

Draft

Somerset West
and Taunton

Somerset West and Taunton
Corporate Strategy 2020-2024



Introduction



Foreword from Chief Executive Officer

[text to come]

James Hassett
Chief Executive of Somerset West and Taunton

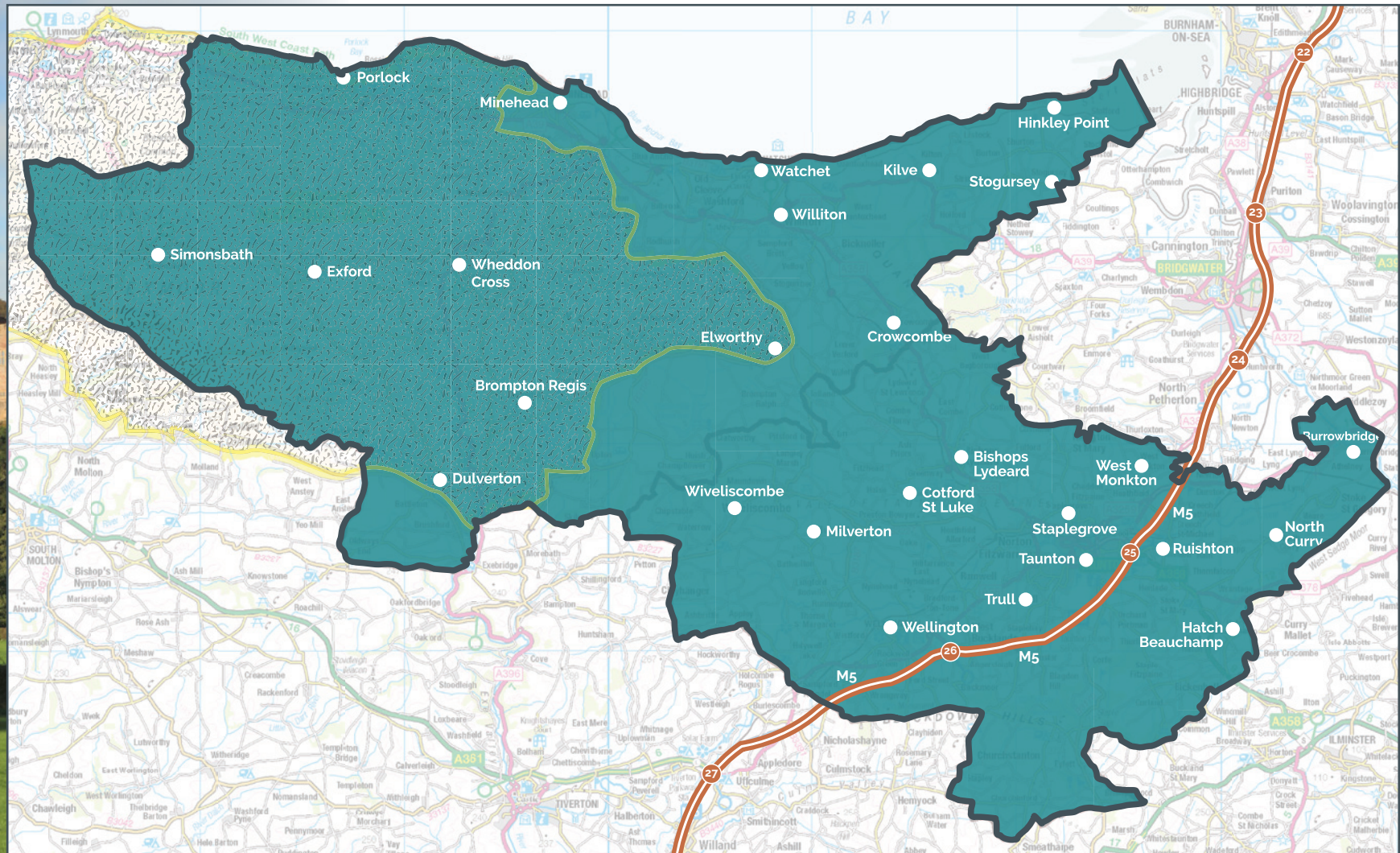


Foreword from the Leader of the Council

[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.



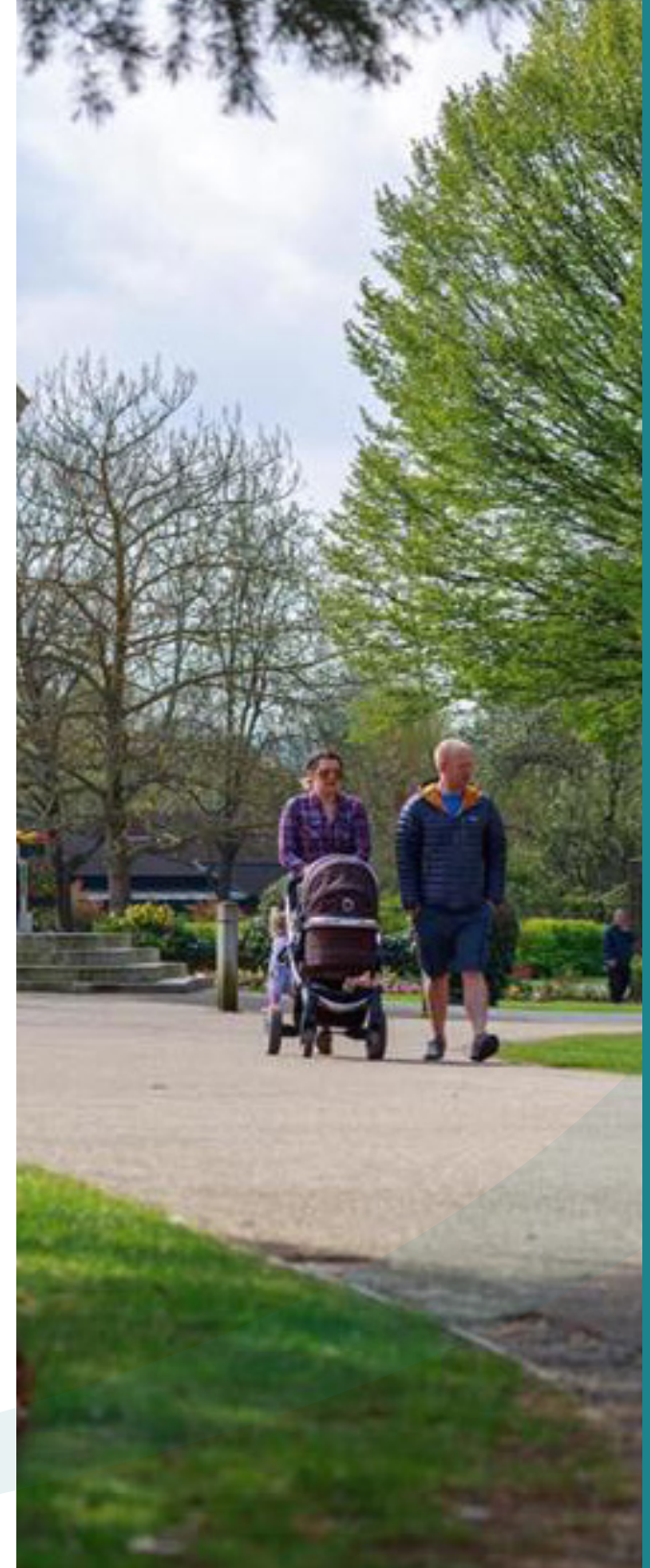


Why this is important

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.

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

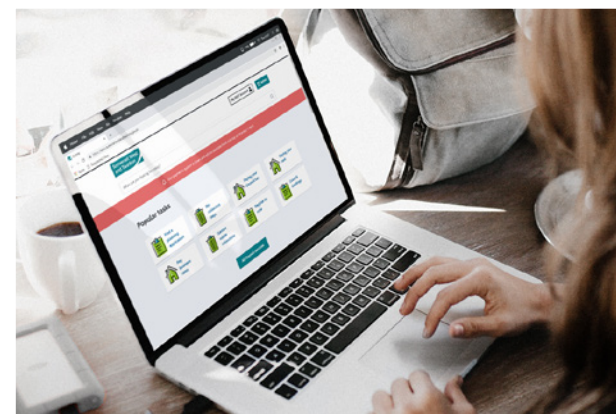
Objectives

- 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.

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).

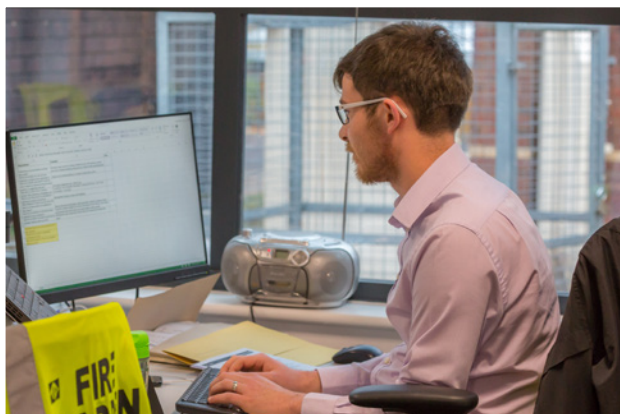
Theme Four: An Enterprising Council

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.



Our Guiding Principles

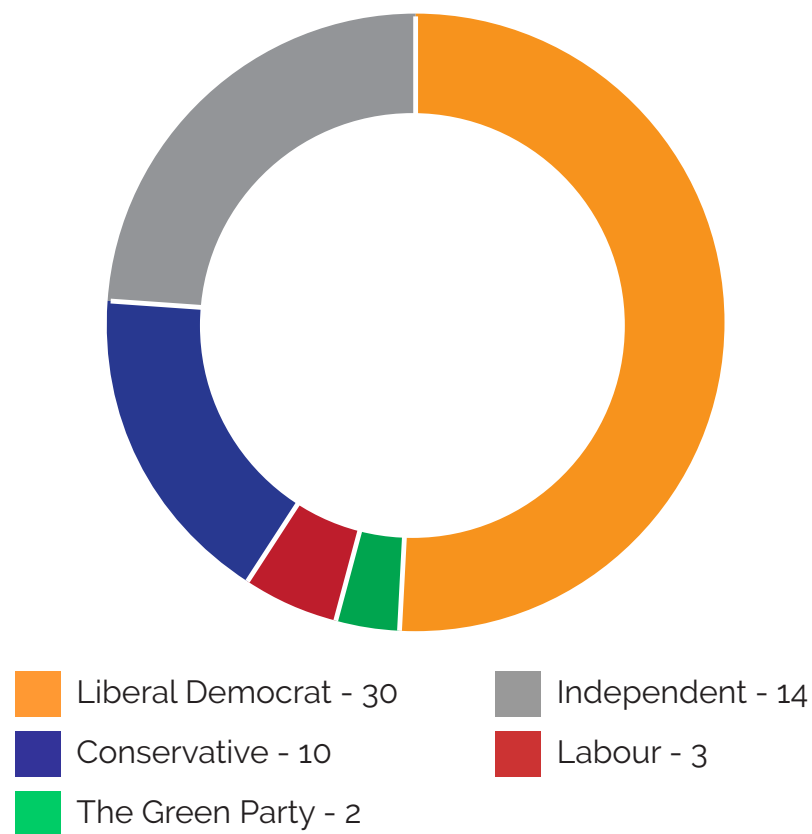


We will:

- 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:-

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