

SWT Scrutiny Committee - 9 October 2019

Present: Councillor Gwil Wren (Chair)

Councillors Libby Lisgo, Ian Aldridge, Sue Buller, Dixie Darch, John Hassall, John Hunt, Sue Lees, Dave Mansell, Hazel Prior-Sankey, Nick Thwaites, Danny Wedderkopp, Simon Coles, Caroline Ellis and Vivienne Stock-Williams

Officers:

Also Present: Councillors Marcus Kravis, Janet Lloyd, Federica Smith-Roberts, Ray Tully, Brenda Weston, Loretta Whetlor and Peter Pilkington

(The meeting commenced at Time Not Specified)

33. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Cavill, Stone and Wheatley.

The following attended as a substitutes:- Stock-Williams, Ellis and Coles.

34. Minutes of the previous meeting of the Scrutiny Committee

(Minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 4 September circulated with the agenda)

Resolved that the minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on 4 September be confirmed as a correct record.

35. 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 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 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	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	Personal	Spoke and Voted

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

36. **Public Participation**

Alan Debenham invited all Councillors to an all-day seminar at Somerset Cooperative Services (10 East Reach) setting up green energy cooperatives on 5th November between 10am and 4pm.

Roger House provided a statement to the Committee summarised below:-

- The Council should enable all Somerset young people from 16 to 21 years a big discount card for travel in our local area for travel to work, college and courting. To help social mobility and combat the high cost of cars for younger people. Similar to Cardiff and the campaign by Citizens UK for 16 to 25 year olds.
- Support private coaches and meet the Confederation of Passenger Transport to achieve coach friendly status for towns within the district.

37. **Somerset Climate Emergency Framework and SWT Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Plan. Report of the Strategy Specialist (attached).**

In 2019 the five Somerset Local Authorities recognised a climate emergency and agreed to collaborate in producing a joint Climate Emergency Strategy. Whilst each declaration was slightly different, all aspired to achieving carbon neutrality in their own operations and to work towards achieving this across the geography of their administrative area.

At the same time, SWT committed to producing a Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Plan. The report to Scrutiny Committee in July this year explained the relationship between the county-wide and SWT-specific work and the Governance arrangements being set up.

Draft Somerset Climate Emergency Framework

A group of officers representing Somerset County Council, the four district authorities, Exmoor National Park Authority were guiding and shaping the development of the County-wide framework within which the detailed investigation needed will be undertaken. This group – the Strategic Management Group - would have a critical overseeing role in shaping the desired outcomes emanating from that work.

Feeding into the Strategic Management Group would be the detailed work undertaken by operational experts and stakeholders within nine work streams:

- Built Environment
- Natural Environment
- Energy
- Farming and Food
- Industry, Business and Supply Chain
- Transport
- Waste and Resource Management
- Flood water and adaptation
- Communications and Engagement

Each work stream was working to a detailed brief and had a nominated lead. They would be researching and prioritising key issues, identifying possible actions to mitigate and understanding the full life cycle of decisions to implement these actions.

SWT had representation on all of these work streams and were able to support with appropriate subject-matter expertise and ensure two-way dialogue between workstream development across the county and in relation to the Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Plan.

The work of officers was overseen by a group of portfolio holders from across the districts, which included Cllr Peter Pilkington, and by the Leaders and CEOs, with Brendan Cleere and Michele Cusack (SCC) acting as the conduit between these groups. The work of all groups was scrutinised by a Joint Task and Finish Group; SWT's representation on that group was through Cllrs Dave Mansell and Loretta Whetlor.

Members noted the proposed timings for delivery of the Climate Emergency Strategy, which included provision for consultation during November and December 2019.

Consultation activities were in the early stages of development, but were expected to include an online consultation aimed at secondary school-aged children 11-18 years, preceded by school visits to encourage participation. They included an online consultation aimed at all residents, communities and businesses in Somerset and a series of Summits, which would take the form of a full day, face-to-face consultation event, open to all. A provisional date for the SWT Summit was 16th November but remained still to be confirmed.

Draft SWT Framework Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Plan

A Draft of SWT's own Framework Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Plan had been produced alongside the Draft Somerset Climate Emergency Framework. Its purpose was to spark a conversation about how the community could look to develop and ultimately deliver the district's action plan.

The Framework set a level of ambition but did not commit the Council to deliver on any specific task or to any specific actions at present. It provided an idea of where things needed to head and some ideas about early tasks that might be necessary to get things started. Some of these tasks would be for the Council to take forward, some might be for others. Importantly, the Framework made it clear that success in delivering on carbon neutrality and climate resilience targets were dependent on garnering wider public and partner support and ownership of the Plan and actions/projects arising.

Once the Framework had been endorsed by Executive Committee, there would be a period of engagement and consultation centred on the Framework document. This included business and community roadshow events across the district as well as school and college events and direct stakeholder engagement to ensure that the Draft Plan was well informed by the views and experiences of our communities and to raise awareness of the need for action and how we are working to co-ordinate this. Officers were working on arrangements for these events and wider consultation on the Framework.

The Draft and Final Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Plans were proposed to be developed alongside and to the same timetable as the Draft and Final Somerset Climate Emergency Strategies. Whilst the Strategy produced for adoption in Summer 2020 would

be badged as “final”, the SWT Plan would be an iterative, “live” document that would need to evolve as actions and projects develop and understanding of issues and risks improves.

The Framework documents would be taken to Executive Committee later in October, amended in response to / accompanied by the comments of the Working Group and Scrutiny Committee. The report to Executive, accompanying the Framework documents will request that authority to endorse the future Draft County-wide Strategy and SWT Plan is delegated to Cllr Peter Pilkington (as Portfolio Holder) in consultation with the Climate Change Member Working Group. However, the final Strategy and Plan will come back to Scrutiny ahead of consideration by Executive and Council. Assuming Executive endorsement of the Framework documents and this approach to delegation, we will then begin consultation and engagement as well as working on some of the identified key early tasks.

The intention is to have a Draft Strategy and Plan completed by February 2020, ready for consideration by the Member Working Group and Portfolio Holder to endorse for further consultation in the New Year. Following the second period of consultation, the “final” Strategy and Plan will be brought back to Scrutiny Committee and Executive Committee before being taken to Council for adoption.

Debate

SWT Framework - discussion took place around the following areas, with some points applying to both SWT and Somerset Frameworks:-

- It was requested for a greater focus was given to Methane and Nitrous Oxide emissions, including in relation to the food and farming section.
- Additional mention of Fracking should be added and the further lobbying of County Council on this point was requested.
- Reduction of meat be a priority rather than solely an emphasis environmentally friendly food.
- More details around divesting from fossil fuels, and stipulating around the licensing if possible around all new taxis.
- Growing food with allotments and urban farms on waste land to be a priority.
- Definitions for carbon neutrality to be clear on the objectives of reducing and mitigating emissions being the focus.
- The IPCC was cautious in its predictions/projections, which was another reason for a 2030 target.
- The section around offsetting was potentially confused and we should be very careful in supporting offsetting elsewhere, as the whole world needed to decarbonise.
- Consumption should be included too, although more difficult to measure, as moving production abroad for products consumed in the UK displaced, rather than reduced, emissions.
- Early tasks around the Built Environment should be more explicit about energy efficiency standards and renewable energy on new development.
- Work around renewable energy generation and storage should be undertaken with utilities and others as well as with community energy groups.
- The strategy should be more explicit about installing Renewable Energies on assets and land owned by the Council.
- Aviation, as a major polluter was missing as part of the transport section.

- Waste section is good and we are strong already in this area, but reducing carbon emissions should be added from operations in waste (collection, haulage, processing, and energy recovery - Avonmouth).
- Further input from Councillors and how they could be a part of the Climate agenda was encouraged.
- Public engagement was key to the strategy but conversations were needed, to ensure they didn't lose sight of rural poverty - domestic and transport.
- The committee encouraged Lobbying with GWR/Network Rail over electrification of the network.
- Monitoring of performance of the strategy and targets were needed along with and funding for delivery of projects.
- Lobbying government on national policy was essential.
- There was a need to apply pressure in relation to changing taxation and costs of different fuels. As an example Gas should be taxed more to tackle emissions.
- Hinkley would need to be mentioned and a major CO2 source
- Holistic thoughts on planning policy to include further options to tackle climate change - not just about PV on roofs.
- Introducing more efficient and better flues for wood burners to minimise issues and tackle rural poverty.
- Working and engaging with farmers needed to be done to work with communities and organisations to improve their supply chain pressure.
- Electric bike hire between transport hubs was requested.
- Lobbying Government on national policy and guidance was considered important. A parking review would be required to tackle emissions in the town.
- The consultation would need to be different to normal consultations. These would need to include further details on proposed activities; with a communications plan and Executive report.
- As part of the framework Councils should lead by example on EV charge points at Deane House and in council car parks included in a more committed revised task.
- Members needed to ensure the framework should be on the agenda for electioneering and how to inform the public.
- Elements such as the Town centre pedestrianisation and ebuses should be included in the framework.
- The front section of the report should set out commitments to areas that can be addressed immediately.
- Greater emphasis on Technology and R&D was requested to maximise the input into a global emergency.
- All Councils needed to make better use of existing building stocks.
- Better communication was required for the public on the carbon impact of food.
- The committee were of the view that the framework needed to be the priority document dictating all other policy documents.
- Cross-party support was required to ensure document is not undermined by elections and any change of ruling group going forward.
- The framework would need to outline best practice and what might be possible for others.
- There was a requirement to ramp up the communications message about the debates going on and the actions being taken.

Somerset Framework - discussion took place around the following areas:-

- Concern was expressed that the county-wide Task and Finish group had not met to discuss this document and whether future work timetables allowed for this .

- Clearer communications was requested with all Members and not just the working group
- There were levels of confusion about CO2 and carbon emission rates in the framework documents at 3.4a not comparing correctly.
- Consumption emissions needed to be added.
- Monitoring with targets and measuring performance and progress towards these would be needed.
- The Committee on Climate Change Net Zero reports provide a national guide on action required.
- Sections 6 and 7 were too negative in places. Good assessment was important, but building an extensive evidence base and undertaking optimal cost benefit analysis risked delay and inaction. We also need to start doing and learning.
- The committee requested clarity in relation to how levels of emissions from the M5 were included where the Councils had very little control.
- Electrification as the main method for decarbonisation of heating, alongside much higher insulation standards, needed to be included.
- Aviation needed to be included in the transport section and this was too weak on encouraging walking, cycling and public transport. In particular, it should add making these more convenient options over car use.
- The same comments as for the SWT document needed to be included on reducing carbon emissions from waste operations and investing in renewable energy and storage.
- Taunton not being parished as an area was requested to be reflected in the consultation.

All members of the committee were encouraged to provide any further specific additional comments following the meeting for consideration.

38. **Scrutiny Committee Forward Plan**

(Copy of the Scrutiny Committee Forward Plan, circulated with the agenda).

Councillors were reminded that if they had an item they wanted to add to the agenda, that they should send their requests to the Governance Team.

Resolved that the Scrutiny Committee Forward Plan be noted.

(The Meeting ended at 20:24).