

Annual Report of the Cabinet Member for Business, Inward Investment and Policy (now Resources and Economic Development)

Cabinet Member: Cllr David Hall - Cabinet Member for Resources and Economic Development

Division and Local Member: N/A

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1. Summary

- 1.1. I will use this report to set out progress and achievements from the last year in the services that fall under my Cabinet responsibilities for business, inward investment and policy, as well as looking forward to what the next year has in store.
- 1.2. This report focusses on the key highlights from these services from the past year. Beyond this it is also important to recognise the importance of on-going service activity and the tremendous contributions our staff make to businesses and communities.

2. Business, Inward Investment and Policy – the last 12 months

2.1. Economic Development

2.1.1 Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)

The LEP is crucial to creating the climate for growth and enabling delivery of the economic priorities from our County Plan. SCC is a key partner in the Heart of the South West LEP and in the past year we have continued to work effectively with the LEP and its wider partners to promote growth in the Heart of the South West area. The LEP concluded negotiating its third Growth Deal with Government in February 2012. The LEP and its partner local authorities worked closely with local MPs to encourage Government to agree a significant deal for the Heart of the South West, resulting in £43.57 million being committed to the area. For Somerset this includes investment in the Somerset Energy Innovation Centre in Bridgwater, the iAero centre in Yeovil, improvements to the Toneway in Taunton, access infrastructure for the Huntspill Enterprise Zone and funds for the Connecting Devon and Somerset programme. These schemes combined account for £27 million of the LEP's Growth Deal 3 award – a favourable outcome for Somerset. Overall the LEP has secured £223 million from its three Growth Deals and schemes benefitting Somerset account for £100 million of these funds. SCC is also working with the LEP and its local authority partners to develop a Heart of the South West productivity plan to supersede the current strategic economic plan for the area and provide a basis for negotiation with government about future funding for growth and infrastructure. A “green paper” for the plan was issued in February 2017 and SCC worked with Somerset partners to prepare a detailed response to this. SCC has also led work on

behalf of the LEP (and its neighbouring LEPs in Cornwall and Dorset) to secure funds for the development of an energy strategy for the South West peninsula. In March 2017 a successful bid was made to BEIS for £100,000 to support this work.

2.1.2 Skills and Employment

There is considerable evidence that availability and retention of suitably skilled workers is one of the key barriers to growth facing Somerset businesses. Equally the potential of career pathways and apprenticeship opportunities in sectors such as engineering and construction is often under-estimated by young people and their advisors at home and in schools. During the past year we have made significant progress in our approach to employment and skills issues. The Somerset employment and skills steering group has been rejuvenated under the leadership of Fiona McMillan and a revised Somerset employment and skills strategy developed, with working groups taking forward key strands of activity. This includes a task and finish group involving SCC, the Somerset Further Education Colleges and other partners to take forward our County Plan ambition of creating a University of Somerset. We have recently commissioned research to evidence future demand for higher level qualifications from employers as a key part of the business case for the University. This work will be completed by September 2017.

2.1.3 Enterprise Zone

Working with the LEP and Sedgemoor District Council we have secured from Government Enterprise Zone status for the Huntspill Energy Park. This will accelerate the delivery of this strategic employment site and provide additional business incentives - crucial to our ambitions to secure local investment relating to the Hinkley Point C supply chain. As part of the LEP's Growth Deal 3 settlement funds were allocated in February 2017 to enable the construction of the access infrastructure needed to unlock this site. In addition the partnership has agreed a Memorandum of Agreement for the operation of the Enterprise Zone with Government and secured commercial support grant funding from DCLG to support the legal and technical work needed to bring the Enterprise Zone forward. Further to this a shadow Governance Board has been established, The Lead Director (Paula Hewitt) and I have a seat on this Board. The partnership has worked closely with the site owners on commercial aspects of the development, including site assembly, negotiating the section 106 agreement associated with the planning consent and marketing of the site.

2.1.4 Superfast Broadband - Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS)

This year significant progress has been made in the delivery of high speed broadband to homes and businesses across Somerset. Phase 1 of the CDS programme has now reached its conclusion with confirmation of the final outturn of coverage being verified by BT in its final coverage report on 5 June 2017. 335,625 premises across the CDS geography are now able to access a fibre enabled service. Of these 335,625 premises 282,042 now have access to a superfast broadband service of 24 Mbps and above. This equates to an over delivery of 2,767 premises that can access superfast broadband.

2.1.5

The phase 2 intervention area has been divided into two areas: Exmoor and Dartmoor National Parks and the remainder of the Connecting Devon and Somerset area. The National Parks deployment is being delivered by Airband Community Internet Ltd and has to date delivered a 30Mbps broadband service to 3,701 premises across some of the hardest to reach areas in the UK.

Finalising where the phase 1 supplier BT was providing a service across the National Parks has meant that the contract has been extended to the 30th September 2017. This has enabled Airband; working with the CDS team to plan a second stage of deployment, targeting those individuals and businesses that otherwise would not be able to access a superfast broadband service. The second stage of deployment is underway, which will enable Airband to not only achieve its contractual targets, but ensures that those desperate for an enhanced broadband service will receive it.

2.1.6 The remainder of the phase 2 area has been divided into 6 separate lots, 5 of which have been awarded to Gigaclear and 1 to Airband (a pure fibre network provider). Currently detailed planning is being undertaken to ensure that as much coverage as possible will be achieved by the funding at their disposal. It is expected that the planning stage will be completed shortly and build can begin on the next stage of the CDS programme.

2.1.7 **Somerset Energy Innovation Centre (SEIC)**
SCC is leading the development of the SEIC in Bridgwater as a key part of our strategy to facilitate the development of a low carbon energy business cluster in Somerset and in particular maximise on supply chain business opportunities linked to the construction of Hinkley Point C. Phase 1 of SEIC comprises a 3000 square metres of office building and is now at 90% occupancy. During the past year EDF Energy has taken a lease and invested significantly in the ground floor of the building so that it can form an induction centre for Hinkley Point C for its contractors and construction workforce. The full vision for SEIC involves a further two phases of construction to complete the facility, with the funding strategy for this including further investment via Growth Deals and EU Structural Funds. A full business case has been submitted to DCLG for European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) grant support for phase 2 and Growth Deal 3 funds were awarded by the Government in February 2017 for phase three. It is our understanding that if our application for European Funds is successful they will not be impacted by Brexit. Alongside this we are progressing the development of these two remaining phases, with full planning consent being secured for phase 2 in January 2017.

2.1.8 **Aerospace/iAero Yeovil Centre**
Aerospace and advanced engineering is of particular importance to Somerset's economy and we are at the centre of the UK's rotorcraft sector, linked to the presence of Leonardo Helicopters and significant parts of its supply chain in the county. We are working closely with the industry, the LEP and other partners to sustain and develop this sector and as part of this we are developing plans for an aerospace centre in Yeovil to support innovation in the supply chain and the development of new products and processes. We have secured planning permission for the development of this centre and are at advanced stages in the process of securing £6.5 million of Growth Deal 3 and ERDF funding to support its construction. In addition SCC has agreed to allocate capital and revenue funding totalling £1.4 million for the scheme. In April 2017 we jointly commissioned with SSDC a report assessing the importance of the sector and its future support needs to influence Government thinking as part of our response to its Industrial Strategy consultations.

2.1.9 **Somerset Growth Plan**
The Somerset Growth Board comprises Somerset local authorities, Further Education Colleges and representatives of the business community and is

designed to ensure effective joint working on economic development across Somerset stakeholders. It has an important role in ensuring a shared Somerset voice to the LEP and Government. During 2016/17 SCC has led the process of refreshing the Somerset Growth Plan on behalf of the board to ensure that there is a focussed and forward looking position in Somerset's growth priorities to support the work of the partners. A draft plan was endorsed by the board in February 2017 and is in the process of being finalised and signed off formally by the partners.

2.1.10 Inward Investment

SCC and the Somerset District Councils work closely together in an informal joint service arrangement to encourage new investment in Somerset, using the brand "Into Somerset" for this purpose. A jointly agreed memorandum of understanding has been signed by the partners and a number of marketing tools are in use including an inward investment website ("intosomerset.co.uk"), social media, ("twitter.com/into somerset") and marketing collateral (e.g. a branded brochure and banner). The Into Somerset twitter account is updated daily by SCC and currently has over 10,200 followers. In April 2017 the "Into Somerset" website was refreshed to ensure the site continues to attract interest from a range of potential inward investors and businesses looking to re-locate or grow. Visits to the website are currently averaging circa 400 unique users per month, an increase of around 20% on the previous year. Circa 349 enquiries and searches have been registered on the commercial property search website since October 2015. The enquiries cover all sectors and scale of activity from single entrepreneurs through to potential investments leading to significant numbers of new jobs. There are over 500 commercial properties listed on the commercial property search section of the website and these are refreshed daily by the 300+ agents that supply data.

2.1.11 In addition to this general marketing and investment casework activity SCC is working with South West local authorities and LEPs to stimulate nuclear related inward investment and business development. A contract was awarded for targeted work to promote the area in March 2017 with two elements; business support and technical advice for SMEs to access supply-chain opportunities from the new nuclear build at Hinkley Point; and an Inward investment campaign to promote the South West as an attractive area for nuclear related investments.

2.1.12 Supporting Businesses and the Local Economy

Our network of enterprise centres provides an infrastructure to support new start and growing small businesses across rural Somerset. In addition to the five existing centres in the network we have made significant progress in the past year with plans for a further three developments: new centres at Wells and Wiveliscombe and a second phase of the Highbridge enterprise centre. Planning permission has been secured for all three developments and we are finalising Growth Deal and ERDF funding to enable the schemes to proceed. Occupancy rates remain high across the network. Alongside this physical infrastructure for small businesses SCC has worked with partners in the Heart of the South West to secure ERDF and BEIS funding for support services for small businesses through the Growth Hub and a dedicated service to support the growth of social enterprises. SCC is directly funding the advisory service element of the Growth Hub and the social enterprise programme.

2.2 New Nuclear in Somerset

- 2.2.1** On 29 September 2016 the UK Government, EDF Energy and China General Nuclear Power signed contracts, including the Contract for Difference, which marked the end of the development phase and formal launch of the Hinkley Point C (HPC) project. Works at the HPC site are fully underway, including the main excavation works where the reactor buildings will stand once construction is complete and the southern landscaping area that will separate the site from nearby hamlets. The first two of fifty tower cranes are now in place, together with some important new operational/infrastructure features including:
- a 57,000 tonnes capacity aggregate store;
 - two new temporary bridges to separate light and heavy vehicles on site;
 - number of workers on site has now exceeded 2000.
 - a spray concrete batching plant that is providing concrete to aid ground stability particularly on the sides of the excavations.
- 2.2.2** The site has reached a major milestone with the pour of the first nuclear safety concrete for the first permanent structures of the station. The installation of the temporary jetty at the site is progressing which will allow 80% of aggregates needed for concrete production to be brought via sea transport throughout construction. The ‘associated developments’ are moving forward and include good progress at the Junction 23 Park and Ride site and advanced preparations for accommodation campus construction in both Bridgwater and on-site.
- 2.2.3** The early completion of a package of road improvement schemes being delivered by EDF Energy in Somerset are key to ensuring that the local infrastructure is fit for purpose during the construction of Hinkley Point C. EDF Energy has already delivered a number of key schemes, most recently the important junction improvements at Bristol Road/The Drove and The Drove/Wylds Road which were delivered in parallel to reduce traffic disturbance and the overall construction programme. The focus of highway works in the next year will continue to be in the north of Bridgwater.
- 2.2.4** In addition to supporting EDF Energy in the delivery of and communications surrounding these infrastructure schemes, SCCs focus has been in the development and delivery of a range of mitigation measures funded through the S106 agreement including highway improvements, rights of way, landscape, archaeology and skills and education interventions. In particular, SCC completed in October 2016 construction of a shared use footpath/cycleway on the 1.5km stretch between the junction of the C182 with Combwich and the new Cannington Bypass. The scheme included carriageway widening and resurfacing with improved drainage. The scheme is part of a wider package of Corridor Improvement Schemes that SCC will deliver over the next few years. Construction of a new footway/cycleway alongside the A39 between Cannington Main Road Roundabout and Sandford Hill Roundabout commenced at the end of June which will provide a safe off road route for cyclists and pedestrians we are continuing to promote its use.
- 2.2.5** SCC has been supporting ‘Education Inspire’ and the ‘Young HPC’ initiatives which are programmes delivered by EDF Energy to prepare young people to take advantage of the huge opportunities that the construction and operation of HPC will bring. The Inspire programme began in 2011 and aims to enthuse young people to continue to study Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects and the construction and built environment.

Between September 2016 and February 2017, 9361 pupils, 115 education institutions and 410 education professionals were engaged. Direct engagement is taking place between the SCC and EDF Energy and its Tier One contractors to inform and shape their Education and Skills Plans by giving advice and guidance and facilitating engagement with Somerset schools.

2.2.6 In October 2016, the Secretary of State for Education announced target geographical areas for investment due to scoring low on Social Mobility measures and West Somerset was identified in the first tranche of areas to be supported. A project proposal has been developed, one element of which involves supporting the 14-25yrs age group. Through this, the County Council facilitated EDF being identified as a 'Cornerstone Employer' as part of the Careers and Enterprise Company's West Somerset plan. This work is on-going. Activity has been taking place to ensure that the HPC project benefits and leaves a legacy for those distanced from employment, disadvantaged or vulnerable. This has included liaison with front line services that work with groups of young people for whom an opportunity to be engaged in the HPC development could be life-changing.

2.2.7 We now have an impressive suite of assets to support our collective ambition to secure the wider benefits from the HPC development, supported by investments secured by the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership. In addition to SEIC and Huntspill Energy Park described earlier they include:

- National College for Nuclear (SW Hub) - to be based in Cannington and opened later this year, the College will increase the concentration of specialist nuclear expertise, reinforcing Somerset place at the forefront of nuclear development and meeting the needs of the nuclear industry for 30,000 new employees in particular to facilitate new nuclear build in the UK.
- Hinkley Point Training Agency – a not for profit training agency designed to act as a facilitator for skills intervention for HPC.
- Hinkley Supply Chain Portal and Hinkley Enabling Team - the Councils and the Somerset Chamber of Commerce have been working closely for many years now with EDF Energy to develop a robust local supply chain that will support the project. Already nearly 2,000 Somerset businesses have registered on the dedicated website as potential suppliers for the Hinkley Point C project. The Somerset Chamber has been capturing the specific needs of the collaboration being sought and helping to identify potential matches within its supplier database. EDF Energy has already awarded £465 million worth of contracts across the South West. Some successes to date include:
 - The Somerset Larder which is a coalition of South West caterers in a contract worth around £50m. 150 jobs have been created and it involves over 30 local suppliers
 - HOST of Somerset will service the temporary worker accommodation. Its contract is worth about £150m and will create 190 local jobs, including landscaping staff, cleaning, catering, security, and maintenance.

2.2.8 Through the Hinkley Strategic Delivery Forum (HSDF) we have been working with local, regional and national partners, including the Local Enterprise Partnership. The initial focus for HSDF has been delivery of the Hinkley Deal which provided additional funding and support from Government. HSDF is now being reshaped to strengthen the link between the Government's ambitions, set out in its Industrial Strategy Green Paper, and the opportunities and challenges

for Somerset and wider the South West in particular associated with a 'sector deal' on Nuclear.

2.3 Waste

2.3.1 Improving Recycling and Reducing Residual Waste

Household waste arisings increased slightly in 2016/17 by 1734 tonnes (0.67%). This represents a slower rate of growth than has been recorded in recent years and is likely to reflect population growth. However the amount of waste landfilled increased with a corresponding downturn in recycling (0.15%). Despite this, the recycling rate in Somerset remains encouraging at 52.7% - significantly above both the South West and England averages. Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP) has made real progress this year to address our performance in residual waste sent to landfill by signing a contract with Viridor that will see energy recovered from residual waste starting in 2020.

2.3.2 SWP has obtained agreement from all the local authorities in Somerset through the Somerset Waste Board (SWB) on a new service model for kerbside collections. The *Recycle More* service will enable residents to recycle additional materials and considerably reduce residual waste. Recycle collections will continue to be weekly and residual waste collections can be every 3 weeks, with additional storage capacity provided where needed for households with nappies and adult hygiene waste. Implementation arrangements and a roll out timetable for the new services are currently being reviewed. The introduction of *Recycle More* and the move from landfill disposal to energy from waste will stop the trend of increasing waste arisings and declining recycling rates and deliver a step improvement in performance along with significant reductions in costs. SWP remains active in supporting community based food waste avoidance, promoting home composting, encouraging use of reusable nappies and promoting furniture reuse.

2.3.3 Recycling Centres

Somerset recycling centres continue to perform well with a 5% increase in visits and an increase in recycling rate to 76%. A significant change was made to the recycling centres in 2016/17 with the introduction of a permit system for vans and trailers. This scheme was introduced to address the cross-border use of the centres by residents of neighbouring authorities, to reduce congestion, and to reduce commercial waste being brought into the sites. SWB considered the findings of the permit review at their June meeting.

2.4 Heritage

2.4.1 The South West Heritage Trust continues to build upon its reputation and over the past year has continued to develop how it meets its objectives relating to looking after our heritage assets. The Somerset Rural Life Museum has re-opened following its redevelopment; I would urge that Members visit this impressive, historical and educational facility. The Trust has developed its digital engagement and has installed new ICT systems to improve access and information storage. This will give a strong framework for the future. Engagement and learning are important parts of the Trust's work and the strength of its public programmes, including in terms of its learning offer. I would like to congratulate the Chief Executive of the Trust, Tom Mayberry, for his recent awarding an MBE.

2.4.2 Outside Somerset the Trust has overseen the renewal of the North Devon Record Office. The Weston-Super-Mare Museum has been redeveloped to give a modernised and improved attraction in North Somerset. The Trust is building its leadership role when it comes to managing and protecting heritage assets. This is helping to build its profile in the South West. The strength of its key partnerships, and building key partnerships, continues to be a focus for the Trust and is seen as an important part of its work. We continue to build new relationships to further the Trust's growing reputation.

2.5 Libraries

2.5.1 Our libraries welcomed nearly 2 million visitors and issued 2.3 million items in the past year. Taunton Library is the third busiest South West Library for borrowing (after Bristol and Exeter). A programme of 3,500 events across the county attracted over 50,000 participants. Participation levels continue to grow year on year, supporting the delivery of key commissioned priorities around literacy, health and wellbeing and digital inclusion.

2.5.2 The new Library Management System was launched in June 2016 across the seven local authorities in the LibrariesWest Consortium and the library ICT team has worked tirelessly to ensure the new system works reliably and efficiently. The new web presence www.librarieswest.org.uk enables customers to simultaneously search the collections of all seven authorities, including the two new partners Dorset and Poole. Conversations considering the future addition of Bournemouth libraries have started, as Poole and Bournemouth's library services work towards a merger of their services.

2.5.3 Library opening hours were reviewed from June 2016. Hours were varied in many of libraries including Taunton, which now opens until 5.00pm on Saturdays. North Petherton Parish Council has raised funds to ensure the opening hours of their local Library remain the same. The first Library Hub was opened at Glastonbury in June 2016. The new look library has been positively received by customers and the library team is providing the first point of contact for all customers to the hub. Two further hubs are due to open – Williton in December 2017 and Shepton Mallet (Shape Mendip), 2018. The One Public Estate programme is exploring opportunities at Bridgwater, Chard, Taunton and Yeovil.

2.5.4 Work continues to identify partners to share library buildings. In May 2017 NSL parking services moved into the first floor of the Taunton Library building and Registration services are due to re-locate to Bridgwater Library in September 2017. During 2016/17 a number of key projects were initiated maximising the impact and added value for libraries. The Glass Box Project has been receiving local and national recognition for its experimental and collaborative approach to digital skills and enterprise. Digital skills workshops for business have been well received; for example 120 businesses were trained by a Google trainer and Cosmic regularly run sessions as part of Get Up to Speed and Get Business, Get Digital initiatives. We are running regular one to one advice drop-ins for start-ups. Activities such as 3D printing, robotics and coding have proved popular with participants and brought new expert STEM volunteers and business partnerships to the service. A partnership with Taunton Deane Borough Council has secured funding for the second year of the Glass Box Project, which will further develop the offer to inspire businesses with digital events, whilst generating income to continue the digital making aspect of the initiative.

- 2.5.5** Wi-Fi use in libraries has doubled in the last 12 months. The SCC's network upgrade, which is currently being rolled out to all libraries, should help to manage the increasing network demand. Digital inclusion through basic computer skills delivery continues to be funded through The Good Things Foundation/UKOnline. The needs of learners are changing, leading to more hands on tablet workshops.
- 2.5.6** A jointly funded project with Public Health has enabled the creation of two Wellbeing Zones in Taunton and Yeovil libraries. These spaces are designed to create active use by health and wellbeing partners commissioned by SCC and from the voluntary sector, for drop ins, group discussion and wellbeing promotions. ShelfHelp, a new reading scheme to support young people's mental health has been launched. A long term health conditions collection will be available soon. The 2016 Roald Dahl themed Summer Reading Challenge generated excellent numbers with 8,000 children participating; helping to prevent the trend of children's reading skills dipping over the holidays.
- 2.5.7** The national 'Love To Read' partnership with the BBC has initiated a monthly Somerset Libraries slot on BBC Radio Somerset. The 'Out of the Mouth of the Parrett' project was designed and delivered in partnership with Theatre Melange, South Somerset and Sedgemoor District Councils. The £65,000 Arts Council funding enabled the collection of personal stories of life and work on and around the River Parrett. The project culminated in a free three week event housed within a spectacular world of light and sound and live performance, specially constructed in Bridgwater Library. The stories collected throughout the project will be loaded onto YouTube shortly. Staff and community led Fun Palaces were run for this first time in October 2016 bringing communities together with science and creativity. School children from areas of deprivation were given live theatre experiences in libraries through an Arts Council funded, LibrariesWest and Travelling Light Theatre partnership.
- 2.5.8** The Conversation Café, a SWRLS (South Western Regional Library Service) funded project between Somerset College and Somerset Libraries, brings together foreign speakers to practise speaking English in a social yet educational setting. The evaluation has demonstrated the initiative is changing people's lives, supporting them with English skills development, leading to better chances of employment and enrolment onto formal English and vocational FE or HE courses. 19,000 volunteer hours plus 18 active friends groups have enabled a diversity of events and activities on offer to communities. Volunteer opportunities are wide ranging and include digital volunteering, Regional Voluntary Service home library service delivery, and young people volunteering during the summer holidays. A volunteer steering group member was recruited to represent library customers as part of the Parrett project.

2.6 Trading Standards

- 2.6.1** The joint service continues to flourish and on 1 May this year expanded to include Torbay Council. The template of creating the joint Devon/Somerset service was used as a basis for including Torbay and the move has proved positive. Plymouth City Council has enquired about possible further expansion; if so, the Trading Standards joint service would cover a contiguous boundary with the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership which will mean consistency in advice and approach for all businesses in the LEP area.

- 2.6.2** Work countering a wide range of scams and rogue traders has proven successful across the trading standards area and this work to protect the vulnerable, continues to be given high priority. As an example the service intervened when an elderly resident in Minehead fell victim to a complex and distressing romance scam that saw her sending significant amounts of money to criminal operators using a false identity as a front.
- 2.6.3** The service has performed well through farm visits and working with farmers particularly at markets; indeed, a collaborative and positive relationship has been built up thanks to the efforts of staff. Animal health and welfare continues to be an important part of the work and the service has continued to identify and prosecute owners not looking after their animals. We are ensuring that this remains a high priority for the service.
- 2.6.4** The service contributes to keeping people safe in other ways and last month stores across Somerset were visited by Police and Trading Standards officers in a joint operation aimed at preventing the sale of knives to under 18s. Officers from the Devon, Somerset and Torbay Trading Standards Service assisted Avon and Somerset Police during “Operation Sceptre”; advising businesses on the increasing prevalence of knife crime and the legal requirements to check potential purchasers age. This is a good example of how the service interacts with a partner to get the best result for communities in the joint service area.

2.7 Flood and Water Management

- 2.7.1** We have had another winter without a repeat of the severe weather and flooding of 2013/14. Work continues on delivering the Flood Action Plan with partners working together to deliver its aims. The Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) is now in its third year and work is on-going to deliver its programme across the county. The Councils of Somerset continued to show unity and raised the £2.85million needed to fund the SRA’s on-going work for this financial year. We are making progress towards the SRA becoming a precept raising body and have identified the potential routes to do this.
- 2.7.2** Positive progress on delivering the Flood Action Plan continues with partners maintaining their commitment to deliver the work. As the SRA becomes more established its processes and working practices are being refined, and prioritisation of schemes has been updated to reflect the Flood Action Plan. Further dredging has taken place to extend the area already dredged. Work continues on the proposed Bridgwater Barrier, with consultation events bringing us towards a preferred option to take forward. Work continues on the development of the preferred solution for the Upper Tone Alleviation scheme to allow growth and improve flood water management in the county.
- 2.7.3** SCC’s work as Lead Local Flood Authority progresses and we have taken leadership of the work stream relating to urban water management in the Flood Action Plan. We have been working with planners in the district/borough councils to improve work around SUDS (Sustainable Drainage Systems) and embed the current guidance into planning practice. This important work to improve the quality of drainage in new developments continues and we are proactively trying to shape development in terms of drainage so that areas are more resilient and developments do not create unwarranted flood risk.

- 2.7.4** Representing SCC on the Wessex Regional Flood and Coastal Committee, (WRFCC) and our region continues to be one of the most effective in terms of implementing flood management schemes. SCC is looking to work even more effectively with the WRFCC to make the most of opportunities that present themselves through accessing Flood Defence Grant in Aid to fund schemes that will help flood management in Somerset.
- 2.7.5** The Somerset Water Management Partnership brings together a wide range of stakeholders to discuss and debate the topical issues relating to flood and water management, in the county. The Partnership has continued to develop under my Chairmanship. The partnership continues to be an important conduit for information as we move forward with the SRA.
- 2.7.6** From a policy perspective we have reviewed the Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment and next year we will be looking at our Local Flood Risk Management Strategy, both in an effort to solidify the framework for making bids for schemes that can both guide the direction of the service and improve our flood resilience even further.

2.8 Leisure

- 2.8.1** Negotiations were held with the service provider, 1610 Ltd, around the Medium Term Financial Plan and delivered £300,000 reduction in the annual management plan that is payable through the current contract, which ends in 2019.
- 2.8.2** A robust mechanism is in place for regular contract management to ensure delivery against agreed outcomes. The provider has held a number of events and initiatives which help to improve health and wellbeing of our residents across the nine sites they manage. 1610 target groups who may find it difficult to stay fit and healthy and tailor activities to attract participants; as an example ten park-based 'Buggy Walks' are being held in towns across Somerset which will help parents with pre-school children to get active with a Buggy Walk followed by a circuit-based exercise session using gym equipment in local parks. As new parenthood can be an isolating experience for some, the sessions will end with a chat and catch-up in a local coffee shop or a picnic depending on the weather, so the exercise is combined with an opportunity to make new friends as well as provide overall wellbeing benefits. It is this kind of broader activity which brings multiple positives that SCC is encouraging and continues to work with the provider to realise the benefits.
- 2.8.3** The current contract ends in 2019 and work is on-going to plan for community leisure after that time. We are taking a team approach with officers from many service areas working together to help shape the future beyond the end of the current contract. Initial discussions have taken place with schools that share sites with 1610 facilities and many have expressed a desire to learn more about running facilities themselves. We are in discussion with Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership (whose core purpose is to increase participation in sport and active recreation across Somerset) and SCC is planning a workshop to help inform schools about the issues they need to consider as they look at whether they want to provide community leisure after the current contract ends.

2.9 Registration Services

2.9.1 The provision of a joint service in North Somerset has progressed well and the Annual Performance Reports for Somerset and North Somerset were extremely positive.

2.9.2 The service is focused on the customer experience and of opportunities to maximise the attractiveness of its offer. The Customer Engagement Strategy provides a framework to help the service understand and enhance relationships with customers and stakeholders, giving both groups the opportunity to contribute to the future shape of the service. It will ensure the service continues to engage with both the public and stakeholders regarding feedback received, changes made to the service and the future publication of these changes.

2.10 Civil Contingencies

2.10.1 The Partnership continues to serve the local authorities of Somerset effectively following a restructure of both the team and the Partnership governance and there have been a number of notable successes over the last year. We have strengthened partnership working even further by adopting a Joint Emergency Response Plan across all six councils. This means we have consistent processes and scalable emergency response capabilities in the event of an emergency. This is a very positive step forward for our planning for any incidents that may arise and helps provide mutual aid to partners more effectively.

2.10.2 Following the last major incident in Somerset, the 2013/14 floods, we have developed a policy for managing volunteers who turn up at an incident and want to help. This policy has attracted national interest and directly informed national guidance. A large multi-partner live exercise received good media interest and strong community involvement, and our plans were refined as a result.

2.10.3 To capitalise on the interest in this issue the partnership held a conference in May saw over a 100 delegates learn more about our policies and those of others, such as local authorities and the Police. The feedback from delegates about the conference (the first of its type the partnership had arranged) was excellent.

2.10.4 We continue to be a key partner in the Local Resilience Forum and are leading on two areas of work – community resilience and the welfare of people stranded on motorways.

2.11 Planning Policy, Control and Enforcement

2.11.1 SCC has statutory responsibility to prepare up to date for minerals and waste plans,

2.11.2 Work continues on the Somerset Waste Plan; a lot of preparatory and review work is needed to give a sound evidence base and the team are currently developing this.

2.11.3 Within the last year, the Planning Control Team has improved its performance against its Key (Central Government) Performance Indicator (KPI), which relates to the determination of 50% of most types of minerals and waste planning

applications within the target time set for with an agreed extension of time in place. The team achieved an outturn of 80% up from 73% the previous year. The team has dealt with a similar number of planning applications as last year but has dealt with/is dealing with a significantly greater number of large planning applications than last year including two planning applications for new primary schools in Yeovil, large planning applications for the disposal of quarry waste at Moon's Hill Quarry, lateral expansion of Callow Rock Quarry, and significant further mineral extraction at Halecombe Quarry on the Mendips, and improvement works at Junction 25 of the M5.

- 2.11.4** The Enforcement and Compliance team has been busy dealing with planning and Rights of Way-related enforcement cases and a number of gypsy and traveller incursions on SCC-owned land, with a number of significant and high profile incursions on vulnerable and sensitive sites notably at the Gateway Park & Ride site, the former St Augustine's School in Taunton and Showground Road in Bridgwater.
- 2.11.5** The Somerset Ecological Service (traded arm of the Service's ecological advice function) has significantly grown its external income generation and continues to grow its business client base, whilst maintaining its Service Level Agreement services to its District Council clients, and the in-house advisory function.
- 2.11.6** We will continue to provide direction to residual statutory and important 'Countryside' projects, notably the DEFRA New Burdens Payment-funded Devon & Severn Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA), and the Severn Estuary Partnership (SEP) and Association of Severn Estuary Relevant Authorities (ASERA) and the South West Coastal Advisory Group (SWCAG). DEFRA has recently confirmed an extension to its New Burdens Payment commitment until 2020.

2.12 Scientific Services

- 2.12.1** In September 2016, the service relocated from County Hall to new purpose built laboratories and office accommodation on the Westpark 26 Trading Estate at Wellington. The service's reputation as a first choice laboratory within the industry continues to be very positive both in the private and public sectors. This was supported by the service receiving one of its best ever feedback results during its annual inspection by UKAS following the move to the new site.
- 2.12.2** Overall, the service's outturn figures continue to be healthy with an encouraging underspend, however the asbestos section have had a difficult year with a reduction of income levels in comparison to previous years.

2.13 Corporate Policy

- 2.13.1** This year the authority continued to develop its Performance Management Framework in line with the County Plan 2016-20 priorities. This has led to the creation of a revised Performance wheel with segments grouped together under 'Peoples Priorities', effective running of the Council, and progress in relation to the Council's Vision projects.

- 2.13.2** The Performance team has worked closely with Directors and data owners to identify the relevant measures to be included in performance reports and work is underway with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to further develop the Directors Scorecards. Work continues to develop and promote the Council's value for money culture.
- 2.13.3** The team has coordinated Council responses to several key Government consultations for example on local authorities' local development frameworks.
- 2.13.4** In addition to the well-received fortnightly policy updates for senior managers a regular update on issues relating to Brexit is now being produced to help the Council plan ahead as Brexit negotiations begin.
- 2.13.5** The Performance Team will continue to maintain oversight of policy developments and support Cabinet and SLT's approach to key policy and performance issues.

3. Background Papers

- 3.1** No background papers.