap.

The Council's capital spending plans have also been presented to Members for consideration.

11.3 We have also started early preparation for completing the Council's Final Accounts to make sure that we are ready for our external auditors and the statutory deadlines for publication.

11.4 We have continued to support a number of potential capital projects particularly those with a commercial and regeneration aspect including:-

- Firepool Hotel;
- The Collar Factory; and
- Taunton Station Regeneration.

Councillor Richard Parrish

Council Meeting - 22 February 2018

Report of Councillor Mrs Jane Warmington - Community Leadership

THINK DIFFERENTLY, DO DIFFERENTLY ~ 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 are already being delivered differently in our disadvantaged urban areas through co-ordinated, frontline, problem-solving, multiagency one teams providing early help eventually based together in the area they serve. Rural parishes with more scattered communities are being helped to access services through community centres and local village agents who identify, signpost and support isolated residents to get the help they need. Urban priority areas need excellent education and health facilities within them if we are to build independence, resilience and raise aspirations in individuals, families and communities, to sustain improvements and reduce the need and costs of interventions in the future.

1. Voluntary Sector Partners with Funding Agreements

- 1.1 Taunton Deane Borough Council (TDBC) continues to support our voluntary and community sector (VCS) in a number of ways which include some core funding agreements; a small grants pot administered for us by Somerset Community Foundation; the Somerset West Lottery; and some TDBC commissioned services in support of our tenants (MIND, Citizens Advice Money Matters, and Inspire2Achieve with work readiness and jobs).
- 1.2 The support the VCS are able to offer within our communities is enormous and they update us on their achievements once or twice a year. The eight organisations with annual funding agreements have reported back on the first half of their year (April to September 2017) and these are summarised here:-

2. Community Council for Somerset

- 2.1 The Community Council for Somerset (CCS) offer a range of services including advising on community buildings such as funding, project planning, health and safety, connectivity, hiring agreements, energy and insurance, membership, food preparation and hygiene, fire safety, and licensing. .
- 2.2 Thirteen community groups have benefitted from this and include Pitminster Village Hall, Fitzhead Tithe Barn, Churchinford Village Hall, Comeytrove Village Hall, West Monkton Village Hall, Wiveliscombe Village Hall, Brittons Ash Community Hall, Priorswood Community Centre, Appley Pavilion, North Curry Village Hall, Kingston St Mary Village Hall, West Buckland Village Hall, Oake Village Hall and Rockwell Green Village Hall.
- 2.3 Two training events on community buildings attracted nineteen attendees from Taunton Deane with others from elsewhere in the county. Forty-seven village/ community halls are currently members and receive Thatch magazine, newsletters and bulletins.
- 2.4 Advice given on community regeneration, community development and planning includes sources of funding, housing needs surveys, community cafe

projects, charity structure, social enterprises and project planning. This has benefitted Nynehead Play Area, Neroche Parish Council, St Margaret's Hospice, St Michael's Galmington, Oake Community Shop, and the communities of Stawley and Ashbrittle.

- 2.5 CCS regularly attend the Taunton Deane Strategic Partnership and also TDBC's Community Planning Working (rural) Group. They are a member of the countywide advisory group on the Voluntary and Community and Social Enterprise Strategic Forum. CCS provide administrative and governance support for the Bishop Fox Educational Foundation. They introduced the Somerset Community Oil Scheme to save money for domestic, community organisations and business buying heating oil. CCS currently has sixty-seven active community group members in Taunton Deane.
- 2.6 As part of the Positive People Programme the Community Enabler from CCS has met twenty-two people in the Taunton Deane area over the six months, seventeen of whom have been referred on to the Positive People Programme (helping long term unemployed or those who may be disadvantaged into work) with three referrals signposted to other appropriate services.
- 2.7 CCS also runs the established Village Agents' programme (providing people in Somerset's rural communities with easier access to information and services) and TDBC helps to fund complete coverage across the parishes of Taunton Deane.
- 2.8 This model of local support is expanding to include Community Agents following a social prescribing trial funded by the Clinical Commissioning Group in two local doctors' surgeries; roll out after a separate trial funded by Adult Social Care to support their less urgent referrals; and Carers Agents after CCS was recently awarded the contract for Carers Support Services in Somerset.

3. Compass Disability

- 3.1 Compass Disability Services have nearly 14,000 members and 600 people on their database. TDBC supports them to hold two six monthly gatherings for members in Taunton Deane and disseminate information throughout the year. Speakers have included advice on scams from Devon and Somerset Standards; Somerset Strategic Housing Officers Group discussing housing needs for those with disabilities; and information about The Deane House refurbishment.

4. Engage

- 4.1 Engage offer advice and support to other voluntary and community groups through face to face meetings (drop-ins/appointments), emails or over the telephone. They match volunteers to volunteering opportunities and run annual Volunteer Week and host the award ceremony.
- 4.2 They are currently working with one hundred and fifty different groups; have matched over a hundred people wanting to volunteer to organisations needing volunteers; which has amounted to over seven thousand volunteer hours in six months (based on an average of ten hours volunteering per month); from advertising nearly two hundred and fifty volunteer opportunities with eighty-eight different groups (two and a half times as many opportunities as three years ago);

advertised through Facebook, Twitter, email, posters, leaflets, groups and forums, radio, Somerset County Gazette and Wellington Weekly.

5. Fuse Streetlinkz

- 5.1 Streetlinkz provides an opportunity for around twenty youngsters who are not necessarily attracted to youth clubs and sports to be part of a group which hones circus skills and performance opportunities to help support them through their teenage years. Involvement invariably increases confidence and the ability to work as part of a team, builds trust, enhances social skills, confers some responsibility and helps keep you fit.
- 5.2 This has helped group members successfully progress into further education (drama, health and social care, horticulture, bricklaying, tree surgery); apprenticeships and jobs (nursery school placement, health and social care worker, trainee hairdresser, Macdonald's employee); and gain qualifications (food hygiene) and continue to learn through volunteering. Past members also still take part and contribute their time, skills and talents and remain supported by Fuse staff.
- 5.3 Performances at events include CicCic, River of Light, Orchard Planting, Streetlinkz Open Day, Milverton May Fayre, Somerset Day, dance project with Zoie Logic, Somerfest, Quayside Festival, August Activities Days in Halcon, August Pride in Priorswood activity, Burnham-on-Sea Appex Park Family Funday, Halcon Halloween Event, Halcon Apple Day, Priorswood Apple Day Treasure Hunt, Children's Wood Apples and Anniversaries. These events have attracted between tens to hundreds of people at each with two events attracting several thousand (Somerfest and Burnham-on-Sea Family Funday).

6. North Taunton Partnership, Priorswood

- 6.1 North Taunton Partnership runs the Priorswood Community Centre which helps hundreds of people each year (footfall at the centre and events in 2016/2017 totalled over twelve thousand) through advice, signposting, hosting local surgeries, holiday activity days, social groups, exercise sessions, educational classes, local courses, free computer access and initiating local solutions.
- 6.2 One hundred and fifty surgeries have taken place over the six months with partners supporting people with advice on benefits, housing, employment, credit union, money management, skills/training and education, energy use, health, volunteering, police matters, and addressing loneliness.
- 6.3 The Community Centre contributes hugely to community cohesion, addresses community needs, offers local opportunities for regular volunteering (currently thirty-seven giving almost two thousand hours of their time), provides a local advice hub, organises or arranges diversionary activities which helps reduce anti-social behaviour, has set up family litter-picks, helps manage the community garden, works alongside thirty-three partner organisations many of which are members of the North Taunton One Team, all working together to help keep North Taunton an attractive vibrant safe place to live.
- 6.4 North Taunton Partnership are looking for volunteers to help out for a few hours in the Community Centre. Opportunities to volunteer include roles of receptionist,

tea/coffee making assistant, computer support/tutor, summer activities support, sports assistant, crafting volunteer, event set up and a general volunteer. For more details about these please contact lesley.priorswoodcc@yahoo.co.uk or ring 01823 353643 or drop into the Priorswood Community Centre beside the shops.

7. Taunton East Development Trust, Link Centre

- 7.1 Taunton East Development Trust (TEDT) runs the Link Centre in Halcon which supports several hundred local residents with information and activities such as bingo, coffee mornings, holiday brunch club and activity days in school holidays (footfall over six months is just over four thousand). There are fifty-two volunteers who help out giving over 8,000 hours of their time.
- 7.2 The Link Centre hosts several local surgeries offering advice on housing (TDBC), employment (i2a), money management (CAB), health and exercise classes (NHS Zing), Adult Social Care and offers free computer access. Surgeries have had nearly 200 visits over six months.
- 7.3 TEDT with Halcon One Team are responsible for the very successful and much valued voluntary community workforce Link Power working in the community building new work skills and experience amongst their twenty or so volunteers. This is through ground maintenance and garden works with some volunteer administrative support. They contribute hugely to the look and feel of Halcon which looks a picture. Volunteers are being helped into work placements and paid work by Inspire2Achieve (commissioned by TDBC) working alongside Link Power and others.
- 7.4 TEDT also started the pop-up Link Kitchen which has supplied over a 1,000 breakfasts in six months and provides a great meeting place for local residents during the week and helps provide a small income for the Trust. Taunton Deane Volunteer of the Year Graham heads up the Link Kitchen.
- 7.5 TEDT is planning to move the Link Centre across the road to Moorland Place which TDBC have adapted with a much improved layout and the current Link Centre will return to flats. New trustees are being sought to help develop the Trust - please contact the new Community Development Officer Lee Bunn if you are interested and have skills to offer (l.bunn@tauntondeane.gov.uk).

8. Taunton Citizens Advice

- 8.1 Taunton Citizens Advice have helped over 3,700 people across Taunton Deane with over 9,000 issues between them. Almost half the issues concerned benefits, followed by debt, finance, relationships, housing, legal, employment and consumer concerns. One third of people advised had dependent children. Over half the initial contacts were in person, just over one third were made by telephone and the remaining tenth wrote in (letter/email). 85% of people had a positive or very positive experience.
- 8.2 CAB enabled nearly £2,000 worth of debt to be written off through 19 Debt Relief and Bankruptcy Orders and achieved nearly £500,000 worth of additional benefits (total gains over course of a year) for over 150 people.

8.3 Referrals from the three One Teams in Halcon, North Taunton and Wellington for money management advice at local community centre surgeries provided by CAB were very similar, around 60 each over the six months (many complex).

9. Wiveliscombe Area Partnership and Wivey Link Community Transport

9.1 Wiveliscombe Area Partnership runs the Community Office in the centre of the town fielding enquiries and offering advice to residents across a wide rural area. It hosts twice monthly surgeries for benefit and housing advice, the Village Agent and a weekly Police surgery which attracted nearly 50 visits in six months.

9.2 It offers free computer access and a well-used small photocopying service; holds public, tourist and local information; household and dog waste bags supply; assists with form filling; signposts to other agencies and sells tickets for local events. It also has a small meeting room for hire and similarly a storage capacity for bulky community items.

9.3 There is small plastics recycling service for plastic milk bottle tops, ink cartridges and laser toners, used postage stamps, trigger-tops from plastic spray bottles and mobile phones. These are all used to raise funds for various charities such as the South West Hospices.

9.4 There have been over 1,000 visits to the Community Office in six months and forty-four people regularly volunteer.

9.5 Wiveliscombe Area Partnership's community transport Wivey Link is run by the community office and has 665 registered users from a wide rural area. Most are over 60 years old although 59 are between eighteen and twenty-five and a similar number over twenty-five but under sixty. 47 users are registered disabled but many more are frail and elderly and struggle to get to the bus stops so appreciate being picked up and transported.

9.6 The 36 volunteer drivers have completed over 4,000 single passenger journeys in four vehicles covering nearly 35,000 miles. Reasons for journeys include hospital, doctor, dentist and other medical appointments; visits to day-centres, church, social events, visiting friends and shopping.

Councillor Mrs Jane Warmington

Council Meeting – 22 February 2018

Report of Councillor Terry Beale – Housing Services

1. Deane Housing Development

Weavers Arms, Rockwell Green, Wellington

- 1.1 The completions are scheduled from Spring 2018. Regrettably there have been some delays owing to material supplies and labour but work is progressing well.
- 1.2 Work continues to prepare for the launch of the Council's shared ownership properties to offer an alternative form of low cost home ownership through the Council.

12 Moorland Close, Taunton

- 1.3 The work is due to complete mid-March and will provide 3 x 1 bed homes and community space.

North Taunton

- 1.4 Letters have been sent to both Taunton Deane tenants and to owner occupiers with regard to the first phase which is likely to result in a refurbishment programme. The exact details are yet to be finalised. A second public consultation event is taking place on Wednesday, 14 February 2018 and the Residents Design Group is working extremely well and providing invaluable community input to the project.

Housing Enabling

- 1.5 85 affordable homes have been completed up to December 2017 with a further 85 anticipated. However this figure is subject to change as some properties may complete in April/May rather than March. The 66 unit Extra Care scheme and 12 unit scheme for Learning Disabilities at Parmin Close, Taunton is scheduled to complete in Spring 2018 (April/May time).
- 1.6 The development pipeline remains strong even with the ongoing viability challenges received from numerous developments.
- 1.7 Housing Enabling are undertaking an affordable housing survey which has been commissioned by Ruishton and Thornfalcon Parish Council through the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. Other parishes are also in discussion to commission this service.
- 1.8 The Affordable Housing Open Day will be held on Wednesday, 6 June 2018 from 3pm until 7pm at Somerset County Cricket Ground. All are welcome and please encourage local residents to attend. It is a 'One Stop Shop' to find out about your affordable housing options.

2. Welfare Reform

Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP)

- 2.1 Little to add to the ongoing programme. We continue to award DHP for a number of valid reasons and we are working very closely with our tenants to examine reasons behind rent shortfalls and any remedial measures we can assist them with.

Universal Credit (UC)

- 2.2 Following on from recent Government changes the freephone contact numbers have proved to be extremely successful as one would expect and resulted in more request for assistance being made to the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP).
- 2.3 Removal of the seven day waiting period and reducing the six week wait from point of claim to five weeks has also made a difference in the overall picture with regards to hardship within the UC system although more needs to be done and we are using Government for additional measures to ease the burden.
- 2.4 The short-term measure where DWP have changed how claimants in temporary accommodation receive support is working well. Local authorities are able to recoup over 80% of the money they spend on temporary accommodation directly from the DWP rather than from the claimant.
- 2.5 The most significant change in UC is here the claimant can now claim a 'New claim advance' of up to 100% of the likely UC award. This advance can now be paid back over a much longer period of 12 months allowing claimants to pay their rent whilst waiting for their first UC payment.
- 2.6 If a claimant is in receipt of Housing Benefit and makes a claim for UC they are now entitled to a two week run on of Housing Benefit. This has still to be clarified and we await further information.

3. Deane Helpline

- 3.1 Deane Helpline continues to go from strength to strength. From April to date we have taken on 529 new customers whilst over the same period we have lost 332. Traditionally for every new customer we take on we lose a customer, meaning for the most part they cancel each other out. However, we currently have a surplus of 197 customers for this financial year - a fantastic position to be in. We firmly put this down to improved networking within the health and social care sector and re-educating our partners on what our service can provide to their clients.
- 3.2 The new additional service of providing and installing keysafes has been popular amongst our customers and we have seen since October when the scheme began take up of approximately 12 installations a week. Whilst the majority have been existing customers, we are getting requests from non-customers which is encouraging. This has been achieved with little or no direct advertising of the service but by word of mouth of satisfied customers. We will be publicising the service far more and we hope more business will come from that project.
- 3.3 Conversion of existing customers is vitally important as these customers are

transferring from a key holding service to having their own keys located at their property, which means the Emergency Response Team are more agile in responding to emergency calls as they do not have to return to our office to collect keys and then

deploy again. This not only impacts positively on our response times, but also delivers savings for the service.

- 3.4 Finally, the programme of replacing 'end of life' lifelines is going well. We identified early on a modern, robust lifeline alarm unit and have been working closely with our provider to ensure the exchange of lifeline units to our customers is seamless. We have taken a strategic decision with the acquisition of the new alarms and they are ready for the analogue phone line switch off in 2025 as they are Internet Protocol voice ready, which is fantastic for our customers.

4. Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Service

New Staff

- 4.1 Andrew Smith joined the team on secondment on the 2 January 2018 which brings the team up to 3 Full Time Equivalentents.

Officer patches

- 4.2 We have now reviewed officers work patches so that they broadly reflect the Area Team boundaries.

Central ASB Team

- 4.3 Retaining the officers as part of a central team ensures consistency of delivery across the whole Borough and also the ability to surge resources where required when demand dictates, as evidenced recently in North Taunton in relation to Organised Crime Gang (OCG) activity.

Performance

- 4.4 Satisfaction with the service remains high. At the end of Quarter 3 96% (target 85%) of tenants who reported ASB in year to date rated the help and advice received as good or excellent.

Casework

4.5 ASB cases recorded between 09/02/17 – 09/02/18 (12 months)

35 new cases were opened during the period – a slight reduction in noise, harassment and physical violence complaints. Although noise remains one of the main concerns residents report:-

Alcohol	5
Domestic Abuse	1
Drugs misuse/Dealing	5
Garden Nuisance	2
Harassment	7
Hate Crime	1
Noise	7
Other Crime	1

Physical violence	3
Vandalism	1
Vehicles	2
Total	35

Closed cases

4.6 All open cases were reviewed as part of a housekeeping exercise linked to the discussion about officer patches. This review has resulted in a significant increase in case closures for the period totalling 160, of which 76.8% were closed as a success.

High Profile/Risk Cases

4.7 There are currently eight such cases currently being dealt with including three concerning Organised Crime Gangs (OCG) and we are working very closely with the Police on these matters. Of these an application has been lodged to the court for a mandatory possession order, another closure order is being pursued and in the other the tenant has been removed to safer accommodation whilst action is progressed.

4.8 I would like to express my thanks for jobs well done to the team with regard to all of these and in particular in Duke Street, Taunton where a closure order was successfully granted and the lives of many of our tenants were made considerably better.

4.9 We are acutely aware of the apparent rise in OCG activity and we are pursuing a rigorous policy with colleagues from the Police and other services.

Other tasking

4.10 We have instigated a review of the Mandatory Possession Procedure and that is currently ongoing. We continue to support 'Chill and Chat' and we are currently looking at the maintenance of the Duke Street CCTV - all work in progress.

5. Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership (SWPSHP)

5.1 I have been asked to reiterate the current position with regards to the SWPSHP and the plans for the future.

5.2 The Council has been involved in the drafting of the housing element of the Somerset Better Care Fund Plan. This introduces an expanding range of housing options through use of the Disabled Facilities Grant element of the Better Care Fund. This includes:-

- Works that seek to avoid hospital admissions;
- Prevention grants (for example for energy efficiency work);

- Minor works grant for small scale adaptations around the home that may for example prevent trips and falls;
- Loaning equipment; and

- Further, grant and loan packages.

Changes to our grant policy to accomplish these measures has already been through Executive and reported to the Council.

And finally.....

Given the uncertainty and disruption taking place with The Deane House refurbishment and Transformation I continue to be extremely impressed by the dedication and hard work of all of our staff who continue to deliver first rate services across the board to the people of Taunton Deane and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them all.

Councillor Terry Beale