

You are requested to attend a meeting of the Full Council to be held in The John Meikle Room - The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton on 20 March 2019 at 6.30 pm.

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## Agenda

The meeting will be preceded by a Prayer to be offered by the Mayor's Chaplain.

1 Minutes of the previous meeting of the Full Council held on 11 December 2018 and the Special Full Council held on 22 January 2019 (attached). (Pages 5 - 28)

2 To report any apologies for absence.

3 To receive any communications.

4 Declaration of Interests.

To receive and record any declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests or personal or prejudicial interests in respect of any matters included on the agenda for consideration at this meeting.

(The personal interests of Councillors and Clerks of Somerset County Council, Town or Parish Councils and other Local Authorities will automatically be recorded in the minutes.)

5 To receive questions from Taunton Deane Electors under Standing Order 15,

6 Receipt of any petitions or deputations under Standing Orders 16 and 17.

7 The Bishop Fox's Educational Foundation. A brief presentation by Councillor Stephen Martin-Scott relating to a local educational charity which could help fund local 11-24 year olds in activities that would help them reach their educational aspirations.

8 Part I - To deal with written questions to the Executive.

9 Part II - To receive reports from the following Members of the Executive (attached). (Pages 29 - 70)

(a) Councillor John Williams – Leader of the Council;

- (b) Councillor Richard Parrish – Planning Policy and Transport Strategy;
- (c) Councillor Vivienne Stock-Williams – Sports, Parks and Leisure;
- (d) Councillor Andrew Sully – Corporate Resources;
- (e) Councillor Jane Warmington – Community Leadership;
- (f) Councillor Stephen Martin-Scott – Housing Services;
- (g) Councillor Patrick Berry – Environmental Services and Climate Change; and
- (h) Councillor Mark Edwards – Economic Development, Asset Management, Arts and Culture, Tourism and Communications.

Following the discussion of the Executive Councillor reports, the Deputy Mayor will take the Chair for the following items.

10 Councillor Catherine Avril Herbert

Councillor Jane Warmington to propose and Councillor Terry Hall to second:-

"That the best thanks of the Council be accorded to Councillor Catherine Avril Herbert for the manner in which she has discharged the duties of the office of Mayor of the Borough during her term of office".

(Note : Councillor Mrs Herbert's term will formally end on 31 March 2019 as the new Somerset West and Taunton Council comes into operation on 1 April 2019. This meeting is therefore the last opportunity the Full Council of Taunton Deane Borough Council will have to offer its thanks to the Mayor. After 1 April, the Mayor will continue to honour invitations to events and engagements on an 'informal' basis up to and including 2 May 2019 when the Local Government Elections will be held.)

Councillor Mrs Herbert will reply.

11 The Deputy Mayor will present to Councillor Mrs Herbert her Past Mayor Badge.

Bruce Lang  
Assistant Chief Executive

12 March 2019

Members of the public are welcome to attend the meeting and listen to the discussions.

There is time set aside at the beginning of most meetings to allow the public to ask questions.

Speaking under "Public Question Time" is limited to 4 minutes per person in an overall period of 15 minutes. The Committee Administrator will keep a close watch on the time and the Chairman will be responsible for ensuring the time permitted does not overrun. The speaker will be allowed to address the Committee once only and will not be allowed to participate further in any debate.

Except at meetings of Full Council, where public participation will be restricted to Public Question Time only, if a member of the public wishes to address the Committee on any matter appearing on the agenda, the Chairman will normally permit this to occur when that item is reached and before the Councillors begin to debate the item.

This is more usual at meetings of the Council's Planning Committee and details of the "rules" which apply at these meetings can be found in the leaflet "Having Your Say on Planning Applications". A copy can be obtained free of charge from the Planning Reception Desk at The Deane House or by contacting the telephone number or e-mail address below.

If an item on the agenda is contentious, with a large number of people attending the meeting, a representative should be nominated to present the views of a group.

These arrangements do not apply to exempt (confidential) items on the agenda where any members of the press or public present will be asked to leave the Committee Room.

Full Council, Executive, Committees and Task and Finish Review agendas, reports and minutes are available on our website: [www.tauntondeane.gov.uk](http://www.tauntondeane.gov.uk)



The meeting rooms at The Deane House are on the first floor and are fully accessible. Toilet facilities, with wheelchair access, are available.

Lift access to The John Meikle Room, is available from the main ground floor entrance. Toilet facilities, with wheelchair access, are available through the door to the right hand side of the dais.



An induction loop operates at The Deane House to enhance sound for anyone wearing a hearing aid or using a transmitter.

**For further information about the meeting, please contact the Governance and Democracy Team on 01823 356356 or email [democraticservices@tauntondeane.gov.uk](mailto:democraticservices@tauntondeane.gov.uk)**

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## Full Council Members:

Councillor C Herbert (Chairman and Mayor of Taunton Deane)

Councillor F Smith	Councillor M Hill
Councillor J Adkins	Councillor J Horsley
Councillor M Adkins	Councillor J Hunt
Councillor T Aldridge	Councillor G James
Councillor T Beale	Councillor R Lees
Councillor P Berry	Councillor S Lees
Councillor J Blatchford	Councillor L Lisgo
Councillor C Booth	Councillor D Mansell
Councillor R Bowrah	Councillor S Martin-Scott
Councillor W Brown	Councillor I Morrell
Councillor N Cavill	Councillor S Nicholls
Councillor S Coles	Councillor R Parrish
Councillor W Coombes	Councillor H Prior-Sankey
Councillor D Cossey	Councillor J Reed
Councillor D Durdan	Councillor R Ryan
Councillor K Durdan	Councillor F Smith-Roberts
Councillor M Edwards	Councillor V Stock-Williams
Councillor H Farbahi	Councillor P Stone
Councillor M Floyd	Councillor A Sully
Councillor J Gage	Councillor N Townsend
Councillor E Gaines	Councillor C Tucker
Councillor A Govier	Councillor J Warmington
Councillor A Gunner	Councillor P Watson
Councillor R Habgood	Councillor D Webber
Councillor T Hall	Councillor D Wedderkopp
Councillor R Henley	Councillor J Williams
Councillor C Hill	Councillor G Wren

## Taunton Deane Borough Council

At the meeting of Taunton Deane Borough Council held in the The Shire Hall, Shuttern, Taunton on Tuesday, 11 December 2018 at 6.30 pm.

Present: The Mayor (Councillor C Herbert)  
The Deputy Mayor (Councillor F Smith)

Councillors T Aldridge, T Beale, P Berry, J Blatchford, C Booth, R Bowrah, W Brown, N Cavill, S Coles, W Coombes, D Cossey, D Durdan, K Durdan, M Edwards, H Farbahi, M Floyd, J Gage, E Gaines, A Govier, A Gunner, R Habgood, T Hall, R Henley, C Hill, M Hill, J Horsley, J Hunt, G James, R Lees, S Lees, L Lisgo, D Mansell, S Martin-Scott, I Morrell, S Nicholls, R Parrish, J Reed, R Ryan, F Smith-Roberts, V Stock-Williams, A Sully, N Townsend, C Tucker, J Warmington, P Watson, D Wedderkopp, J Williams and G Wren

38. **Minutes of the previous meetings of Full Council held on 2 October 2018 and Special Full Council held on 14 November**

The Minutes of the meetings of Full Council held on 2 October 2018 and Special Full Council held on 14 November 2018, copies having been sent to each Member, were signed by the Mayor.

39. **To report any apologies for absence.**

Apologies were received from Councillors Mrs J Adkins, M Adkins, Davies, Prior-Sankey, Stone and Ms Webber.

40. **To receive any communications.**

The Mayor reported on two matters:-

- 1) The Communications Manager had informed her that there was currently a technical issue which was affecting the receipt of Members' e-mails. It was hoped this issue would be resolved in the next couple of days; and
- 2) She had attended the annual Court Leet Law Day on 9 November 2018 which had been very interesting. The Court Leet had offered its thanks to the Council for the work it had carried out during the past year.

Councillor Habgood expressed his thanks to the Council for its role in co-ordinating with local churches and statutory bodies the establishment of the 'Streetwise Night Café'. The café which had been set up at the Pentecostal Canon Street Church, Taunton on a short term basis was intended for the benefit of the hard-to-reach rough sleepers in the town.

It was a fantastic piece of work which had resulted in the café being set up very swiftly and the officers concerned should be congratulated.

41. **Declaration of Interests.**

Councillor Mrs Smith-Roberts declared a personal interest in relation to agenda item No 8 due to her involvement in the 'Refugee Aid from Taunton' charity which operated from a building sited on the Firepool Site.

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

42. **To receive questions from Taunton Deane Electors under Standing Order 15.**

- a) Henry Haslam of Taunton Transition Town addressed the Council on behalf of his colleague David Blake who had run the Taunton Half Marathon several times and more recently the Deane DLO 10K race in late September. He had always been disturbed by the amount of plastic waste that these events generated, especially in the form of single-use plastic bottles, often handed out to runners who take a few swigs of water and then discard the bottle on the course.

Although the bottles were collected and disposed of, it seemed an unnecessary amount of waste and something that could easily be avoided. Following very extensive media coverage, there were very few people who were unaware that a serious crisis of plastic pollution was unfolding, both in the oceans and across the ecosphere.

With the backing of Taunton Transition Town, a petition was started on 38 Degrees on 26 October 2018 under the heading "Support Taunton runners who say no! to plastic bottles". Within a few weeks, it had attracted 976 signatures.

Although the races referred to above were organised by the Taunton and District Carnival Committee, they were Taunton events and it was within its powers for the Council to ask the Committee to consider supporting Taunton Deane's desire to become a "single-use plastic free Council".

Taunton Transition Town therefore asked the Council to take note of the petition and take practical steps where possible to work with the Carnival Committee and the organisers of races to halt the distribution of single-use plastic drinks bottles at future road races, making use of more environment-friendly alternatives.

In response, Councillor Patrick Berry stated that this was a good point that would be taken up with the organisers of the Marathon and the 10K Run. The Mayor added that she had attended recent meetings of the Committee and it was taking the matter very seriously and were already looking at ways of providing alternatives to plastic bottles of water.

- b) Liz Goldsworthy asked what the outcome was following the discussion at the last Council meeting concerning the prevention of Kingston Stream Open Space being used by travellers.

There was a need to set a way forward to address this problem, not having the matter 'hijacked' to enable the provision of static sites to be discussed.

She also asked whether any progress had been made by the Legal Department regarding the enforcement of the injunction to prevent further illegal encampments.

In reply, Councillor John Williams regretted the lack of tangible progress but the Council was studying the alternatives available such as progressing the transit site on the Blackdown Hills where unauthorised travellers could be moved to relatively quickly.

He added that Taunton had a huge problem with the number of green spaces which meant the Council needed to look at the whole issue. It was likely that if the Council sought to address the problem of illegal occupations at Kingston Stream, the travellers would simply find another vulnerable green space.

- c) Martin Pakes made reference to the proposed re-development of Coal Orchard area of Taunton which was featured in the Councillor Edwards's report. He asked:-

When would the construction of the replacement building for the former Swimming Baths site be started and completed?

How long would there only be 25 car parking spaces and where would they be sited. Where and how many spaces would be provided "nearby"? Would it not be better to delay the proposed closure of St James Street until after the Coal Orchard development had been completed to allow construction traffic to use this route?

In reply, Councillor Mark Edwards stated that:-

The tender exercise was currently underway. Tenders were due to be received during January 2019 and, subject to the responses received, it was hoped that a contract would be awarded at an early date.

The Council would be looking to maintain as many spaces as possible in the Coal Orchard Car Park in conjunction with the contractor appointed. However, the number of spaces was likely to vary as the re-development moved forward. Councillor Edwards added that other opportunities for parking were also being investigated.

The proposed permanent closure of St James Street was still the subject of public consultation which would close on 31 December 2018. There was therefore still time to submit representations. He was not convinced

that construction traffic should access the site via St James Street but this would be discussed with the successful contractor.

The Mayor stated that she would call the next three questioners as they wished to raise matters on the same issue and would then ask Councillor Richard Parrish to respond.

- d) On behalf of the Residents of Staplegrove Action Group (RoSAG), Jackie Calcroft reported that Staplegrove residents were very aggrieved that this Council was going back on its word.

Councillors too who sat on the Staplegrove Planning Committee in October 2017 must also feel let down as the advice given to them unambiguously stated that if the Council was successful in its bid for £7,200,000 of Government Housing Infrastructure Funding (HIF) to build the Staplegrove Spine Road then there would be no need for a drop down road onto the rural Corkscrew Lane.

In a recent letter from land promoters, Ptarmigan, RoSAG had been informed that "We have always been consistent with our position that the District Distributor Road will be required whether the HIF money was secured or not.....we have been in discussion with Redrow who are looking to purchase the whole site. They have not discussed with us the logistics of how the site would be physically built out." This was followed a few days later by a further letter which stated that "I do know they [Redrow] have had a number of meetings with the Council regarding Reserved Matters for the site....."

The Chairman of Staplegrove Parish Council and RoSAG had recently put forward a workable solution to Taunton Deane and Somerset County Highways which conformed with Policy TAU2 to build the spine road from the west and negated access at Corkscrew Lane.

Why did RoSAG say that the Spine Road must be delivered up front and in its entirety? It was to avoid a possible scenario of only a limited number of houses 499 out of the total 713 being constructed in the west, the developer then leaving the site due to choice or market forces thus creating a cul-de-sac without proper, suitable access and an already over capacity Corkscrew Lane becoming even more congested!

Given the u-tums relating to outline approval you must surely appreciate why residents have lost confidence in the Council and its Planning Department and our concerns over the detailed application.

My questions therefore were:-

Given that the HIF bid was submitted on the basis of up front delivery of the Spine Road and the deletion of any need for the drop down road, were there any legal agreements to ensure that all developers of any part of the west site could not use any part of Corkscrew Lane as access to, or



egress from, the site for any purpose assuming HIF money was forthcoming?

Why did the Council not robustly adhere to its pledge that the drop down road would not be required in the event of the HIF bid being successful? and

Would the Council ensure that a condition was imposed on Redrow or a.n.other that the Spine Road must be completed in its entirety before any houses were built?

- e) David Lausen stated that there were rumours that Taunton Deane and Somerset County Council were now in discussions with Redrow about a “Drop Down Road” as “temporary” access off Corkscrew Lane despite Taunton Deane securing £7,200,000 HIF for a Spine Road. If these rumours were correct:–

Was Council Leader, Councillor Williams misled when he was interviewed with me on Radio Somerset in February 2018, when he assured everyone that the drop down road would now no longer be required?

Were our Member of Parliament, Rebecca Pow and then Minister for Housing and Planning, Alok Sharma misled when they visited Corkscrew Lane in November 2017 to see – and confirm – how unsuitable and dangerous Corkscrew Lane was?

Was Mr Tim Burton misled – or may be misleading – when he assured Councillors on the Planning Committee in October 2017 that approving Outline Planning and securing Spine Road funding would result in no drop down road?

- f) Simon Briggs also made reference to the HIF money for the Spine Road. As there was a lot of concern about the need for temporary access to Corkscrew Lane it was understood that this money would remove the need for that access. Bearing in mind that this allocation was agreed at the beginning of the year, when was it likely to be received, why had it taken so long and what was being done to speed up the process?

In response, Councillor Parrish stated that the Housing Infrastructure Funding (HIF) was part of the Government’s programme to accelerate the delivery of new housing. In the case of Staplegrove it also had the added benefit of delivering additional affordable housing.

Whilst it was initially hoped that the delivery of the Spine Road at the start of the development would prevent the need for a temporary access, the need to deliver new housing as early as possible would require new dwellings to be constructed alongside the construction of the Spine Road. It had therefore been confirmed that there remained a need for a temporary access, but this would be in use for a considerably shorter period of time than would be the case without HIF.

The timing of the release of the funding sat with Homes England who were undertaking the necessary due diligence. The Council had provided all the information requested, but they were handling a large number of cases which had meant that the process in relation to all of the awards had not been as swift as it might otherwise have been. There was no reason to suggest that the delay was anything more than this.

We currently did not have a date for when the money would be transferred.

g) Alan Debenham asked the following three questions:-

In view of the Government's recent budget announcement that the cap was to be lifted on Councils' borrowing to build many more new Council houses, where on the agenda was there mention of this extra borrowing and all the extra rented Council houses to be delivered?

The important arts and cultural side of Taunton's adjustment to truly becoming a Garden Town rested greatly on its ample cheap public transport, its green shrubbery and floral displays, its library facilities, its park and ride usage, a vibrant indoor produce and stall market, thorough pedestrianisation of the centre to banish all non-public services through traffic, aesthetic and emphatic connectivity between the town centre and its wonderful parks and River Tone. How was it that all these essentials were undergoing either continuing austerity cuts or little development at all?

Everyone now had stark awareness of the recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's published grave dangers facing us all of catastrophic climate change and rising sea levels unless the world reduced its carbon emissions by 45% in the next 12 years, and to net zero by 2050. How had the Council responded, or would respond, to this fearful news and why was there no mention of any urgent response on the agenda for this meeting?

In response:-

Councillor Beale replied that he was very pleased that the Government had lifted the cap which should allow the Council to increase its stock of housing.

Currently, the officers were looking at how the Government's decision would 'pan out' and what needed to be done to access the additional funding that would be available.

He added that the Council was heavily involved at the moment with the re-development of the Woolway dwellings in North Taunton. This would result in a lot more affordable housing being available compared to the present.

Councillor Edwards disagreed with Mr Debenham's question as many of the examples he had highlighted had not been subject to continuing austerity cuts. For example, pedestrianisation was underway, the Park and Ride had been saved by the Council, a Country Park had been established at Longrun Farm and further land had been acquired to provide another park to the north-east of the town and Taunton Deane still invested in floral displays.

This was due to the Council seeking to protect front line services and investing in the town. The Council would seek to continue to do this in the future as a result of Transformation.

Councillor Berry announced that he was not in a position to answer the question, which was one for the World....not just the Council.

He was aware that many people were 'doing their bit' locally to reduce their impacts on the environment. As far as the Council was concerned, more plastic than ever was being collected for recycling and carbon production at The Deane House would be significantly reduced once all the refurbishment works had been completed.

However, reducing petrol and diesel consumption of the vehicles on our roads would not happen unless there was more financial support from the Government.

- h) Roger House welcomed the proposed traffic restriction to St James Street but felt it was also time to close North Street to cars to make Taunton a real pedestrian friendly town centre.

By doing so, we would gain space to create a Touring Coach Rendezvous Point with free parking to attract many more private coaches.

North Street was the natural point to bring tourists with the Brewhouse Theatre, the main churches, the River Tone, Castle Green, the Museum and toilets, within walking range of older people.

With lower levels of future economic growth predicted, the Council could still capture more coach trade from the M5 if it acted quickly before planned attractions nearby came into being.

Could the Council make the closure of North Street a priority and by attracting coaches make our traders a bit less grumpy!

In response Councillor Parrish stated that the closure of North Street had been muted on numerous occasions over the past 25 years but was still some way off despite there being some support for it.

The current proposals, welcomed by Mr House, involved the permanent closure of St James Street between North Street and Lower Middle Street.

This meant that access to the area would still be able to be gained via Canon Street and Middle Street.

Temporary closures were currently being proposed for Hammet Street and East Street and, if these were introduced, would initially be for a trial basis so their effects could be assessed.

- i) Gideon Amos spoke about the impacts of the potential removal of 40 Commando Royal Marines from Taunton. It was not just a military issue but one that would have a significant impact on Taunton's economy.

He asked what the Council's policy on the matter was and whether this took into account the views of the Norton Fitzwarren Ward Councillors and the growing local petition to the Secretary of State for Defence that he had started against the proposed closure of Norton Manor Camp and the relocation of the Marines. The petition had so far gathered over 1,500 signatures and the campaign to halt the closure was supported by the Somerset County Gazette.

Mr Amos stated that following initial pressure to think again about the closure of the camp, an announcement had been made that it was unlikely to close until 2028 which was encouraging news. He felt that if all parties worked together there was a chance of keeping Norton Manor Camp open.

In response, the Mayor reported that if it had not been for Norton Manor Camp where her husband had been posted in 1995, she would not have moved to Taunton. She felt that Rebecca Pow MP was best placed to apply pressure on the Secretary of State to reverse the current proposal. She added that most people in the local area would support the retention of 40 Commando in Taunton Deane.

Councillor Bob Bowrah reminded Members that he was the Council's Armed Forces Champion. He stated that he had recently attended a meeting of the Armed Forces Covenant Board at Tidworth Garrison in Wiltshire where the proposed closure of the camp was discussed. The matter was therefore a County-wide issue not just a Taunton one.

Councillor Williams referred to the Motion on the agenda which would follow shortly which he hoped all Councillors would support.

43. **Opposing the closure of Norton Manor Camp and relocation of 40 Commando Royal Marines out of Taunton Deane. To consider a Motion proposed by Councillor Marcia Hill, seconded by Councillor Simon Coles (attached). An assessment of the implications for the Council should the motion be carried is also attached.**

Proposed by Councillor Marcia Hill, seconded by Councillor Simon Coles.

"The Council were aware that the closure of Norton Manor Camp, with expected disposal in 2028, was announced by the Secretary of State for Defence in

November 2016 in 'A Better Defence Estate', with a key objective to raise £1 billion from land sales, including the statement "opportunities to release value from surplus land and property must be maximised".

The Somerset County Gazette reported "False Hope" after the Defence Secretary said in Parliament on 22 October 2018 that 40 Commando Royal Marines would remain in Taunton "for a long time into the future" but his Ministry of Defence (MOD) spokesperson then described these words as "vague" confirming the Camp remained scheduled for closure.

The National Audit Office (NAO) had said implementing the plan would be "extremely challenging" and there was a "significant risk" to defence capability.

No operational military reasons or objectives had been given by the MOD for the closure, and the Government's National Security Capability Review begun in summer 2017 had led to proposals to cut up to 2,000 Royal Marines over the next decade; cuts which the Defence Select Committee of the House of Commons described as "militarily illiterate".

At a time of significant reductions in footfall in Taunton Town Centre the value of 700-800 personnel at the Camp to the local economy had been estimated at £10-14 million per annum (on the basis of the proportion of locally spent average family incomes).

#### **Recommendations:-**

- 1) The Council opposes the decision of the Government to close Norton Manor Camp and relocate the Royal Marines out of Taunton Deane; supports the efforts of our local Member of Parliament, Rebecca Pow, to secure the retention of the 40 Commando Unit; and stands behind the local 40 Commando community of serving and veteran Royal Marines who wanted the Camp to remain in the Borough;
- 2) The Leader of the Council writes to the Secretary of State for Defence strongly opposing the closure of the Camp, urging him to remove Norton Manor Camp from the list of sites to be disposed of on the Ministry of Defence website; and
- 3) The Leader of the Council also writes to all of Somerset's Members of Parliament pointing out that the County was in danger of losing 40 Commando Royal Marines, urging them to take up the importance of Norton Manor Camp to the County of Somerset and to Taunton Deane in particular in Parliament and oppose its closure and the relocation of 40 Commando to another area and that the Chief Executive should report back to the whole Council placing copies of any replies received on the public record."

The Motion was put and was carried unanimously.

44. **Firepool Hotel Development - Consultation with Local Businesses. Report of the Head of Commercial, Investment and Change (attached), to be**

**presented by Councillor Mark Edwards.**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the feedback from consultation with local businesses, on the previous Council resolution to invest and develop a new mid-market hotel on Firepool south-side site.

The original hotel report was approved by Full Council 10 April 2018 (Minute No. 12/April 2018 refers). Subsequently, at the Full Council meeting on 10 July 2018 a motion was agreed - "To defer the decision to build a hotel at Firepool and consult with businesses in Taunton Deane in order to safeguard public funds and to ensure the maximum return on our capital". (Minute No. 8/July 2018 refers).

The consultation process involved the creation of a 'Question and Answer' leaflet and an on-line survey. The consultation period was during the whole of October 2018 and the Taunton Business Community was informed as follows:-

- Press release issued and published on the Council and [www.investtaunton](http://www.investtaunton) websites (on 1 October and follow-up on 24 October 2018);
- E-mails sent directly to 312 Taunton / town centre businesses on the Council's Business Development and Visitor Centre databases (together with sending a message directly to the Taunton Chamber of Commerce);
- Social media – The consultation was promoted regularly throughout October via Twitter (Taunton Deane and Taunton Business Twitter accounts);
- Taunton Business twitter feed = c.2700 followers; and
- TDBC corporate twitter = c.4000 followers.

The feedback from the consultation with local businesses, on the previous Council resolution to invest and develop a new mid-market hotel on Firepool south-side site, had been noted. The full results were submitted for the information of all Members.

Reported that the response rate had been very low despite extensive promotion by the team and direct contact with the business community. As such there was no clear pattern of response from which to draw definitive conclusions. Whilst the hotel specific question brought a higher "no" response, if the no response from the hotel/ bed and breakfast sector was taken into account, the responses were broadly even. There was support for the principle of Council investment to support the town and to generate income to support essential services. However on such a low response rate firm conclusions were clearly hard to draw and must be viewed accordingly.

Noted that the original decision was made based on delivery of the Council's prime objectives - the investment would secure longer term benefits for the town centre and the Taunton area economy creating jobs and footfall; it would spur regeneration of the currently under-developed riverside site; and, critically it would create a new source of income for the Council to support service delivery.

The Council was working closely with professional construction and design advisors (AECOM) in planning the layout of the new hotel and services on site

and were engaging with representatives of our preferred Hotel Brand and Management Operations organisations. This was necessary to identify the highest quality and affordable design for a hotel that best fitted with the Council's aspirations for the site and within an agreed budget, supported by a robust Business Case.

Early pre-application consultations were continuing with local authority and highways planners to reach general consensus around a suitable site access, layout and services, before developing a concept design into more detailed plans.

Members would be kept informed as proposals for the new hotel developed into architect plans that could be shared.

Further reported that there were no planned changes to the original Business Case that supported the planned investment in the hotel, which was based on robust information and uses informed estimates and assumptions. The details of the Business Case had been reported previously to Councillors and remained confidential.

The proposed investment had been assessed as attaining best value for the Council, supported by the findings of independent feasibility studies, commercial valuations and construction cost estimates. A detailed review of the existing supply of hotels within Taunton had provided positive income projections thereby supporting proposals to develop a new type of hotel in this preferred location.

The hotel as a commercial venture added value to the capital Land and Building investments of the Council and would provide a positive contribution to the Council's General Fund. The Council as landowner had the opportunity to develop and retain income from the new asset. Noted that the preferred model was for the Council to create a new Special Purpose Vehicle to trade enabling surpluses generated to be returned to the Council.

During the discussion of this item, an amendment urging the Council to delay a decision on the new hotel until the new Council was formed was proposed by Councillor Habib Farbahi and seconded by Councillor Simon Coles.

The amendment was put and was lost.

**Resolved** that in light of the response to the business consultation exercise and confirmation of the robustness of the original Business Case, the Firepool Hotel Project be continued in accordance with the approval of the 10 April 2018.

45. **Heart of the South West - Joint Committee - Council Update. Report of the Head of Localities (attached), to be presented by Councillor John Williams.**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the work of the Heart of the South West (HotSW) Joint Committee.

In January 2018, the HotSW Joint Committee was formally established by the

Councils and organisations involved since 2015 in the devolution partnership. The Committee was tasked with improving productivity across the HotSW area in collaboration with the HotSW Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and other organisations as necessary.

The Committee which was Chaired by Councillor David Fothergill, Leader of Somerset County Council (with Councillor John Tucker, Leader of South Hams District Council as Vice-Chairman) had met formally three times in 2018, in March, June and October.

In addition to this, the management structure that sat behind the Committee and involved Chief Executives and senior officers from across the partnership had met regularly to drive the business of the Committee.

The report summarised the progress made by the Committee over recent months in key areas of activity which included:-

- Influencing the Government;
- Approval of the HotSW Productivity Strategy;
- Endorsement of the Delivery Plan;
- The preparation of an Opportunities Prospectus;
- Housing - an agreement to work closely with Homes England and the Government to successfully deliver the ambitious housing programmes that exist across the area;
- Working with the National Infrastructure Commission to secure Government funding for a Growth Corridor Study;
- The formation of a Brexit Resilience Opportunities Group to research and advise on the opportunities and risks to the HotSW; and
- Setting up a Sub-National Transport Body to work with the Government to deliver investment in the Region's major transport infrastructure.

The report also set out actions proposed in the coming months, particularly:-

- 1) The development of an Investment Framework for the Delivery Plan so that priorities for delivery and project opportunities could be delivered via investment from a range of sources; and
- 2) Reviewing the roles and functions of both bodies through a governance review to acknowledge the revised and enhanced focus given to LEPs by the Government.

Further reported that the inclusion of the HotSW LEP area in the second wave of areas to benefit from working with the Government to develop their Local Industrial Strategies (LIS) was a considerable achievement for the Joint Committee and the LEP.

By working closely with the Government to develop our LIS it was hoped to be able to jointly agree the long term transformational opportunities that would help deliver the 'asks' specific to our area and influence wider Government policy and delivery.



LIS's would focus on the foundations of productivity and identify transformational opportunities with partners across Ideas, People, Infrastructure, Business Environment and Place.

Noted that the LEP's proposed timetable was to have the final LIS agreed between the LEP and the Government by June 2019. To enable the development of the LIS to be taken forward at pace, and to demonstrate alignment with partners across the area, it was proposed that local authority input was developed, coordinated and signed off by the Joint Committee. Approval was therefore sought from the constituent authorities to formally delegate the Council's responsibilities for contributing to and signing off the HotSW Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) to the Joint Committee.

The report also provided details of the Joint Committee's budgetary position to provide assurance that it was operating within its budget. These details included:-

- a) A summary of the Committee's current budget position for 2018/2019;
- b) A Budget and Cost Sharing Agreement which was a development of the Inter-Authority Agreement agreed by the constituent authorities at the time the Committee was established; and
- c) An indicative budget request for 2019/2020 to the constituent authorities, as set out below:-
  - County Councils - £10,500
  - Unitary Councils - £4,000
  - District Councils and National Parks £1,400.

**Resolved** that:-

- a) The progress report setting out the work of the Heart of the South West Joint Committee since its establishment in March 2018 be noted;
- b) The development and endorsement of the Heart of the South West Local Industrial Strategy be delegated to the Joint Committee (noting that final approval of the Strategy rested with the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership and the Government);
- c) The Budget statement for 2018/2019 set out in Appendix B to the report be noted and that in accordance with the decisions taken at the time the Committee was established, the Shadow Council would be asked to make an annual budgetary provision to meet the support costs of the Joint Committee in line with the Taunton Deane and West Somerset 2018/2019 contributions. Final clarification on any additional 2019/2020 budget requirement would be provided following the completion of the review of the Joint Committee's role, function and management support arrangements and development of its work programme for 2019/2020; and

d) The Budget and Cost-sharing Agreement set out in Appendix B to the report be agreed.

46. **Approval of Funding Request for the Transformation Programme. Report of the Chief Executive (attached) to be presented by Councillors John Williams and Andrew Sully.**

Considered report previously circulated, which sought additional funding for the Transformation Programme.

The approved High Level Business Case for the creation of a new Council with Transformation in 2016, promised £3,100,000 savings with one-off costs of £7,100,000.

The original Business Case required a saving of 23% of staff costs. From recruitment to date (phase 1) and staff expressions of interest (phase 2), the Councils were broadly on track to deliver this through the voluntary redundancy (VR) route. It was estimated that approximately 23% of staff would have taken VR by the end of the process.

The revised Business Case had increased the savings from £3,100,000 to £3,500,000 with a revised investment of circa £9,500,000 delivering an attractive return of investment whilst protecting front line services and improving the customer experience.

This meant that overall costs for Transformation were now estimated to exceed the original High Level Business Case estimates by £2,387,000, for which Taunton Deane's share was £1,880,000. It was proposed that the annual savings target be increased by £348,000.

The additional costs mostly came from the average cost of redundancy not from higher numbers of redundancy. In 2016 it was predicted the former to be £25,000 when in reality it has proven to be £34,000. This was most likely due to the age profile and length of service of the people involved.

Reported that approximately £800,000 of the additional cost had arisen from the inclusion of the Deane DLO workforce into the Transformation Programme. This had enabled the Councils to grow and develop the Localities function. It was also more inclusive as all staff now had the opportunity to apply for any role and to benefit from the development on offer.

The updated Business Case provided a payback period, at 2.7 years, which was below the three year good practice benchmark the Council had used for this programme.

To maintain capacity, resilience and service standards there were some one-off transitional costs for both this year and the start of next year totalling £685,000, for which the Council's share was £564,000.

**Resolved** that:-

- 1) An increase to the Transformation Programme Budget of £2,387,000 be noted and that funding of £1,277,000 for Taunton Deane's General Fund and £603,000 for Taunton Deane's Housing Revenue Account be approved. (Note £507,000 to be funded by West Somerset Council's General Fund);
- 2) An increase to service budgets for transitional costs totalling £685,000 be noted and that funding of £386,000 for Taunton Deane's General Fund and £178,000 for Taunton Deane's Housing Revenue Account be approved. (Note £121,000 to be funded by West Somerset Council's General Fund);
- 3) The proposed increase of the annual savings target by £348,000 to £3,500,000 be supported; and
- 4) It be noted that the Shadow Executive would consider the basis for allocating the increased savings target within the new Council's Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan.

47. **Suspension of Standing Order**

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

48. **Confirmation of Appointment of Joint Chief Executive. Report of the Assistant Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer (attached), to be presented by Councillor John Williams.**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the appointment of James Hassett as Chief Executive for Taunton Deane Borough and West Somerset Councils with effect from 1 January 2019.

At the meeting of the Shadow Council held on 19 November 2018, it was agreed to appoint James Hassett as the Chief Executive Designate for the Somerset West and Taunton Council with effect from 1 January 2019 and as the permanent Chief Executive of the new Council with effect from 1 April 2018.

This decision, by virtue of the provisions of the Local Government (Boundary Changes) Regulations 2018, determined that the current Chief Executive should be treated as being dismissed by reason of redundancy. The current post-holder had therefore been given notice that their employment would cease with effect from 28 February, 2019.

Given that the Shadow Council did not have the powers to appoint staff to the extant authorities, for clarity and to ensure a smooth handover, as well as to be legally compliant, both Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset Council needed to formally appoint James Hassett as their Joint Chief Executive with effect from 1 January 2019 as recommended.

During the discussion of this item, the Leader of the Council, Councillor John Williams paid tribute to Penny James who had decided not to apply for the post of Chief Executive with the new Council. He stated that Penny had undertaken the

role of Chief Executive very well in often challenging conditions both at national and local levels. She had helped steer Taunton Deane and West Somerset Councils towards the creation of Somerset West and Taunton Council which would continue to provide local residents in both areas with a level of services into the future comparable to that which existed.

**Resolved** that the appointment of James Hassett as Chief Executive (including being Head of Paid Service, Returning Officer, Electoral Registration Officer and a Core Member of the Central Implementation Team) for Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset Council with effect from 1 January 2019 be confirmed.

49. **Approval of Redundancy (Transformation) where severance is over £100,000. Report of the Transformation HR Lead (attached), to be presented by Councillor Andrew Sully - see also Confidential Appendix at Item No. 16.**

Considered report previously circulated, which sought Council approval for the redundancies of the ICT and Information Manager.

Although the necessary financial approvals were already in place via the Business Case for Transformation, there was a requirement within the Councils' HR Policies for redundancies to be approved where severance costs exceeded £100,000 per case.

Although the new structure created through Transformation would come into effect at the end of February 2019 there was a requirement to retain the services of this particular employee until the 30 April 2019 to ensure that the significant risks associated with the IT Service could be managed appropriately.

**Resolved** that the redundancy of the ICT and Information Manager be approved with effect from 30 April 2019 in accordance with the financial details set out in the Confidential Appendix A to the report.

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

50. **Part II - To receive reports from the following Members of the Executive (attached):-**

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

Councillor Williams's report covered the following topics:-

- Chief Executive Designate;
- New Council;
- New Chair - Taunton Strategic Advisory Board;
- Proposed Dualling of the A358 – Progress;
- Refurbishment of The Deane House;

- Retail Relief – Guidance from the Government; and
- Proposed Development of the Tangier Site, Taunton with 182 new homes.

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

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

- Community Leisure – Play and Recreation; Play Equipment Repairs; Section 106 Funding for Play, Sport, Allotments and Community Halls; Capital Grant Scheme for Voluntary Village Halls, Sports Clubs and Allotments and the Parish Play Area Grant Scheme; Friends of Netherclay (Bishops Hull); Carols around the Bandstand, Vivary Park, Taunton; and Staffing;
- GLL (Taunton Deane) – Community Sport and Health; and Facilities;
- Leisure Procurement Project;
- Parks and Open Spaces – Staffing; Grass Cutting; Winter Planting; Arboriculture; Langford Lakes Christmas Trees; Vivary Park, Taunton; Wellington Park; Comeytrove Park; Somerset Wood; Swains Lane Nature Reserve, Wellington; and Abandoned Vehicles;
- Property – Station Road Swimming Pool; Vivary Park Golf Course, Taunton; and Wellington Sports Centre.

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

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

- Corporate Performance;
- Customer Services;
- Facilities Management;
- ICT/Technology;
- Members Case Management;
- Human Resources;
- Finance;
- Revenues and Benefits; and
- The Mayoralty and Democratic Services

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

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

- Taunton Town Centre;
- Street Wardens;
- Rough Sleeping Reduction Plan Overview;
- Streetwise Rough Sleepers Night Café;
- Wood to commemorate the Fallen of World War One; and
- Green Forum

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

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

- Deane Housing Development - Weavers Arms, Rockwell Green, Wellington; North Taunton; Oake; 12 Moorland Close, Taunton; Outer Circle, Taunton; Laxton Road, Taunton; Future Council Development Pipeline; Affordable Housing Completions; General Enabling; Large Scale Sites of Interest; and Other Sites of interest;
- Deane Housing Repairs and Maintenance;
- Welfare Reform - Universal Credit; and
- Anti-Social Behaviour.

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

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

- Street Sweeping and Toilet Cleaning;
- Somerset Waste Partnership;
- Cemeteries and Crematorium (Update on projects; Crematorium Waiting Room Extension; and Resignation of the Crematorium Manager); and
- Environmental Health – Health and Safety; Private Water Supplies; and Safety Advisory Group; and
- Licensing.

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

The report from Councillor Edwards covered:-

- Communications;
- Events, Place, Retail Marketing and Visitor Centre – Events; Future Events; and Place Marketing;
- Growth Strategy and Specific Projects – Coal Orchard Redevelopment, Taunton; The Brewhouse Development, Taunton; Firepool Development, Taunton; Firepool Land Assembly; and Firepool Section 106 Agreement; and
- Asset Management Service Update – New Asset Management System; Leisure Procurement Facilities – Assets and Leases; Proposed Country Park (Near Nerrols Farm, Taunton); Annual Asset and Insurance Valuations; Landlord and Tenant Advice for Projects Managed by Development and Regeneration Teams; Income Recovery Efficiency Improvements; and Unauthorised Traveller Encampments.

### **Planning Policy and Transportation (Councillor Richard Parrish)**

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

- Tonedale Mill, Wellington;
- Car Parks - Variable Message Signage and Car Park Pay on Foot;
- Neighbourhood Plans;
- Public Space Improvements – St James Street, Hammet Street and East Street;
- Community Infrastructure Levy Update; and
- Garden Town Plan – Borough-wide Design Guide; Arts and Culture Strategy; Housing Infrastructure Fund – Forward Fund; Employment, Retail and Leisure Study; and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.

(Councillors Horsley and Govier left the meeting at 7.30 p.m. and 8.09 p.m. respectively. Councillors Ms Durdan, Farbahi, Mrs Floyd, Hall, Henley, Hunt and Wedderkopp all left the meeting at 9 p.m. Councillors Martin-Scott and Mrs Gunner left the meeting at 9.10 p.m. and 9.14 p.m. respectively.)

(The Meeting ended at 9.54 pm)





## Special Full Council - 22 January 2019

Present: Councillor C Herbert (Chair)

Councillors M Adkins, P Berry, J Blatchford, W Brown, N Cavill, S Coles, W Coombes, M Floyd, E Gaines, A Gunner, R Habgood, T Hall, J Hunt, R Lees, S Lees, L Lisgo, S Martin-Scott, I Morrell, R Parrish, H Prior-Sankey, R Ryan, F Smith, V Stock-Williams, A Sully, N Townsend, J Warmington, P Watson and J Williams

Also Present: Councillors Mrs Anne Elder

(The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm)

### 15. Apologies

Councillors Mrs Adkins, Beale, Booth, Bowrah, Edwards, Farbahi, Govier, Mrs Hill, Mansell, Nicholls, Mrs Reed, Mrs Smith-Roberts, Wedderkopp and Wren.

The Mayor referred to the recent death of Councillor Tom Davies. Members stood in silence in his memory.

The Mayor also reported upon Councillor Bob Bowrah who was currently very poorly. She proposed to send the best wishes of the Council to Councillor Bowrah for a speedy recovery. This was agreed.

Mr James Hassett, the newly appointed Chief Executive of Taunton Deane Borough and West Somerset Councils, and from May 2019 Somerset West and Taunton Council, introduced himself to Members.

He acknowledged that there were many challenges ahead as a result of the current Transformation process and the formation of the new Council but was optimistic these could be overcome with the full involvement of Councillors.

### 16. Declarations of Interest

Councillors Coles, Hunt and Prior-Sankey declared personal interests as Members of Somerset County Council.

Councillors Brown, Cavill, Gaines, Hunt, James, Mrs Stock-Williams, Townsend, Mrs Warmington and Watson all declared personal interests as Members of Town or Parish Councils.

### 17. **The following item is likely to be considered after the exclusion of the press and public because of the likelihood that exempt information would otherwise be disclosed relating to the Clause set out below of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.**

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

18. **Confidential - Leisure Operators Contract. Report of the Localities Manager (attached).**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the proposed award of the new Leisure Operators Contract.

The existing leisure contract was currently delivered by Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) following their merger with Tone Leisure in 2016. It covered the management and operation of four sports and leisure centres and a golf course and high ropes facility. The contract would come to an end on 31 July 2019.

The Authority had advertised a new contract initially for 8 months and 10 years to 31 March 2030 (with the potential to extend by mutual consent for a further 10 years to 31 March 2040) to operate the leisure centres in one 'Lot' (Lot 1) and the golf and high ropes facilities in a second 'Lot' (Lot 2). The first 8 months would align the new contract with the Council's financial years.

The Council's aim was that there would be no management fee payable from the Authority to operate the contract (a 'zero subsidy' or a 'positive management fee') and that the operator should take on additional repair and maintenance obligations when compared to the current situation.

Following an extensive procurement process, it was now recommended that the Council should proceed to award the contract to manage the Lot 1 and Lot 2 facilities.

When factoring in the saving based on current payments by Taunton Deane, the saving on maintenance responsibilities passed over to the operator of the new contract, the receipts and payments of the management fees and the one off transition costs, this represented an improved financial position for the Council over the initial life of the contract. In the event of an extension being awarded after this time then the saving was likely to grow.

**Resolved** that:-

- 1) The contract award and associated leases of Lot 1 to the recommended contractor for an initial 8 months and 10 years with the option of extension for up to a further 10 years be approved;
- 2) The contract award and associated leases of Lot 2 to the recommended contractor for an initial 8 months and 10 years with the option of extension for up to a further 10 years be approved;

- 3) Revisions to the Medium Term Financial Plan to reflect the new budget profiling including the necessary transition costs be approved; and
- 4) The principle of a capital financing loan be also approved with delegated authority being granted to the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Leader of the Council to negotiate the final terms. Provision for such a loan to be included in the Capital Programme for 2019/2020.

(The Meeting ended at 7.51 pm)



## **Council Meeting – 20 March 2019**

### **Report of Councillor John Williams – Leader of the Council**

#### **1. New Council and Re-organisation**

- 1.1 This has been a time of significant change for our organisation as we transition from Taunton Deane Borough Council to Somerset West and Taunton Council on 1 April 2019 delivering the vision in the Business Case approved by Taunton Deane and West Somerset Councils and our 2017 submission to the Secretary of State.
- 1.2 A great deal of hard work and preparation has got us to this point.
- 1.3 Although we look forward to an exciting and more sustainable future as a new Council, we recognise that not all of our staff will be making that journey.
- 1.4 Many members of staff have left, or will be leaving, the Council. I am sure the Council will join me in recognising the huge contribution made over the years by those staff who are leaving and offer our thanks and sincerest best wishes for whatever the future may hold for them.
- 1.5 The main body of the internal Phase 2 recruitment, into the Customer function (Case Managers, Customer Champions and Specialists) and the 'DLO' has now been completed. Staff commence working in these new roles and structure from April.
- 1.6 We welcome new staff and congratulate those existing officers who have been appointed to the new structure - ready to work in new ways and in a rewarding environment to deliver efficient, customer-focused services to our communities.
- 1.7 Formed from an earlier merger of the Municipal Borough of Taunton, Wellington Urban District, Taunton Rural District and Wellington Rural District, after nearly 45 years this is the final Full Council meeting of Taunton Deane Borough Council.
- 1.8 I recognise it is a sad event but equally a time to reflect and celebrate all that has been achieved over those years.
- 1.9 It is also a time to look forward with optimism. Local government in Taunton Deane and West Somerset is embarking on a more secure future that benefits the communities we serve and helps better protect the services on which they rely.

#### **2. Proposed dualling of the A358 – Update on Progress**

- 2.1 Highways England (HE) has recently made clear that their announcement on the Preferred Route for the new dualled A358 will be made in the spring of this year. When pushed they accepted that this meant a decision before the summer, for which they have used the meteorological definition - i.e. 21st June. Based on conversations the officers have had with HE, I would not expect any announcement to be made before the forthcoming local elections, although technically they could make the announcement at any time.
- 2.2 HE have already held an inaugural meeting of the 'Community Liaison Forum'. This was done at Somerset County Cricket Club on 26 February 2019. It was thought to be helpful to have a gathering of all interested parties before the Preferred Route Announcement, as an introduction for all present on the process, how it will pan out, timings and how people can interact with the various processes involved. Taunton Deane Borough Council, South Somerset District Council, local Parish Councils, businesses and interest groups attended and participated at this meeting. The Community Liaison Forum will next meet after the Preferred Route Announcement.
- 2.3 Moving forward, HE has confirmed the following broad general timings for the various parts of the whole process:-
- The Preferred Route Announcement - before 21 June 2019 (unless anything unforeseen intervenes);
  - The design and development stage - approximately a 16 to 18 month period after the Preferred Route Announcement;
  - A statutory public consultation period of six weeks (the prescribed norm) after the design stage;
  - After the statutory consultation period, the formal submission of the Development Consent Order to the Government (The Planning Inspectorate), and the holding of a public inquiry (likely to last for six months);
  - After the close of the public inquiry, a further period for The Planning Inspectorate to submit their recommendation to the Secretary of State (probably three months), a further period (again likely to be three months) for the Secretary of State to decide; and
  - Finally, there has to be an allowance of time to give the opportunity for any legal challenges.
- 2.4 All this means that realistically we are probably at least three and a half to four years away from any physical works taking place on the ground.

### **3. Works to Junction 25 of the M5 Motorway and progress report on Nexus 25**

- 3.1 Update for Junction 25 – Somerset County Council has now entered in contract with Alun Griffiths and works are being planned to start on the 18 March 2019. However, early site clearance commenced during the week commencing 25 February 2019 to mitigate the risk of affecting the bird nesting season in March.

- 3.2 Positive progress with Nexus 25, Henry Boot Developments are responsible for the employment park working with Summerfields and they are already hard at work.
- 3.3 We met with the Henry Boot Director responsible who confirmed they have examined the approved scheme and they are seeking minor amendments to the proposed road layout. It does not change the substantive scheme but just allows better separation of HGV vehicles for the section for more industrial use. A planning application seeking an amendment has now been lodged and will be considered through the normal process.
- 3.4 The director commented on the benefits of using the Local Development Order process with the result that planning consent was granted early so giving certainty for both developer and investor in terms of commencement and delivery; a great asset for the development.
- 3.5 In terms of delivery of the site and buildings they are looking to start on site as soon as the planning amendment is approved and construct the first phase of infrastructure so allowing marketing to commence in earnest in about six months' time. They are aiming to have first occupation in approximately two years to coincide with completion of the major works to Junction 25. Very good news and real commitment to delivering this important strategic employment site.

#### **4. The Deane House**

- 4.1 The Deane House refurbishment is now finished (apart from the agreed additional works to the Automatic Opening Vents in the stairwells). Midas completed the works on time, to a high quality and agreed budget.
- 4.2 Avon and Somerset Police have now been in occupation for three months and are enjoying working from The Deane House. We have already seen benefits to our customers with our teams working together within the Customer Hub.
- 4.3 We continue to market the available space on the ground and first floors with Agents, Lambert Smith Hampton, and in addition to this we are also appointing a well-established local agent too. We are continuing to have detailed conversations with potential tenants, but at this time we do not have any firm commitment to report.
- 4.4 Following the completion of the refurbishment Deane House has been valued at £6,000,000 based on the works complete and £9,500,000 based on works complete and fully let. The previous valuation from SW1 a few years ago was £2,500,000.

#### **5. Country Park**

- 5.1 Planning Permission was granted in January 2018 for the change of use of two fields at Maidenbrook Lane, from agricultural land to Public Park.

- 5.2 Full Council resolved in April 2018 to purchase the land from the Crown Estate. The Council completed the land purchase in November 2018. The land will be brought into tripartite ownership with Cheddon Fitzpaine and West Monkton Parish Councils shortly. The Parish Councils have resolved to contribute to the land purchase costs and maintain the Park in the future.
- 5.3 More than 1,600 trees have been planted in the Park by volunteers. These trees will form part of the Somerset Wood, a County Council initiative to commemorate the fallen from Somerset from the Great War. A ceremony to mark the dedication of the Memorial Wood was held in November last year. I must also pay special tribute to the great efforts of the team of volunteers who have made this possible for it to actually happen.
- 5.4 New pathways and cycle routes are planned for the land and further trees will be planted in the autumn.

Councillor John Williams



# **Council Meeting – 20 March 2019**

## **Report of Councillor Richard Parrish – Planning Policy and Transport Strategy**

### **1. Car Parks Pay on Foot**

- 1.1 Six out of the seven Pay on Foot (PoF) Car Parks went live on the 4 February 2019. Since going live approximately 75,000 vehicles have used the car parks. Operations are settling down and new processes for reporting faults and issues are bedding in. A review of the work delivered has taken place and customer feedback has been sought and being assessed to ensure the changes and their benefits are clear to customers.
- 1.2 The variable message signs are in use and providing customers with greater information on which car park has capacity. Additional signage is yet to be delivered to provide better information for both residents and visitors to Taunton.
- 1.3 The management system will provide rich data on usage, payment types and other data that will give a new insight into parking habits of customers so further informing any future parking strategies. The new PoF ticket system will provide the opportunity for traders in town to offer parking incentives. This feature will be rolled out after the project is handed over to the operational Parking Team.

### **2. Public Space Improvement Project**

- 2.1 Since the new year, responding to feedback received from town centre traders, the Public Space Improvement Project (PSIP) team have convened a stakeholder working group to review the strategic goals and proposed solutions of the project. This group included the Chamber of Commerce, Avon and Somerset Police, Somerset County Council Highways, Compass Disability, First Buses, Taunton Area Cycling Campaign, Taunton Transition Town, Taxi Association and Taunton Visitors Centre. The meeting was attended by myself and was constructive and appreciated by those who attended.
- 2.2 It is planned to have three such meetings. The final session is due to meet During the week commencing 11 March 2019 where the group will agree on a joint statement on the way forward and any changes agreed to the goals and deliverables of the project.

### **3. Planning Appeal - Gladman Developments**

- 3.1 Members will be aware that public concerns existed that the success of an appeal by Gladman Developments in Wellington would lead to other successes by an imagined weakness in the Council's Planning Policies.
- 3.2 A recent planning appeal by that developer relating to a site in Creech St. Michael has been rejected by the Planning Inspector on various grounds all relating to the strength of our policies. This is a good decision for us and, seems to be particularly useful in its support for the settlement policy/plan led system and land supply/planning balance.
- 3.3 The Inspector stated that the development would not be acceptable having regard to the development plan's strategy, being contrary to Policies CP4, SP1 and SP4 of the CS. These policies, when read together, seek to create balanced and sustainable mixed-use communities, with growth in the rural areas being more limited, reflecting rural character and sustainability considerations. The harm that would arise is that development would come forward outside this plan-led approach to addressing housing needs. Whether or not development is genuinely plan-led is an important facet of sustainability.
- 3.4 Policy CP8 refers to protection of unallocated greenfield land outside settlement boundaries and Policies SP1 and SB1 place limitations on the location of new housing development. Therefore, these policies could be read as being more restrictive than paragraph 170 of the Framework. However, the Core Strategy and Site Allocations and Development Management Plan were adopted after the publication of the 2012 Framework. There is nothing in the Framework which suggests that settlement boundaries are not a legitimate planning tool. Policies CP8, SP1 and SB1, when taken and in the context of the development plan that supports economic growth and the housing land supply position is consistent with the Framework and is not out of date.
- 3.5 The Inspector concluded that the planning system should be plan-led. Land should generally be brought forward through the development plan to address housing needs and boost supply. Such a process allows options for sustainable growth to be considered, the relative merits of sites in terms of their various impacts and benefits to be assessed and infrastructure requirements to be properly planned. Moreover, the plan-led approach provides certainty for communities. There are no overriding reasons such as the lack of a five-year supply of housing that suggest that the development plan should not be followed. Overall, the conflict with the development plan would not be outweighed by other material considerations, even though the benefits of the scheme would be substantial. Therefore, the appeal should be dismissed.

#### **4. Cornhill, Wellington**

- 4.1 Officers have been working on this potential heritage risk site as part of the Project Team over the last year with the applicants to bring a scheme forward

for the site.

- 4.2 The Cornhill and Fore Street application was recommended for approval for both planning permission and listed building consent. This scheme is likely to bring back to life two listed buildings and buildings of merit at risk within the Conservation Area. The scheme will contribute to the enhancement of the neglected back land site to the rear of Fore Street and a number of important heritage assets within the town.

## **5. Taunton Garden Town Vision**

- 5.1 The Garden Town vision was published on the website (details below) in February 2019. The Vision is the start of work on Taunton Garden Town. It will be supported by a Delivery Plan to be prepared over the coming months which will provide detail to the individual strategies, projects and activities which will deliver the Vision.
- 5.2 Importantly, this Delivery Plan will not be a fixed document which will date but over time will develop into an online platform providing up-to-date information about strategies, projects and activities. The Vision is also an important tool in informing some specific pieces of work for the Council. It will influence work on the emerging Local Plan as well as more detailed design guidance which will come through a new Urban Development Framework and Design Guide.
- 5.3 This Vision framework will therefore influence all plan-making and development management decisions. Supporting strategies and plans will be needed in some areas to bring to life some of the concepts and ideas expressed in this document. These will include the Taunton Waterways Action Plan and Taunton Cultural Strategy.
- 5.4 Most importantly of all, the Council is committed to giving its communities and stakeholders an active role in realising the vision from project identification through to delivery. Somerset West and Taunton Council will work to establish new governance arrangements for the Garden Town which will incorporate new and innovative ways to encourage community participation.
- 5.5 The Council looks forward to receiving feedback on the ideas that have been set out – this document will then be revised and adopted by the Council. The Project Delivery Plan will then be drafted and consulted upon. The more detailed Urban Design Framework and Design Guidance that follow will also be subject to public consultation and will be given influence and weight within the planning system by being adopted as part of the Local Plan. As we move forward, further engagement and strong participation with individual citizens, local communities and representatives from key sectors of society within Taunton will be vital.
- 5.6 To read the full document which give details how to make comment on the Vision go to - <https://www.tauntondeane.gov.uk/media/2692/taunton-garden->

[town-vision-document-web-optimised.pdf](#)

Councillor Richard Parrish

# Council Meeting - 20 March 2019

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

*Good sports, parks and leisure facilities improve the health and wellbeing of our local communities.*

### 1. Community Leisure

#### Play and Recreation

1.1 **The following works have been advanced**, since the last report, using either the Taunton Deane replacement play equipment budget and/or Section 106 Agreement funding:-

- Showell Park Kindergarten, Taunton - two new Spring Rockers are currently being installed;
- Victoria Park, Taunton - the 7.5 m tower slide has been manufactured and installation works are underway. The Baseball pitch is currently under construction, as is the Beach Volleyball court; and
- Walkers Gate, Wellington – replacement play equipment is being ordered for this small play area using Section 106 Agreement funding.

#### Play Equipment Repairs

1.2 Work continues from within the Open Spaces Team on the maintenance of our play equipment stock. All known repairs to our play equipment are currently up-to-date or have the replacement parts on order. As far as is reasonably practical, works are being carried out (spares permitting) to ensure equipment is not out-of-service for longer than is necessary.

#### Section 106 Agreement Funding for Play, Sport, Allotments and Community Halls

- 1.3 Stoke Road Allotments continue to complete their improvement projects and are drawing down Section 106 funding.
- 1.4 West Monkton Village Hall are continuing on their agreed improvement works to the hall.

#### Capital grant scheme for Voluntary Village Halls, Sports Clubs and Allotments and the Parish Play Area Grant Scheme

1.5 The awards made to halls, sports clubs and parish play areas in 2018 have been drawn down as projects complete.

## **2. GLL (Taunton Deane)**

### **Community Sport and Health**

#### **Work Experience**

- 2.1 Five students from Bishop Fox's School visited during the Christmas holidays to find out more about working in a leisure centre. All have now been offered work experience placements during the summer.
- 2.2 The Taunton Partnership has now received over 30 applications for work experience opportunities for the 2018/2019 school year.

#### **Health and Wellbeing**

- 2.3 GLL staff attended the Beacon Centre Health and Wellbeing event in January 2019. The event was well attended by patients from Musgrove Park Hospital, who were keen to find out more about the opportunities available to them at their local Better Leisure Centres and many of the community activities which GLL run.

#### **GLL National Awards**

- 2.4 A number of staff attended the GLL National Awards Ceremony in London on 7 February 2019:-
  - Debby Brown - Healthwise Co-ordinator, Wellsprings Leisure Centre
  - Ben Wilkinson and team, Blackbrook Leisure Centre and Spa
  - Natalie Ackland, Taunton Tennis Centre
  - Sue Gibbs - Coach and Holiday Activity Lead, Wellsprings Leisure Centre.

## **3. Leisure Procurement Project**

- 3.1 Three bidders were retained following the Detailed Solutions stage and invited to dialogue meetings to clarify outstanding matters prior to final submissions. The dialogue meetings were supplemented by legal conference calls to address specific legal matters that remained "live".
- 3.2 The three bidders submitted final tenders by the December 2018 deadline and these were checked for compliance before being evaluated by officers and Councillors in the days leading up to Christmas. To ensure consistency, the same team evaluated the bids, after which moderation sessions were held to 'challenge' the outcome and ensure the process was as robust as possible.
- 3.3 Following evaluation and moderation, the team was able to identify submissions that met the Authority's requirements. They next identified a preferred bidder for each Lot – ie the bidder which offered "the most economically advantageous tender for the Authority".

- 3.4 The following Operator was selected as preferred bidder for both Lots: Sports and Leisure Management Limited (SLM) (trading as 'Everyone Active').
- 3.5 The recommendation was presented to Shadow Scrutiny in January 2019 and subsequently to Shadow Executive before being approved at a special meeting of Taunton Deane's Full Council.
- 3.6 Now that the statutory 'standstill' period has ended, we can progress with 'fine tuning' any last items and agree any remaining minor contractual issues. SLM are beginning mobilisation ready to start on 1 August 2019.
- 3.7 The position reached enables the Authority to meet its primary aim of protecting valued services whilst at the same time doing so effectively and efficiently.
- 3.8 In the last full year of operation, the Authority paid GLL £261,000 to operate the services. The new contract will deliver a total saving of £6,937,310 (including a maintenance saving) over the eight months and 10 years term (assuming the final GLL payment had remained constant).
- 3.9 The outcome is hugely positive for the Authority. We will be working with both SLM and GLL over the next six months to ensure a smooth transition.
- 3.10 My thanks to Steve Hughes, Project Manager – Leisure Procurement, and Chris Hall, Project Sponsor, for their focused commitment to achieving this superb outcome for the Authority.

## **4. Parks and Open Spaces**

### **Arboriculture**

- 4.1 Arbotrack Limited have been appointed to examine 7,000 of our trees to ensure they are safe. This work will be completed by the end of the year.

### **Comeytrove Park**

- 4.2 In order to fund the Friends of Comeytrove Park's public liability insurance, a member has made and put up 10 nesting boxes, which have been sponsored by various individuals and companies.



### **Green Flags**

- 4.3 All entries for this year's Green Flag competition have now been entered. We know how much green spaces matter to our residents and visitors in Taunton Deane, so are absolutely delighted to receive these Awards. They are testament to the dedication of our staff and the wonderful volunteers who put so much effort into maintaining our parks and open spaces to such a high standard. It really is an achievement to retain them year on year. They should feel very proud

### **Frieze Hill Community Orchard**

- 4.4 The Friends of Frieze Hill Community Orchard organised another very successful Wassail in January. Entertainment was provided by the Taunton Thespian Mummers, who performed "St George and the Dragon" to the delight of all the children present and their families, followed by the Big Noise Street Band. Entry was free and everyone was encouraged to wear wellies, bring a torch together with bells, whistles, horns and drums to wake up the apple trees.
- 4.5 It was a pleasure to see the newly formed Friends of Netherclay helping out with this happy event.

### **Somerset Memorial Wood**

- 4.6 Councillor Norman Cavill and his hard working team of volunteers spent a week recently digging up, transporting and re-planting 200 12-year old trees from the Ruishton Park and Ride area in order to make way for the Junction 25 Redevelopment Scheme. These will add to the diversity of the expanding woodland.
- 4.7 Wellington Town Council was proud to donate three young Wellingtonias to the scheme, which will slowly grow into notable tall specimen trees to be admired for generations.





## Staffing

- 4.7 Richard Brown's effective secondment as part-time Project Manager has now come to an end and he has returned to his base in The Deane House.
- 4.8 Darren Hill and Roy Porter, in addition to their business-as-usual activities, are immersed in the recruitment process for the transformed Localities Champions Workforce (LCW). All current employees who are taking up new roles will be in post on 1 April 2019.
- 4.9 Darren and Roy are keen to roll out refresher and training workshops and courses to all staff as soon as practicable, so that the new ways of working become quickly embedded.
- 4.10 They will also then begin an external recruitment process to ensure that all posts are suitably filled and the LCW is at full strength.

## **Transition Town Wellington**

- 4.11 Rebecca Pow MP has nominated Transition Town Wellington (TTW) for a Green Heart Hero Award, under the category of “Inspirational Community Project”. She was particularly impressed with the foraging map the group had produced. Two members were hoping to attend the ceremony on 13 March 2019 in Westminster Palace.
- 4.12 TTW’s Food Group, in partnership with the DLO’s Open Spaces Team, Somerset Rural Youth Project outreach workers and members of the local community are starting work on the one acre Dobree Park Community Garden Project. They began by surveying the site and levels using laser guided surveying equipment to gain accurate measurements and, with the aid of an accurate scale map, make a detailed plan. It is an interesting area as the field was remodelled into two distinct levels when the housing estate was built, incorporating a sustainable drainage system.
- 4.13 Work has begun on clearing the well-established brambles and accumulated rubbish. It has been agreed that dense piles of brush-wood lying here may be hiding hibernating hedgehogs, and so they will be left undisturbed until the weather warms and the animals wake up! The town’s Tree Warden has estimated 50 trees could eventually be planted in this newly acquired community garden, the main focus being on fruit and nuts.

## **Vivary Park**

- 4.14 The postponed project to desilt the Lake in Vivary Park is now scheduled to start on 1 April 2019 and will result in a much improved watercourse for wildlife and the public’s enjoyment. Any subsequent reinstatement works needed will be undertaken shortly thereafter.
- 4.15 For safety reasons, the bridge at Wilton Lands has been taken out of action. A temporary bridge has been installed until the Vivary Stream de-silting work is completed. A permanent new flat bridge will then be installed, so that it is not damaged by rising waters.
- 4.16 New segregated litterbins, made from recycled plastic, are to be installed in the area of the park near the children’s playground and café. These are harder wearing than the traditional bins, easier to clean and extremely difficult to set fire to – a cigarette stub would simply cause insignificant melting which would be unnoticeable. They are also cheaper than the large Big Ben bins. There will be a programme to roll these out across the district as litter bins need replacing.
- 4.17 Vivary Park will also benefit this summer from the installation of new, recycled plastic benches, which are dark brown in colour and have wheelchair access.
- 4.18 A battery powered maintenance vehicle for Vivary Park is replacing the current petrol vehicle this year and a replacement schedule is being programmed for the district’s parks.

- 4.19 Battery powered blowers, strimmers and hedge cutting tools are being trialled in the Park this year, thus actively reducing the workforce risk of hand-held vibration issues.
- 4.20 Looking forward, it is proposed to schedule a gradual replacement of the current style of dog bins with front, not top, lids to ease the removal of full and heavy internal plastic bags.
- 4.21 It is proposed to purchase mini-shredders for the shrub bed gangs, so that compost can be made from the cuttings in the DLO Nursery rather than paying for its disposal. This compost will be available for local groups to use.

### **Unauthorised Encampment Action**

- 4.22 The Council is taking action to deter unauthorised encampments on open space land. The priority area is in Wellsprings, Taunton, which has seen five illegal encampments in the last two years.
- 4.23 It has devised a landscaping scheme to stop vehicles gaining access to two stretches of open space near the Kingston Stream. The measures follow calls for help from the local community which submitted a petition to the Council asking for something to be done to stop future incursions.
- 4.24 Work will include the creation of several landscaped bunds (2ft high banks of land) around the perimeter of open access areas in Enmore Road and Wellsprings Road.
- 4.25 There will also be strategically placed bollards which can be dropped down to allow access for maintenance vehicles. Bollards may also be placed at Hope Corner Lane as a further preventative measure.
- 4.26 The scheme, along with other minor preventative work on key sites, will cost in the region of £15,000 and should be completed by Easter.

### **Wellington Flower Tower**

- 4.27 Wellington's impressive Flower Tower (forged by Darren Hill's grandfather) is to be repaired and will again take pride of place in the town this summer, bedecked with colourful flowers from the DLO Nursery. The flower tower represents Wellington's unique Monument and the National Trust is delighted that there will be visual support from the town and Borough for their Restoration Appeal (which is now their third most important priority nationally).

### **Wellington Park**

- 4.28 Work has now been completed on clearing out the rubbish and tidying the pond in Wellington Park. A child's pushchair and shopping trolley were amongst the items retrieved from the muddy bottom.
- 4.29 The Friends of Wellington Parks and Parks Team are busy making preparation for this year's Spring Fayre, which will be held on Sunday, 5 May,

starting at the earlier time of 12.30 p.m. This is a very popular annual event for local families and will include exciting new entertainment.

## **5. Property**

### **Station Road Swimming Pool**

- 5.1 External redecoration of the whole building is now complete and its refreshed appearance has been well received.
- 5.2 Following an external survey of all the leisure sites, remedial electrical works will be carried out shortly at this site and at Blackbrook Pavilion.

### **Vivary Park Golf Course**

- 5.3 Essential tree surgery work is being carried out on the golf course.
- 5.4 An Energy Performance Certificate survey of the Green Keeper's Workshop revealed that the lighting needed upgrading, which is scheduled to take place imminently.

### **Wellington Sports Centre**

- 5.5 Tarmac repairs have been carried out to improve the safety in this popular car park.
- 5.6 Extensive work has also been carried out to improve the exterior of Wellington Sports Centre. Panels were re-rendered, brickwork repairs and pointing carried out and the whole outside of the building was then repainted and refreshed.
- 5.7 Remedial electrical works are also scheduled to be carried out at this site and at Wellsprings.
- 5.8 The Procurement Team are continuing their preparatory work for the replacement of the centre's air handling unit.

*Valete Taunton Deane Borough Council!!!*

Councillor Vivienne Stock-Williams

# **Council Meeting – 20 March 2019**

## **Report of Councillor Andrew Sully – Corporate Resources**

### **1. Corporate Performance**

- 1.1 I would like to welcome Amy Tregellas, who was appointed on the 11 March 2019 as our New Governance Manager. Amy will also take on the responsibility for Data Protection, so our arrangements with South Somerset District Council will come to an end at the end of March 2019.
- 1.2 Our Current Audit Plan for 2018/2019 is showing good progress. The Corporate Governance Officers Group are now working on the 2018/2019 Annual Governance Statement.

### **2. Customer Services**

- 2.1 The integration of Taunton Police Station into the Customer Hub on 10 December 2018 has gone well. There were no issues with staff from Avon and Somerset Police or Taunton Deane, and everyone is working well together. To date there have been no concerns from our customers regarding operating in a shared space.
- 2.2 Internal recruitment of Leads and Champions has been very successful with a further phase of internal recruitment being undertaken now to complete the team. I would also like to welcome Gilly Allgood, Steven Clarke, Alex Lumby and Alice Mercer who have joined Richard Burge to lead the Customer Services Team.
- 2.3 Cross training across various areas of expertise is underway to prepare our Customer Champions for 1 April 2019 and our telephone system is being used to route calls to the right person with the right skills to deal with as many customer enquiries as possible first time.
- 2.4 The team are very involved with the development and implementation of Firmstep and training has begun to allow our team members to capitalise on the efficiencies it will bring as it begins to be rolled out to the organisation.
- 2.5 The recruitment of a Case Manager – Members has begun. This role will continue to provide direct support to our Members until the Members Portal is in place and operating efficiently. The role is a fixed term contract for six months.
- 2.6 Calls continue to be shared and managed across West Somerset and Taunton Deane to minimise any dips in service during busy times. This has been very effective and has allowed our team to be truly agile in how they are deployed to serve the customer.
- 2.7 Garden Waste calls have begun. Call volumes have increased as expected and are being managed effectively. Further seasonal events such as rent increase letters are scheduled and close co-ordination between our Case Management and Customer Champion Teams ensures we are prepared for short term spikes in call

volumes. This has been very effective.

### **3. ICT/Technology**

3.1 The ICT Team continues to support the delivery of critical 'business as usual' and "transformation" projects.

3.2 Key Projects:-

- Preparing for go-live of Firmstep, the new Somerset West and Taunton website, E5 finance system for the new Council, new single payment hub, gov.uk pay for on-line payments. This includes supporting user acceptance testing and staff training.
- The new single security domain project is currently on track to hit its go-live date of the 23-24 March 2019.

3.3 Business as usual priorities:-

- Making improvements to our data backup infrastructure, implementing improvements to Wi-Fi following a post implementation health check, review of equipment in the two Council's data centres and starting work to build a plan for consolidation of infrastructure, support activities – as well as continuing to provide a responsive "helpdesk" service.
- Supporting year end activities for Finance, Revenues and Rents.

### **4. Members Case Management**

4.1 Members Case Management continues to be providing support for elected Councillors getting their queries resolved and keeping them updated on issues Raised during this period of change. Whilst also collecting data around issues raised which will help in the development of services for Members in the future.

### **5. HR (Human Resources)**

5.1 Our priorities at this busy time are:-

- Internal recruitment - Providing support to internal recruitment of Case Management Leads, Case Managers and Locality Champions.
- External recruitment - Recruitment of all Specialist posts and Case Manager posts not yet filled.
- TUPE transfer of staff to new Council - Notification to stakeholders/ suppliers of new Council from 1 April 2019 and amendments to HR policies and internal templates to reflect changes.
- Continuing support to employees on long term sick - Successfully supported two employees and one ex-employee through the ill-health retirement process.

- Support for leavers process – return of equipment, pensions options, annual leave calculations etc.
- Payroll - Build of new structure in payroll system. Issuing of new statements of particulars to all staff taking up their new roles. Transfer of West Somerset Councillors onto Taunton Deane payroll. Processing all voluntary redundancy leaver's forms and checking all calculations for redundancy figures.

## **6. Finance**

- 6.1 The team has finalised the budgets for the new Council and these were presented to Shadow Full Council for approval on 21 February 2019. Alongside the budget proposals, the Capital Strategy, Investment Strategy and Treasury Management Strategy for the new Council were also presented and approved.
- 6.2 The Quarter 3 budget monitoring reports have also recently been presented to Members and both Taunton Deane and West Somerset Councils are forecasting under spends for the current financial year.
- 6.3 Preparation for the year-end close down for both Councils has also recently begun with guidance sent out to all relevant budget holders and business support staff. In addition, a report setting out the transitional arrangements in respect of the production and approval of the financial statements of both predecessor authorities was presented to the Corporate Governance Committee (Taunton Deane) and Audit Committee (West Somerset) on 19 March 2019. This report set out the statutory responsibilities of the Shadow Authority including the key milestones to ensure that both sets of accounts are approved within the required deadlines.
- 6.4 Work also continues to ensure that all the key financial actions are completed for the new Council to start business safely and legally from 1 April 2019. There is a great deal of work involved to make sure this is achieved including, for example, the setting up a new bank accounts, informing suppliers and making changes to the current finance system etc. We are currently on track to achieve this.

## **7. Revenues and Benefits**

### **Revenues**

- 7.1 Council Tax bills for Somerset West and Taunton will be issued mid-March.
- 7.2 The team focus is now on outstanding work and aiming to clear backlogs.
- 7.3 There will be a renewed push on collection to try and recover from the "down time" needed to deliver annual billing.
- 7.4 Continuing with the preparation for the new Council, updating letters and forms and involvement in testing for the new website and Firmstep.

### **Benefits**

- 7.5 The team are experiencing backlogs currently as the service settles down post the



changes in staff roles. We are mitigating this where possible by using agency resource, extending the finish date for some staff and are looking to use an off-site processing company to support too.

7.6 In early April the priority will be to support newly appointed Customer Champions to be trained up to deal with front end benefit calls and counter queries. Some of the Benefits Officers in their Case Manager roles will support this training to support a better front end service.

7.7 The impact of the backlog and shortages in staff will impact on our performance and, as always, we are in regular liaison with the Department of Work and Pensions.

## **8. 'Democratic Services' and The Mayoralty**

8.1 The new Governance and Performance function is now responsible for servicing the Council's meetings meaning that the former 'Democratic Services' unit has been consigned to history!

8.2 Although given a different name, there have been many meetings in recent months that have had to be serviced by staff in the new structure involving Committees at both Taunton Deane and West Somerset Councils and those set up as part of the Shadow Authority.

8.3 Hopefully, once the new Council is elected in early May, the number of meetings will decline in number making it far more manageable for the members of staff who, I am sure, will continue to provide the efficient service which Councillors have become used to.

8.4 Later in the agenda, formal thanks will be offered to the last Mayor of Taunton Deane, Councillor Catherine Herbert, for the way in which she has carried out her duties during 2018/2019.

8.5 From a position six months ago where it looked like the Mayoralty was going to disappear, an approach to the Government has led to a Statutory Instrument being drafted which, if approved by Parliament on 1 April 2019, would allow Charter Trustees to be established in what currently is the Unparished Area of Taunton.

8.6 In effect, this means that the 16 Councillors elected on 2 May 2019 to represent the Wards of Blackbrook and Holway, Halcon and Lane, Manor and Tangier, North Town, Priorswood, Victoria, Vivary, Wellsprings and Rowbarton and Wilton and Sherford will automatically become Charter Trustees in addition to being Members of Somerset West and Taunton Council.

8.7 Their main duty as trustees will be to continue to operate the terms of the Royal Charter granted in March 1975, which afforded 'Borough' status on Taunton Deane District Council.

8.8 Therefore, rather than losing the Mayoralty on the formation of the new Council, the Charter Trustees will be able to meet during May/June 2019 to elect a Mayor of Taunton and a Deputy perpetuating this long established office. Good news indeed!



## **9. Portfolio Holder**

I would like to add my personal thanks to all departments and staff that have helped me in the past two years in bringing such valuable information on the workings of their departments and reporting it to Full Council.

Councillor Andrew Sully



# Council Meeting – 20 March 2019

## Report of Councillor Mrs Jane Warmington - Community Leadership

*THINK DIFFERENTLY, DO DIFFERENTLY ~ The strategic vision for Taunton Deane's more 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, multi-agency one teams providing early help working closely 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.*

Having nearly completed two terms of office as part of the administration, I thought I would reflect on some of what has been achieved over the last four years.

### 1. Community Leadership

- 1.1 What stands out in particular is that much of what we do in the community is increasingly achieved through working together in partnerships with others. Working in partnership is leading to long term efficiencies, simpler internal arrangements, aligned strategies, a focus on what we all want to achieve, some shared budgets, and much better outcomes.
- 1.2 The longest standing partnerships are probably those with the voluntary sector which are well established and highly valued, from the smallest friends group to the larger Citizens Advice Taunton, Community Council for Somerset, Somerset Community Foundation and Engage, and many clubs, community centres and others in-between. We have been able to retain all important core funding, establish more service agreements, protect small grants during challenging financial times, set up a local lottery with over eighty registered good causes - all of which have enabled those organisations to continue to deliver so much to so many.
- 1.3 Support through grant aid comes from across the Council. It helps grow both small and larger businesses; helps establish and equip local sports clubs and leisure activities; improves village halls and local play areas; supports the Quantock Hills and Blackdown Hills Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty; helps protect universal advisory services such as Citizens Advice Taunton and Engage; retains vital community centres and supports the activities they run; helps fund group projects; supports community safety through our CCTV cameras and occasional Town Wardens schemes; funds equipment, projects and youth activities in the Unparished Area; and the same to benefit our tenants.
- 1.4 The support grant from Government to Local Authorities has all but disappeared and we have made challenging but necessary changes in the Council so as to continue to afford to deliver desirable as well as essential services. To achieve this we have had to think differently about how we do things and importantly plan and decide to make these changes. Other Government funding opportunities have

been grasped although timescales are often tight but joint applications with partners have secured millions of Pounds of inward investment for wider Taunton.

- 1.5 Taunton Deane Borough Council has not only shared officers with neighbouring West Somerset for four years (One Team Two Councils) but very soon will become a new district Council spread across a much wider and diverse area, although still with a population below that of South Somerset.
- 1.6 The Council is already part of several successful partnerships with other authorities including the Somerset Waste Partnership, South West Private Sector Housing Partnership, Building Control, Shape Mendip Legal Services and more. We have needed to be both responsive and innovative in forming new partnerships and strengthening others, to work more efficiently and be more effective. This is admirable and all Members and officers should be proud of what has been collectively achieved and what is coming to fruition following all the planning over the last four years.
- 1.7 We embraced the concept of 'One Team' for our shared management with West Somerset Council, and our shared lead with Avon and Somerset Police for innovative, co-ordinated, multi-agency, frontline working focused on our more disadvantaged areas which is now established across Somerset. Both attracted funding from the Government in recognition of their aims and objectives and the forerunner of the latter, the Halcon One Team has won several awards and received national attention.
- 1.8 We have seen improved outcomes from collaborative working particularly on the front-line where a problem-solving approach translates into more settled, better supported tenants and residents. This has more recently been extended to Taunton Town Centre where problems with rough sleeping and begging were increasing. In order to understand better and share the responsibility, the agencies came together and drew up a detailed plan which has again attracted funding from Government to implement this. The Homelessness Reduction Plan has already reduced our rough sleeping by half and is providing essential support to resettle a few with local connections into permanent housing. Some have lived on the streets for years and adjusting takes time. Patience and compassion are essential ingredients and the team meets daily for updates.
- 1.9 As a low wage economy with high house prices, there are too few affordable rents, so we are building more Council houses by redeveloping areas and diversifying our housing stock to suit more people. Local tenants help design and plan this new housing and have first refusal to move back in. We have new schemes in West Bagborough, Normandy Drive, Bacon Drive and Creechbarrow Road in Taunton, and Rockwell Green near Wellington. Plans are underway for further schemes in Oake, Laxton Road in East Taunton and a large area in Priorswood, North Taunton where non-traditional houses built of concrete are degrading and will soon be entirely refurbished or replaced.
- 1.10 The Council finally decided upon the refurbishment of The Deane House as modern, well-placed, office space to share with others which now hosts the new Police Station. The new working environment is really very good indeed and has helped staff adjust as jobs change with a new way of working starting to establish under the transformation programme. Investing in these changes and somewhat

reluctantly acknowledging that forming a new Council with our neighbour West Somerset had to be, has meant the new Council will have a balanced budget for several years, enabling it to face the future with minimum impact on services, and more opportunities to invest in our larger combined area.

- 1.11 Throughout all of this, it is the teamwork we have between Members and officers translating ideas into reality, which stands out for me, brokered with patience and professionalism by staff throughout. I would argue that as a team we have achieved a lot over the past four years during financially testing times.
- 1.12 High level strategic partnerships across Somerset are now closely aligned and very much agree on a preventative agenda. The opportunities then are there to work more effectively and pool budgets to achieve better outcomes. The Portfolio Holder represents Taunton Deane on the Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Panel, the Safer Somerset Partnership and the Health and Wellbeing Board. More recently as Vice-Chair of the Somerset West Early Help Advisory Board, the Portfolio Holder sits on the Early Help Strategic Commissioning Board and continues to advocate for vital funding for early help.
- 1.13 In the Borough, the Taunton Deane Strategic Partnership (TDSP) supported the development of the One Teams (focused on three urban areas) and the rural Village Agents (responsible for clusters of parishes). The Village Agents are employed by the Community Council for Somerset and supported by the Council to signpost and support vulnerable residents in scattered rural communities. This simple but effective model has developed to include Community Agents working with Adult Social Care and Carers Agents undertaking this role for the County Council.
- 1.14 Parish Councils are the lowest tier of local government and the Unparished Area of Taunton when it is part of the new Council may soon ask to be parished after proper consultation with residents, with a Town Council and one new Parish Council. There is a lot of support amongst current Councillors for this to happen. In the interim the Mayoralty of Taunton (though not Taunton Deane) is likely to be preserved under a Charter with new Ward Councillors as trustees and the Chair as Mayor.
- 1.15 We are five years on from when the then Chief Executive asked Portfolio Holders what they would like to achieve in the next quadrennium. My list was rather short and comprised of just two things although they encompass a lot - (1) One Teams working in all our disadvantaged areas; and (2) Village Agents covering all the rural parishes of Taunton Deane. We have achieved this and rather more and I would like to thank all Members, partners and officers for working hard with others to turn these into a reality.
- 1.16 Particular thanks go to our Housing and Community Services, Avon and Somerset Police and Council Leader Councillor John Williams who trusted me to get on with things. It has been a privilege to serve on the Borough Council for the last eight years with such good support during one of the most challenging periods in local authority history.

I am taking this opportunity to step back from the Council after eight years of giving it most of my time. My family is growing with two small grandchildren next door and another on the way and I would like to be more involved at home on the farm again.

Councillor Jane Warmington

# Council Meeting – 20 March 2019

## Report of Councillor Stephen Martin-Scott – Housing Services

### Section 1 – A Memorable Year

- 1.1 As this is the final Full Council of the current financial year, it seems appropriate to identify the number of significant events achieved, an enduring legacy of this Council, its Members and – in particular – the former Housing Enabling and Development Team, for which our staff should be thanked and congratulated – particularly during a period of considerable change.
- 1.2 I am delighted to report that we have this year:-
- Once again exceeded our target of delivering 200 affordable homes for Taunton Deane. At the time of writing we have 205 completions, with a further 26 likely to be completed by the end of this financial year. Assuming no slippage we will have added 231 new affordable homes, plus a further 10 open market buy-backs which go some way to replacing the stock we lose every year through Right to Buy.
  - Completion of Parmin Close, Taunton - the planned 66 unit extra-care scheme and 12 homes for those with learning disabilities (delivered by LiveWest, working in close partnership with the Council).
  - The continued success of the Council's own new build development programme, delivering 26 new affordable homes at Weavers Arms, Rockwell Green, Wellington. This includes the sale of the Council's first two shared ownership properties.
  - Completion of the 12 Moorland Close, Taunton development to provide the new, improved community space for the Link Centre which facilitates their support within Halcon. The scheme also provides 3 one bed flats of which two are for general needs and one offers temporary accommodation. Elsewhere on Outer Circle the contractor selection process has been started to develop 4 x one bed units where the Link Centre was originally sited.
  - We have also concluded the 12 month resident consultation in North Taunton and the new project team are working on the implementation of the Woolaway Project following its unanimous support by Members in February. This is alongside the continuation of the Council's newbuild development programme.

### Section 2 - Other Affordable Housing Developments

- 2.1 As well as those mentioned above, we have also progressed:-
- 2.2 **Weavers Arms, Rockwell Green, Wellington** - 13 homes were handed over by the developer [WRW Construction] on the 29 November 2018 and the remaining 13 homes will be handed over by the end of this April. The first properties should already be on Homefinder Somerset by the time of this meeting, with the balance being listed shortly thereafter.

- 2.3 **North Taunton Woolaway** - Progress with this major project was reported to this month's Shadow Full Council. A verbatim of the information provided at that time is appended to this report.
- 2.4 **Oake** - A pilot project for a detailed analysis of options to undertake repairs of Woolaway buildings is being undertaken to help inform the overall Woolaway Programme.
- 2.5 **Laxton Road, Taunton** - The contractor tender selection – to deliver 8 x one bed newbuild flats – is due to conclude in mid-April, and we expect to be starting on-site this summer.
- 2.6 All in all, over the past five years we have delivered over 1,000 affordable homes through our strong Taunton Deane Affordable Housing Partnership. We have seen our own development programme deliver new Council homes, purchase further homes on the open market, develop an 'active elderly' scheme, a new office hub and new community space. We have also provided environmental improvements through car parking improvements and installing scooter stores. This was alongside a detailed and complex resident consultation to develop an exemplar estate regeneration scheme in North Taunton to reflect the needs of our residents, providing high quality, energy-efficient homes within a sustainable environment that fosters independent living within a strong and thriving Garden Town Community.

### **Section 3 - Somerset Housing Strategy**

- 3.1 The Somerset Housing Strategy Stakeholder Launch Event, on 6 March 2019, attended by many of the public housing 'movers and shakers' from across the county, was organised by Taunton Deane. It was probably the most interesting and informative Housing event – featuring a range of excellent, engaging speakers – I have ever attended. If this is an area that interests you, I recommend you visit our website:-
- <https://www.tauntondeane.gov.uk/housing-and-community/housing-strategy/>
- 3.2 All the slides used by the speakers at this event will be available on this webpage later this month.
- 3.3 One of the most interesting speakers was Councillor Keith House, Leader of Eastleigh Council who opened his section by saying "If you want any money from Government to build houses, all you have to do is ring up the Treasury, say you are representing 'so and so Council' and tell them you want to build some houses. The answer will be 'How much? – and when do you want it?' – Sounds simple... However as Councillor Williams stated at the recent Shadow Full Council, what we are really short of is suitable land. Nevertheless this is a very encouraging framework within which to create ambitious targets, something which I look forward to progressing.



## Section 4 – North Taunton Woolaway Project

- 4.1 ***verbatim* of the Report by the Executive Councillor for Housing, Stephen Martin-Scott, to Shadow Full Council on 21 February 2019**
- 4.2 **ITEM 13 - The North Taunton Woolaway Project** The houses that we refer to as 'Woolaways' are houses of a non-traditional construction type built during the late 1940s and 1950s as a means of increasing the post-war housing stock. In the early 1980s it became apparent that certain non-traditional construction methods which contained prefabricated reinforced concrete did not provide the lifespan expected and were deteriorating as they aged. In 1984 the Government designated some as inherently defective, including Woolaways. This did not identify Woolaways as unsafe; it simply banned any more being built.
- 4.3 Taunton Deane Borough Council (TDBC) has approximately 240 Woolaway properties across the Borough with the main concentration being in north Taunton. In order to extend the life of the Woolaway properties and to bring them up to current standards of occupier comfort and to meet thermal efficiency targets TDBC undertook a programme to clad the houses with external wall insulation which gives the homes a distinctive look of pebbledash panels on the ground floor and grey tiles to the upper floor. And before the word 'cladding' raises concerns, given Grenfell, the type of cladding used on these properties is very different specification.
- 4.4 In 2013 a survey of our Woolaways across the Borough was carried out. This survey was necessarily limited as the homes were occupied and some insulation was in place restricting inspection. Tests were undertaken and the results showed that the prefabricated reinforced concrete elements – key structural elements – had deteriorated further and this deterioration would continue. The engineers' recommendation was that, over a period, all Woolaways should be replaced, given their inherent limited lifespan.
- 4.5 Accordingly, in 2016 TDBC began a redevelopment in Rockwell Green, Wellington, that allowed us to take a more detailed examination of the houses during the demolition process. The discovery of further degradation of the structure elements within the buildings confirmed the earlier findings and reinforced the need to plan for a wider replacement of the Woolaways.
- 4.6 In February of the following year, TDBC had the opportunity to bid for funding from the then DCLG that allow the appointment of a Master-planning Team to consider how to best manage the whole of the council's Woolaway estate. The aim of this funding was to engage with the community living in the largest concentration of Woolaways, in the North Taunton area, and to work with them to bring forward a phased regeneration scheme to a planning application stage.
- 4.7 Accordingly, in September 2017 a letter was sent to residents to advise them that they were living in a property known as a Woolaway, that it had a limited lifespan – but was currently quite safe – and invited them to attend a public

consultation so they could learn more about their homes and could discuss matters further.

- 4.8 There are 212 Woolaway homes within the North Taunton Woolaway Project area of which almost 80% (167) are owned by the Council with the remainder in private ownership.
- 4.9 Over a 12 month period there were 4 Public Consultation Events to which all households affected by the project were invited – an Introduction to the project and an explanation of Woolaway construction; an Exploration of the site constraints/ opportunities; followed by an intro to how decisions would be made regarding the area; thereafter an exploration of the 3 options for the area and explained how they had been developed. The final event showed the preferred option for the area and explained how it had been arrived at. It also identified how the project would be phased.
- 4.10 To ensure there really was good understanding of the project an exhibition was held in early February featuring planning drawings and a detailed 3D model of the redevelopment proposals, with Master planning Team members and council officers attending. Many of these elements were then featured in the subsequent area Newsletter.
- 4.11 Throughout the consultation process, three redevelopment proposals were considered. The one preferred by the community consists of predominantly new-build housing – with a small percentage of refurbished properties – in two locations. The proposed plan is a mix of housing that reflects the needs of the current community and ranges from 1 to 5 bed properties including flats, bungalows and 2 and 3 storey houses. The identified scheme will proceed in 5 phases, A-E.
- 4.12 An outline planning application for phases B-E was submitted in December 2018 together with a detailed planning application for phase A. Both these are planned to go before TDBC Planning Committee for consideration at the planning committee on the 27<sup>th</sup> March 2019. If planning permission is granted, we will start progressively relocating residents and procuring a build contract for phase A with the intention of starting construction in early 2020.
- 4.13 The project received unanimous support at the recent Tenant Services Management Board, at Shadow Scrutiny and by the Shadow Executive. I hope that now – as we move to the Recommendations, those endorsements will be repeated. It is so important to those affected, living in North Taunton.

Councillor Stephen Martin-Scott

## **5. Homelessness in Somerset and Taunton Deane**

The introduction of The Homeless Reduction Act in April 2018 has led to a significant increase (approximately 65% in Taunton Deane) through 2018/19 in the number of applications for interim domestic accommodation, as statutory thresholds have changed. Unsurprisingly, this has had a knock-on effect on demands on officer time as well as in the provision of such accommodation. Taunton has a team of 9 Housing Options Officers currently managing Homeless applications and, in addition to the statutory impacts driving up numbers, the service has also had to manage changes resulting from losing staff to other posts as a result of the Transformation project. Having to rely on agency staff would not normally have created significant challenges. However, given the current demand for experienced Housing Officers across England due to the recent legislation changes, we have experienced a relatively high turnover among our temporary staff and this in turn has led to cases taking longer to process as individuals and families change officers. The regrettable knock-on effect of this has seen users' time in temporary accommodation being prolonged.

Currently there is an interim management team in place consisting of 2 Senior Officers who have implemented new procedures to ensure consistency of approach and who are monitoring overall quality and performance. All placements have to be signed off, as do any 'Main duty' decisions – one where attempts at prevention and relief have not worked and so the affected individual or family is Temporary Accommodation. Focus has been put on prevention and making Personal Housing Plans more robust so as to reduce Bed and Breakfast placements. Currently we have 30 households in temporary accommodation, all self-contained units. With all of these, officers are currently working to find alternative, more permanent accommodation.

In Bed and Breakfast accommodation we currently have 8 individuals and 8 families. 1 family has been in B&B for longer than 6 weeks (the normal maximum) but the officer dealing with this case is being very pro-active in trying to find alternative accommodation. Wider influences have been rental prices in the District being significantly higher than Local Housing Allowance rates, meaning that many households are being priced out of the private rental market, and many do not have the guarantors required by landlords, which is excluding them. We are looking into finding some innovative incentives to help with this.

Social Housing is under immense pressure in Somerset. As of 31/12/18 the Homefinder register stood at 8,771, with 2,664 (30%) of these being registered in Taunton Deane. Numbers on the register have increased by 586 (7.2%) in the last year. Looking at this more closely, 1,339 are awaiting a 1-bed, 840 a 2-bed, 364 a 3-bed, 110 a 4-bed and 11 a 5-bed. 11% of accepted offers of accommodation went to households for whom we had accepted a duty to house.

These statistics readily show the pressure on single person households requiring accommodation, this is found in our homeless cases as part of the reason for increased single B&B placements is due to the increase in single people with multiple complex needs which is impacted by a reduction of provision by other service providers.



## **Council Meeting – 20 March 2019**

### **Report of Councillor Patrick Berry – Environmental Services and Climate Change**

#### **1. Street Sweeping and Toilet Cleaning**

- 1.1 The contract continues to deliver in accordance with the requirements and Idverde continues to support any volunteer or community group who wish to carry out community litter picks and have even helped two local Primary Schools with social awareness projects.
- 1.2 The PQMS (Professional Quality Management Services) system is now up and running. This allows both the contractor and client to monitor and score the street cleansing from 10 randomly chosen sites chosen by computer. So far we have completed three months of inspections (with the Client Manager) and the results have been good.
- 1.3 The town area is becoming prime focus as we head towards the summer and planned events which include the International Cricket Council (ICC) World Cup. Plans are being made to ensure the town centre sparkles during these events. One of the main issues in the town centre is the increasing number of unsightly chewing gum blobs on the paving. Quotations are being sought for a one-off removal, however it may be worth including this work in the South West and Taunton Council's regular maintenance programme.
- 1.4 In the past, the mechanical road sweepers have experienced difficulties where the level of parking is very high. This occurs in several areas of Taunton, which are relatively close to the town centre. The outcome is usually that the drainage channels are not properly swept. We have successfully carried out a leaflet drop in these areas where all adjacent properties received a leaflet advising them not to park on that road until after the road had been swept. All parked vehicles also received the leaflet. The response by both residents and parked vehicles was extremely positive. Success rates have varied between 60-80% depending on the area. Roads completed by using this method are Middleway and the Cranmer Road area near the Cricket Ground.

#### **2. Somerset Waste Partnership**

- 2.1 Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP) has had another successful year, with a recycling rate of around 53% in Quarter 3 of 2018/2019 and continuing to recycle over 95% in the UK (over half staying in Somerset). SWP have increased the scope of their recycling centre contract with Viridor, enabling residents to use every recycling centre to recycle cartons/tetrapaks and plastic pots, tubs and trays. SWP remain on track to move away from landfill by 2020, with the construction of an Energy from Waste plant at Avonmouth.

- 2.2 SWP has been focussing on changing behaviours, including:-
- Visiting over 100 primary schools through their 'Schools Against Waste' programme, working with Carymore Environment Trust;
  - Distributing over 10,000 Pledge Against Preventable Plastic cards;
  - Promoting the refill initiative in Somerset; and
  - Doubling its Facebook reach over the last year
- 2.3 SWP's key programme of work is to procure a new collection contractor who will roll out the Recycle More service. The Somerset Waste Board will make a decision on the preferred contractor at its meeting on 29 March 2019, with the announcement of the new contractor planned for 13 May 2019. Considerable work in building a new fleet of recycling vehicles will be undertaken ahead of the new contractor commencing services in March 2020 - ensuring that our vehicles are designed to collect even more recycling every week (plastic pots, tubs and trays, tetrapaks/ cartons, small electrical items and batteries) and have the technology to support excellent customer service.
- 2.4 With all the recycling collected each week the frequency for collection of residual waste will reduce to every three weeks. A major communications campaign will be undertaken ahead of these service changes. SWP expect this to increase their recycling rate considerably, whilst maintaining its excellent environmental performance.
- 2.5 Nationally, there is considerable change coming up in waste policy - in particular through embedding the 'producer pays' principle to underpin substantially improved national recycling performance. SWP was proud to be the only Local Authority case study in the national strategy - held up as an exemplar for the quality of recycling we collect and our history of innovation in being the first food waste collection at scale.

### **3. Cemeteries and Crematorium**

- 3.1 The dedicated Bereavement Services Team based at Taunton Deane Crematorium are responsible for looking after the Crematorium and four operational cemeteries – Taunton Deane, St Mary's and St James Cemeteries in Taunton and Rockwell Green in Wellington.
- 3.2 The majority of the cemeteries date from around the early 1900's, with new burial plots still available in all cemeteries apart from the St James Cemetery. The last 12 months have seen 78 burials carried out in both new and existing graves.
- 3.3 The Crematorium opened in 1963, and became Grade II listed in 1998 for reasons of architectural interest. In the last 12 months 2,468 cremations have taken place. The large chapel can seat 140 people comfortably, with services exceeding 300 people with standing. Facilities include webcast, DVD and CD recordings of services for those who are unable to attend or would like to have a memento of the service for their loved one. Also provided are visual tribute screens and a personal viewing room into the crematory.
- 3.4 The Council has recently invested in several improvements to the service which

include:-

- More memorial options available to families out in the grounds;
- Ground works to create new burial, interment of ashes and niches for ashes in the majority of the sites; and
- Natural burial and interment of ashes have also just been introduced.

- 3.5 On the 28 March 2019 the official opening of the new Children's Garden will take place at the Taunton Deane Cemetery and Crematorium on Wellington New Road.
- 3.6 Following some delay to the procurement process, tenders are due to be issued shortly for the extension to the waiting room and in order to facilitate this work, much of it will be carried out outside normal working hours. A temporary waiting room facility is now almost ready for use to ensure the least possible disruption to the service.
- 3.7 An informative and educational open day is to be planned for later this year.

#### **4. Licensing**

- 4.1 The Licensing Service achieved its performance target for October to December but customers are being advised to expect delays from March onwards, whilst the Council's new operating model beds in and until the bulk of customer self-serve licence applications are made available on the Council website. The taxi trade is likely to be most affected and the Licensing Manager has sent licence holders a letter, set of FAQs and advice to help staff to help them during this time.
- 4.2 Officers are now spending longer attending to applications for animal activity licences, following the implementation of new regulations. Clearer minimum standards have been introduced and for the first time, licensees will be given a star rating for how well they comply with those standards, similar in some respects to the hygiene ratings given to food premises. Those that achieve the higher ratings will also now make financial savings as they can receive longer term licences; up to a maximum three years.
- 4.3 A taxi mystery shopper exercise carried out in partnership with Compass Disability before Christmas produced mixed results. Of sixteen attempts to use a taxi, by volunteers in wheelchairs, only six resulted in a fare being carried out. Two of those were without fault and the drivers were complemented on their manner. Officers are now giving thought to the introduction of mandatory disability awareness training.

#### **5. Environmental Health**

- 5.1 This team is as usual extremely busy and in the midst of transformation, as are all other teams. Erica Lake who has been in charge since before I took up my role in 2015, is now about to take up a new role and is covering more than one role.
- 5.2 Her report shows that Members of staff who have left the team are:-
- Nicola Sambells - Food Safety Officer;

- Lis Kennard – Environmental Health Officer;
- Lisa Plenty – Environmental Health Administrative Assistant;
- Melanie Pike - Environmental Health Administrative Assistant; and
- Louise Evans - Environmental Health Administrative Assistant.

New Roles secured:-

- Emily Vining and Matt Hill – Environmental Health Specialists;
- Joanne Toogood – Case Manager Lead; and
- Case Managers - Claire Haines, Kim Lewington, Simon Moon and David Alford.

5.3 Erica is currently covering Environmental Health Line Management, Corporate Health and Safety and starting her new role in Performance and Governance as the New Authority's Project Management Officer.

5.4 The Environmental Health Team has not taken any enforcement action recently and have not had any significant cases to report on.

## **6. Portfolio Holder**

6.1 I should like to add my personal thanks to all the staff in the teams and departments I have been working with and reporting on. Their professional approach and dedication to their work have made my work as portfolio holder more interesting and more enjoyable as a result.

Councillor Patrick Berry



# **Council Meeting – 20 March 2019**

## **Report of Councillor Mark Edwards – Economic Development, Asset Management, Arts and Culture, Tourism and Communications**

### **Section 1 – Communications**

- 1.1 Alongside the very busy day to day work of the press office, the Communications and Engagement function has continued to work towards modernising the production and distribution of content to promote the work of the Council. This has included a growing focus on video and daily social media posts. The targeted video campaign to attract new Councillors to attend an information session resulted in 31 attendees, compared to 1 for Sedgemoor!
- 1.2 This has led to requests from local organisations for video production. There has also been significant continuing work to raise awareness of the new Somerset West and Taunton Council, with printed, social, video and audio campaign material produced and distributed. A newsletter to update the community on the various infrastructure projects has been designed for distribution on all platforms, to increase the focus on boosting the presence of “owned” media ensuring a clear message reaches the local population directly.
- 1.3 Officers have run member engagement sessions to help ascertain preferred methods of communication in addition to the bi-weekly newsletter. Staff now benefit from a bi-weekly newsletter, CEO briefings, SMT drop-in sessions and regular bespoke staff communications run by the team. The Taunton Garden Town Plans will go on display at the Market House, before being taken to various community forums in the area.
- 1.4 Work on the new website for 1 April 2019 is on track and the new site – [somerwestandtaunton.gov.uk](http://somerwestandtaunton.gov.uk) – is now hosted on our own servers for user testing.

### **Section 2 – Events, Place, Retail Marketing and Visitor Centre**

#### **Events**

- 2.1 Work to ensure Taunton and Somerset benefits from the Cricket World Cup (CWC) continues. The Communication and Events Team are working very closely with the CWC organisers to maximise exposure and awareness. This has included the Trophy Tour in Minehead and Taunton, an event at the County Ground and a new mural to celebrate the event.
- 2.2 Support and planning for the Somerfest is continuing. All events on behalf of

the Mayor are managed by the Communications and Engagement function including managing the fundraising for the Mayor's charities.

### **Place and Retail Marketing**

2.3 A video is in production for the Cricket World Cup "world feed" which will be viewed by up to 2 billion people. Updating all the guide books and website collateral ahead of the main tourist season is progressing well.

### **Visitor Centre**

2.4 Ticket sales for the summer concerts have been strong with the promotion of the Visitor Centre as the only place to buy tickets with reduced fees and postage charges seeing long queues for Madness and Tom Jones. The Tom Jones tickets have sold out.

## **Section 3 – Growth strategy and specific projects**

### **Coal Orchard Redevelopment**

3.1 Over the last few months there has been good progress. The former St James Swimming Pool was demolished just before Christmas and the site levelled. The OJEU tender process for a main contractor has been completed, albeit the timetable became extended due to requests for extensions of time. Midas Construction have been selected as the preferred contractor and a Pre-Construction Services Contract has been entered into in order for the final contract and scheme details and infrastructure to be resolved. Some investigative survey work has been carried out during February, and this was co-ordinated with the digging of the final three archaeological trenches, so that car park closures were kept to a minimum.

3.2 Over the next couple of months the contractors will be working on phasing and construction details leading to building works commencing in late Spring. Prior to this, the contractors will provide information in good time before the erection of hoardings around the site, regarding parking arrangements and temporary changes to pedestrian and cycle routes. The build programme is still being finalised but will be approximately 18 months.

3.3 We are working with our commercial agents, JLL, to ensure that the space and design of the units are attractive to leaseholders in the current market. We will be launching a marketing programme in early summer for both commercial and residential. JLL Exeter are already receiving enquiries for the retail units, and our residential agents Connells Taunton are taking details of early interest.

### **Firepool**

3.4 A key milestone has been reached with the Section 106 Agreement being finalised with Somerset County Council Highways signing off in March 2019. Consequently site master plan delivery planning is now progressing along

with preparation for some early site enabling works. Site set up and infrastructure works will commence shortly. Initial work involves site clean-up, replacement of fencing to secure the site and construction of access from the Northern Inner Distributor Road. In addition, some minor demolitions will be undertaken including breaking up the concrete slabs. Proposals are being prepared which will be brought to the new Council in due course relating to a masterplan business case and delivery action plan.

### **Geospatial and Innovation Centre**

- 3.5 It is marvellous to see the completion of the United Kingdom Hydrographic Office's (UKHO) landmark new HQ building in Taunton. The standard of the building reflects the UKHO's status as the world's leading marine geospatial agency.
- 3.6 We are also working closely with UKHO, Somerset County Council, Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and others on a business case for a new innovation centre in Taunton, focused on digital skills and the commercial application of marine geospatial information. The proposal is recognised by the LEP and Government as a major opportunity to drive business growth and raise productivity levels, in line with local, regional and national policy objectives. Further details will come forward this year.

### **The Brewhouse Theatre**

- 3.7 Good progress has been made on the Royal Institute of British Architects Stage 0/1 report (Strategic Brief) in conjunction with Taunton Theatre Association by MICA Architects, and associated specialist theatre consultants Sound Space Vision to provide options for expansion. The options explore potential additional facilities as a dedicated studio theatre, cinema and gallery space, to provide greater scope for delivery of an improved cultural, educational, community and wellbeing programme for the region. Delivery of the end of stage report is due in mid-March, which will include outline costs and a programme for construction, to be supported by a revised business case for consideration by the newly formed Somerset West and Taunton Council.

### **High Street Fund Bid**

- 3.8 Officers are working on the High Street Fund bid for Taunton, due to be submitted on 22 March 2019. The fund provides potential capital funding for up to £25,000,000, although the Government prospectus states that most successful areas will receive approximately £5-10,000,000.
- 3.9 There will be two rounds of the Fund, both with a two-phase application process. Phase 1 of the application process is an Expression of Interest (EOIs) stage and will be assessed on the vision for the town centre, the challenges facing the centre and the need for funding. EOIs that pass Phase 1 will be invited to develop a detailed funding bid for Phase 2 in summer 2019.

- 3.10 The High Street Fund prospectus expects bidding local authorities to put forward a single, transformative submission covering one high street or town centre in their area. On this basis Taunton Town Centre was identified as the most appropriate area to submit for the bid. Government funding will not be provided for surface-level projects that only make a difference to the appearance, rather than the use, of the area or those that would not have a long-term impact. Projects are also expected to identify co-funding by either public and/or private sector partners.
- 3.11 The Council held a Taunton High Street Fund workshop on Thursday, 28 February 2019, to gather views from local residents and businesses on emerging ideas for the High Street Fund bid, with approximately 30 people attending. This information has informed the developing EOI and will also help inform future work on the review of the Local Plan.

## Section 4 – Asset Management Service Update

- 4.1 The Asset Estates Team members are heavily involved in 'Business as Usual' transactions and ensuring that systems and processes are robust for the new service as well as working to maximise income in conjunction with Property and Development Business Support and Finance functions. Two consultants and three agency staff have been extended for a short period to cover recruitment and training under the new structure and some team members have already been appointed as Assets Specialists.
- 4.2 Some of the key project work completed during this period includes:-
- **Leisure Procurement – Assets Impacts:** Following the award of the Leisure Contract, Assets Specialists are continuing to assist with the property aspects of demobilisation / mobilisation and the completion of leases to a new operator.
  - **Accommodation Project:** Whilst the project has been managed by the Accommodation Team, Asset Specialists have provided advice on lease documents and proposed lettings of vacant areas. Alder King are to be instructed as joint agents.
  - **Blackdown Business Park:** Two units have recently been let and are now producing income. One unit remains vacant with agents actively marketing in order to reach full occupation. The new block has benefitted from recent works to clean down the cladding and driveway / loading areas.
  - **Cornhill Development:** In discussion with the developer in lieu of a significant payment to grant access into this proposed residential development.
  - **Annual Asset Valuations:** Wilks Head Eve has been engaged to conduct the annual Asset Valuation work which is well underway with draft valuations already received in preparation for the Valuation date of 31 March 2019.

- **Asset Management System (Open Assets by Capita):** Progress is continuing to be made in line with the agreed Project Plan. There have been some issues encountered due the condition of the existing data but these are being resolved as work progresses, wherever possible.

In addition:-

- Significant detailed configuration work has been carried out;
- Components and attributes have been successfully data loaded into the OpenAssets test server;
- Decent homes parameters have been agreed;
- Kick-off meetings have been held for both RDSAP (Energy) data and asbestos data;
- Initial training sessions for stock condition, RDSAP and asbestos have been planned;
- A Project Initialisation Document (PID) is being reviewed prior to agreement with Capita. The PID will incorporate a Project R.A.I.D. Log for:-
  - Risks
  - Actions
  - Issues
  - Dependencies

4.3 Risks are constantly being reviewed and additional administrative resources are being sought to help support the project.

## **Section 5**

### **Tackling Unauthorised Encampments**

- 5.1 Following on from the petition received last October by residents of the Wellsprings Road area, we have looked at what we can do to try and protect this site in particular from further unauthorised encampments. Having reviewed several options, we now have a plan for landscaping work on this site and are liaising with the local residents on the detail.
- 5.2 Scrutiny Members received an update last week and were supportive of the action being taken. We hope to have this work done in the next few weeks to try and protect this important area of open space that is very well used and valued by the community.
- 5.3 Other sites across the Borough area are also being reviewed - with minor additional works planned for Blackbrook and Hamilton Park.
- 5.4 Further updates will be shared with the new Council later this year on the potential for use of injunctions, and progress on other permanent sites.

Councillor Mark Edwards

