

## SWT Full Council

Tuesday, 8th October, 2019,  
6.15 pm

The logo for Somerset West and Taunton, featuring the text "Somerset West and Taunton" in white on a teal background with a white swoosh at the bottom right.

The John Meikle Room - The Deane  
House

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**Members:** Hazel Prior-Sankey (Chair), Simon Coles (Vice-Chair), Ian Aldridge, Benet Allen, Lee Baker, Marcus Barr, Mark Blaker, Chris Booth, Paul Bolton, Sue Buller, Norman Cavill, Dixie Darch, Hugh Davies, Dave Durdan, Kelly Durdan, Caroline Ellis, Habib Farbahi, Ed Firmin, Andrew Govier, Roger Habgood, Andrew Hadley, John Hassall, Ross Henley, Marcia Hill, Martin Hill, John Hunt, Marcus Kravis, Andy Milne, Richard Lees, Sue Lees, Libby Lisgo, Mark Lithgow, Janet Lloyd, Dave Mansell, Chris Morgan, Simon Nicholls, Craig Palmer, Martin Peters, Peter Pilkington, Andy Pritchard, Steven Pugsley, Mike Rigby, Francesca Smith, Federica Smith-Roberts, Vivienne Stock-Williams, Phil Stone, Nick Thwaites, Anthony Trollope-Bellew, Ray Tully, Terry Venner, Danny Wedderkopp, Loretta Whetlor, Gwil Wren, Sarah Wakefield, Alan Wedderkopp, Brenda Weston and Keith Wheatley

### Agenda

**1. Apologies**

To receive any apologies for absence.

**2. Declarations of Interest**

To receive and note any declarations of disclosable pecuniary or prejudicial or personal 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.)

**3. Minutes of the previous meeting of Full Council**

To approve the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee.

(Pages 7 - 26)

#### **4. Public Participation**

To receive any questions, statements of petitions from the public in accordance with Council Procedure Rules 14, 15 and 16. The Chair to advise the Committee of any items on which members of the public have requested to speak and advise those members of the public present of the details of the Council's public participation scheme.

For those members of the public who have submitted any questions or statements, please note, a three minute time limit applies to each speaker and you will be asked to speak before Councillors debate the issue.

#### **5. To receive any communications or announcements from the Chair of the Council**

#### **6. To receive any communications or announcements from the Leader of the Council**

#### **7. To receive any questions from Councillors in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 13**

#### **8. Heart of the South West Joint Committee Governance Review Report**

(Pages 27 - 36)

This report provides an update for the Constituent Authorities on the Joint Committee's governance arrangements and budgetary position for 2019/20. The report contains recommendations for amendments to the Committee's Arrangements document following the governance review.

#### **9. Corporate Strategy 2020-24**

(Pages 37 - 78)

The report introduces the draft corporate strategic priorities, outcomes and objectives for the period 2020-2024, which were considered, and unanimously recommended for Council approval, by the Executive at their meeting of 18 September 2019.

#### **10. HRA Capital Scheme Recommendation from Executive**

(Pages 79 - 82)

Executive request Full Council to approve the Housing Director / Head of Function, in consultation with the Housing Portfolio Holder, to have delegated authority to approve changes to the budgeted spend for all of the HRA capital schemes, whilst remaining within the approved capital programme for 2019/20. The reason for this is to help address flexible delivery of the programme in year.

#### **11. Political Allocation and Committee Membership revised October 2019**

(Pages 83 - 86)

To approve the revised Political Allocation and Committee Membership following the two recent by-elections.

**12. Signing of the Armed Forces Covenant**

(Pages 87 - 94)

To sign the previously agreed Armed Forces Covenant as Somerset West and Taunton Council

**13. To consider reports from Executive Councillors**

(Pages 95 - 132)

Part I – To deal with written questions to the Executive.

Part II – To receive reports from the following Members of the Executive:-

- a) Councillor Federica Smith-Roberts – Leader of the Council
- b) Councillor Benet Allen – Deputy Leader & Communications and Culture
- c) Councillor Christopher Booth – Community
- d) Councillor Ross Henley – Corporate Resources
- e) Councillor Marcus Kravis – Asset Management and Economic Development
- f) Councillor Richard Lees – Sports, Parks and Leisure
- g) Councillor Peter Pilkington – Climate Change
- h) Councillor Mike Rigby – Planning and Transportation
- i) Councillor Francesca Smith - Housing
- j) Councillor Alan Wedderkopp – Environmental Services

An Executive Councillor shall submit a report to an Ordinary Meeting of the Council as to current and future business of their portfolio for the information of and comment from the Council. Such reports are for discussion and comment only and no motion shall be put to the meeting as to any such item other than those closure motions described in Standing Order 5.



**JAMES HASSETT  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

Please note that this meeting will be recorded. At the start of the meeting the Chair will confirm if all or part of the meeting is being recorded. You should be aware that the Council is a Data Controller under the Data Protection Act 2018. Data collected during the recording will be retained in accordance with the Council's policy. Therefore unless you are advised otherwise, by entering the Council Chamber and speaking during Public Participation you are consenting to being recorded and to the possible use of the sound recording for access via the website or for training purposes. If you have any queries regarding this please contact the officer as detailed above.

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 3 minutes per person in an overall period of 15 minutes. The Committee Administrator will keep a close watch on the time and the Chair 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 Chair will normally permit this to occur when that item is reached and before the Councillors begin to debate the item.

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, and Committee agendas, reports and minutes are available on our website: [www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk](http://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk)

The meeting room, including the Council Chamber at The Deane House are on the first floor and are fully accessible. Lift access to The John Meikle Room, is available from the main ground floor entrance at The Deane House. The Council Chamber at West Somerset House is on the ground floor and is fully accessible via a public entrance door. Toilet facilities, with wheelchair access, are available across both locations. An induction loop operates at both The Deane House and West Somerset 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 via email: [governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk](mailto:governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk)

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**SWT Full Council - 30 July 2019**

Present: Councillor Hazel Prior-Sankey (Chair)

Councillors Simon Coles, Ian Aldridge, Benet Allen, Lee Baker, Marcus Barr, Mark Blaker, Chris Booth, Paul Bolton, Sue Buller, Norman Cavill, Dixie Darch, Hugh Davies, Dave Durdan, Kelly Durdan, Habib Farbahi, Ed Firmin, Roger Habgood, Andrew Hadley, John Hassall, Ross Henley, Marcia Hill, Martin Hill, John Hunt, Marcus Kravis, Andy Milne, Richard Lees, Sue Lees, Libby Lisgo, Mark Lithgow, Janet Lloyd, Dave Mansell, Chris Morgan, Simon Nicholls, Craig Palmer, Martin Peters, Peter Pilkington, Steven Pugsley, Mike Rigby, Francesca Smith, Vivienne Stock-Williams, Phil Stone, Nick Thwaites, Ray Tully, Terry Venner, Danny Wedderkopp, Loretta Whetlor, Gwil Wren, Alan Wedderkopp, Brenda Weston and Keith Wheatley

Officers: Christine Fraser, Nick Bryant, John Burton, Emily Collacott, Paul Fitzgerald, Chris Hall, James Hassett, Robert Hillier, Marcus Prouse and Amy Tregellas

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

42. **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillors Adkins, Ellis, Govier, Pritchard, Smith-Roberts and Trollope-Bellew.

43. **Minutes of the previous meeting of Full Council**

(Minutes of the meeting of Full Council held on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2019 circulated with the agenda)

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of Full Council held on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2019 were confirmed as a correct record.

44. **Declarations of Interest**

Members present at the meeting declared the following personal interests in their capacity as a Councillor or Clerk of a County, Town or Parish Council or any other Local Authority:-

Name	Minute No.	Description of Interest	Reason	Action Taken
Cllr L Baker	All Items	Cheddon Fitzpaine & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr M Barr	All Items	Wellington	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr M Blaker	All Items	Wiveliscombe	Personal	Spoke and Voted

Cllr P Bolton	All Items	Minehead	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr C Booth	All Items	Wellington and Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr N Cavill	All Items	West Monkton	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr S Coles	All Items	SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr H Davies	All Items	SCC	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr C Ellis	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr A Govier	All Items	SCC & Wellington	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr Mrs Hill	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr J Hunt	All Items	SCC	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr R Lees	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr S Lees	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr L Lisgo	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr M Lithgow	All Items	Wellington	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr J Lloyd	All Items	Wellington & Sampford Arundel	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Mansell	All Items	Wiveliscombe	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr A Milne	All Items	Porlock	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr C Morgan	All Items	Stogursey	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr S Nicholls	All Items	Comeytrove	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr C Palmer	All Items	Minehead	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr M Peters	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr P Pilkington	All Items	Timberscombe & ENPA	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr H Prior-Sankey	All Items	SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr M Rigby	All Items	SCC & Bishops Lydeard	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr F Smith	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr V Stock-Williams	All Items	Wellington	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr R Tully	All Items	West Monkton	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr T Venner	All Items	Minehead	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr A Wedderkopp	All Items	SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Wedderkopp	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted

Cllr B Weston	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr L Whetlor	All Items	Watchet	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr G Wren	All Items	Clerk to Milverton PC	Personal	Spoke and Voted

Councillor Coles declared a personal interest in respect of Item 8 – Motion to oppose the closure of Porlock Fire Station as a Member of the Fire Authority and would not take part in the debate or vote on the item.

Councillor Coles declared a prejudicial interest in respect of Item 10 – Importation of Nuclear Waste into Hinkley Point A as a member of the Regulation Committee at Somerset County Council and would not take part in the debate or vote on the item.

Councillor Nicholls declared a prejudicial interest in respect of Item 8 – Motion to oppose the closure of Porlock Fire Station as a Fire Officer for the Authority and would not take part in the debate or vote on the item.

Councillor Davies declared a personal interest in relation to Item 10 – Importation of Nuclear Waste into Hinkley Point A as a signatory to a letter on this matter to be discussed at the Regulation Committee at Somerset County Council and so would not take part in the debate.

Councillor Morgan declared a personal interest in relation to Item 10 – Importation of Nuclear Waste into Hinkley Point A as a Member of Stogursey Parish Council and the representative for the area where the Hinkley site was located.

Councillor Baker declared a personal interest in relation to Items 11 and 12 – TDBC and WSC Treasury Management Outturn Reports for 2018/19 as an employee of Lloyds Banking Group.

45. **To receive any communications or announcements from the Chair of the Council**

The Chair had commenced the meeting with a moment's silence in memory of the recent passing of Past Mayor of Taunton Deane Borough Council Mr Peter Lee and Past Chairman and Alderman of West Somerset District Council Mr Viv Brewer.

The Chair also advised the Council that Councillor Catherine Herbert had resigned from the Council with immediate effect. The Chair wished to give the thanks of the Council to Catherine for her twelve years of service as a Councillor and as the last Mayor of Taunton Deane for 2018/2019.

Councillor D Wedderkopp echoed the sentiments of the Chair as a fellow Ward Councillor for Vivary.

The Chair reminded Councillor's that they had three minutes when called to speak, five minutes when proposing a motion and when calling for a Point of Order a Councillor must make reference to the Standing Order in the Constitution.

46. **To receive any communications or announcements from the Leader of the Council**

The Deputy Leader advised that there were no announcements to convey to the Council.

47. **Public Participation**

1. Councillor Rod Williams (Somerset County Council) made the following statement in relation to Item 9 – Taunton Garden Town Vision:-

It's a privilege to speak to you this evening in support of the Vision Document for Taunton Garden Town. I speak in strong support of it and urge you to adopt the Vision Document as policy. We should be clear about the scale of the undertaking and also the size of the opportunity. We in Taunton live in one of the very few places in England that can decide in the next year or two what it will be like to live here for generations to come. This is a vision for twenty years or so, perhaps to 2040. Therefore it is an extremely substantial undertaking and before you adopt this as policy, I would remind you of the scale of the task and the need to stick at this for some years to come.

The thinking for the Garden Town started two years ago. A number of us recognised then that it needed to encompass every aspect of living in Taunton, not just Economic Development or House Building. We had to take an all-round view. The vision so far consists of a number of elements or components that fit together to make a coherent whole. Therefore the design of the Vision Document is to achieve a synergy so that the whole Garden Town is worth more than a sum of the constituent parts.

To outline why you should make this your policy, I will highlight the reasons why the document is very good. First, we are aiming at the right thing. It is ambitious. We are not aiming to make Taunton just better, but at making it excellent. We want to raise the quality of every part of living in Taunton. An excellent Taunton must be a town for everybody. The Vision Document is Strategic in the proper meaning of the term. It considers Taunton as a whole, it is long term, and it correctly identifies the essential components. It understands that this vision is just the first part in a process of delivery. The process doesn't end with the Design Guide, the Delivery Plan or even the Delivery itself, but with the benefits from realising the Vision. The Vision is deliverable and it is realistic provided we commit to it and stick to it over some years. How people live their lives will change over the next twenty years, so we must make the Garden Town adaptable, but we can do that.

In summary, we need to do three things to make the Taunton Garden Town a great success. First, you need to endorse this vision as your policy. Second, Members and the Strategy team need to make a Delivery Plan that will realise this vision. Third, we need to build on the public's strong support so far into a sustained commitment so we all in partnership will make Taunton's Garden Town a reality.

Councillor Rigby thanked Councillor Williams for his comments and for all his work undertaken to getting to this point with the Garden Town Vision Strategy. The piece of work before us would form the basis of the development of the Town for some years ahead and would echo Councillor Williams's comments.

2. Beverley Milner-Simonds made the following statement on behalf of EAT Taunton:-

EAT festivals is a social enterprise. Our aim is to reconnect people with the land. One of the main things we do is deliver multi-award winning food and drink festivals in towns within your area. We have been running for around seven years now and this year we are delivering 16 festivals. Some of you may have come along to our event in Taunton on Somerset Day on 11<sup>th</sup> May. On 7<sup>th</sup> September our fourth festival will be held in Wellington. All our events are free to attend. We are working in Minehead for the first time year at the invitation of Minehead BID and the former West Somerset Council. Our first festive festival will be in Taunton this year on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2019. As a social enterprise it is very important to us that entry is free and that no-one is excluded from learning about great food and drink. We have won awards for our sustainability. We are 100% single-use plastic free and all our waste is fully compostable. We are very happy to work with other local community groups and events to share our knowledge in this area on environmental policies. We look forward to welcoming you to any of the events in the area.

3. Carol Lydiate asked the following question related to 5G:-

5G technology uses electromagnetic radiation at high frequencies of between 30 - 300 GHz compared to below 6GHz for 4G frequencies.

It is marketed as enabling greater coverage than current 3G and 4G, faster download speeds and larger data transfer in order to cope with the insatiable appetite for the 'Internet of Things' as seen in smart meters, smart devices and smart cars, etc.

5G uses shorter wavelengths than 4G therefore a completely new infrastructure is required to support it. This will include larger masts, closely packed small cell antennas every 100 metres on lampposts or houses on every street. These super high frequencies work only if there is a clear direct line of sight between the antenna and the device receiving the signal, which could result in trees having to be felled to give a clear path.

Some masts may need to be placed close to schools with the added concern that young children and babies absorb up to 60-70%% more radiation than adults.

We understand that these masts and antennas, along with the radiation from the 20,000 new satellites which are to be launched in space to support the infrastructure, will produce a 'blanket' of 5G microwave radiation covering every area of our planet, including our community in Taunton.

- a) In the light of this information, does the West Somerset and Taunton District Council share concerns regarding the health and safety of 5G and in what ways might they be prepared to apply the Precautionary Principle and make a stand to protect the citizens of West Somerset and Taunton from this potentially harmful technology?

4. Warwick Lydiate asked the following question related to 5G:-

Not so long ago, water companies and householders were involved in the expensive process of removing thousands of miles of lead water pipes. Warnings about them were often ignored until the health concerns became too numerous and problematic to ignore. Millions of pounds were spent all over the country changing to safer materials.

Not so long ago cigarettes were given the all clear by health experts and they became fashionable accessories to a sophisticated lifestyle. Until the health warnings became too frightening to ignore. Health warnings and smoke free zones are now the norm.

Not so long ago petrol contained significant quantities of lead which was considered safe until eventually health warnings were noted and millions of pounds were spent converting vehicles to be able to use lead free alternatives.

Not so long ago, thousands of tons of asbestos had to be removed from buildings all over the world after health warnings about lung diseases were finally heeded. Millions of pounds has been spent since on the hazardous task of its removal.

In all these cases scientific doubts about the safety of these products were set out and sadly ignored, until people got sick or died from them. In addition to these concerns which seriously affect both health and the economy, we understand that the 5G rollout affects the environment in ways that are contrary to the government's own global climate goals...

It utilises a significant increase in energy use and consumption of natural resources;

It creates a larger carbon footprint in the manufacture of satellites and other infrastructure

It encourages more consumerism;

Furthermore, it creates undue waste as usable household gadgets will need to be discarded and replaced by so called 'smart' appliances.

- a) Does the West Somerset and Taunton council share these concerns and in what ways is it considering the green impact of the 5G technology and the impact it will have on Taunton's carbon emission goals as well as the health and wellbeing of its citizens. After spending vast sums of money

rolling out 5G, will it all need to be removed in a few years when we all wake up to its many problems.

5. Karen Cave asked the following question related to 5G:-

Knowing there are doubts behind the safety of 5G does the council think the 5G masts and cell antennas are safe for the residents of Taunton?

6. Louise Thomas asked the following question related to 5G:-

Due to the World wide opposition to 5G technology, the appeals by scientists , doctors and environmentalists, the peer reviewed research indicating biological harm to humans and the environment especially the bees and the fact that both Glastonbury, Frome and now Roscommon Ireland town councils have issued a moratorium on the rollout of 5G and have set up 5G advisory committees , I would like to ask the council as they have a health and wellbeing department if we can have a full council meeting or a meeting with the councils scrutiny committee to thoroughly investigate 5G technology, so the council can be absolutely certain they are protecting the citizens and environment of Taunton?

Councillor Allen responded to the four questions related to 5G, and thanked the members of the public who had spoken on this matter. He noted the concerns regarding the health aspects related to 5G. The Council was not in a position to rule on the safety or otherwise of 5G. The Council's remit extended to the allowing of planning permission of certain towers, most won't require planning permission at all. This Council was not in a position to stop the implementation of 5G even if we wanted to.

Councillor Wren as Chair of Scrutiny was happy to add it to the list of matters for consideration. Scrutiny had re-oriented its role and would carry out investigations into things that affect the district and the people that live within it. We would be quite happy to look into this and come back to the member of the public.

7. Nigel Behan asked the following questions which had been circulated to all Councillors prior to the meeting:-

- a) We recently submitted questions to Somerset County Council (SCC) about the Climate Change Emergency and Extinction Rebellion (XR) - proposed practical activities during the week beginning 15<sup>th</sup> July. In the (shortened) text below SCC has been replaced with SWT.  
"Relates to a week of events from 15 July across the UK "Summer Uprising – ACT NOW. IT IS TIME TO REBEL"

The Bristol Occupation by XR Southwest state on their "Events" page that: "Parliament and many UK councils have declared a climate and ecological emergency, but their actions do not match their words. The government's commitment to cut carbon emissions to zero by 2050 is an alarmingly insufficient response. In the Global South, water shortages, famine, extreme weather and conflicts over dwindling resources are already

commonplace. Britain's food security is at risk. Our children's future is at stake."

There are XR groups in Somerset including:

"Extinction Rebellion Frome And "Extinction Rebellion South Somerset"

- i) What will SWT (Elected Councillors who decide and the Officers who advise) do practically to highlight the "Climate Change Emergency" issues as the XR "demand is..... that national and local governments ACT NOW to halt biodiversity loss and cut greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2025."?
  
- b) We also note the "Report of Councillor Peter Pilkington – Climate Change" in this meeting's Agenda. Whilst George Monbiot recently stated that: "The threatened collapse of our life-support systems is bigger by far than war, famine, pestilence or economic crisis, though it is likely to incorporate all four. Societies can recover from these apocalyptic events, but not from the loss of soil, an abundant biosphere and a habitable climate." And "As I've grown older, I've come to recognise two things. First, that it is the system, rather than any variant of the system, that drives us inexorably towards disaster. Second, that you do not have to produce a definitive alternative to say that capitalism is failing... Our choice comes down to this. Do we stop life to allow capitalism to continue, or stop capitalism to allow life to continue?"
  - i) Does SWT believe that it must "act politically as if climate catastrophe were impending as the best hope of preventing it."?
  - ii) And will SWT support and promote (amongst Service Users, Electors, Citizens, Residents, Council Taxpayers and Elected Councillors) the Day of Action on the 20<sup>th</sup> September?

(The 20<sup>th</sup> September is a global school strike day of action, ahead of the UN Climate Summit in New York. There will be a week of action on climate, with further strikes taking place on 27<sup>th</sup> September and decentralised actions during the week focusing on key targets such as fossil fuel finance.)

Councillor Pilkington responded that the Council had established Climate Change as a top political priority. Governance arrangements to drive change were being established as outlined in a recent report to Scrutiny. These arrangements would involve all elected members. In regards to supporting a day of action, that would be up to individual Councillors to decide to support.

8. Alan Debenham made the following statement:-

As a Green Party activist, with Green Party Councillors here today continuing my work as a Green Socialist Councillor from 1991 to 2003, I much welcome the importance this Council has placed upon saving my great grandchildren from a



fate worse than death, by not only adopting a comprehensive Climate Emergency motion so promptly, but also putting in place a special Executive Councillor and backing organisational structure to meet this existential climate chaos problem head-on.

What worries me, and hopefully this Council, is that not enough is being said, nor planned, to both realise and answer the fundamental underlying causes of this threat to our very continued existence on planet Earth.

- a) First and foremost is the well-entrenched British establishment's obsession with the private individualised materialist greed of capitalism and all its extremes of rampant class-structured material inequality and its anti-democracy monarchy and lords-based government, with no written constitution to defend the rights of ordinary citizens either in parliament, at home, or at work, nor fair voting system where votes roughly match seats.
- b) Secondly, is the way in which establishment religion works as an embedded partner in this oligarchic, undemocratic parliamentary government - Marx's so-called "opium of the masses" - basing itself on the self-aggrandisement, self-destroying theory of white male humans being born in the image of a male god and bound for eternal life and heaven if they're good subservient citizens. "Mother Nature" and all its undestroyed, unpolluted, rich biodiversity and life sustaining atmosphere should be our god, if ever we needed one.
- c) Thirdly, economic growth, prosperity, consumerism, materialism – plus their demand for protection and militarism - must become subordinated to basic ideas of frugality, sustainability, 'communal undevelopment' and co-operative housing and business in our whole lifestyle system.
- d) Lastly, new Prime Minister Johnson's narcissistic, bombastic, and arrogant promotion of hard-right conservatist capitalism – as opposed to community based socialism – is about as crazy as his hair-ruffling mental state and the words of the new Lib Dem leader, Jo Swinson ("this man is not fit to be PM") ring very true when one considers the personal insults and relentless smear campaign of the hard-right against old respected colleagues, Jeremy & John. Please could everyone do their best to send Johnson packing ASAP?

Councillor Allen thanked Mr Debenham for his statement.

48. **To receive any questions from Councillors in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 13**

The Chair advised that no such questions had been received.

49. **Motion to oppose the closure of Porlock Fire Station. To consider a motion proposed by Councillor Andy Milne, seconded by Councillor Terry Venner (attached). An assessment of the implications for the Council should the motion be carried will also be attached**

Moved by Councillor Milne, seconded by Councillor Venner.

Councillor Milne asked Councillors as a matter of urgency to approve this motion, asking Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority to remove Porlock Station from their list of potential stations to close for a number of humanitarian and environmental reasons. Members would have seen that the consultation document offers the Fire Authority Members seven options to make a more efficient and effective service. The first six options are conflated development building on option one, which recommends the closure of seven Devon Stations and one in Somerset, Porlock. Last Thursday the Devon and Somerset consultation team visited Porlock Village Hall. Over 400 people attended the meeting, all deeply concerned and indeed frightened by the reduced cover that was on offer. Members may have seen aspects of the meeting in the media. At the conclusion of the meeting I handed a petition to the Fire Authority with over three and a half thousand signatures opposing the closure. There is no reason why rural communities should accept a less capable service than the urban areas, particularly as we pay the same level of taxes to the Fire Authority.

Specifically, the population of Porlock District is around two thousand people. Unusually, compared to Somerset as a whole the proportion of the population over 60 is around 25%. The average for Somerset is 11%. Many of these people have mobility issues and are not as fleet of foot as they once were. They are vulnerable. I mention the Porlock Fire Crew, expected in most of the properties within their area of responsibility within ten minutes. Last year they were at 85% readiness, a remarkable achievement. Clearly the response time for remote properties will be longer but simple logic says that if the start point is closer they will be quicker to arrive.

Devon and Somerset Fire Service propose that the cover will be provided by two engines stationed at Minehead which they claim will arrive at Porlock inside sixteen minutes. How can they expect to achieve this with a lumbering vehicle on narrow roads filled with tourist traffic and slow moving vehicles, not to mention going up Porlock Hill. Standard practice is two engines to despatch to a House fire, and more if it escalates. Less than two months ago there was a fire in Minehead and the second Engine could not be manned and a smaller vehicle provided secondary cover from Porlock. In May 2014 there was a serious fire in the village which took Minehead Crew a not unreasonable twenty five minutes to arrive. Lives and property were saved by the quicker arrival of the Porlock firemen.

Last year Porlock Fire Crew were nominated as the top Fire Station in Devon and Somerset. It has four volunteers waiting to be enrolled to the requisite crew of twelve. I think you would agree this is a remarkable achievement for a retained

crew which costs only £50,000 per year. Other than the permanent population visitor numbers increase each year during the tourist season. In 2017 there was a 6.2% increase in visitor numbers from the previous year. There is no evidence in the consultation document to take account of this seasonal population increase. In Porlock, 20% of the properties are for rental or second home. In the holiday periods these are full and greatly increase District Risk Profile over the winter months. As a consequence of the increased tourism, the number of Road Traffic Accidents sadly increases on Exmoor's Roads. If Porlock Hill is blocked, the A39 is closed until it is clear. A rapid response is needed not only to save life but to keep communications open. Whilst not a statutory duty, the Station provides an important co-responder service to the Community. When ambulance arrival times can be up to an hour, co-responders arrive much more quickly and there are numerous examples.

We are aware of the disastrous effects of Climate Change and the ever increasing warmth of our summers. Exmoor is vulnerable. Fires need to be put out quickly and to stop them getting out of control. The last thing we need is a Saddleworth Moor situation. Porlock Fire Station has specialist moorland firefighting capabilities which they are able to deploy quickly and stop fires. Porlock has been identified for flash flooding and many of the new builds have been identified in that zone. There is no evidence to suggest that future resources will be fully manned. The consultation document states that those threatened with closure are low risk stations. No one knows where and when the next call will be. Porlock is as likely as any other Station. I ask you to support this motion in recognition of the very real concerns of the community and the environment that surrounds us.

Councillor Venner stated that the Consultation closed on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> September. He urged Councillors and all the parishes to download the consultation form from the website and submit it individually to the Fire Service. It effects everybody in the District and not just Porlock. We needed to thank the Fire Service Staff for the work they do on our behalf.

During the discussion of this item, Members made comments and asked questions which included:-

- Concerns were raised that the addition of the second part of the motion diluted the effectiveness of the Motion and could make it seem more political.
- It was raised that the Fire Service had a healthy reserves balance and so this could not be laid at the feet of central government cuts.
- It was raised that as the incidence of wildfires was increasing as a direct result of Climate Change, the loss of Porlock Station would be detrimental in tackling this effect.
- It was suggested that a Member Briefing or a Scrutiny Session on the formal consultation from the Fire Service should be planned before the closing date.
- It was commented that West Somerset had higher proportions of residents with additional needs as elderly or disabled and this proposal would impact them.

- It was commented that an additional 6500 people entered into Minehead every weekend on top of the resident population that was not recognised.

The Council was therefore **recommended**:-

1. A letter is written to the Chair of the Devon and Somerset Fire Authority expressing this Council's opposition to the closure of Porlock Fire Station and the impact it will have on the surrounding rural areas.

An amendment was proposed by Councillor Booth and seconded by Councillor Hunt as follows;

1. A letter is written to the Chair of the Devon and Somerset Fire Authority expressing this Council's opposition to the closure of Porlock Fire Station, the proposed removal of fire appliances from Taunton and Wellington, and the potential for these cuts to be followed by reductions in numbers of whole-time firefighters across the district, particularly in rural areas.
2. A letter is written to both the District MPs from the Leader asking them if they oppose and seek a reversal of the reduction of 25% in Government funding to the Devon & Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority which makes the cuts, with replies reported back to the Council.

The amendment was accepted by the original proposer Councillor Milne.

The substantive motion as amended was thus put and was carried unanimously.

## 50. **Taunton Garden Town Vision**

Councillor Mike Rigby introduced this item which concerned the vision for Taunton as a Garden Town and what was to be achieved. The document "Taunton – the Vision for our Garden Town" was the culmination of many months of work, public and stakeholder engagement, and concluded the important first stage – the agreement of a shared vision for the Garden Town that would guide the actions of the council and many other stakeholders, and can be championed and owned by the whole town. Taunton was designated as a 'Garden Town' in early 2017 following a submission to Government. This submission reflected the Council's commitment to transformational housing growth centred on a number of new garden communities and a regenerated town centre supported by essential infrastructure and an enhanced network of green infrastructure.

The document included:

- The Vision statement
- Context – understanding Taunton's roots and character (townscape, neighbourhoods and landscape)
- Four themes:
  1. 'Growing our town greener' – transforming our open spaces and streets.
  2. 'Branching out' – moving cleaning, moving smarter.

3. 'Growing quality places to live' – town centre, new and existing neighbourhoods.
  4. 'New shoots and blossom' – a dynamic and prosperous community founded on knowledge, culture and business.
- Next steps

This vision framework was just the start of work on Taunton Garden Town (TGT), but would influence all plan-making (e.g. the emerging Local Plan) and development management decisions (such as more detailed design guidance emerging through a new Urban Development Framework and Design Guide). There were no prescriptive guidelines set out by central Government, and each place was expected to be different and determine what the Garden Town status might mean based on local circumstances and characteristics. This document therefore began to explore and articulate the types of physical change and improvements Taunton might look forward to. The particular themes extended from the vision identified tangible opportunities and challenges that needed to be grasped or overcome. Formal adoption of this vision would enable the next stage to progress – the development of a Delivery Plan that will provide detail to the individual strategies, projects and activities which will deliver the vision.

The Portfolio Holder formally proposed the recommendations which were seconded by Councillor Wren.

During the discussion of this item, Members made comments and asked questions which included:-

- The document was praised but it was hoped that in the delivery of this the principles would be captured to be applied right across the locality.
- It was commented that the security of the Park and Ride service was important and permanent control of this now required. The Park and Ride Service was used by those outside of the Town and in the rest of the district.
- It was felt more work was needed to improve Station Road and make it more exciting.
- The walkways out to the Quantock were important. The Country Park at Monkton Heathfield had three hundred active volunteers with two thousand trees planted.
- It was hoped that more cycling racks could be provided near Schools in the Town.
- It was commented that the bus service and train services needed to be improved, with the Park and Ride going past the station.

**RESOLVED** to formally adopt the Taunton Garden Town Vision document as Council policy, from which a detailed Delivery Plan can be subsequently developed.

51. **Importation of Nuclear Waste into Hinkley Point A Site - Consultation Response**

Councillor Ross Henley introduced this item which concerned the consultation currently underway on the importation of nuclear waste at Hinkley Point A. Following on from the previous motion on Fracking at the last Full Council, we raised objection to implementation of potential fracking sites. If the Council was anti-fracking, it would have been absurd for this Council to not raise some kind of formal objection to the potential import of nuclear waste from other sites in the United Kingdom. The Portfolio Holder fully accepted that Hinkley Point needed storage for waste produced on its own site, but to accept this importation would send out the wrong message environmentally and on the new administrations climate change agenda.

The Portfolio Holder formally proposed the recommendation which was seconded by Councillor Allen.

During the discussion of this item, Members made comments and asked questions which included:-

- It was commented that Hinkley already had built the Nuclear Waste Storage Facility and the Council could be accused of sending a negative message to the rest of country for a relatively minor amount of waste.
- It was medium level waste and not highly radioactive. It was commented that we had to accept responsibility for the power we had produced and used.
- It was commented that High Level Waste from Point A had been stored at Sellafield and the crates in use here were irradiated and very safe.
- Councillors expressed concern at the movement of Nuclear Waste across the countryside, and expressed a preference for it to be left where it was generated.
- Some Councillors felt the Council needed to express a robust response in opposition and that we had a duty to articulate the communities concerns.
- It was raised that whilst it had been commented that the UK lacked a long-term solution this did not mean that this had to be accepted.

**RESOLVED** that in response to the consultation on this matter a formal objection was made stating that Somerset West and Taunton Council have strong concerns about the import of nuclear waste from other sites within the United Kingdom to sites in the Somerset West and Taunton Council area.

There were eight votes against and five abstentions from Councillors Coles, Davies, Palmer, Stock-Williams and Whetlor.

52. **Taunton Deane Borough Council Treasury Management Outturn Report 2018/19**

Councillor Ross Henley introduced this item which concerned an update on the Treasury Management activity of Taunton Deane Borough Council and performance against the Prudential Indicators for 2018/19. This report had been scrutinised at the Audit Committee meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2019. Highlights for the year included:

- Investment activities continue to remain restricted due to the current economic climate;
- Interest rates still remain low;
- Accrued interest received on investments in 2018/19 was £0.728m;
- Accrued interest payable on external loans in 2018/19 was £2.502m;
- Prudential Indicators were all met in 2018/19 and are to be noted;
- The Operational and Authorised Boundary Limits were not breached;
- The Council continues to maintain CIPFA best practice requirements

The Portfolio Holder formally proposed the recommendations which were seconded by Councillor Lithgow.

**RESOLVED** to approve the Taunton Deane Borough Council Treasury Management Outturn Report for the 2018/19 financial year and compliance with the Prudential Indicators.

53. **West Somerset Council Treasury Management Outturn Report 2018/19**

Councillor Ross Henley introduced this item which provided an update on the Treasury Management activity of West Somerset Council and performance against the Prudential Indicators for 2018/19. Treasury management performance during the year had reflected the agreed strategy for the Council, with low risk investment exposure delivering relatively low returns. This was appropriate for the local context. The Council had complied with the Code of Practice and local Treasury Management Indicators and Prudential Indicators. This was the final outturn report for West Somerset Council with cash balances and investments transferring to Somerset West and Taunton Council on 1 April 2019. This report had been scrutinised at the Audit Committee meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2019

The Portfolio Holder formally proposed the recommendations which were seconded by Councillor Allen.

**RESOLVED** to approve the West Somerset Council Treasury Management Outturn Report for the 2018/19 financial year and compliance with the Prudential Indicators.

54. **Structural Change - Senior Leadership Team**

Councillor Benet Allen introduced this item which proposed the creation of four Directors, reporting directly to the Chief Executive, be put in place providing a focus on key delivery areas of: Housing, our internal capability to future proof services, our external delivery to customers and our development of place and external investment. The Directors would be accountable for leading the corporate direction of the Council through strategic leadership, taking the principal role in the development of a clear strategy and priorities to achieve investment, excellence in service delivery through sustainable process development and revenue generation.

The newly formed Somerset West and Taunton Council had set ambitious strategic targets and clear corporate priorities. The transformation programme had already put in place some of the arrangements necessary to deliver savings and improved customer care. However, to drive the organisation at pace towards these goals while continuing to work towards exceptional levels of service excellence a new senior leadership structure was required. It was vital to ensure the leadership of the Council is matched to its wider commercial, economic, community and environmental priorities.

The proposed structure contained in the report more accurately aligned to our corporate ambitions whilst providing a strong position to increase the overall financial health of the authority and deliver further savings. The report set out a proposed structural change to the Senior Leadership Team, a process to recruit and a financial recommendation and was endorsed by the Executive on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2019 prior to consideration by Full Council.

The Portfolio Holder formally proposed the recommendation which was seconded by Councillor Barr.

During the discussion of this item, Members made comments and asked questions which included:-

- Concern was raised that whilst the Chief Executive would wish to drive forward key priorities, the shortage of junior staff was also an issue.
- It was commented that the progress and investment being made elsewhere in the organisation was not part of this report.
- It was felt useful that UNISON feedback had been included in the report, but it was queried as to how UNISON were then responded to?
- Concern was raised over the risk of returning to a silo structure after the Transformation business process re-engineering, and could the Leader and Deputy Leader make that personal commitment to the Transformation Business Case?
- It was responded that whilst Transformation had not been an unalloyed success the Council was in the situation it was in.

**RESOLVED** that Council:-

- a) Approved the additional budget of £94,000 for 2019/20:
  - (i) General Fund: £50,000 from the CEO Earmarked Reserve and £18,000 from Business Rates Retention Funding.
  - (ii) Housing Revenue Account: £26,000 from general balances.
- b) Noted the full year costs of £254,000 (General Fund: £183,000; HRA: £71,000) and;
- c) Resolved that this be built into the Councils Medium Term Financial Plan/HRA Business Plan for 2020/21 onwards.



55. **Appointment of Representatives to Outside Bodies**

Various comments and queries were raised by Councillors which were clarified.

The recommendation was proposed from the Chair.

**RESOLVED** to:-

Agree the Appointments of Representatives to Outside Bodies for 2019/2020.

56. **Council Meetings Timetable 19/20**

**RESOLVED** that the revised Meetings Timetable for the remainder of the municipal year for 2019/2020 was noted.

57. **To consider reports from Executive Councillors**

**(i) Leader of the Council (Councillor Federica Smith-Roberts)**

Councillor Smith-Roberts's report covered the following topics:-

- Introduction and New Executive
- Corporate Strategy
- Service Delivery
- Chair of the Council
- Armed Forces Day
- Taunton Toads Trail
- 40 Commando Annual Reception
- Friends of Konigslutter

**(ii) Communications and Culture (Councillor Benet Allen)**

The report from Councillor Allen provided information on the following Areas within his portfolio:-

- West Somerset Railway
- Cricket World Cup
- Armed Forces Day
- Blenheim Gardens, Minehead
- Press Releases
- Facebook Statistics
- Website
- Brewhouse
- Cultural Forum

**(iii) Community (Councillor Chris Booth)**

The report from Councillor Booth provided information on the following Areas within his portfolio:-

- PSPO's
- CCTV
- Rough Sleeping
- Mental Health
- Localities and Communities

**(iv) Corporate Resources (Councillor Ross Henley)**

The report from Councillor Henley provided information on the following Areas within his portfolio:-

- Customer Service (Recruitment, Performance, Satisfaction)
- Income
- Operational Support
- Benefits
- Revenues
- Governance
- Business Intelligence, Performance Management and Strategic Procurement
- People Managers (including HR)
- Technology
- Finance
- Change

**(v) Asset Management and Economic Development (Councillor Marcus Kravis)**

The report from Councillor Kravis provided information on the following Areas within his portfolio:-

- Asset Management System Capita's Open Asset
- Major Projects (Coal Orchard, Firepool, Brewhouse, Seaward Way, Watchet East Quay)
- Economic Development Strategy Commission
- Inward Investment
- Government's High Street Fund
- Business Improvement District
- UK Hydrographic Office Innovation Centre
- Affordable Employment Land Local Development Order (LDO)
- Business Rate Retention Pilot 2019/20
- Hinkley C Economic Opportunities Project
- Skills, Training and Employment
- Hinkley C
- West Somerset Community Employment Hubs
- West Somerset Opportunity Areas

**(vi) Sports, Parks and Leisure (Councillor Richard Lees)**

The report from Councillor R Lees provided information on the following Areas within his portfolio:-

- Community Leisure (Play and Recreation & Play Equipment Repairs)
- GLL (Taunton Deane)
- Leisure Procurement Project
- Parks and Open Spaces
- Property
- Music in the Park
- Taunton Flower Show
- Green Rewilding Schemes

**(vii) Climate Change (Councillor Peter Pilkington)**

The report from Councillor Pilkington provided information on the following Areas within his portfolio:-

- Introduction
- Appointments
- University of Exeter Multidisciplinary Plastics Research Hub
- Climate Change Strategy & Carbon Neutrality
- Electric Vehicle Charging Points

**(viii) Planning and Transportation (Councillor Mike Rigby)**

The report from Councillor Rigby provided information on the following Areas within his portfolio:-

- Local Plan
- Taunton Garden Town
- Funding Bids

**(ix) Housing Services (Councillor Francesca Smith)**

The report from Councillor Smith provided information on the following Areas within her portfolio:-

- Introduction
- Housing Capital Programme
- Housing Repairs (Recruitment, Performance)
- HRA Portfolio Compliance
- Building a Safer Future
- Anti-Social Behaviour Update
- Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

**(x) Environmental Services (Councillor Alan Wedderkopp)**

The report from Councillor A Wedderkopp provided information on the following Areas within his portfolio:-

- Environmental Health and Private Sector Housing SW
- Private Sector Housing Standards
- Food Safety and Infectious Diseases
- Environmental Protection and Pollution
- Private Water Supply Inspections
- Environmental Permitting
- Air Quality Monitoring
- External Health and Safety Investigations
- Dog Warden Service Contract
- Licensing

(The Meeting ended at 9.15 pm)

DRAFT

Report Number: SWT 81/19



## **HOTSW JOINT COMMITTEE GOVERNANCE REVIEW REPORT**

Lead Officer: Pat Flaherty, Chief Executive, Somerset County Council  
Author: Julian Gale, Strategic Manager – Partnerships Governance  
Contact Details: 01823 359500

### **1. Summary**

- 1.1. This report provides an update for the Constituent Authorities on the Joint Committee's governance arrangements and budgetary position for 2019/20. The report contains recommendations for amendments to the Committee's Arrangements document following the governance review.

### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1. **Somerset West and Taunton Council is recommended to approve the amendments (shown in red) to the Committee's list of functions in the Arrangements document – Appendix A attached – and to note the updated budget position for 2019/20.**
- 2.2. **Somerset West and Taunton Council is recommended to agree to the reappointment of Somerset County Council as the Administering Authority to the Joint Committee for the period from 22 January 2020 to 21 January 2022.**

### **3. Reasons for recommendations**

- 3.1 In recent months the Joint Committee has reviewed and updated its governance arrangements in the light of experience since its establishment in early 2018 and in response to changing Government policy and local circumstances. Some changes are required to the Committee's Arrangements document as a result and these need to be formally agreed by the Constituent Authorities. It is essential that the Joint Committee remains: fit for purpose, represents a sustainable way of working into the future; and delivers value for the resources committed to it by the Constituent Authorities.

### **4. Background**

#### **4.1 Review of the role and functions of the Joint Committee**

- 4.1.1 The Constituent Authorities have previously agreed one addition to the list of delegated functions by giving the Joint Committee the function of agreeing the local authorities' input into the development of the HoSW Local Industrial Strategy (LIS).

- 4.1.2** In addition to the above policy development, the need to review the governance arrangements arose from:
- Changes in Government policy away from large devolution ‘deals’ to a more targeted dialogue on key themes of relevance to the local authorities and partners, eg, housing. The Joint Committee’s influencing role has become increasingly important as recognised by Ministers, local MPs and Government officials. The ambition remains to draw down additional functions, powers and funding from Government.
  - The evolution of the Joint Committee’s role from agreeing policy (the HotSW Productivity Strategy) to overseeing delivery of the Strategy alongside the LEP.
  - The developing relationships with other key local partnerships to ensure that there are appropriate reporting lines, ie, HotSW LEP Joint Scrutiny Committee, Peninsula Transport Board, Great South West, HotSW Local Transport Board.

**4.1.3** Accordingly, the Committee has refined its focus into the following areas:

- Strategic policy development
- Influencing Government / key agencies to achieve direct intervention, support, funding and powers
- Designing and delivering strategic HotSW responses to ‘Government’ offers
- Designing and delivering public sector reform where this will deliver improved productivity, eg in health and education
- Delivering at scale –(beyond what individual councils can achieve)
- Oversight of the Delivery Plan – working with the HotSW LEP to ensure delivery of the HotSW Productivity Strategy.

It is not proposed at this stage to request the delegation of further functions from the Constituent Authorities to the Joint Committee.

These refinements to the focus of the Committee have been reflected in amendments to the list of functions contained in the Joint Committee’s ‘Arrangements’ document – see Appendix A attached.

**4.1.4** The subject matter focus for the Joint Committee will fall into the following areas of the Delivery Plan:

- Housing – including bid(s) for strategic housing deal(s) designed, submitted and agreed resulting in additional investment into HotSW
- Major Route Corridor Study agreed and completed
- Agreed HotSW LIS which meets our transformational objectives
- Successful engagement plan with MPs / Ministers
- Successful operational phase of the Brexit work in collaboration with Government
- Preparation for / response to offers of public sector reform to improve productivity
- Agreement and submission of Coastal Communities proposal to Government seeking additional Government support for our coastal communities

- Development of the JC's investment framework required to deliver the Productivity Strategy within a new national funding environment.
- Enable the partners to prepare for and respond to opportunities arising from the Comprehensive Spending Review and the Shared Prosperity Fund.

## **4.2 Joint Committee Political Arrangements**

- 4.2.1** The Committee has agreed to change its meeting arrangements to achieve a better balance between formal decision-making meetings (fewer) and more opportunities for informal engagement and challenge sessions.

In addition, two informal engagement sessions will be arranged per annum to engage relevant Portfolio Holders and Directors on Joint Committee business.

## **4.3 Joint Committee Management Support Arrangements**

- 4.3.1** Comprehensive management support arrangements have been in place to support the partnership (and latterly the Joint Committee) since 2015. These have been recently reviewed and refined. To minimise direct support costs impacting on the Committee's budget, most of the officer resource is provided by the Constituent Authorities on an 'in-kind' voluntary basis. In addition, Somerset County Council was appointed as the Administering Authority to the Joint Committee to support and run the Joint Committee and its meetings. SCC has been paid for undertaking this role from the Joint Committee budget. Other direct budget contributions towards the Committee support costs have been allocated to refund those Constituent Authorities who have provided officer resources for project management capacity and administrative support to the Brexit Resilience and Opportunities Group.

- 4.3.2** The diagram in Appendix B shows the revised management support arrangements of the Joint Committee.

The revised arrangements provide for:

- A CEx Executive Group to lead the work of the Joint Committee and to include theme leads from the Delivery Plan. The membership of this Group is set out in Appendix B.
- Use of existing Devon and Somerset Chief Executives' and Leaders' meetings to support the work of the Committee;
- 1 x joint meeting per annum of the Devon and Somerset Chief Executives.
- Better alignment of the Joint Committee's support arrangements with the LEP.
- A Policy and Technical Officer Group of senior policy officers to focus on: delivery of the Delivery Plan; monitoring progress/measuring performance; and drafting responses to national policy changes.

- A dedicated and resourced programme management function, (funded from the Joint Committee’s budget) to manage Joint Committee business on behalf of the CEx Executive Group and in addition to the Administering Authority role. This arrangement was initially agreed for 6 months (April to Oct 2019) pending a review of the work load.

#### 4.5 Joint Committee Budget Position

4.5.1 The Joint Committee remains completely reliant on the Constituent Authorities for its budget and there are no obvious sources of additional funding to support running costs or delivery of its work programme.

The Joint Committee budget as at the end of March 2019 was as follows:

Constituent Authorities	Contributions – 18/19 £	Expenditure – 18/19 £
County Council x2	10,500	40,000 – Administering Authority costs (including staffing, venue hire, publicity costs) 16,346 – Brexit admin support costs 9750 – Housing audit 5000 – Housing conference 8759 - Transport consultancy 660 - Portfolio-holder event costs
Unitaries x 2	4,000	
Districts / National Park Authorities x 15	1,400	
Underspend carried forward from Devolution Budget	66838	
<b>Total</b>	<b>116,838</b>	<b>80513</b> 36,325 (carry forward to 2019/20)

4.5.2 The Joint Committee budget covers the costs of running the Committee and the work programme. Contribution levels for each council tier are based on population levels. The Committee agreed earlier this year that a larger annual budget was likely to be required to fund work programme priorities in future years and approved ‘in principle’ to seek the agreement of the Constituent Authorities to double the 2018/19 core contributions as a one-year arrangement so giving maximum contributions in 2019/20 of:

County Council - £21,000

Unitary Council - £8,000

District Council / National Park Authorities – £2,800

For 2019/20 the Constituent Authorities have been invoiced for 50% of the amounts stated above. A second invoice was to be sent to each Constituent Authority for the other 50% in the autumn if the budget proved to be insufficient to fund the work required in 2019/20 and only if fully costed work programme proposals were available to justify the request.



The overall budget position for 2019/20 is detailed in the table in 4.5.3. There are no plans to invoice the Constituent Authorities for the second budget contribution for 2019/ 20 because of the need to take stock of the direction of the Committee’s work programme following the recent elections and delays in progressing discussions with Government as a result of Brexit. As it stands the contributions collected from the Constituent Authorities (£48,600) together with the underspend carried forward from 2018/19 (£36,326) totalling £84,926 is sufficient to cover the planned and anticipated costs for 2019/20 of £60k. A key unknown aspect of the work programme is the preparations for Brexit and the budget impacts of any work which the Committee may wish to commission. This will be kept under review in the coming months as the position becomes clearer.

#### 4.5.3

<b>Income</b>	<b>£ (,000)</b>
Constituent Authority contributions	48,600 - committed 48,600 – in principle
2018/19 underspend	36,326
<u>Total</u>	133.5 (of which 48.6k is in principle)

<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>£ ,000</b>
Administering Authority Programme Office	20 – committed (for the year) 10 – committed (April to Sept) (Oct to March 2020 tbc but estimated at £10k)
Brexit Resilience and Opportunities Group – officer support costs	10 – in principle (April to Sept) (Oct onwards tbc but estimated at up to £10k)
Housing Task Force	Tbc
Growth Corridor Work	Tbc
MP/ Ministerial engagement	Tbc
Brexit work programme	Tbc
Coastal Communities proposal	Tbc
<u>Total</u>	£60k (including anticipated commitments detailed above)

4.5.4 Further discussions are planned as to how to establish a financially stable Joint Committee budget for future years as a pre-requisite to preparing a budget proposal for 2020/21 for submission to the Constituent Authorities.

#### 4.6 Appointment of Administering Authority

At the time of the establishment of the Joint Committee, the Constituent Authorities agreed to appoint Somerset County Council as the Administering Authority for the Joint Committee for a two-year period from 22 January 2018. With this appointment coming to an end early in the new year the HotSW Chief Executives' Executive Group has considered an appointment for the next two year period (as required by the Joint Committee's 'Arrangements' document).

The detail of the Administering Authority role is set out in the Joint Committee's Arrangements document but in summary it includes:

- Running the Joint Committee business and meetings;
- Administering the Joint Committee's budget;
- Responsibility for the Committee's communications and engagement plan including maintaining the Joint Committee's website.

The view of the HotSW Chief Executives' Executive Group is that Somerset County Council has done an excellent job of supporting the Committee and their recommendation is to reappoint the County Council to the Administering Authority role for a further two year period from 23 January 2020 to 22 January 2022. The Joint Committee will consider this recommendation at its meeting on the 27<sup>th</sup> September and it is likely to be agreed. In anticipation of this approval, Somerset West and Taunton Council is recommended to agree to the reappointment of Somerset County Council as the Administering Authority to the Joint Committee for the period from 22 January 2020 to 21 January 2022.

Note: The Joint Committee have agreed a budget allocation of £20,000 to the Council appointed as the Administering Authority.

## **5. Equalities Implications**

- 5.1 There are no equalities implications associated with the recommendations.

## **6. Other Implications**

### **6.1 Legal:**

The review of the role and functions of the Joint Committee have taken account of the legal framework within which the Joint Committee operates.

### **6.2 Financial:**

As stated in the report.

### **6.3 HR**

As stated in the report.

### **6.4 Risk**

The key risk to the Constituent Authorities is a Committee without a clear role and functions and with unsustainable support arrangements which threaten the security and operation of the model. If the Committee

cannot be sustained into the future then the momentum already achieved with Government will be at risk and the opportunity to realise additional funds, powers and responsibilities from Government for the benefit of the HotSW will be severely compromised. This in turn would compromise the ability to deliver the Productivity Strategy.

- 6.5** Other Implications: Health and Well-being; Health and Safety; Sustainability; Community Safety; Privacy  
No implications.

## **7. Background papers**

- 7.1** Link below to the HotSW Joint Committee Arrangements document as agreed by all of the Constituent Authorities



Annex A Heart of the  
South West Joint Con

Link below to the HotSW Joint Committee Inter-Authority Agreement as agreed by all of the Constituent Authorities



Annex A Heart of the  
South West Joint Con

**Note:** For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author.

## APPENDIX A – EXTRACT FROM THE JOINT COMMITTEE’S ARRANGEMENTS DOCUMENT

### 2. Joint Committee Functions:

2.1 The only delegated functions of the Joint Committee relate to:

- (a) the approval of the HotSW Productivity Strategy; and
- (b) the development and endorsement of the HotSW Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) (noting that final approval of the HotSW LIS rests with the HotSW Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and the Government.

All other matters referred to in 2.3 below are ‘referred’ matters where the Joint Committee will make recommendations to the Constituent Authority or Authorities for decision. Additional delegated or referred functions may be proposed for the Joint Committee in the future by the Joint Committee or any of the Constituent Authorities but shall only be agreed if approved by all of the Constituent Authorities.

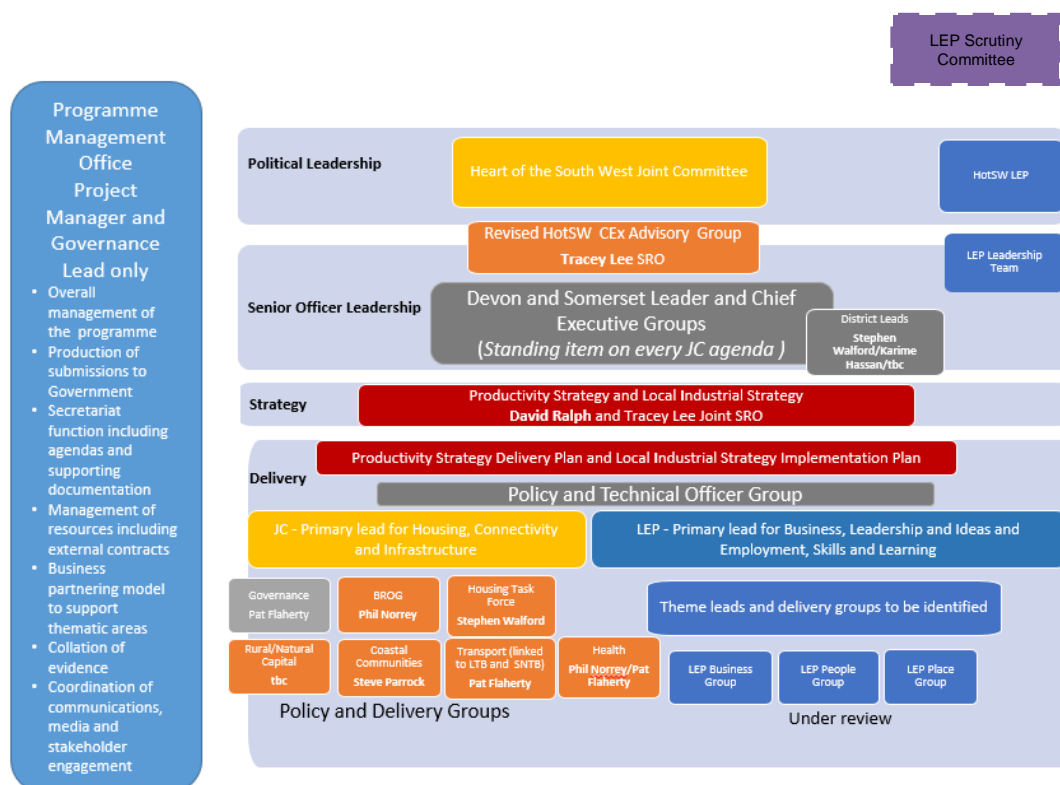
2.2 The principle of subsidiarity will apply to the relationship between the Joint Committee, the Constituent Authorities and local Sub-Regional Partnerships with decisions being made at the most local and appropriate level on all matters to do with the delivery of the Productivity Strategy and in relation to the other functions of the Joint Committee.

2.3 The Joint Committee shall:

- (a) Develop and agree the HotSW Productivity Plan in collaboration with the LEP.
- (b) Maintain oversight of the HotSW Delivery Plan = working alongside and in collaboration with the LEP using each other’s strengths and roles to ensure delivery of the HotSW Productivity Strategy.
- (c) Continue discussions /negotiations with the Government and Government agencies to achieve direct intervention, support, funding and powers to the benefit of the HotSW and assist with the delivery of the Productivity Plan and the LIS, working with the LEP.
- (d) Continue discussions / negotiations with the Government / relevant agencies to secure delivery of the Government’s strategic infrastructure commitments, eg, strategic road and rail transport improvements.
- (e) Design and deliver the strategic HotSW response to ‘Government’ offers and respond to Government calls for evidence if appropriate.
- (f) Design and deliver public sector reform where this will deliver improved productivity to the HotSW, eg health, education.
- (g) Deliver at scale (beyond what individual councils can achieve).
- (h) Work with the LEP to identify and deliver adjustments to the LEP’s democratic accountability and to assist the organisation to comply with the revised (November 2016) LEP Assurance Framework. This includes endorsing the LEP’s assurance framework on behalf of the Constituent Authorities as and when required. However, this is subject to the Framework being formally approved by the LEP’s Administering Authority.
- (i) Ensure that adequate resources (including staff and funding) are allocated by the Constituent Authorities to enable the objectives in (a) to (e) above to be delivered.

## APPENDIX B

### HotSW Joint Committee Support Structure



### Chief Executives' Executive Group Membership and Roles

Theme/Role	Lead	Body
HotSW Leaders SRO	Tracey Lee	JC (PCC)
Productivity Strategy SRO	Tracey Lee/David Ralph	JC (PCC)/LEP
LIS SRO	David Ralph/Tracey Lee	LEP/JC (PCC)
BROG	Phil Norrey	JC (DCC)
Governance lead	Pat Flaherty	JC (SCC)
Housing lead	Stephen Walford	JC (MDDC)
Transport lead	Pat Flaherty	JC (SCC)
Coastal Communities lead	Steve Parrock	JC (TC)
District Council Leads X 3	Stephen Walford (Devon - Rural) Karime Hassan (Devon - City/Urban) Stuart Brown (Somerset)	JC (MDDC/ECC/MDC)
Rural/Natural Capital lead	Kevin Bishop	JC (DNP)
Health theme	Via Phil Norrey and Pat Flaherty in the short term	JC (DCC/SCC)



*Report Number: SWT 83/19*

## **Somerset West and Taunton Council**

### **Full Council – 8 October 2019**

#### **Draft Corporate Strategy 2020-2024**

**This matter is the responsibility of the Leader of the Council**

**Report Author: Paul Harding, Strategy Specialist**

#### **1 Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 This report introduces the draft corporate strategic priorities, outcomes and objectives for the period 2020-2024, which were considered, and unanimously recommended for Council approval, by the Executive at their meeting of 18 September 2019.
- 1.2 The strategic priorities, outcomes and objectives form the Corporate Strategy which is the Council's key overarching strategic-planning document and, as such, contains high-level priority outcomes for the council over the next four years based on local needs, regional and national strategies, Government policy and alignment to the political manifesto of the controlling group of the Council
- 1.3 The Corporate Strategy does not describe the specific actions that need to take place nor who will carry them out (these will be contained within directorate plans, service plans, project plans and individual work plans).
- 1.4 The Corporate Strategy is designed to guide future decision making. Once the priorities, outcomes and objectives are agreed they will underpin all subsequent strategies and delivery plans the Council produces. Future decision making reports will set out how they accord with the Strategy.
- 1.5 Once the strategic priorities, outcomes and objectives have been approved work will commence on preparing a Business Plan for the 2020/21 financial year which will set out what the Council intends to do during the year to help achieve its strategic outcomes.
- 1.6 Progress against delivery of the strategic outcomes will be a key area of focus of council's performance management framework and will be the subject of regular public reports.

## 2 Recommendations

### 2.1 Full Council resolves to:

- approve the priorities, outcomes and objectives within the attached appendix.
- authorise the Head of Communications to agree the final design and publication style for the Strategy.

## 3 Risk Assessment (if appropriate)

3.1 Without the Council clearly articulating its priorities there is a risk that activity and resources are not targeted to where they are most needed.

## 4 Background and Full details of the Report

4.1 These draft Strategic Priorities, Outcomes and Objectives 2020-2024 will be the basis of the first Corporate Strategy for Somerset West and Taunton Council.

4.2 The purpose of this Strategy is to :-

- articulate the Council's high-level priorities over the next four years that ensure we bring about positive change for our people and place; that will make the district an even better place in which to live, work and visit;
- describe why these priorities are important;
- define the outcomes that will constitute success;
- provide a framework which will underpin all subsequent strategies and delivery plans the Council produces and decisions it makes.

4.3 The Corporate Strategy does not describe specific actions that need to take place nor who will carry them out (these will be contained within the annual Business Plan, team operational plans, project plans and individual work plans).

4.4 In constructing the Corporate Strategy we don't start with a blank sheet of paper. Via our former councils we have committed to a number of evidence-based strategic outcomes within current live strategies including the countywide Improving Lives in Somerset (Health & Wellbeing) - 2019-2028; Somerset Housing Strategy - 2019-2023; Somerset Growth Plan - 2017-2030; Taunton Deane Core Strategy- 2011-2028 and the West Somerset Local Plan to 2032. Additionally, the Strategic priorities, outcomes and objectives are aligned to the pledges within the manifesto of the controlling group of the Council.

4.5 The Strategy comprises of four strategic themes, each with a clearly articulated outcome and objectives that underpin, and give effect to, the strategic themes.

- Priority theme 1. **Our environment and economy.** Outcome; A low-carbon, clean, green and prosperous district that attracts high quality employment opportunities and encourages healthy lifestyles.



- Priority theme 2. **A transparent and customer-focused Council.** Outcome; A Council which informs and engages openly with our stakeholders and which consistently delivers excellent customer service.
- Priority theme 3. **An Enterprising Council.** Outcome; A financially self-sufficient Council which has expanded its commercial activity and generated more income in order to support service provision.
- Priority theme 4. **Homes and Communities.** Outcome; A district which offers a choice of good quality homes for our residents, whatever their age and income, in communities where support is available for those who need it.

4.6 The Corporate Strategy will be supported by an Annual Business Plan that will be structured around the strategic aims in the Corporate Strategy. This will ensure that there is a clear link between the high-level outcomes we are seeking and our day-to-day activities. It will also support us to correlate more clearly, evidence of our shorter-term achievements with their impact on our longer-term outcomes.

4.7 The Annual Business Plan for 2020/21 is scheduled to be considered by the Executive in March 2020.

4.8 The draft Strategic Priorities, Outcomes and Objectives 2020-2024 are contained within **Appendix A.**

## **5 Links to Corporate Strategy**

5.1 This report introduces the corporate strategic priorities, outcomes and objectives which form the Corporate Strategy.

## **6 Finance / Resource Implications**

6.1 The Strategy contains an objective to identify and develop commercial investment opportunities for the council and deliver early projects that generate additional income that can be reinvested in service delivery in order to protect or enhance services on which our communities rely.

6.2 The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy will need to align with the Corporate Strategy to ensure that there are sufficient budgets in place to deliver the priorities as proposed. In addition, the Business Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis to take into account our changing budgetary position.

## **7 Legal Implications (if any)**

7.1 There are no direct legal implications associated with this report.

## **8 Climate and Sustainability Implications (if any)**

8.1 The Corporate Strategy includes the council's commitment to reducing carbon emissions and adapting to the impacts of climate change as a key objective.

8.2 Our guiding principles include ensuring the council's investment decisions are compatible with our social and environmental ethos.

**9 Safeguarding and/or Community Safety Implications** (if any)

9.1 The Corporate Strategy includes an objective to reduce anti-social behaviour.

**10 Equality and Diversity Implications** (if any)

10.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken in relation to this report. The assessment has not identified any adverse impacts on groups and individuals with protected characteristics arising from this strategy.

10.2 The priorities and objectives within this strategy are built around reducing inequality - providing suitable homes, jobs and environments for all within our district. As detailed delivery plans are developed they will continue to take account of the potential impact on any of the protected characteristics as outlined in the Equality Act 2010.

**11 Social Value Implications** (if any)

11.1 Our guiding principles, within the Draft Strategy, include the council considering Social Value opportunities when purchasing goods or commissioning services.

**12 Partnership Implications** (if any)

12.1 The objectives, in many cases, will not be achieved by the council alone. We will continue to work with existing partners to achieve our strategic objectives and we will seek additional opportunities to work in partnership where this will deliver a better outcome for our communities.

**13 Health and Wellbeing Implications** (if any)

13.1 The Corporate Strategy sets out the council's commitment to increasing access to affordable and suitable homes and jobs as well as creating green open spaces, encouraging walking and cycling and tackling anti-social behaviour; all of which positively impact on the health and wellbeing of our residents.

**14 Asset Management Implications** (if any)

14.1 The Corporate Strategy contains an objective to ensure our land and property assets support the achievement of the council's objectives (including service delivery, regeneration projects and community initiatives).

**15 Data Protection Implications** (if any)

15.1 There is an objective to make greater use of our business intelligence and feedback to improve the delivery of services to our customers. This will clearly be within the parameters of what is permissible under GDPR.

**16 Consultation Implications** (if any)

16.1 Both the Council's Senior Leadership team and the Council's Executive participated in workshops to help shape the Strategic Priorities, Outcomes and Objectives. Approval will be sought from Full Council.

- 16.2 The Strategic Priorities, Outcomes and Objectives are heavily based upon the manifesto of the Council's ruling group, which formed the basis of their election campaign in May 2019 and have therefore been recently and widely promoted as part of that process. Similarly, the priorities and objectives arising from existing strategic plans (such as the Local Plan and countywide strategies such as the Health & Wellbeing Strategy) have been subject to public consultation prior to their approval.
- 16.3 The draft strategic themes, priorities, outcomes and objectives were shared at an SWT member briefing, open to all SWT members, held on 29 August 2019.

**17 Scrutiny Comments / Recommendation(s) (if any)**

17.1 Not applicable.

**Democratic Path:**

- **Scrutiny / Corporate Governance or Audit Committees – No**
- **Executive – Yes**
- **Full Council – Yes**

**Reporting Frequency:**  **Once only**

**List of Appendices (delete if not applicable)**

Appendix A	Draft Corporate Strategy 2020 - 2024
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**Contact Officers**

Name	Paul Harding
Direct Dial	01823 218751
Email	P.harding@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk



Somerset West and Taunton  
**Corporate Strategy 2020-2024**



# Introduction



## Foreword from Chief Executive Officer

[text to come]

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James Hassett  
Chief Executive of Somerset West and Taunton



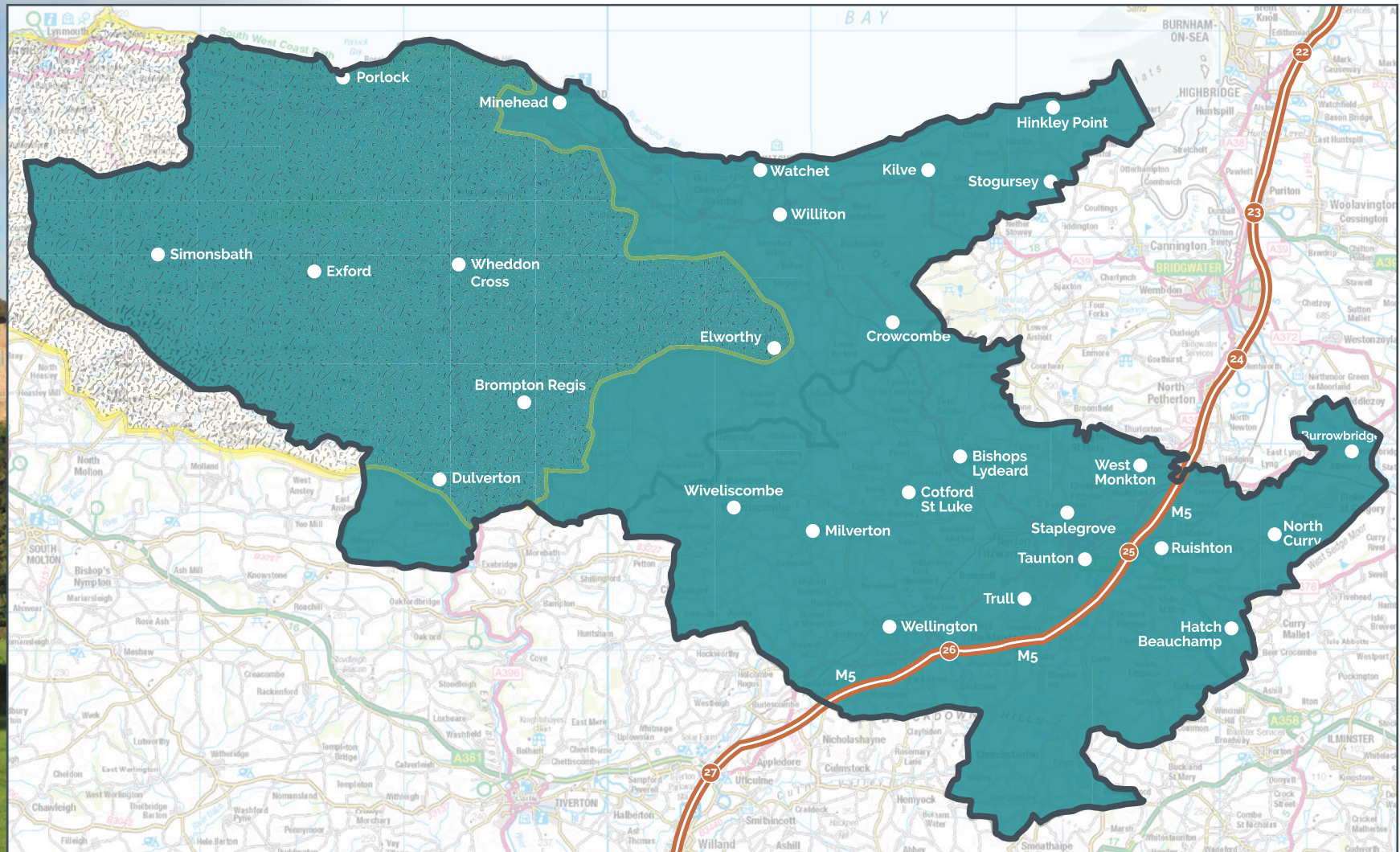
## Foreword from the Leader of the Council

[text to come]

Federica Smith-Roberts  
Leader of Somerset West and Taunton



# Map of our Area



Somerset West and Taunton Area

Exmoor National Park



# The Context - Our People and Place

## Our Area:

**459.5** square miles - includes:

- 70% of Exmoor National Park
- 2 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- 50km of coastline
- 11 Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- 2913 Listed Buildings
- 235 Scheduled Ancient Monuments
- 52 Conservation Areas
- 11 Historic Parks and Gardens

## Home of Hinkley Point C

Key Deliverables, commitments and investments:

- Aim to create 1,000 apprenticeships
- 25,000 job opportunities
- 34% of employment opportunities for locals
- £15m investment into education and skills

Economic benefits for the regional economy:

- £200m per year during construction
- £40m per year during operation

**5,800** homes owned by SWT

## Employment:

**73,800** people aged 16+ in employment

**41,000** full time employee jobs

**26,000** part time employee jobs

**3,622** active applications in the SWT area on Homefinder Somerset (March 2019)

**27.4%** of Somerset's population live in Somerset West and Taunton.

Somerset West and Taunton has a

**population of 152,288**

17% are aged 0-15    8.8% are aged 16-24  
28% are aged 25-49    21% are aged 50-64  
25.2% are aged 65+

**11.7%** SWT population aged 75+

**10.9%** Somerset Average aged 75+

## Key employment sectors:

- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| • Manufacturing                           | 7.2%  |
| • Construction                            | 7.4%  |
| • Wholesale and trade                     | 16.7% |
| • Accommodation and food services         | 6.9%  |
| • Public administration and defence       | 7.7%  |
| • Education                               | 9.7%  |
| • Human health and social work activities | 16.5% |

**6,520** business enterprises

**89.7%** employ <10 people

**3** neighbourhoods in Taunton (2 in Halcon and 1 in Lyngford) are within the top **10% of most deprived areas,**

**2** others (Wellington North and another in Lyngford) are in the top **20% of most deprived** (Index of Multiple Deprivation)

# Our Challenges

**We live in a beautiful area where residents have high expectations for good quality services and most enjoy an excellent quality of life.**

However, some within our community do not share this high quality of life due to being unable to access affordable /appropriate housing, suitable employment or through experiencing poor physical or mental health.

Many of the District's rural communities are disadvantaged by barriers to suitable housing and social exclusion through poor access to facilities and limited public transport.

Climate change is a global challenge but one which is of particular relevance locally. Most likely issues which may affect the District include an increased risk of flooding (levels and moors, surface water runoff and coastal storm inundation).

The population of the District is older than the national average which will increasingly require adaptability of homes, and a range of specialist housing. Growing population requires additional infrastructure to meet the pressures that will result from more people living in the district.

Whilst rates of employment are high, many jobs are relatively low earning, particularly in the agricultural, care, hospitality and tourism sectors. There is a need to attract higher earning jobs that will boost the District's productivity. There are large disparities between average local earnings and average house prices, making affordability a real issue for many of our residents.

Pressures on the vibrancy and viability of Town Centres, in particular through changing shopping habits.

# Priority Strategic Themes and Outcomes

Our four strategic themes are:

Our expected outcomes are:

**1. Our Environment and Economy**



**A low-carbon, clean, green and prosperous district that attracts high quality employment opportunities and encourages healthy lifestyles.**

**2. A transparent and customer-focused Council**



**A Council which informs and engages openly with our stakeholders and which consistently delivers excellent customer service.**

**3. Homes and Communities**



**A district which offers a choice of good quality homes for our residents, whatever their age and income, in communities where support is available for those who need it.**

**4. An Enterprising Council**



**A financially self-sufficient Council which has expanded its commercial activity and generated more income in order to support service provision.**



# Theme One: Our Environment and Economy

## What success will look like:-

A low-carbon, clean, green and prosperous district that attracts high quality employment opportunities and encourages healthy lifestyle.



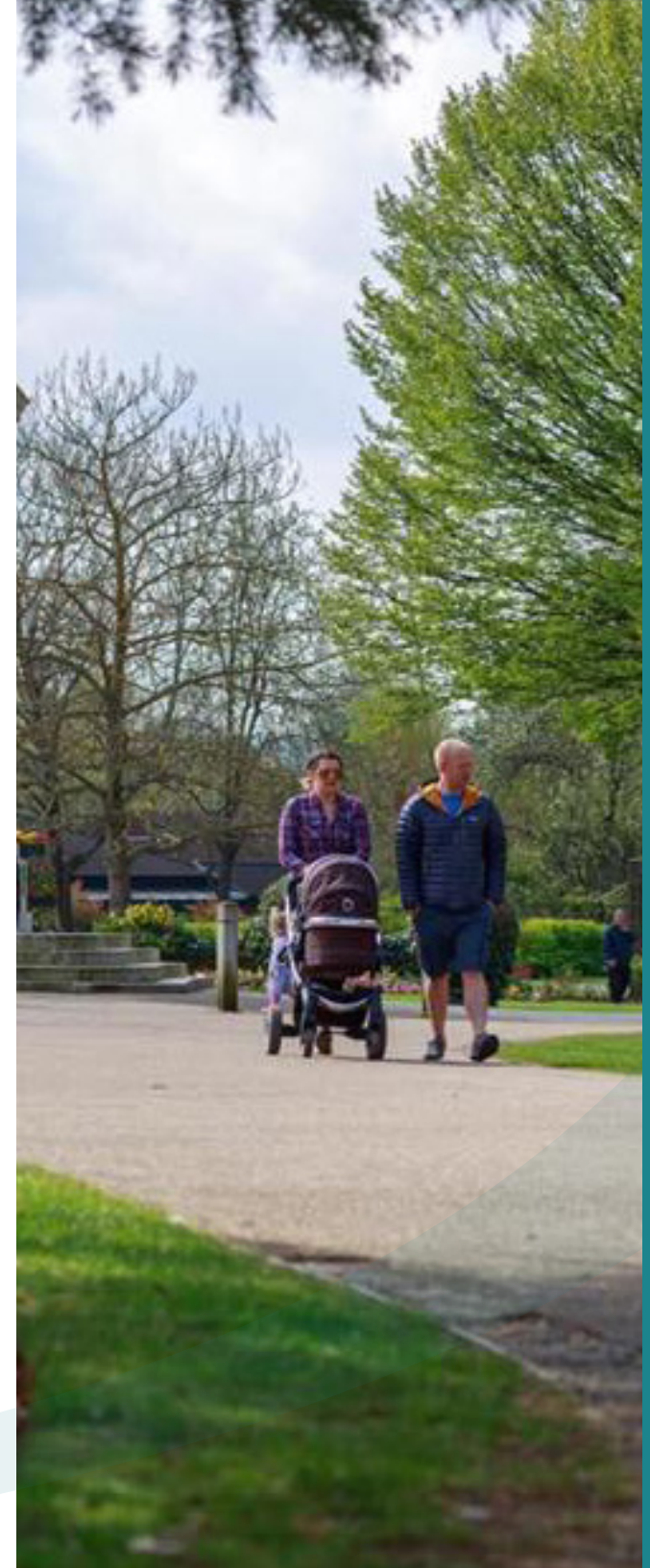


## Why this is important

Putting in place the conditions for attracting inward investment which delivers employment opportunities is key to tackling important issues in our district such as restricted social mobility, low pay and inequality.

Cleaner, greener environments help support a wide range of positive outcomes. We want everyone to enjoy high-quality natural and built environments. This is because the quality of the environment we live in is integral to our health and well-being and the quality of our lives. It can also greatly influence the Council's ability to attract investment and jobs to the district, as well as maintaining civic pride in our heritage and landmarks.

As well as looking after the district of today, it is also vital to protect the district of tomorrow by identifying issues affecting our environment and taking action to manage them; keeping our communities safe from the effects of extreme weather, such as flooding, and work with them to improve resilience and preparedness.







# Theme One: Our Environment and Economy

## Objectives

- 1** Work towards making our District carbon neutral by 2030 - deliver projects based on a Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Plan that work toward this goal (for example installing electric vehicle charging points across the District) .
- 2** Shape and protect our built and natural environment, supported by a refreshed Local Plan and develop our heritage, cultural and leisure offer including a clear vision and delivery plan for the Taunton Garden Town.
- 3** Encourage wealth creation and economic growth throughout the District by attracting inward investment, enabling research and innovation, improving the skills of the local workforce and seeking to ensure the provision of adequate and affordable employment land to meet different business needs.
- 4** Improve recycling rates and reduce the amount of waste material that is not recycled through working with other Councils in the Somerset Waste Partnership.
- 5** Provide and maintain green open spaces and parks, enhanced public spaces, as well as additional opportunities to safely walk or cycle in order to encourage active and healthy lifestyles.
- 6** Support the town centres throughout the District to meet the challenge of changing shopping habits.
- 7** Facilitate the development of the commercial parts of the Firepool site in Taunton.
- 8** Support the enhancement of arts and culture provision within the District.

# Theme One: Our Environment and Economy

## How we will measure success

- % Household waste recycled.
- Energy performance of our public buildings.
- Satisfaction with the local area as a place to live.
- Major planning applications determined within time.
- Planning decisions subject to successful appeal.
- Social Value delivered via the Council's procurement activities.

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**Performance around carbon neutrality & climate resilience, economic development and regeneration projects will be monitored through the relevant delivery plans.**



# Theme Two: A Transparent and Customer-focused Council

## What success will look like:-

A Council which informs and engages openly with our stakeholders and which consistently delivers excellent customer service.





## Why this is important

Openness and transparency, and the perception of both, underpin effective local democracy.

Good decisions are most likely to be made when they draw on the views and experiences of a wide cross-section of our community and our councillors. It is important therefore that everyone feels confident to actively engage with our decision-making processes on matters important to them, their families and their communities and that we have methods in place to encourage participation.

Every member of the public has a right to expect excellent service from the Council. Excellence means many things to many people and is something often noticed more by its absence than its presence.

For us it means:

- Helping you get what you need from the council easily.
- Keeping our promises; doing what we say we will.
- Ensuring information from the Council is accurate and readily available whether people choose to visit in person, online or by telephone.
- If we can't do something, clearly explaining why.
- Treating customers with respect – reflecting the differing needs of the varied groups within our community.
- Delivering value for money.
- Apologising if we get things wrong and quickly putting it right.





## Theme Two: A Transparent and Customer-focused Council

### Objectives

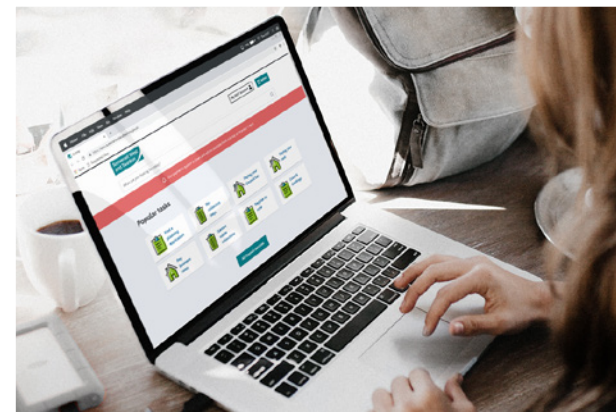
- 1** Deliver excellence in the way the Council conducts its business.
- 2** Make more of our services available to access 24/7.
- 3** Reduce the Council's reliance on specialist agency staff by 'Growing our own' expertise through investing in our own staff.
- 4** Deliver new technologies and improvements to our processes that deliver excellent customer service.
- 5** Develop and deliver effective communications, consultation and engagement which listens to and engages with our residents and stakeholders and is central to the delivery of our services, strategies and plans.
- 6** Make greater use of our business intelligence and feedback to improve the delivery of our services.
- 7** Review the Council's decision making arrangements to enable greater participation by all Councillors and the public.



# Theme Two: A Transparent and Customer-focused Council

## How we will measure success

- Customer satisfaction (surveys).
- Customer feedback (trends).
- Independent assessment of our website.
- The number of SWT Self-service accounts created.
- The number of our services which are available to our customers online.
- Participation by members of the public in Council Meetings (in person and online).
- No. of upheld complaints to the Ombudsman
- Number of successful appeals to the Information Commissioner which require the Council to release information.
- Freedom of Information compliance rate



# Theme Three: Homes and Communities

## What success will look like:-

A district which offers a choice of good quality homes for our residents, whatever their age and income, in communities where support is available for those who need it.





## Why this is important

Decent secure, affordable housing is a basic human need and can contribute much to the overall health, well-being and quality of life for our residents. However, large disparities exist in our district between average earnings and average house price making affordability a real issue for many of our residents which is reflected in our growing housing waiting list. Local authorities have a broad role to play in supporting and regulating the housing sector, and in facilitating the delivery of new homes.

Lack of access to public transport is a crucial factor in contributing to social isolation and restricting access to opportunities such as further education, training, and employment. It also makes it more difficult for people to access health facilities, as well as shops, amenities and leisure activities.

To support and enable economic and housing growth it is essential that the infrastructure (roads, transport etc.) is in place to connect people between home and work and to build communities that are sustainable and self-sufficient.







# Theme Three: Homes and Communities

## Objectives

- 1** Increase the number of affordable and social homes in our urban towns, rural and coastal communities; including those built by the Council.
- 2** Facilitate the development of the residential blocks at Firepool, Taunton, in order to deliver new homes and public open spaces.
- 3** Reduce anti-social behaviour, through working with residents and our partners as well as tackle economic, social and health inequalities within the groups and communities that need extra support.
- 4** Work to end homelessness and rough sleeping in the District.
- 5** Engage with the voluntary sector in their mission to help support our communities.
- 6** Support the delivery of strong sustainable transport infrastructure links including greater provision of public transport across the district, as well as solutions which remove barriers to people using public transport to access work, training and leisure opportunities
- 7** Seek additional funding for new strategic infrastructure and regeneration projects from developers, investors, Government and other funders, which support or enable existing or new communities within our district.

# Theme Three: Homes and Communities

## How we will measure success

- £ secured and spent on infrastructure.
- Net number of new homes delivered in line with Government target.
- Number of Affordable homes delivered.
- Number of Social homes delivered.
- Number of long term empty homes within the District.
- Number of cases of homelessness helped or prevented.
- Major planning applications determined within time.
- Housing land supply.
- Residential planning decisions subject to successful appeal.

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**Performance around health and well-being will be monitored through the relevant action /delivery plans.**





# Theme Four: An Enterprising Council

## What success will look like:-

A financially self-sufficient Council which has expanded its commercial activity and generated more income in order to support service provision.







## Why this is important

All councils have seen significant reductions in the money they receive from Government over the last decade.

While the council has, and will continue, to find ways to reduce its operating costs it is essential that the Council find new ways to generate additional income to fill the shortfall in order to protect and enhance our services on which our communities rely.

**This priority theme supports our ability to deliver the other three.**



# Theme Four: An Enterprising Council

## Objectives

- 1** Pursue commercial investment opportunities that generate additional income that can be reinvested in service delivery in order to protect or enhance services on which our communities rely. Supported by a commercial investment strategy.
- 2** Meet the challenge of Government completely withdrawing the Council's grant funding.
- 3** Ensure our land and property assets support the achievement of the council's objectives (including service delivery, regeneration projects and community initiatives).



# Theme Four: An Enterprising Council

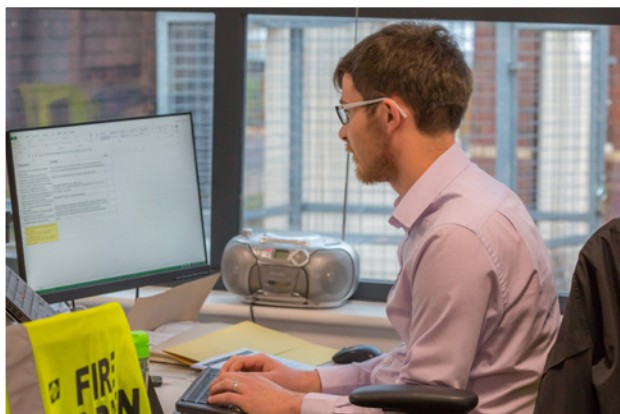
## How we will measure success

- Value of additional capital and revenue receipts raised through commercial activity, which is available to support service delivery.
- 5-year Medium Term Financial Plan.
- Number and value of redundant land and property assets.

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# Our Guiding Principles

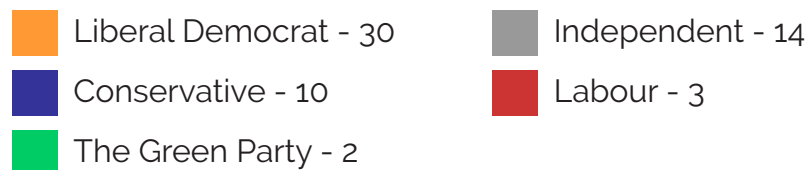
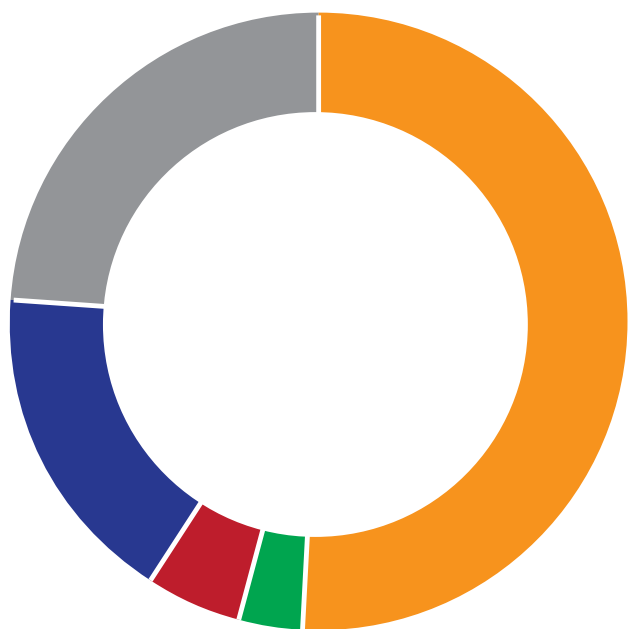


## We will:

- Put our customers first.
- Consider Social Value opportunities when purchasing goods or commissioning services.
- Help our communities address issues that are important to them.
- Be fair to people who use or would like to use our services and who work for us or who would like to work for us; respecting and celebrating the diversity of our district and our workforce.
- Use our resources well and innovatively.
- Be open to change.
- Be open and transparent.
- Work with partners wherever it can deliver a better outcome for our residents and our district.
- Ensure the council's investment decisions are compatible with our social and environmental ethos.

# Political make up and Leadership of the Council

## May 2019 election result



**Total: 59 councillors**

## Leader and Portfolio Holders

### Leader of the Council

Cllr Federica Smith-Roberts

### Portfolio

### Portfolio Holder

Communications & Culture (and Deputy Leader)	Cllr Benet Allen
Community	Cllr Chris Booth
Housing	Cllr Fran Smith
Corporate Resources	Cllr Ross Henley
Planning & Transport	Cllr Mike Rigby
Environmental Services	Cllr Alan Wedderkopp
Climate Change	Cllr Peter Pilkington
Asset Management & Economic Development	Cllr Marcus Kravis
Sports, Parks & Leisure	Cllr Richard Lees

## Contact Details:-

SWT Strategy

Email: [strategy@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk](mailto:strategy@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk)

Web: [www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk](http://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk)

# Somerset Equality Impact Assessment

Before completing this EIA please ensure you have read the EIA guidance notes – available from your Equality Officer

<b>Organisation prepared for</b>	<b>Somerset West and Taunton Council</b>		
<b>Version</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>Date Completed</b>	<b>02/09/2019</b>

## Description of what is being impact assessed

### The Corporate Strategy 2020/2024.

The Strategy is the Council's key overarching strategic planning document and as such contains high-level priority outcomes for the council over the next 4 years based on local needs, regional and national strategies, Government and local political agenda.

The Corporate Strategy does not describe specific actions that need to take place nor who will carry them out (these will be contained within team plans, project plans and individual work plans).

Where projects, action plans, or more specific strategies are developed to deliver against the corporate strategies additional Equality Impact Assessments will be completed where relevant.

The four priority themes and outcomes the council wish to focus on are:

- Priority theme 1. **Our environment and economy.** Outcome; A low-carbon, clean, green and prosperous district that attracts high quality employment opportunities and encourages healthy lifestyles.
- Priority theme 2. **A transparent and customer-focused Council.** Outcome; A Council which informs and engages openly with our stakeholders and which consistently delivers excellent customer service.



- Priority theme 3. **An Enterprising Council. Outcome:** A financially self-sufficient Council which has expanded its commercial activity and generated more income in order to support service provision.
- Priority theme 4. **Homes and Communities. Outcome:** A district which offers a choice of good quality homes for our residents, whatever their age and income, in communities where support is available for those who need it.

### Evidence

**What data/information have you used to assess how this policy/service might impact on protected groups?** Sources such as the [Office of National Statistics](#), [Somerset Intelligence Partnership](#), [Somerset's Joint Strategic Needs Analysis \(JSNA\)](#), Staff and/ or [area profiles](#), should be detailed here

Previously agreed recent and live strategies including Taunton Deane Core Strategy- 2011-2028, West Somerset Local Plan to 2032, Improving Lives in Somerset (Health & Wellbeing) 2019-2028, Somerset Housing Strategy -2019-2023, Somerset Growth Plan 2017-2030 each of which have been evidence-based using such sources as Office of National Statistics, Somerset Intelligence Partnership, Somerset's Joint Strategic Needs Analysis (JSNA). Additionally the Corporate Strategy has ensured alignment to the political manifesto of the controlling group of the Council.

**Who have you consulted with to assess possible impact on protected groups?** If you have not consulted other people, please explain why?

The Strategy team within Somerset West and Taunton are responsible for drafting the Corporate Strategy. Both the Council's Senior Leadership team and the Council's Executive participated in workshops to help shape the Strategy.

The priorities and objectives arising from existing strategic plans (such as the Local Plan and countywide strategies for example the Health & Wellbeing Strategy) were subject to extensive public consultation prior to their approval.







This Strategy requires approval from Full Council, informed by recommendations from the Council's Executive Committee. These council meetings are open to members of the public and all papers are published on our website in advance of the relevant meetings to allow for public participation and challenge.



<b>Analysis of impact on protected groups</b>				
<p>The Public Sector Equality Duty requires us to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations with protected groups. Consider how this policy/service will achieve these aims. In the table below, using the evidence outlined above and your own understanding, detail what considerations and potential impacts against each of the three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty. Based on this information, make an assessment of the likely outcome, before you have implemented any mitigation.</p>				
<b>Protected group</b>	<b>Summary of impact</b>	<b>Negative outcome</b>	<b>Neutral outcome</b>	<b>Positive outcome</b>
<b>Age</b>	<p>No negative impacts identified at this initial high-level stage.</p> <p>All members of the community, including this protected group, should benefit from the outcomes described in the Corporate Strategy. (Provision of additional affordable homes, new employment opportunities, more vibrant town centres and better green spaces etc.). Care will of course be needed to ensure that delivery of the strategic objectives does not unwittingly introduce unintended consequences for some groups and that change is effective for all target groups.</p> <p>The objective to make more council services available on-line (whilst preserving traditional channels) should appeal to younger customers in particular who are most prone to transacting digitally.</p> <p>The objective to work with partners and service providers to encourage greater provision of public transport across the district as well as develop solutions which remove barriers to young people using public transport to access work, training and leisure</p>	□	□	☒

	opportunities should have a particularly positive impact on the younger residents who have no independent means of travel.			
<b>Disability</b>	<p>No negative impacts identified at this initial high-level stage.</p> <p>All members of the community, including this protected group, should benefit from the outcomes described in the Corporate Strategy. (Provision of additional affordable homes, new employment opportunities, more vibrant town centres and better green spaces etc). Care will of course be needed to ensure that delivery of the strategic objectives does not unwittingly introduce unintended consequences for some groups and that change is effective for all target groups.</p> <p>The objective to ensure greater focus on the particular needs of people with disabilities within our service provision should have a positive impact for this protected group.</p> <p>The objective to enable more of our services are available on-line, whilst preserving other methods of contact, should be more convenient to e-enabled customers with a disability and avoid them having to make journeys to the council's office if they don't wish to do so.</p> <p>The Corporate Strategy can be made available in other formats to assist those customers who are visually impaired.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Gender reassignment</b>	<p>No negative impacts identified at this initial high-level stage.</p> <p>All members of the community, including this protected group, should benefit from the outcomes described in the Corporate Strategy. (Provision of additional affordable homes, new</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

	<p>employment opportunities, more vibrant town centres and better green spaces etc). Care will of course be needed to ensure that delivery of the strategic objectives does not unwittingly introduce unintended consequences for some groups and that change is effective for all target groups.</p>			
<b>Marriage and civil partnership</b>	<p>No negative impacts identified at this initial high-level stage.</p> <p>All members of the community, including this protected group, should benefit from the outcomes described in the Corporate Strategy. (Provision of additional affordable homes, new employment opportunities, more vibrant town centres and better green spaces etc). Care will of course be needed to ensure that delivery of the strategic objectives does not unwittingly introduce unintended consequences for some groups and that change is effective for all target groups.</p>	□	□	☒
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	<p>No negative impacts identified at this initial high-level stage.</p> <p>All members of the community, including this protected group, should benefit from the outcomes described in the Corporate Strategy. (Provision of additional affordable homes, new employment opportunities, more vibrant town centres and better green spaces etc). Care will of course be needed to ensure that delivery of the strategic objectives does not unwittingly introduce unintended consequences for some groups and that change is effective for all target groups.</p>	□	□	☒

<p><b>Race and ethnicity</b></p>	<p>No negative impacts identified at this initial high-level stage.</p> <p>All members of the community, including this protected group, should benefit from the outcomes described in the Corporate Strategy. (Provision of additional affordable homes, new employment opportunities, more vibrant town centres and better green spaces etc). Care will of course be needed to ensure that delivery of the strategic objectives does not unwittingly introduce unintended consequences for some groups and that change is effective for all target groups.</p> <p>Since this protected group includes Gypsies and travellers, particular attention will need to be given to their housing needs since traditional housing growth is unlikely to be of similar benefit to this group as it is to the wider population.</p> <p>The Corporate Strategy can be made available in other languages to assist those customers whose first language is not English.</p>			
<p><b>Religion or belief</b></p>	<p>No negative impacts identified at this initial high-level stage.</p> <p>All members of the community, including this protected group, should benefit from the outcomes described in the Corporate Strategy. (Provision of additional affordable homes, new employment opportunities, more vibrant town centres and better green spaces etc). Care will of course be needed to ensure that delivery of the strategic objectives does not unwittingly introduce unintended consequences for some groups and that change is effective for all target groups.</p>			

<b>Sex (Gender)</b>	<p>No negative impacts identified at this initial high-level stage.</p> <p>All members of the community, including this protected group, should benefit from the outcomes described in the Corporate Strategy. (Provision of additional affordable homes, new employment opportunities, more vibrant town centres and better green spaces etc). Care will of course be needed to ensure that delivery of the strategic objectives does not unwittingly introduce unintended consequences for some groups and that change is effective for all target groups.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	<p>No negative impacts identified at this initial high-level stage.</p> <p>All members of the community, including this protected group, should benefit from the outcomes described in the Corporate Strategy. (Provision of additional affordable homes, new employment opportunities, more vibrant town centres and better green spaces etc). Care will of course be needed to ensure that delivery of the strategic objectives does not unwittingly introduce unintended consequences for some groups and that change is effective for all target groups.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Other, e.g. carers, veterans, homeless, low income, rurality/isolation, etc.</b>	<p>No negative impacts identified at this initial high-level stage.</p> <p>All members of the community, including this protected group, should benefit from the outcomes described in the Corporate Strategy. (Provision of additional affordable homes, new employment opportunities, more vibrant town centres and better green spaces etc). Care will of course be needed to ensure that delivery of the strategic objectives does not unwittingly introduce unintended consequences for some groups and that change is effective for all target groups.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

	<p>The Corporate Strategy contains a specific objective to reduce homelessness and rough sleeping which should of course have a positive impact on those in that position or in danger of becoming so.</p> <p>Although not unique to the Corporate Strategy, the Council supports the Somerset Armed Forces Covenant to ensure veterans are treated fairly and not disadvantaged. This is a cross-cutting commitment.</p> <p>The objective to enable more of our services to be available on-line, whilst preserving other methods of contact, should be more convenient to e-enabled customers with caring responsibilities and those located some distance from the Council's offices and avoid them having to make journeys to the council's offices.</p> <p>SWT residents have the lowest number of households with access to a car or van in Somerset. The objective to work with partners and service providers to encourage greater provision of public transport across the district should have a positive impact on those experiencing rural isolation.</p>			
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<p><b>Negative outcomes action plan</b> Where you have ascertained that there will potentially be negative outcomes, you are required to mitigate the impact of these. Please detail below the actions that you intend to take.</p>				
Action taken/to be taken	Date	Person responsible	How will it be monitored?	Action complete
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>



**If negative impacts remain, please provide an explanation below.**

**Completed by:** Paul Harding

**Date** 02/09/2019



# Somerset West and Taunton Council

## SWT Executive – 8 October 2019

### Financial Monitoring – Delegated Authority for HRA Capital Programme

This matter is the responsibility of Cllr Ross Henley, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources

Report Author: Emily Collacott (Finance Business Partner)

#### 1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 An update on the projected outturn financial position of the Council for the financial year 2019/20 (as at 31 July 2019) was provided to the Executive meeting on 18 September 2019. This report seeks approval for the delegated authority to approve changes to the budgeted spend for all of the HRA capital schemes, whilst remaining within the approved capital programme for 2019/20
- 1.2 Monitoring the budget is an important part of the Council's performance management framework.

#### 2 Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that Full Council to approve the Housing Director / Head of Function, in consultation with the Housing Portfolio Holder, to have delegated authority to approve changes to the budgeted spend for all of the HRA capital schemes, whilst remaining within the approved capital programme for 2019/20. The reason for this is help address flexible delivery of the programme in year.

#### 3 Risk Assessment

Risk Matrix

Description	Likelihood	Impact	Overall
That the Authority overspends against the approved budget	3	4	12
<i>Mitigated by - Regular budget monitoring reports are produced and managers actively manage the budgets under their responsibility</i>	1	4	4

Risk Scoring Matrix

Likelihood	5		4		3		2		1	
	Almost Certain	Low (5)	Medium (10)	High (15)	Very High (20)	Very High (25)	High (16)	Very High (20)	Medium (12)	High (15)
4	Likely	Low (4)	Medium (8)	Medium (12)	High (16)	Very High (20)	Very High (25)	High (16)	Very High (20)	High (15)
3	Possible	Low (3)	Low (6)	Medium (9)	Medium (12)	High (15)	High (15)	Medium (12)	High (15)	High (15)
2	Unlikely	Low (2)	Low (4)	Low (6)	Medium (8)	Medium (10)	Medium (10)	Medium (8)	Medium (10)	Medium (10)
1	Rare	Low (1)	Low (2)	Low (3)	Low (4)	Low (5)	Low (5)	Low (4)	Low (5)	Low (5)

	1	2	3	4	5
	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	Catastrophic
	<b>Impact</b>				

<b>Likelihood of risk occurring</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Description (chance of occurrence)</b>
1. Very Unlikely	May occur in exceptional circumstances	< 10%
2. Slight	Is unlikely to, but could occur at some time	10 – 25%
3. Feasible	Fairly likely to occur at same time	25 – 50%
4. Likely	Likely to occur within the next 1-2 years, or occurs occasionally	50 – 75%
5. Very Likely	Regular occurrence (daily / weekly / monthly)	> 75%

#### **4 Background and Full details of the Report**

- 4.1 Regular monitoring of financial information is a key element in the Council's Performance Management Framework. Crucially it enables remedial action to be taken in response to significant budget variances, some of which may be unavoidable. It also provides the opportunity to assess any consequent impact on reserves and the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan.
- 4.2 The Council's forecast end of year financial position for revenue and capital expenditure as at 31 July 2019 for the Council's General Fund (GF) and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was reported to Scrutiny on 4 September 2019 and Executive on 18 September 2019.
- 4.3 Executive request Full Council to approve the Housing Director / Head of Function, in consultation with the Housing Portfolio Holder, to have delegated authority to approve changes to the budgeted spend for all of the HRA capital schemes, whilst remaining within the approved capital programme for 2019/20. The reason for this is help address flexible delivery of the programme in year. Any changes to spend will be updated through the budget monitoring updates to Scrutiny and Executive.

#### **5 Links to Corporate Aims / Priorities**

- 5.1 The financial performance of the Council underpins the delivery of corporate priorities and therefore all Corporate Aims.

#### **6 Finance / Resource Implications**

- 6.1 Contained within the body of the report.

#### **7 Legal Implications**

- 7.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

**Democratic Path:**

- **Full Council – 8 October 2019**

**Reporting Frequency: one-off**

**List of Appendices**


**Contact Officers**

Name	Emily Collacott
Direct Dial	01823 218742
Email	<a href="mailto:e.collacott@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk">e.collacott@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk</a>

Name	Paul Fitzgerald
Direct Dial	01823 217557
Email	<a href="mailto:p.fitzgerald@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk">p.fitzgerald@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk</a>

Name	Kerry Prisco
Direct Dial	01823 218758
Email	<a href="mailto:k.prisco@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk">k.prisco@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk</a>





**POLITICAL ALLOCATION – October 2019**

	Totals	Liberal Democrats (LD) 32	Independent + Green (I+G) 15	Conservative (Con) 9	Labour (Lab) 3
% based on current membership of 59	100	54.24 (54)	25.42 (26)	15.25 (15)	5.08 (5)
Committee Seats	56	30.37 (30)	14.23 (14)	8.54 (9)	2.84 (3)
<b>Committee Allocation</b>					
Committee	No on Committee	LD <b>30</b>	I+G <b>14</b>	Con <b>9</b>	Lab <b>3</b>
Scrutiny	15	8.03 (8)	3.75 (4)	2.41 (2)	0.80 (1)
Audit, Governance & Standards	11	5.89 (6)	2.75 (3)	1.76 (2)	0.58 (0)
Planning	15	8.03 (8)	3.75 (4)	2.41 (2)	0.80 (1)
Licensing	15	8.03 (8)	3.75 (4)	2.41 (2)	0.80 (1)
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>
		0	+1	-1	0

Committee seat allocation based on number on Committee divide by total seats multiplied by Committee seats per party

In terms of seat allocation on the Committee the roundings mean that discussion will need to take place between the Conservatives and Independents and Greens over one committee seat.



## Councillor Appointments to Committees

<p><b>Scrutiny Committee = 15 seats</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cllr Sue Buller (LD)</li> <li>2. Cllr Dixie Darch (LD)</li> <li>3. Cllr John Hassall (LD)</li> <li>4. Cllr Sue Lees (LD)</li> <li>5. Cllr Hazel Prior-Sankey (LD)</li> <li>6. Cllr Phil Stone (LD)</li> <li>7. Cllr Danny Wedderkopp (LD)</li> <li>8. Cllr Keith Wheatley (LD)</li> <li>9. Cllr Gwil Wren (ING)</li> <li>10. Cllr ..... (ING)</li> <li>11. Cllr ..... (ING)</li> <li>12. Cllr ..... (ING or Con)*</li> <li>13. Cllr ..... (Con)</li> <li>14. Cllr ..... (Con)</li> <li>15. Cllr Libby Lisgo (Lab)</li> </ol>	<p><b>Audit, Governance and Standards Committee = 11 seats (plus 2 Independent people and 2 Town and Parish Council representatives)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cllr Sue Buller (LD)</li> <li>2. Cllr Lee Baker (LD)</li> <li>3. Cllr Simon Coles (LD)</li> <li>4. Cllr Dixie Darch (LD)</li> <li>5. Cllr Caroline Ellis (LD)</li> <li>6. Cllr Sarah Wakefield (LD)</li> <li>7. Cllr ..... (ING)</li> <li>8. Cllr .....(ING)</li> <li>9. Cllr .....(ING or Con)*</li> <li>10. Cllr .....(Con)</li> <li>11. Cllr .....(Con)</li> <li>12. A. Elder, Independent Person</li> <li>13. Vacant, Independent Person</li> <li>14. B. Williams, Town &amp; Parish Representative</li> <li>15. Vacancy, Town &amp; Parish Representative</li> </ol>
<p><b>Planning Committee = 15 seats</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cllr Simon Coles (LD)</li> <li>2. Cllr Sue Buller (LD)</li> <li>3. Cllr Ed Firmin (LD)</li> <li>4. Cllr Marcia Hill (LD)</li> <li>5. Cllr Martin Hill (LD)</li> <li>6. Cllr Mark Lithgow (LD)</li> <li>7. Cllr Simon Nicholls (LD)</li> <li>8. Cllr Ray Tully (LD)</li> <li>9. Cllr .....(ING)</li> <li>10. Cllr .....(ING)</li> <li>11. Cllr .....(ING)</li> <li>12. Cllr .....(ING or Con)*</li> <li>13. Cllr .....(Con)</li> <li>14. Cllr .....(Con)</li> <li>15. Cllr Brenda Weston (Lab)</li> </ol>	<p><b>Licensing Committee = 15 seats</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cllr Sarah Wakefield (LD)</li> <li>2. Cllr Caroline Ellis (LD)</li> <li>3. Cllr Marcia Hill (LD)</li> <li>4. Cllr Sue Lees (LD)</li> <li>5. Cllr Mark Lithgow (LD)</li> <li>6. Cllr Martin Peters (LD)</li> <li>7. Cllr Ray Tully (LD)</li> <li>8. Cllr .....(LD)</li> <li>9. Cllr .....(ING)</li> <li>10. Cllr .....(ING)</li> <li>11. Cllr .....(ING)</li> <li>12. Cllr .....(ING or Con)*</li> <li>13. Cllr .....(Con)</li> <li>14. Cllr .....(Con)</li> <li>15. Cllr Libby Lisgo (Lab)</li> </ol>

\*In terms of seat allocation on the Committee the roundings mean that discussion will need to take place between the Conservatives and Independents/Greens over one committee seat.







## **AN ARMED FORCES COVENANT**

BETWEEN

SOMERSET WEST AND TAUNTON COUNCIL

AND

THE ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY IN SOMERSET WEST AND TAUNTON

**We, the undersigned, agree to work and act together to  
honour the Armed Forces Covenant.**

## Signatories

Signed:

Name:

Position Held:

**Signed on behalf of Somerset West and Taunton Council**

Signed:

Name:

Position Held:

**Signed on behalf of the Armed Forces  
Community**

## **SECTION 1: PARTICIPANTS**

1.1 This Armed Forces Covenant is made between:

The serving and former members of the Armed Forces and their families working and residing in Somerset West and Taunton.

And

Somerset West and Taunton Council

## **SECTION 2: PRINCIPLES OF THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT**

2.1 The Armed Forces Covenant is a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its local Armed Forces Community. This Covenant encompasses the moral obligation between the Nation, the Government and the Armed Forces, at the local level.

2.2 The Armed Forces Covenant is based upon two key principles:

- The Armed Forces community should not face disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services.
- Special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most such as the injured and the bereaved.

2.3 The purpose of this Covenant is to encourage support for the Armed Forces Community working and residing in Somerset West and Taunton and to recognise and remember the sacrifices made by members of this Armed Forces Community, particularly those who have given the most. This includes in-Service and ex-Service personnel their families and widow(er)s in Somerset West and Taunton

2.4 For Somerset West and Taunton Council and partner organisations, the Community Covenant presents an opportunity to bring their knowledge, experience and expertise to bear on the provision of help and advice to members of the Armed Forces Community. It also presents an opportunity to build upon existing good work on other initiatives such as the Welfare Pathway.

2.5 For the Armed Forces community, the Covenant encourages the integration of Service life into civilian life and encourages members of the Armed Forces community to help their local community.

## SECTION 3: OBJECTIVES AND GENERAL INTENTIONS

### Aims of the Covenant

3.1 The Armed Forces Covenant defines the enduring, general principles that should govern the relationship between the Nation, the Government and the Armed Forces community

3.2 It aims to encourage all parties within a community to offer support to the local Armed Forces community and make it easier for Service personnel, families and veterans to access the help and support available from the MOD, from statutory providers and from the Charitable and Voluntary Sector. These organisations already work together in partnership at local level.

3.3 The scheme is intended to be a two-way arrangement and the Armed Forces community are encouraged to do as much as they can to support their community and promote activity which integrates the Service community into civilian life.

## SECTION 4: Measures

4.1 *Detail regarding specific measures to be put in place could be inserted here, e.g. Civil/Military Partnership Boards, Welfare Pathway, etc*

## CONTACT PERSONNEL AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS

MOD Armed Forces Covenant Team

Email address: [covenant-mailbox@mod.gov.uk](mailto:covenant-mailbox@mod.gov.uk)  
Address: Armed Forces Covenant Team  
Zone A, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Ministry of Defence  
Main Building  
Whitehall  
London  
SW1A 2HB

In-Service representative(s)

Contact Name:  
Title:  
Telephone:  
Address:

Somerset West and Taunton Council

Contact Name:  
Title:  
Telephone:  
Fax:  
Address:



## **THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT**

An Enduring Covenant Between

The People of the United Kingdom  
Her Majesty's Government

– and –

All those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces of  
the Crown

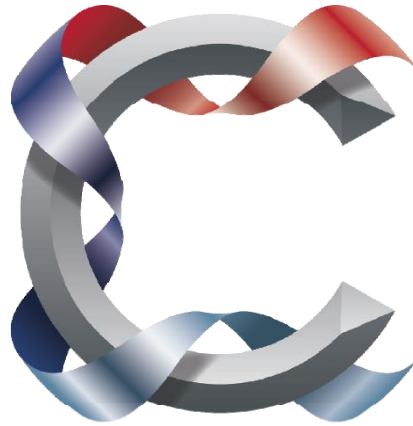
And their Families

The first duty of Government is the defence of the realm. Our Armed Forces fulfil that responsibility on behalf of the Government, sacrificing some civilian freedoms, facing danger and, sometimes, suffering serious injury or death as a result of their duty. Families also play a vital role in supporting the operational effectiveness of our Armed Forces. In return, the whole nation has a moral obligation to the members of the Naval Service, the Army and the Royal Air Force, together with their families. They deserve our respect and support, and fair treatment.

Those who serve in the Armed Forces, whether Regular or Reserve, those who have served in the past, and their families, should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services. Special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most such as the injured and the bereaved.

This obligation involves the whole of society: it includes voluntary and charitable bodies, private organisations, and the actions of individuals in supporting the Armed Forces. Recognising those who have performed military duty unites the country and demonstrates the value of their contribution. This has no greater expression than in upholding this Covenant.





# **Community Covenant**

## **AN ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY COVENANT**

BETWEEN

SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL, REPRESENTATIVES OF THE  
CHARITABLE AND VOLUNTARY SECTORS,  
THE CIVILIAN COMMUNITY OF SOMERSET

AND

THE ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY IN SOMERSET

**We, the undersigned, agree to work and act together to  
honour the Armed Forces Community Covenant.**

## Signatories

**Date:**

Following the merger of Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset Council in 2019:

### **Signed on behalf of Somerset West and Taunton Council**

Name:

Name:

Position Held:

Position Held:

Signed:

Signed:

Name:

Name:

Position Held:

Position Held:

Signed:

Signed:

## **Council Meeting – 8 October 2019**

### **Report of Councillor Federica Smith-Roberts – Leader of the Council**

#### **1. Coal Orchard**

1.1 I am very pleased to say that Midas Construction began work on the Coal Orchard site at the end of August. The detailed plans to regenerate one of Taunton's prime riverside quarters were approved in September 2018, and preparatory work on the site started in spring 2019.

1.2 The plans include a mix of apartments, retail, workspace, and restaurants; and incorporate a riverfront plaza with a stepped terrace to make the most of its position on the River Tone.

#### **2. Emergency Services Day**

2.1 On 6 September, SWT marked national Emergency Services Day with a flag raising ceremony at Deane House. The flag was also flown at West Somerset House, Williton.

2.2 The ceremony at Deane House was hosted by the Mayor of Taunton, Cllr Francesca Smith and the Chair of SWT, Cllr Hazel Prior-Sankey. They were joined by representatives from local emergency service organisations including the Police, Ambulance and Fire Brigade.

2.3 National Emergency Services Day takes place on 9th September every year. Two minutes silence is held at 9am (the 9th hour of the 9th day of the 9th month) to remember emergency services personnel killed as a result of their duties.

#### **3. Engagement**

3.1 On 17 September the Chief Executive and I spent the day visiting sites in Exmoor, such as the Dulverton Weir and Leat and meeting with officers of Exmoor National Park. Again, as part of my visit I met with District and Town Councillors to hear any concerns and issues they wished to raise in their respective areas.

3.2 I have been meeting with more local businesses such as Sangha House and I also met with Go Create, who have some very exciting ideas for Taunton Live 2020.

3.3 At the beginning of September I met with Sue Mountstephens, Police & Crime Commissioner and had a look around Police HQ, Portishead, which included a look around their control centre. I also met with the Community

Council for Somerset and the Citizens Advice Bureau and was pleased to attend the PCC and Police Public Forum Event in Minehead and the Somerset County Scout Council Annual General Meeting.

- 3.4 On 10 September, I attended a GWR drop-in session in London, along with Cllr Mike Rigby, Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning, to learn about some significant changes to their timetable. On 15 December this year GWR will be making the biggest change to their timetable in 40 years, with 75% of services changing. There will be over 40,000 more seats every day, with faster and more frequent services.

#### **4 Service Delivery**

##### **4.1 Recruitment of new Directors**

- 4.2 A review of organisational requirements and priorities identified the needs to focus and structure delivery against four key areas – Housing, Economic Development, Strategic Partnership and Climate Change. Recruitment for these roles began at the beginning of September and the closing date was 23 September. The interviews will be held later this month and early November.

Councillor Federica Smith-Roberts

## **Council Meeting – 8 October 2019**

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

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

Among the high profile topics covered have been:-

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



## **Council Meeting – 8 October 2019**

### **Report of Councillor Chris Booth – Community**

Time has truly flown on since Full Council in July. I continue to learn more and more about my portfolio and I have recently attended numerous organisation AGMs in September where I've had the chance to meet key partners in our efforts to build a better community in SWT.

I appreciate the hard work and progress our locality teams are making across the district and I would like to thank them for their feedback.

#### **Rough-Sleeping**

I went out with the Streetwise Team at the beginning of August to get an insight into the current situation in Taunton and Wellington regarding the amount of rough sleepers (13 were counted). This will expand out into Minehead, Williton and Watchet going forward.

The Streetwise Team has been working with partners including the Police, ARC, Open Door, Somerset County Council, the health sector and other agencies to support rough sleepers and address the issues of concern.

The Council has been using money awarded from the Government's 'Rough Sleepers Initiative Fund' to pay for specialist support to settle rough sleepers into permanent homes. It secured an extra 15 bed spaces with private landlords for people who are homeless, or have a history of rough sleeping.

The Streetwise Team have also set up monthly visits from the award-winning charity Dogs on the Streets to provide veterinary care, equipment and advice to the homeless community with dogs.

It operates a Diverted Giving scheme which means that people can donate money to the local charity Open Door which uses the cash to provide meals, showers, laundry and support to rough sleepers from its base in Mount Street.

#### **Sangha House**

Cllr Smith-Roberts and I both attended a meeting with Andy and Denise Sprigg who run Sangha House in Taunton.

Sangha House is a health and wellbeing centre that promotes and facilitates activities from yoga to therapy. Both put forward the idea that Taunton joins the likes of Plymouth, Liverpool, Brighton, etc in becoming a 'City of Compassion'.

The cities and communities that sign on to become Compassionate Cities and Communities have often begun their work by identifying the issues that are troubling the community and need to be addressed through compassionate action. For example, a community may discover a significant issue related to social justice for women, for immigrants, or for some other marginalized group. Other communities may want to address issues of drug use, gang violence, the lack of equitable healthcare, or the effects of environmental racism. Others may decide

to work to provide empowerment to youth or to educate their communities about the need for compassion in addressing environmental issues.

The Charter's Compassionate Communities program is not a certificate program that offers a seal of approval, nor does it subscribe to a single definition of a Compassionate Community. Instead, the Charter invites communities of all sizes to bring compassion to life in practical, specific ways through compassion-driven actions in neighbourhoods, businesses, schools and colleges, healthcare, the arts, local government, peace groups, environmental advocacy groups, and faith congregations. Some officer time will be spent from late October onwards looking into whether this is appropriate for Taunton and what benefits this can bring.

## **Fire Consultation**

On behalf of the Executive and I am sure all Members, I would like to say a big thank you to Chris Hall who led an excellent members' discussion on the topic of cuts to the Fire Service. Those who attended were able to participate in a lively and passionate debate, and I believe everyone who attended learnt something new.

## **Somerset Community Council**

Cllr Smith-Roberts and I met with Keely Rudd, CEO of Somerset Community Council. This is a longstanding body who work to support local organisations, community groups and individuals.

One of their biggest attributes is providing Village Agents who assist in signposting residents to the right source of help or even provide the help themselves! These agents first appeared in 2012 as a pilot for 5, now there are 57 Agents with a multiple set of expertise from Carer Agents to Mental Health Agents (2 out of the 5 of these are currently working in West Somerset).

## **Wivi Partnership**

I would like to thank Cllr Blaker for his invitation to meet the incredible team at Wivi Partnership. There are two arms to this Partnership:

- First is the famous Wivi Link - a transport service which helps those in the rural part of west Taunton Deane get where they need to go for a small cost, particularly those who are elderly or disabled.
- Second is the more traditional Partnership role they play from hosting police surgeries to helping to set up community events.

This council currently provides the Partnership just under £30K a year, mostly from the Community Grants Budget. While I shall be sitting down with officers to discuss our grants, etc going forward, I struggle to see how the success of the Wivi Partnership and Wivi Link means that this isn't worth every penny.

## **WSOA Partnership**

As I explained in my first report in July, I now sit on the West Somerset Opportunity Area Board - a partnership bringing together relevant stakeholders with an aim to improve education and opportunity in West Somerset after West Somerset was ranked bottom in the country for social mobility.

- Our recent meeting provided positive feedback on progress being made by schools to improve results as well as local organisations who provide educational opportunities locally.
- Some of the biggest challenges are the three tier system in West Somerset which the Government does not do enough to provide for.
- Attracting high calibre teachers to West Somerset. The Board will be seeking ways that we can sell West Somerset to prospective teachers and making sure our young people get the best education possible from teachers who want to stay in the community. There has been concerns over turnover of staff at schools across the area.
- The funding from the Government or the OAs is due to end next year. The Board is very focused on making sure that there is a legacy network to make sure that the significant progress made is not left to decline. This will likely require a continued partnership to monitor progress being made.

## **Hinkley Money**

I had a discussion with the Chair of the Somerset Community Foundation, who also sits alongside me on the Hinkley Point C Grants Board. I've asked him to put forward for discussion about how we appeal to further organisations in this district. While it's understandable that Sedgemoor takes a large portion of the money, having looked back through recent bids, there seems to have been a decline in bids coming in from the former West Somerset area and I don't see why the Taunton Deane area can't also pick up some funding. I implore all councillors to speak to their parish councils, local organisations, etc and if you feel that impact can be demonstrated then I ask you to bid. Please speak to me or Lisa Redston for more information.

## **CCTV**

Verbal Update - Hopefully a draft review should be in place by the time of Full Council. If there is no time to give a report, an update will be sent to members.

## **Taunton Locality**

- The Localities Engagement Leads in Taunton will be approaching retailers and businesses in the Town Centre to invite them to join the Park and Ride Saver Scheme. Businesses will be given the opportunity to offer discounts or special offers to attract shoppers and visitors into the town centre via the Park and Ride services. The offers will be promoted widely and will be available to those who present their park and ride ticket at participating businesses.

- Consultation with businesses in the proposed Business Improvement District zone continues and a Business Plan is being developed. A BID is a way for businesses in a defined area to decide, fund and agree collectively on projects and initiatives that they want to be delivered in their area. Each business with a rateable value of £5000 or more will be able to vote 'for' or 'against' a BID in early 2020. Further information can be found at [www.tauntonbid.co.uk](http://www.tauntonbid.co.uk)

### **Wellington & Deane Locality**

- Engagement Leads for Wellington have facilitated the set-up of a Graveyard Gardeners group for the cemetery there. The group tend to and maintain graves that no one visits.
- A joint survey, conducted by Wellington Engagement Leads, Wellington Police teams, Court Fields School and WTC to help shape the future of Wellington Park for all users has just closed. Results will be analysed and published during October.

From the intro to the survey: There are some wonderful parks and recreational spaces in Wellington and several organisations including Somerset West and Taunton Council, Avon and Somerset Police, Wellington Town Council and Court Fields School amongst others, would like to know what you think about them and even what you would like to change. We cannot promise we can act on all ideas but your responses will help shape our plans for the future.

- Engagement Leads have been working with Cotford St Luke Parish Council to support the new Parish Clerk solve a number of issues, including maintenance of land currently in the hands of receivers, section 106 queries, and inputting into the annual village survey to assess where the Council can help deliver projects that will arise from the feedback. This has been a great piece of relationship building, and one that the team will be replicating with other PCs.

### **West Somerset Locality**

To be provided.

### **And Finally...**

I stated in my last report that I wish to end every report on a positive. I believe a special mention should go to Ken and Pauline Sellick of Stogumber for their incredible wildflower field. Visitors to the field were able to make a donation to the Charity, *Elliot's Touch*, which is the charity they set up in 2015 after losing their 13-month-old son to mitochondrial disease, a rare genetic condition, and cardiomyopathy, a condition which affects the heart.

Amazingly, they raised over £6000!

# Council meeting 8 October 2019

## Report of Councillor Ross Henley – Corporate Resources

### 1. Introduction

1.1 Charter trustees: in March 2018 the former Taunton Deane Borough Council approved a recommendation to carry out a Community Governance Review of the Unparished Area of Taunton. The Governance Manager is currently developing a timetable for this work and it will be discussed by the Chartered Trustees at their meeting on 2 October. I will work with the Chartered Trustees and Officers to take this forward.

1.2 The new audio visual equipment has been installed in the JMR at Deane House (see 11.1 below) and this will enable the live streaming of meetings in the future.

1.3 Wellington community office: I have met with Cllr's Wheatley and Lithgow on-site and talked to staff and the Customer Service Manager on site as well. I have an aspiration for an improved service for local residents here and am now launching a review of this facility to see what we can do to improve service at the Wellington community office. I want to involve all members, the town council and partner organisations as well in this process. I hope that whatever we achieve through this process we can use a template for services across the District also.

1.4 Deane helpline: I have visited the Deane helpline staff at Kilkenny to meet staff and see for myself the great support this service delivers to vulnerable people and their family and friends.

1.5 I want this Council to become a living wage employer and I will work with Officers to look at the implications of this.

Regarding the areas which sit in my portfolio, I can offer the following details:

### 2. Customer - overview

2.1 The priority remains on stabilising service delivery, but also starting to progress process improvements e.g. timesheets, purchased orders. Recruitment is now largely complete and we are focused on training new staff. There are still some backlogs but plans are progressing well to address them. The team is looking at staffing and budget requirements for next year.

### 3. Customer Service - Recruitment

3.1 Our recent recruitment run has been very successful with four new Customer Champions joining us over the last two weeks. They are initially being

trained on Council Tax and the Repairs service to improve resilience in these two areas and will be trained in all areas over the coming months.

3.2 David Thorne has joined us as a Lead and will shortly be taking responsibility for managing the Freedom of Information requests in much the same way that Jess McVie manages the complaints process.

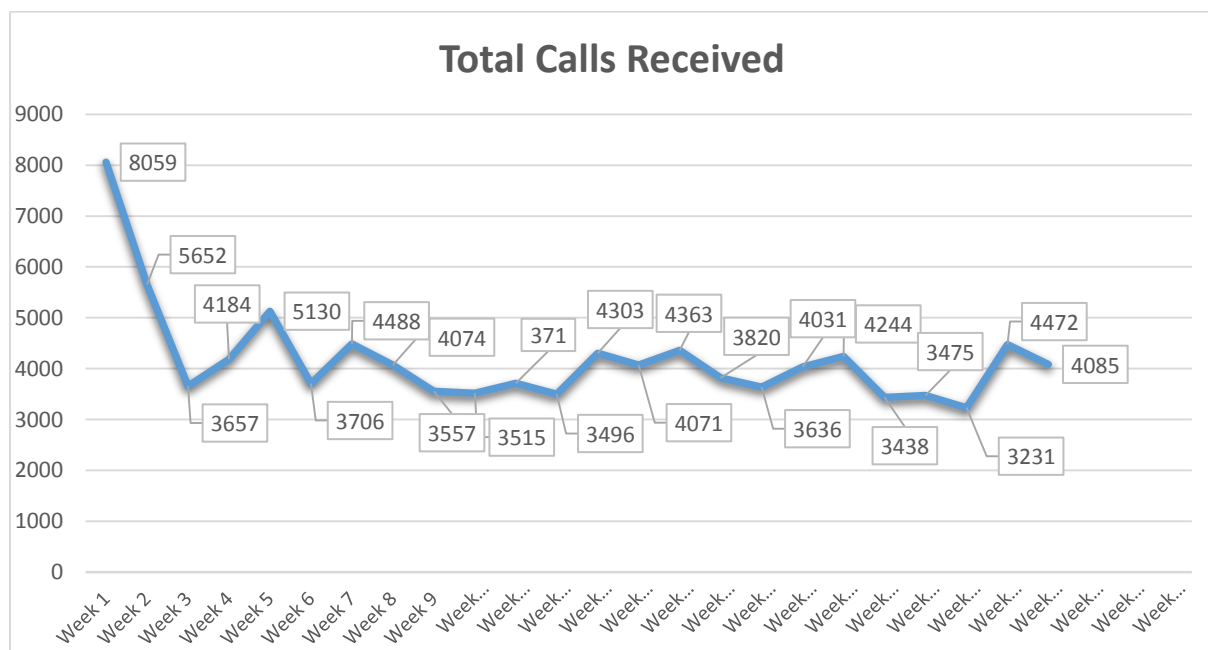
3.3 This brings Customer Services to full complement for the first time since April.

#### 4. Customer Service - Performance

4.1 Customer Services has achieved a further improvement in performance in September but as expected the delivery of summons letters in July August and the impact of summer holidays had an effect on performance levels.

	<i>Calls</i>	<i>Abandonment Rate</i>	<i>Average Wait Time</i>
April	23,666	41%	3 minutes 49 seconds
May	18,841	18%	2 minutes 58 seconds
June	15,026	8%	1 minute 5 seconds
July	18,284	12%	1 minute 51 seconds
August	16,025	18%	2 minutes 10 seconds
September*	10,909	12%	1 minute 38 seconds

\*Eight days of results still due in for September



#### 5. Customer Service - Satisfaction

5.1 The pace of incoming complaints has slowed and the number of compliments has increased. These are being managed effectively by the Customer Services team and significant progress has been made in improving response times, Freedom of Information requests will be managed by the Customer Services team following the same model and requests through Social Media will also be handled by Customer Champions as part of our commitment to the customer from 1<sup>st</sup> August.

## **6. Income**

6.1 The Income function is responsible for bringing in revenue to the council – including Council Tax, Business Rates, rents and miscellaneous income (approx. £100m). Responsible for year-end process for the council housing stock, administering Right to Buy function, cashiers function, setting up, amending and processing Direct Debit payments in line with BACs guidelines.

6.2 The team is currently involved in the Lean process review for Rents income & will look to extend this learning to other areas.

6.3 We have now recommenced the arrears recovery processes for miscellaneous income, and reduced the processing time for the Business Rate and Council Tax banking control functions to under a week. We have also progressed our application for paperless direct debit and the relevant team members are now qualified to administer this.

## **7. Operational Support**

7.1 The operational support function provides administrative & technical support to the wider organisation in areas such as procurement, supplier payments, timesheet input, invoice raising, Freedom of Information, purchase orders, travel & meeting requests, bookings etc.

7.2 Getting the team fully resourced has been challenging, but we now have everyone in place & training is progressing well.

7.3 We have now cleared a backlog of payments to suppliers and now processing within 8 days.

7.4 We have undertaken a process review of the procure-to-pay functions and have identified a leaner process, which is being implemented.

## **8. Benefits**

8.1 The Benefits function is responsible for assessing & paying claims for Housing Benefit, our local Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Discretionary Housing Payments. The prompt assessment and payment of benefit is key to



supporting vulnerable customers, minimising debt problems and maximising income for the authority. The service is increasingly impacted by the gradual implementation of Universal Credit for working age claimants.

8.2 Benefit claims and changes of circumstances continue to be processed quickly and within the statutory timeframes.

8.3 We are currently reviewing and looking to improve our online e-claims form.

## **9. Revenues**

9.1 The Revenues function is responsible for the billing and collection of Council Tax and Business Rates which includes assessing entitlement to discounts, exemptions and reliefs. Prompt and accurate billing is critical to minimising debt problems for customers and maximising our income (we currently bill £99m for Council Tax and £60m for Business Rates).

9.2 Good progress is being made in clearing the backlog of changes of circumstances work items in Revenues and we are on track to be up to date in early October. At this point we will be able to release some temporary staff and start to pick up activities we have had to suspend whilst focussing on the backlog.

9.3 The in-year Council Tax collection rate remains on target, but the Business Rate figures remain under target. We are keeping the Business Rates collection rate under close scrutiny. But it is important to remember that Business Rate collection targets can be heavily impacted by changes to the debit payable or late payment by a small number of high value accounts.

9.4 The normal recovery and enforcement processes are underway and we are actively chasing those who will not pay and assisting those who cannot pay. We have identified a backlog of old debt where enforcement action has failed and are in the process of planning how to address this.

## **10. People Managers (including HR)**

10.1 To help us understand how staff are feeling in the new Council, the People team will be running a staff engagement survey and also an emotional wellbeing survey (also known as a stress survey) in the next quarter.

## **11. Governance**

11.1 The Audio Visual kit is being fitted in the JMR Room the week commencing 16<sup>th</sup> September and in the West Somerset House Chamber on 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> October. The Governance Team will receive training on how to use the

new kit following the installation. Once officers have had training, a couple of sessions will be done for Councillors before it is fully operational.

11.2 Elections – there are two by-elections taking place for the Vivary Ward and Norton Fitzwarren and Staplegrove Ward as well as the Creech St Michael Neighbourhood Plan referendum. We are also mindful of the fact that a General Election may be on the cards and there may be a need to divert resources from the team across to Elections if and when it is called

11.3 The annual canvas is continuing and any amendments that come through are being updated on the Electoral Register.

11.4 The Governance Team will shortly be asking Councillors to complete a survey on training and development. Councillors will then be invited to have a one to one Personal Development Plan meeting to discuss any training and development needs.

11.5 A number of training sessions will be rolled out to Town and Parish Councils in the next couple of months on Standards, Register of Interests and other ethical standards issues.

## **12. Business Intelligence, Performance Management and Strategic Procurement**

12.1 Work continues to develop a full reporting infrastructure for Firmstep. A new BI specialist will join the team in late September which will provide the much needed capacity to progress this work. Detailed and specific analysis has been undertaken for services where a back log of work has built up, and once processes have been improved, regular monitoring reports are being circulated to show the impact.

12.2 Key Performance indicators are being reported regularly to SLT, and a performance report for Quarter 1 has been to Scrutiny and Executive. In time, this will be supported by a suite of performance reports for all service areas.

12.3 The team have nearly finalised a list of all of the Council's statutory reporting requirements to ensure that we are compliant. Many returns have been completed over recent months, and a schedule for those to be submitted later in the year is being developed.

## **13. Technology**

13.1 The team continue to focus on service improvement but have recently had to focus on solving some infrastructure issues which caused the wifi to stop working. They are also updating corporate laptops to Windows 10 before security support ceases in January 2020.

## **14. Finance**

14.1 The Financial Strategy for 2020/21 to 2022/23 was approved by the Executive on 18 September. The Strategic Finance Advisor / S151 Officer led a Members Briefing on 9 September, providing an opportunity for all members to build their understanding of discuss the key factors within the Strategy. The Government recently announced the one-year Spending Round which will influence the amount of funding available for local government next year. The deferral of the Business Rates Reset in particular helps the Council's funding position in the short term, however we continue to face an ongoing financial challenge and need to ensure action is taken to balance the budget in future years. We continue to face uncertainty in our funding projections beyond next year, and will keep the Strategy under review and adapt to any further information that fundamentally changes our estimates and plans.

14.2 The Strategy includes establishing savings targets rising to £3m per year by 2022/23, and specific proposals will be developed through the budget process for consideration by Full Council in the Budget Report in February 2020. Of course, consultation with Members will take place during this process. Finance officers are currently working with managers and budget holders to update detailed budget estimates and an update will be presented to Scrutiny and Executive in the near future.

14.3 Grant Thornton are continuing their work on the audit of last year's Statement of Accounts for Taunton Deane Borough Council. It is anticipated the final audit findings report and opinion will be issued soon, in order that the final accounts can be presented to the Audit Governance and Standards Committee for approval.

## **15. Change**

15.1 The Change team are focusing on reviewing and improving processes across the organisation, as part of our review of what systems solutions might be appropriate to some of our work. Firmstep is one part of this work, however there are other systems which can help staff work more efficiently, and the key to this is improving processes initially. The work carried out on the Change of Circumstances process has led to a reduction in work backlog from 4500 cases to 1845, and the team are on track to clear this by mid October. These changes will also allow us to start reducing the additional staff numbers brought in for business resilience. We continue to look at ways to move to digital by default and encourage our customers to move to online self serve where possible.

# Council Meeting – 8 October 2019

## Report of Councillor Marcus Kravis – Economic Development

### Section 1 – Asset Management

**1.1** Estates Surveyors continue to provide specialist expertise and guidance on Commercial Investment's Special Projects, notably on developments at Coal Orchard and Firepool and Commercial acquisitions.

**1.2** Individual achievements for quarter to date include:

Successful conclusion of the Leisure Procurement exercise with Council's 5 Leisure Sites now managed by SLM (trading as Everyone Active) for the next 8 months and 10 years. This lengthy exercise has resulted in a commercially beneficial arrangement for the Council moving from a Council funding arrangement to a positive financial contractual agreement of significant benefit to the Council.

**1.3** Land at Seaward Way – Heads of Terms of lease to Snazaroo. Heads of Terms are being negotiated for the second unit, rent to be agreed. The parcel of land to be transferred to Magna now has agreed Planning Permission for 40 homes.

**1.4** Taunton Technology Park refurbishment is near to completion upon which Assets will execute an agreed lease with Novanta for occupation of a second building.

**1.5** Taunton Garden Town – The team continue to provide support in implementing the Garden Town status with focus on formalising the agreed terms of management of the Country Park in Monkton Heathfield with the relevant Parish Councils, inputting in to the Public Open Space Improvement Plan by way of upgrading street furniture and bus shelters by way of digital advertising.

**1.6** The programme to acquire additional Housing Revenue Account dwellings for social rent, in order to increase the Council's stock of Affordable Housing and to utilise additional Right to Buy receipts continues. Properties are acquired at market values in areas where the Council already holds stock. Since June, 8 purchases have been completed and a further 7 purchases where terms have been agreed.

### Section 2 – Major Projects

#### 2.1 Coal Orchard

- Start on site 27<sup>th</sup> August, with a Spring 2021 completion.

- Initial diversions and site security established and being monitored as the site settles in
- Hoarding to be completed w/c 23<sup>rd</sup> Sept ready for promotional material
- Petition lodged to reopen Riverside Path
- Two “meet the builder” sessions held, well attended by residents and traders
- Awaiting news from Homes England fund bid. “Shovel Ready” bid for HSF being prepared for 27<sup>th</sup> Sept, following encouragement from MHCLG.

## **2.2 Firepool**

- Acquisitions completed, asbestos surveys undertaken to allow demolition quotes to be completed. Utilities disconnected.
- 2x Exec Firepool strategy monthly meetings held
- Next report due for December 19
- Multi-disciplinary design team appointed (BDP) 8 week programme for initial draft of revised masterplan work
- Commercial and Residential agents appointed.
- Brief for multi-purpose venue with Exec for comments
- Plans for community engagement sessions (public facing) for October underway, details tbc.

## **2.3 Brewhouse**

- TTA to briefed members on their offering and request for additional revenue support 2<sup>nd</sup> September
- Full council decision 8<sup>th</sup> October

## **2.4 Reconstruction of Watchet East Quay**

Soil Investigation (by Solis Ltd) and Structural analysis (by Crouch Waterfall) are being undertaken to ascertain the current structural integrity of the marina, including the East Quay Wall. The results of this are due in late October. These will be reviewed by our Consulting Engineer, Pick Everard.

Following on from this an Option Analysis will be developed to present the results of the structural analysis and present Executive with options in order to make a decision on the level of maintenance/reconstruction that will be carried out.

We forecast a timeline of:

- 3 month 2 stage procurement of a main contractor
- 3 month design of wall solution, led by main contractor, supported with consulting engineer

- 6-9 month construction/maintenance period

The intention is that we will approach Executive this year to report an outline project budget and to request a fee for design. Design is the basis upon which we will appoint our contractor to ensure that the procured solution is deliverable. This is based upon a previous procurement exercise that did not achieve what it intended. We aim to achieve a well thought out, fully designed, fully costed solution that is deliverable by our chosen contractor.

## **2.5 Seaward Way**

We intend to commence construction on our half of the site in mid-October of the two light industrial units. We have appointed Gates consultants to manage the delivery of the scheme and Devon Contractors to construct. The build programme should conclude by early June next year. We are delivering shell and core units, allowing for leases to carry out their own internal fit out.

We are currently agreeing heads of terms with two local companies who intend to take leases. One of these have had support from us to design their fit out and we know they are very keen to take out a lease due to the time they have already invested so we expect the units to be occupied very shortly after completion.

On the other half of the site which also has planning authority delegated to the local planning officer, we remain with the intent to sell this land to Magna Housing so that they can develop 40 homes for affordable rent adjacent our own half of the site. We have prepared a contract for the sale of land to Magna. They are continuing their due diligence e.g. design, costing, funding, of their scheme and are seeking further funding to support scheme viability. We continue to work with Magna and support them in their aim to build out their part of the scheme. Timescales are very much dependant on them.

## **Section 3 – Economic Development and Inward Investment**

### **3.1 Economic Development Strategy commission**

- Good progress on the economic development strategy is being made. Over 20 1:1 key stakeholders interviews will have been completed by the first week of October and surveys despatched and returned.
- 4 workshops have been arranged – one internal staff workshop and three others in Taunton, Williton and Wellington between 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> October.
- Some of the initial findings of the stakeholder engagement and surveys will be shared with us towards the end of September and introduced at the workshops.

### **3.2 European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) bid for Digital Innovation Centre on Firepool**

- We are working with the County Council on submitting an Expression of Interest for capital funding to build the first phase of a digital innovation centre on Firepool. The Expression of Interest (EOI) will be submitted by the end of September, but there is no guarantee of success and if we do proceed, a more detailed business plan will need to be developed.

### **3.3 Climate change programme**

- The team are working with the County on two workstreams related to the Climate Change programme which include the Business and Industry and Transport workstreams.

### **3.4 Business Rates Pilot**

- Somerset was successful in its application to Government to act as a national pilot in 2019/20 for Business Rates Retention, with the Somerset Growth Board being identified as providing strategic oversight for the Economic Growth and Productivity part of the funding.
- The anticipated total gain generated is circa £4m and business cases have been developed and taken to the Somerset Growth Board for approval.
- Somerset West and Taunton have been on the steering group shaping and informing the intended plans and future calls for proposals which are likely to be launched in September 2019. The areas covered include contributions towards:
  - Business support and Innovation – start up, entrepreneurship and scale up
  - Supply chain and business clusters
  - Inward Investment
  - Enabling and unlocking growth and development
  - Skills and apprenticeships
- Final sign off is expected in Autumn 2019 with funding calls likely to be announced from November onwards.

### **3.5 Inward Investment**

#### **Customer relationship management system**

- A customer relationship management system (CRM) has been procured which will be embedded within our Council website, with a banner to direct businesses to. This is expected to be launched in early October and staff training has been arranged for the economic development team.
- This system will allow us to engage more effectively with businesses and capture details related to their growth intentions and issues and follow up actions.
- It will also host a property search function and web based commercial property register for any prospective investor to be able to search through.



Monthly updates of properties will be provided by local agents and developers, enabling us to handle any property enquiries in a streamlined and effective manner. 90% of council enquiries are attracted by a good quality commercial property register.

### **3.6 Businesses looking to invest in the District (inward investment)**

- Since June 2019 through engagement with agents/developers and intermediaries, a pipeline of 34 good quality inward investment enquiries has been received, including 6 foreign direct investment enquiries with a potential to create several hundred jobs if they are converted.
- Engagement has been made with the Department for International Trade (DIT), the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and Innovate UK to which has delivered:
  - 6 foreign direct investment enquiries for Somerset West & Taunton
  - access to DIT's pipeline of enquiries to pitch to more investors
  - export support and possible funding to our indigenous businesses to enable them to grow through exporting to new markets (Somerset has historically been largely overlooked by both DIT and Innovate UK)
  - joint working with the LEP to create a soft landing package to make it easier for investors to relocate to this area

### **3.7 We are making the most of our membership of Nuclear South West to:**

- Attract new inward investors to base themselves in Somerset West & Taunton on the back of their work at Hinkley Point C – 2 enquiries received so far.
- Provide the main contractors with information on the attractiveness of our area as a base for sub-contractors – costs provided showed locations in Somerset West & Taunton in a very favourable position.
- Work with local businesses to engage with the HPC project and pitch for contracts.

### **3.8 Business engagement with strategic businesses**

- We are engaging closely with key employers to better understand their current needs and priorities, help and/or signpost them to support available and create more and better jobs in the area.
- The first 5 visits of a new rolling programme have been undertaken as a result of which there has been assistance provided by the Council for 2 expansions/ relocations.

### **3.9 Affordable Employment land**

- The team is working on the development of the Somerset West and Taunton Local Development Order (LDO):

- Consultants have been successfully appointed after a competitive tender process to deliver a local authority wide LDO to provide small scale light industrial and office units for businesses, saving them time and money.
- The first draft report is expected early October 2019 and expected to be out for wider consultation during Autumn 2019.

### 3.10 Enterprising Minehead Update

- **Eastern Esplanade Development** – Phase One works started in March 2019. The developments include hard and soft landscaping work, two play areas, enhanced seating, planting, enhanced lighting and event space. The seafront enhancements have now been completed.

A proposal for Phase Two funding to roll out enhancements further east toward the Golf Course will be progressed this autumn. Pending bid decisions (expected over the winter), it is hoped the Phase Two enhancements can be developed in 2020 to include the following:

- Public realm enhancements to further section of seafront, new seating, enhanced lighting, landscaping, planting and roundel event space
  - Competition to refresh gabion open air gallery artwork
  - Support for a calendar of events
  - New beach activities and seafront esplanade pavement games
  - New eastern esplanade shelter (subject to funding/planning permission)
  - New event/notice board incorporated within existing shelter on seafront. (plus demolition of old Victorian event board in central plaza)
  - Minehead Bay branded artwork installations in poly carbonate to weather proof existing Edwardian shelters
  - Activity products / marketing
- **Artisan Markets** – these were held in 2018 and are continuing in 2019, running from Easter through to September. Feedback from visitors and stallholders has been really positive. This programme ran over a two year period and has now finished. Review of this scheme will be undertaken in the autumn to ascertain if the markets can continue without support.
  - **Guided Walk Ambassador Scheme** – 10 walks took place between March–Sept 2018 which exceeded expectations with over 70 people attending. Walks have continued throughout 2019. Details of guided walks can be found on [www.mineheadbay.co.uk](http://www.mineheadbay.co.uk). Guided walks will continue to be ongoing coordinated by the Minehead Tourist Information Centre.
  - **Minehead Bay website and branding** – the new Minehead Bay website was launched in June 2018. Minehead Tourist Information Centre (TIC) has received really positive feedback from the industry regarding the new destination website [www.mineheadbay.co.uk](http://www.mineheadbay.co.uk). The Minehead Bay brand was developed and launched in 2018 to attract new target markets and support programme of events activity. The intention is to re-position the

town in the minds of visitors. It provides a set of high quality professional branding tools and guidelines. Also branded merchandise is available in the Minehead TIC.

- **Minehead Maritime Mile Heritage Interpretation Trail, with Open Air Gallery & Augmented Reality App** – a new waymarked seafront heritage trail, gallery and App launched in June 2018. The mile long heritage trail was created to attract visitors and the community to use the seafront, encouraging them to walk all the way along to the harbour. The trail showcases Minehead's history and heritage of 'then and now' and how the resort has evolved over the last Century. Minehead TIC has received many favourable comments about the trail and relayed that visitors and residents alike have commented on finding it interesting comparing the Town to 'then and now'. Subject to funding (EM Phase Two) the open air gallery may evolve next season with a competition to replace the artwork.
- **Edwardian Shelter concession** – One of the Edwardian shelters has had one half converted in to an enterprising opportunity. A pilot deck chair hire concession was run over the 2019 summer holiday season. We have received feedback that the pilot was not as busy as anticipated, however the weather impacted greatly. The scheme will be reviewed with a view to proceed again next season.

### **3.11 Tourist Information Centres**

- A report was submitted to the Executive Committee in June 2019 for draw down of Hinkley Point C 106 money for a 3 year phased payment plan.
- Minehead, Porlock and Watchet TIC's receive funding in line with the Hinkley Point C Development Consent Order.
- Service Level Agreements (SLA's) are in place for the next 12 months with Minehead, Porlock and Watchet TICs. SLA's will be renewed annually for the 3 year period.

### **3.12 Employment Hubs**

- There are a range of offers being provided by the Hubs which include: fully funded distance learning courses with tutors to help. This includes courses as diverse as: Childcare and Education. Business Leadership and Management. Health and Social Care. Retail and Hospitality. Personal Development and Employability. Health and Well being.
- These courses hope to meet people's needs and requirements and are also mapped to the West Somerset Opportunity Area's (WSOA) Identified needs.
- There is a need for future funding to ensure the sustainability of the hubs and the role of a hub co-ordinator to facilitate and build on their success and future. A bid is being submitted to the Community Impact Mitigation (CIM) Fund team to extend the funding of the employment hubs beyond December 2019.

- The hubs have also continued to accommodate Hinkley Point C drop ins for people to find out more about future and current roles at HPC and how to register for work

# Council Meeting – 8 October 2019

## Report of Councillor Richard Lees – Sports, Parks and Leisure

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

### Section 1 - Events

#### 1.1 Staffing Changes

We have recently appointed Georgie Andrews, Case Manager – Event Management.

#### 1.2 Events

Taunton and the wider area has enjoyed an amazing summer of great events. Thousands of people enjoyed the Live in Somerset Concerts in July which took place in Vivary Park, the Provider has already booked to return in 2020. This is fantastic news for Taunton and the wider area.

The Cricket World Cup went very well with local, national and global reach, promoting Taunton to nearly 2 billion people. Castle Green was the focal point to watch the games on a large screen. Closing down Castle Green and Fore Street to traffic, supported an incredible atmosphere for all to enjoy. Taunton in a poll compiled by the ECB, was voted best ground with the best volunteers. Our thanks goes out to all involved.

Fake Festival returned to Longrun Meadow and was sold out for another year. Watchet Summertime and Watchet Festival was a great success for the area, attracting thousands of people.

Somerfest was delivered by Fuse Performance for its fourth year utilising Castle Green, Goodland Gardens, High Street, Fore Street and Orchard Shopping Centre. Their four year contract expires in 2019 and we will look to tender this event for 2020, 2021 and 2022.

Active friends of groups, hosting community events in Comeytrove, Victoria Park and Wellington Park have all proved popular and we thank them for their hard work and continued efforts in maintaining those spaces.

Taunton Flower Show, the Steam Rally, Taunton Armed Forces and Veterans Day, Eat Taunton and Wellington have all taken place over recent months attracting great crowds. With two funfairs, an inflatable theme park and a circus in Taunton this year, we've had an exceptional mix of events on offer. A significant number of community events across the Somerset West and Taunton area ranging from belly dancing and Arabic drumming to an Armed and

Emergency Services Day and the Sunday Bandstand Concerts in both Taunton and Minehead. We will continue to work together with event organisers across the area to provide a vibrant and varied year-long event programme.

## **Section 2 – Everyone Active**

### **Community Sport and Health**

#### **2.1 Walk Well in Taunton and Wellington**

September has seen the launch of the Autumn walk programme, across Taunton, Wellington, Creech St Michael, Ruishton and Kingston St Mary. With up to 10 walks now available each week of varying lengths, there is something for everyone. New walkers are very welcome to join the programme at any time. The walks continue to grow, and Taunton regularly has 55 people attending each walk, with Wellington now achieving 35 – 40 per walk, a great achievement for our volunteers, to provide such great activity for our local community. We are currently recruiting new volunteers to support our walk programme, and leader training will be held later this month.

#### **2.2 Wacky Wednesdays**

Wacky Wednesdays are a community event held in Wellington, and driven by the local partners across Wellington, including Churches Together, SW and T, Everyone Active, Reminiscence Learning, Devon and Somerset Fire Brigade, Somerset and Avon Police, Livewest and Courtfields Pre-School. The events are held on Wednesdays in local parks across Wellington, throughout the school holidays, and this summer we have seen record number of over 1000 participants attending. All partners provide a variety of activities for the local children to get involved in, and it has been a fabulous opportunity for us all to get to know local families. Plans are now in place for the next event during October half term, and Christmas.

#### **2.3 Health and Wellbeing Cancer event**

Everyone Active attended this event, in September run by staff from Musgrove Park Hospital's Beacon Centre. The event gives us an opportunity to talk to patients, who might be considering participating in physical activity post treatment, and offering free taster sessions.

#### **2.4 Max Whitlock Gymnastics Programme**

On the 9<sup>th</sup> August, Everyone Active launched their Max Whitlock Gymnastics Programme, at Wellsprings Leisure Centre, Blackbrook Leisure Centre and Wellington Sports Centre. The programme provides opportunities for children to improve their balance, strength and coordination in a fun programme with qualified instructors. The programme is tailored to meet the needs of children aged 3 to 12 years and regularly recognises their achievements with awards.

## **2.5 Wellsprings Leisure Centre Holiday Activity Programme**

Staff at Wellsprings Leisure Centre led a great holiday activity programme for children and working parents across the long summer holidays, providing amazing opportunities like gymnastics, trampolining, football, nerf, arts, crafts, and games. Across the 6 ½ weeks holiday, 610 participations were recorded.

## **2.6 Flexercise**

Healthy Halls a seated exercise programme, which has been running throughout 2019, is currently taking place at Hope Corner Lane Community Hall, Kilkenny Court, Wellesley Street Community Hall, and Heathfield Drive Community Hall. SWT tenants and other local residents are continuing to enjoy their weekly Flexercise session of physical activity, as well as making new friends and reducing the risk of social isolation.

Led by Everyone Active trained instructors, the programme consists of seated exercise, seated sports, as well as games and lots of laughter.

## **2.7 National Dementia Carers' Day**

Everyone Active offered people who live with dementia and their carers complimentary access to its leisure centres on September 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>. With a choice of gym, swim, racquet sports or golf, it was a great opportunity to use the centres in Taunton and Wellington at no additional cost.

## **Section 3 - Parks and Open Spaces**

### **3.1 Green Flag**

The Localities Team have been working very hard this year, they have now recruited into the roles and I am very happy to say Somerset West and Taunton have been awarded 6 x Green Flag awards, 1 of which was a new Community Green Flag. The Green Flag Award scheme recognizes and rewards well managed parks and green spaces, setting the benchmark standard for the management of recreational outdoor spaces across the United Kingdom and around the world.

Green Flag Awards have been given for the following locations: French Weir, Victoria Park, Vivary Park, Wellington Park, Swains Lane and Comeytrowe Park (Community Green Flag)

Thanks must be given to all staff, community groups and volunteers for all of their help and support. The great new relationship that has been made with Comeytrowe Park Friends Group has helped to achieve this Community Award.

The Open Spaces Team are already planning and working on next year's entries, when Blenheim Gardens in Minehead will be included, so they have been working with Minehead Town Council and the volunteers in preparation for this.



## **Section 4 – Property**

### **4.1 Wellsprings**

The curvature of glass curtain wall that surrounds the two floors of gyms is now complete with thermal property glass, which will improve both the energy efficiency of the building and the aesthetics externally. This has given the facility a new look and a canvass for our leisure provider to wrap an eye-catching vinyl around the lower glass to give an immediate impact on arrival.

The glass roof in the school's link corridor has been replaced with Polycarb Thermal panels. Work will be undertaken, in the school's half term, to the school corridor floor, which provides access to the changing rooms from the school, which will complete work in this facility.

### **4.2 Vivary Park Golf Course**

Due to the extreme weather we have experienced in September, there has been additional tree damage which has required work by our tree surgeons. To improve security, a security cage screen is being manufactured to cover the rear access door, also an internal office door has been replaced to improve security.

### **4.3 Wellington Sports Centre**

Currently SLM is carrying out work to upgrade this facility. SWT's Procurement Team are continuing their preparatory work for the replacement of the centre's air handling unit to provide an efficient heating system for the pool area.

### **4.4 Blackbrook Sports Centre**

Blackbrook Sports Centre has undergone extensive works by SLM and rebranded, d SWT have ensured any works for which the Authority was completed. We continue to have responsibility for some elements of the site so the main road boundary fencing repairs arranged for week commencing 30<sup>th</sup> September.

# Council Meeting – 8 October 2019

## Report of Councillor Peter Pilkington – Climate

### Climate Change Strategy

Members will already be aware that Somerset West and Taunton Council, along with all other Somerset local authorities, has declared a climate emergency and is working towards achieving a carbon neutral district by 2030. This is undoubtedly a massive challenge – arguably the biggest we have ever faced as a society – and we are stepping up to this with determination. Some headline areas of activity as follows:

- We are working hard with other Somerset councils to produce a 'framework' climate change document for Somerset. The framework document will contain crucial evidence about our local impact on the climate and initial proposals to support our collective efforts towards a carbon neutral Somerset. Achieving a carbon neutral Somerset needs action by *everyone*, from national Government, residents, businesses, parish and town councils and many other organisations. The framework document will be a starting point for consultation and engagement with local groups over the winter and spring of 2019/20. Alongside the county wide framework, Somerset West and Taunton will be putting forward a complementary document with a range of initial ideas and actions that have a specific emphasis on action by SWT to tackle the climate emergency. Both documents (County wide and SWT) will come through Scrutiny and Executive during October 2019 and then be consulted upon over winter and spring 2019/20, working towards approval of a final strategy in Summer 2020.
- A climate change 'task and finish' group of elected members from all Somerset authorities met for the first time in Glastonbury on 4 September 2019. This group will oversee progress in the development of the Somerset Climate Change Strategy and make recommendations to Council Leaders and individual authorities for decision making across Somerset. Somerset West and Taunton has also established a Climate Change Member Working Group which will be feeding views for consideration by Scrutiny Committee and Executive.

### Elected Member Training on Climate Change

We recently teamed up with Somerset Climate Action Network (SCAN) to deliver a successful member training event on 19<sup>th</sup> September. SCAN is a new organisation bringing together climate expertise, groups and individuals from across the county, aiming to work with local authorities and other key players to help drive down carbon emissions across Somerset. This was a valuable opportunity for members to learn more about the facts behind climate change and the actions we can all take as individuals and as a council to make a positive

difference. A further session will be arranged for those members who weren't able to attend.

### **Bid to Urban Tree Challenge Fund**

One way to make a positive difference on climate change (as well as local amenity and health) is by tree planting. Earlier this summer, we submitted a bid to the Government's 'Urban Tree Challenge Fund', focused on proposals to plant 711 trees on Council-owned land within Priorswood, Halcon and Holway and seeking c.£250k of grant funding towards this. At the time of writing this update, we are waiting to hear if our bid was successful but hope to be able to report verbally at the Full Council meeting itself. If our bid is successful we will be working with schools, community groups and organisations to carry out the planting over the coming months. There will also be a second round of the fund available next year which we will explore too.

### **The Council's own Carbon Footprint**

We have commissioned an assessment of the Council's own carbon and environmental footprint, arising from our own direct activities and the influence we can have as a planning authority, policy maker, purchaser of good and services and elected leader in the community. The solar panels on the roof of Deane House are an example of direct action to reduce our own carbon emissions. The assessment, to be completed in early 2020, will provide a baseline of evidence on our current impact and provide recommendations on the priority actions we should be taking.

### **Managing Flood Risk**

We know that climate change is already creating more extreme weather events around the globe. Whilst tackling the root causes of climate change, we also need to take steps to adapt to the changes it is creating, now and into the future. An example of this is the Taunton Strategic Flood Alleviation and Improvement Strategy (TFAIS). We have worked in partnership with the Environment Agency to better understand and model the impact of climate change to the flood levels in the River Tone over the next 100 years. The resulting strategy will suggest a range of measures that need to be taken to reduce the flood risk to existing properties in Taunton into the long term, whilst also enabling the development of key riverside sites in the town centre. The strategy will come to Executive for approval in November 2019.

### **Electric Vehicle Community Charge Point Fund**

With private transport being one of the major contributors to climate change, I wrote to all parish and town councils in early August 2019, encouraging applications to a one-off budget of £20k, to support the installation of electric vehicle charging points in communities throughout the district. This fund will be available to parish and town councils to apply for grants of between £500 and

£1500. A small number of applications have already been received and the final deadline is 1 November.



# Council Meeting – 8 October 2019

## Report of Councillor Fran Smith – Housing

### Housing Estates

Over the last three months the tenancy team has been working hard on stabilising and getting new staff familiar with their roles and responsibilities and clearing the existing backlogs. The housing service is settling down and we are improving our responsiveness to tenants.

### Housing Development and Assets

Performance this quarter:

- 5 buybacks of ex-council houses due to be completed
- 121-123 Outer Circle due to complete (4 units)
- Laxton Rd due to start on site (8 units)

New initiatives this quarter:

- Modern Methods of Construction (MMC): We are investigating new approaches such as modular homes for our council development. No follow up yet from Verto Homes or Zedpod, but follow up from Magna post meeting with Rollalong. Will be requesting surveys from Rollalong for sites with MMC potential.

New business this quarter:

- Appointed Architect for Oxford Inn, and mitigated requirements on planning consultation by providing local evidence on need and usage.
- Reviewed previously investigated garage sites to identify potential for development. Capacity studies now underway.

### Responsive Repairs

The Response Repair service maintains performance in line with agreed Council targets, with 90% of all non-emergency jobs so far this year completed on time, and 99% of emergency jobs completed within 24 hours.

### Lean Process Reviews

We have brought in 'Lean Partnership' to work alongside us in reviewing the process we follow to let a property, once a tenant leaves.

We looked closely at the process we were following and identified all the areas where we could improve it. We also stepped back and asked "what is the value of this service to our customer and what do they want from it". This enabled us to think "how would a 21<sup>st</sup> century housing professional design this process from scratch to meet those customer needs in the best and most efficient way possible."

This has resulted in officers across Housing building a new process – one with the customer at the heart and with an ethos of doing it right, first time and seeking continuous improvement.

We will now implement this new process over the coming months and are confident that it will lead to significant reductions in letting times (lost rent between tenancies) and improved service quality and satisfaction.

We are now working with Lean Partnership to review our rent collection and arrears recovery process with an aim to increase rent collection and reduce evictions due to arrears. We plan to follow this up with a review of our responsive repairs process.

### **HRA Business Plan**

We are revisiting our 30 year Housing business plan and this includes setting out our ambitions and priorities for the service around delivery and new social housing alongside a review of finances to support this. This will be in place for the new financial year and will be the framework to drive the housing service over the next few years.

### **Housing Management System**

We are progressing the replacement of the Academy Housing System which will no longer be supported in future. We have completed a Project Initiation Document and are working on the specification for this new system. This is a sizeable project for the service however will be a key tool to enable the modernisation of the service as it will improve self-serve capability, provide a tenant portal and help monitor and manage workloads more effectively.

### **Homelessness and Rough Sleeping**

We are pleased with the progress we are making to support rough sleepers. The funding we have achieved for this and the Rough Sleeping Initiative project has effectively halved the numbers of rough sleepers on the streets and this is particularly evident in Taunton. That said, we are aware that in August the number rose slightly, however this is a normal trend during the Summer months, which tends to decline again as we move towards Winter.

Housing Options and Homelessness Service – Staffing levels in the team are now at the required levels and we have recently recruited a private sector officer to increase the number of private rented properties available to the service.

The team has recently reorganised its approach to working and has adopted a drop-in system rather than having pre-booked appointments. This also gives officers more time to work on and progress their cases. Alongside this we have introduced regular case audits as a training aid for staff and to provide confidence on the quality of decision making.

The Council was approached by 216 customers in the quarter to date (June to middle of September)

### **Homefinder Statistics**



The statistics from the Homefinder housing register show us that in September there are nearly 4,000 households in the Somerset West and Taunton area that have registered for social housing. The bedroom need and banding of these applicants is shown in the table below.

This is broken down as follows:

Bedroom Need	Total	Breakdown by banding				
		Emergency	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
1	2,074	4	200	560	1,310	<b>2,074</b>
2	1,184	2	81	440	661	<b>1,184</b>
3	507	0	33	293	181	<b>507</b>
4	147	0	23	100	24	<b>147</b>
5	20	0	12	7	1	<b>20</b>
6+	1	0	1	0	0	<b>1</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,933</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>1,400</b>	<b>2,177</b>	<b>3,933</b>



## **Council Meeting – 8 October 2019**

### **Report of Councillor Alan Wedderkopp – Environmental Services**

Environmental Health & Private Sector Housing

#### **Overall summary**

Overall this service area is under pressure as we have been unsuccessful in filling vacancies following transformation, despite two attempts but are currently back out to the market again, with market factors applied to the roles and are hopeful that we will attract qualified and experience candidates.

We have secured 2 agency members of staff to help support Private Sector Housing and Environmental Protection but to date have struggled to secure agency staff for Food Safety. This has resulted in backlogs increasing for food inspections and this is a key priority to tackle this. However we are using a consultancy firm to help with our inspections.

We recognise that various policies require updating and once we have fully recruited, we will programme in some work on this on a risk based approach to ensure all our key policies are fully up to date.

#### **Food Safety**

Although we have a large number of outstanding food inspections, we are targeting these by risk and 'A' & 'B' risk rated premises continue to be our priority (with 13 inspections outstanding) alongside higher risk 'C' premises.

In the current round of recruitment we are hoping to attract an experienced Environmental Health Officer along with Food Safety Officers to help with rebuilding the team. In the short term however we are continuing to try and recruit agency staff and will continue to use consultants for inspection work to help manage and ultimately reduce the inspection backlog.

#### **Private Sector Housing**

We currently have 2 members of staff working within the private sector housing team, an experienced agency officer and someone working towards becoming a qualified Environmental Health Officer. As a result there is no backlog in this area and complaints are being dealt with in a timely fashion. We have begun to review our policies and are working closely with Sedgemoor Council to align these as far as possible which will help landlords that have properties across both Districts.

#### **Environmental Protection**

It has been a busy summer period for Environmental Protection but our agency Environmental Protection Officer has significantly helped with keeping on top of complaints. We also have a new Business Support Team (BST) who are picking up complaint work well, with training, and supporting the officers.

There are between 15-20 inspections due this year for permitted processes (petrol stations, dry cleaners etc). There are no issues expected with achieving these inspections in the next coming months.

### **Air quality monitoring**

The Council has a duty to review and assess air quality in its area and produce a yearly Air Quality Report for DEFRA. This has been delayed due to staff shortages but we will address this and produce it in November.

### **Private Water Supplies**

There is a backlog of 39 inspections across the district and an officer has been tasked with prioritising PWS inspections until the backlog is cleared. This is also being supported by an agency member of staff covering Environmental Protection work.

### **Dog Warden Service**

The service is contracted out to the St Giles Animal Centre (or Somerset Dog Warden Service). The contract continues to work well with no issues to note.

### **Street Cleansing**

IdVerde carry out the Authority's street scene cleansing under 2 separate contracts. These cover the cleansing of streets and public spaces. It excludes open spaces (parks), flytips, graffiti, servicing of public toilets (10), removal of dead animals, bin emptying (excluding dog bins) and litter issues, minor repairs in public toilets, litter bin replacements which is all undertaken by the DLO..

The West Somerset covers the cleansing of streets and all public spaces, including open spaces (parks), flytips, graffiti, removal of dead animals, bin emptying including dog bins and litter issues.

Challenges that we are currently addressing is commercial and residential waste being left out too early and littering the town centre and residential areas, flytipping and graffiti. We are working with Somerset Waste Partnership and Environmental Health to address these issues and are writing to those identified as the first step of enforcement.

### **Household Collections**

Somerset Waste Partnership is continuing to move forward with Recycle More, which will be Somerset's next big leap forward in driving up recycling in the county.

The change will see a range of new materials added to weekly recycling collections: household and food plastic pots, tubs and trays; food and drink cartons, household batteries, and small electrical items.

The upgraded service will start rolling out across the County during 2020, at the same time as a brand new fleet of collection vehicles and the switch for rubbish from landfill to resource recovery, pumping energy into the national grid. All householders will be informed well in advance of any changes happening in their neighbourhood.

With so much being taken out of the waste bin each week, the frequency of rubbish collection will then be able to reduce to three weekly with garden waste and clinical waste collections remaining unchanged.

### **New Bereavement Services Manager**

Localities are please to confirm that following an intensive recruitment process we have appointed a new Bereavement Services Manager. Richard Brown moved to this area of work on the 9<sup>th</sup> September and I am sure that like me you will welcome him into this new role.

### **Mud Working Group update**

The Mud Working Group presented to Scrutiny on 5<sup>th</sup> September and allowed Member to understand the work that has been undertaken at Watchet Marina and harbour and the direction of travel for the group.

