

SWT Full Council - 8 October 2019

Present: Councillor Hazel Prior-Sankey (Chair)

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

Officers: Lesley Dolan, Paul Fitzgerald, Christine Fraser, Paul Harding, James Hassett, Robert Hillier, Clare Rendell and Amy Tregellas

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

58. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors P Bolton, D Durdan, K Durdan, M Hill, R Lees, C Morgan and P Stone.

59. 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 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	Personal	Spoke and Voted

		Trustee		
Cllr A Govier	All Items	SCC & Wellington	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr C Herbert	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	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 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 S Nicholls	All Items	Comeytrove	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr C Palmer	All Items	Minehead	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Perry	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr M Peters	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr P Pilkington	All Items	Timberscombe	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 F Smith-Roberts	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

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

(Minutes of the meeting of Full Council held on 30 July 2019 circulated with the agenda)

Councillor Wakefield advised that she had submitted her apologies for the previous Full Council meeting which had not been included in the minutes. The Chair advised Councillor Wakefield that her apologies would be added.

Resolved that the minutes of Full Council held on 30 July 2019, with amendments, be confirmed as a correct record.

61. **Public Participation**

Mr Hincks (Extinction Rebellion) made the following statement in relation to a petition submitted to Full Council:-

Mr Hincks introduced himself to the Councillors and had been a member of Extinction Rebellion for approximately a year. Extinction Rebellion was a fairly new group but had been influential over the past couple of years, rapidly increasing both public and government awareness of the climate and environmental emergency that was confronting the planet. Extinction Rebellion remained concerned, however, that there were still many people who did not fully understand the gravity of the emergency being faced. If they did recognise it, they were failing to act in a manner that reflected that recognition. All those in such power, including those in the room, held a greater degree of responsibility than normal for our future in these precarious times. Unless suitable policies were implemented and fundamental changes were made swiftly, we would simply run out of time. Time was of the essence and action was needed now. Whilst Extinction Rebellion had been running a vigil outside the Deane House, they hoped that some of their concerns had permeated even if only subliminally into the consciousness of the Council, its officers, staff and of course the Councillors themselves. And into the consciousness of the public that passed by. We've not made a nuisance of ourselves, as the vigil had been a more subtle form of protest than they were used to, but they had hoped it had some sort of effect. He also hoped that you had been able to recognise that many members of Extinction Rebellion in Taunton were normal people like yourselves. During the vigil they had collected signatures to a petition from people who had just been passing by, they had not gone out of their way to obtain the signatures and they were real signatures on paper, not just something you could do with a quick click on the internet. The petition demanded that: 1. The creation of a citizen's assembly to hold our local council authorities to account and oversee changes to combat the climate change emergency. 2. Immediate implementation of local policies to reduce net carbon emissions to zero in the Somerset area by 2025 and the reduction overall of consumption levels. 3. Reversal or revision of any existing policies which increased net carbon emissions. There were 23 pages of signatures on the petition and it had been his privilege to present the petition to the Council and thanked the Councillors for allowing him to speak at the meeting. Extinction Rebellion.

The Chair of the Council advised Mr Hincks that the petition would be checked and that he would be advised when the item would be debated at the next available Full Council meeting.

Val Hammond (Brewhouse – Taunton Theatre Association (TTA)) made the following statement in relation to a petition submitted to Full Council:-

She advised the Councillors that she had a petition signed by over 3000 people on behalf of My Theatre Matters, to ask the Council to make a funding decision to enable TTA to continue to provide high quality, accessible and diverse arts events in Somerset's county town. TTA was the largest provider of arts and culture in Somerset West and Taunton and provided a rich and diverse programme at their base and increasingly worked with others across the region on national projects. They were successful and offered 1000 events each year, 6 or 7 days a week, day or night and had welcomed over 75,000 people in the last year alone. The situation that brought them to the point of the petition had arisen solely because the Council had postponed its decision to redevelop the site. Ambitious yet realistic, well researched plans would see a large multi-purpose flexible and sustainable venue with a 7500 seat theatre, cinema, studio theatre, art gallery, community studio and other space. Flexible and sustainable, it would invigorate Taunton and develop the whole region for the people who lived here. The project anticipated that the Brewhouse site could be repurposed to provide a spectacular centrepiece for Firepool, but with the delays to the planned development, it would mean that increased investment would be required in the interim. On the 1 April 2019, the Council itself asked the TTA to request additional funding that would be required over a 5 year period, now 6 months from then, considerable work had been carried out at the Council's request on the financial modelling and business planning, both with the cost implications of the delay and for the future redeveloped Brewhouse, over a 40-55 year period. They had a timetable to present the information for a funding decision to Full Council, however, one week prior to the meeting, they learned from officers that the report would not be presented and that they would not have the opportunity to discuss the papers or to represent the constituent's views. That placed the TTA in a very difficult position. For the last 3 years they had continuously provided the Council with free consultancy at approximately 2 days per week, which was time that would have been spent differently if they had thought that the Council was not fully committed to the Brewhouse development. Instead they had every reason to believe they were in partnership with the Council on how best to develop an effective multi-purpose arts centre for the community. My Theatre Matters petition requested that the Council secured future funding to enable TTA to continue to deliver its current programme of activities and to also invest in and work with the TTA, who resurrected the Brewhouse and had a track record of running a successful multi-purpose arts venue to deliver the much improved sustainable arts venue that the region deserved. TTA also encouraged Councillors to ask why the Leader of the Council promised that this would be a Full Council decision, however, officers had not presented the papers as planned so that the Councillors would have the full appropriate facts and supporting documentation and she hoped that this matter would be brought forward quickly for action. She thanked Councillors for listening and for receiving the petition.

The Chair of the Council advised Val Hammond that the petition would be checked and that he would be advised when the item would be debated at the next available Full Council meeting.

Nigel Behan (Somerset County Council) made the following statement in relation to the Employers Side of SW Provincial Council:-

Notes that had been presented included the following:

- Government had endured central government funding cuts of nearly 50% since 2010.
- Between 2010 and 2020, councils would have lost 60p out of every £1 they had received from central government.
- The 2019 Local Government Association (LGA) survey of council finances found that 1 in 3 councils feared they would run out of funding to provide even their statutory, legal duties by 2022/23. The number rose to almost two thirds of councils by 2024/2025 or later.
- The LGA estimated councils would face a funding gap of £8 billion by 2025.
- Faced with those cuts from central government, the local government workforce had endured years of pay restraint with the majority of pay points losing 22 per cent of their value since 2009/10.
- At the same time as seeing their pay go down in real terms, workers experienced ever increasing had been lost in local government since June 2010 – a reduction of 30 per cent. Local government had arguably been hit by more severe job losses than any other part of the public sector.
- There had been a disproportionate impact on women, with women making up more than three quarters of the local government workforce.

- Our workers were (public service) dedicated staff. They kept our communities clean, looked after those in need and kept our towns and cities running.
- Without the professionalism and dedication of our staff, the council services our residents relied upon would not be deliverable.
- Government funding had been cut to the extent that a proper pay rise could result in a reduction in local government services.
- The government needed to take responsibility and fully fund increases in pay; it should not put the burden on local authorities whose funding had been cut to the bone.

They wanted to approach the Government through the LGA to obtain real funding for council services which were often placed down lower than the national health services because of the way the media presented it. This was about producing work for the local economy and providing social structures to help other parts of the public sector.

The Leader of the Council thanked Mr Behan for his comments and welcomed his views that local government needed to receive more funding from central government and currently we did not, the council's budget had been cut by 64% in recent years and yet we continued to provide the services that the public wanted and would try to continue to do so. The Leader advised she would provide a full written response to his comments.

62. **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 Somerset West and Taunton Councillor Jean Adkins and former Taunton Deane Borough Councillor William Coombes.

The Chair also welcomed the newly elected Councillors Derek Perry and Andrew Sully.

The following announcements were made by the Chair:-

- Councillors were advised on the new procedure to follow during question time on the Portfolio Holder Reports.
- Councillors were reminded about the Mayor's Civic Event.
- The Chair advised Councillors that both the Vice Chair, Councillor Simon Coles and Executive Councillor Richard Lees, would be unavailable for Council business for a few weeks and to contact the Governance Team with any queries for them.

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

The Leader was pleased to announce that Somerset West and Taunton Council had scored joint second in the Friends of the Earth rankings for Climate Change. The results were based on the Council's eco achievements and policies. She said that it had demonstrated the actions taken so far by the Council and acknowledged there was still more work to be undertaken, but that it was a step in the right direction.

The Leader highlighted the introduction of the new audio/visual equipment and to remind Councillors to be aware of their behaviour during meetings as it was recorded and would be available on webcast in the future.

The Leader also wanted to remind Councillors that it was Mental Health Week and that there were several activities being held in the offices and that she would like to encourage a Councillor to take on the role of Mental Health Champion.

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

The Chair advised that no such questions had been received.

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

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors queried whether the Local Enterprise Partnership were due to include any information on climate change.

The next meeting was scheduled for 29 November 2019 and climate change was due to be on the agenda.

- Councillors wanted to use the agenda to lobby Central Government on climate change.

Resolved that Somerset West and Taunton Council:-

- Approved the amendments (shown in red) to the Committee's list of functions in the Arrangements document – Appendix A – and noted the updated budget position for 2019/20; and
- Somerset West and Taunton Council agreed 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.

66. **Corporate Strategy 2020-24**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors made the following comments on the themes within the Strategy:
 - Theme One: concern was raised that there weren't any measures included.
 - Theme Three: Councillors thought it was a shame that the current administration had declined the opportunity to build a hotel on development land, the theme should include ethical implications and concern was raised that the theme had been developed due to lack of support provided from Central Government.
 - Theme Four: concern was raised that events for those with learning difficulties had not been included.
- Councillors requested that promotion of equality of opportunity be included in the high level report.
- Councillors thanked the officers for their work on the Strategy and supported the publication of the document.

Resolved that Somerset West and Taunton Council:-

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

67. **HRA Capital Scheme Recommendation from Executive**

Resolved that Somerset West and Taunton Council approved 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.

68. **Political Allocation and Committee Membership revised October 2019**

Resolved that Full Council noted the revised Political Allocation and Committee Membership.

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

The Leader and the Chair of the Council along with the Armed Forces Champions spoke in support of the covenant and subsequently the document was signed.

The Armed Forces Champion highlighted the importance of the document and the agreement set out between SWT and the service men and women out in the community along with their families and the people that supported them. He was happy to recommend that the Council continued with the Armed Forces Covenant as it ensured that the service men and women who lived in the district were able to access services and were treated equally.

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

Leader of the Council (Councillor Federica Smith-Roberts)

Councillors asked questions on the following topic:-

- Transformation and commitment from the Executive towards to Change Programme.

Communications and Culture (Councillor Benet Allen)

Councillors asked questions on the following topics:-

- Internal communications;
- Improved communication programme; and
- Firmstep processes and procedures.

Community (Councillor Chris Booth)

Councillors asked questions on the following topics:-

- Concern for traders located in the Station Road area;
- Taunton BID;
- CCTV; and
- Rough sleepers check.

Corporate Resources (Councillor Ross Henley)

Councillors asked questions on the following topics:-

- Customer service satisfaction;
- Firmstep processes and procedures;
- Wellington Customer Hub and staffing levels;
- Somerset living wage community;
- Complaint statistics; and

- Staff structure and definitions for job titles.

Asset Management and Economic Development (Councillor Marcus Kravis)

Councillors asked questions on the following topics:-

- Cost implications of the work of the East Quay wall and harbour safety;
- Information on Seaward Way;
- Taunton ice rink; and
- Affordable employment land.

Sports, Parks and Leisure (Councillor Richard Lees)

No question were submitted for the Portfolio Holder.

Climate Change (Councillor Peter Pilkington)

Councillors asked questions on the following topics:-

- Climate change awards;
- Concern on emissions produced by the ice rink; and
- Electric vehicle charging points.

Planning and Transportation (Councillor Mike Rigby)

Councillor Mike Rigby apologised for his report not being submitted. He then presented a verbal update to Full Council, which included an update on the following:-

- Planning staffing levels and the reduction in the backlog on the validation stage of the planning application process.
- A Conservation Officer had been appointed.
- A Local Plan Working Group had been formed and he gave information needed for developments on the Local Plan.

Councillors asked questions on the following topics:-

- Planning staffing levels;
- Government targets set for planning applications and sanctions that might be incurred;
- Park and ride and potential for Saturday operations;
- High Street funds;
- Business developments and infrastructure; and
- Employment land.

Housing Services (Councillor Francesca Smith)

Councillors asked questions on the following topic:-

- Perspective of Housing over time.

Environmental Services (Councillor Alan Wedderkopp)

Councillors asked questions on the following topic:-

- Taxi vehicles checks.

(The Meeting ended at 8.42 pm)