

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 16th July 2019 circulated with the agenda)

RESOLVED that the minutes of Full Council held on 16th 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 11th May. On 7th 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 13th 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 15th 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 20th September?

(The 20th 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 27th 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 20th 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 26th 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 26th 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 23rd 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)