

# **Council Meeting – 8 October 2019**

## **Report of Councillor Benet Allen – Communications**

The Communications team has been busy with a number of press releases and statements issued, as well as many press enquiries fielded on a range of subjects.

Among the high profile topics covered have been:-

The Coal Orchard -marking the contract for delivery of the Coal Orchard development with Midas Construction, followed by an explanation over the closure of the riverside footpath. We are working closely with Midas Construction to ensure good communication throughout the project. Recent information sessions were well received.

The Public Realm Improvement Project which aims to make Taunton town centre more user friendly and improve the area for pedestrians and cyclists. Phase one covering the trial closure of St James Street between North Street and Lower Middle Street started in May. The first quarterly monitoring report has just been published showing increased footfall at the junction of North Street and St James Street.

The Taunton Theatre Association which launched a “use it or lose it” campaign for the Brewhouse Theatre. A statement was issued from the Leader of the Council explaining our position and the consideration that will be given to funding. The statement recognised the important contribution of the Brewhouse Theatre to Taunton over the years.

Sports and leisure operator, Everyone Active, which officially took over management of the Council's leisure facilities on 1 August. As part of the partnership, Everyone Active and SWT will invest over £1.2 million to improve the range of facilities in the area. We are working with their communications team at Everyone Active who are promote the enhancements and other initiatives.

In other news, Green Flags have been raised at six of our parks and open spaces which were recognised as some of the best in this year's Green Flag Award Scheme. The flags have gone up at Taunton's Vivary, Victoria and French Weir Parks, and Comeytrowe Park which gained a Community Green Flag Award. In Wellington they have been raised at Swains Lane Nature Reserve and Wellington Park, which also received a Green Flag Heritage Award.

A lot of positive press interest was generated by our work with the award winning charity Dogs on the Streets (DOTS) to support rough sleepers and the homeless community with dogs. The service in Taunton has been secured by SWT's Streetwise team and is one of a number of initiatives in place to address issues associated with rough sleeping and anti-social behaviour locally.

The Council recently highlighted its work to reduce the number of empty properties in the area during National Empty Homes Week (23 – 29 September),

demonstrating its commitment to bringing empty homes back into use and creating sustainable and thriving communities.

The Council has also been promoting its work within our coastal communities. Recent press releases have highlighted our work with the Minehead Coastal Community Team and the new tenant of the Jubilee Café are working together to bring a traditional feel back to Minehead beach, and our support of the Minehead Business Improvement District (BID) to brighten up the town centre.