

Annual Report of the Leader of the Council - 2018

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1. Summary

1.1 I would like to take this opportunity to begin by expressing my heartfelt thanks to Cabinet, Scrutiny, council members, officers and the Council's partners for the great work done over the past twelve months.

1.2 There are many highlights and achievements to be celebrated:

- Our new **Vision for Somerset** which clarifies our focus for the future
- Our changing focus in **adult social care** so it actively promotes wellbeing and supports people to remain **independent** and connected to their **communities**. Our **Home First** approach is allowing people to leave hospital promptly rather than waiting on the ward.
- Our **children's services** continue to **improve** as evidenced by Ofsted's Inspection in November 2017 rating our services as moved from 'inadequate' to 'requires improvement'.
- Our commitment to build 24 **new and significantly improved schools**, the biggest schools improvement programme in generations.
- Our ongoing role in ensuring homes and businesses in rural areas now have access to **superfast broadband** thanks to Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS).
- Our continued **partnership working** including the established **Joint Committee** which gives us a voice, alongside other leaders from across the South West, to speak clearly to Government and be responsible for driving our **devolution** plans and new **Productivity Strategy for the Heart of the South West**.
- Our invitation to the LGA and peers to look at various aspects of our work through a **Peer Challenge**. This is an excellent opportunity to weigh up where we are as we look to improve across the Council.
- Our close involvement in the **West Somerset Opportunity Area** action plan that has been developed to address social mobility in the area.
- And finally, we have opened a **conversation** about local government reorganisation across Somerset. This is the **start** of a journey that could bring benefits to our residents, businesses and communities as well as contribute to financial sustainability for local services.

1.3 Since Council elections in May 2017, we have developed a new **Vision for Somerset**, in consultation with our partners and shared with our key stakeholders at the Stakeholder Event on 8th March.

A new **Business Plan** will show what we will do to deliver the Vision and help the Council prioritise its work, budget well and make decisions with confidence.

We want our county to be ambitious, confident and improving. With an overall aim to 'improve lives', our Vision for Somerset is:

- A thriving and productive county that is ambitious, confident and focussed on improving people's lives.
- A county of resilient, well-connected and compassionate communities working to reduce inequalities.
- A county where all partners actively work together for the benefit of our residents, communities and businesses, and the environment in which we all live.
- A county that provides you with right information, advice and guidance to help you help yourself, and targets support to those who need it most.

We will work to meet the needs of our residents and businesses while responding to the challenges facing the county: demographic change, financial sustainability and inequalities. We accept that we cannot do everything, and that we can achieve more when we work with partners, residents and communities. I refer to the decision paper published in the agenda as Paper A Appendix 1.

2. Key achievements

2.1 Adults and Health

Adult Social Care's focus is moving from reacting when people reach crisis point to actively **promoting wellbeing** and responding and supporting people to remain **independent** and connected to their **communities**. We are working with health and other partners to deliver seamless services that:

- Maximises independence to support people to remain in their homes and communities, without formal social care support wherever possible.
- Changes the relationship with the public where we manage expectations and are realistic about what we can do and what we expect from individuals, families and communities to help themselves.
- Works differently with partners to support people to get the right level and type of support at the right time.

Our relationship with the NHS is as important as ever and we have seen significant developments in the delivery of new services such as our '**Home First**' initiative. So far over 1,200 people have left hospital an average of 5 days earlier than through traditional methods. As soon as someone no longer needs medical support in hospital, Home First allows people to leave hospital rather than waiting on the ward for care assessments and rehabilitation

planning, which can take time. Instead they receive those assessments and support at home, or in a specialist unit, care home or community hospital, to help them get back on their feet.

Social Care teams working with the NHS have **reduced delayed transfers of care** significantly and have received recognition from the Secretary of State. On one winter day alone Musgrove Park saw more than 120 ambulance admissions, but with only a handful of patients across all the four hospitals in our extended patch suffering delays to their release due to care provision.

The transfer of the Council's **Learning Disability Provider Service** to a new Social Enterprise has taken place over the year and Council will know this has not been without its challenges. I'd like to thank staff within the service and who transferred who have worked hard to make this transition happen with the least disruption possible. I'm pleased that Scrutiny commissioned a Task and Finish Group to look at learning we can generate from this transfer. At the same time, commissioners continue to engage to modernise the offering to those with learning disabilities and have introduced some new progressive providers to the market as well.

We are introducing the **Somerset Mental Wellbeing Service (SMWS)** in partnership with Compass Disability Services. An example of a **diverse collaboration** of third-sector providers delivering a community-based targeted support service. It will help people maintain and improve their mental wellbeing by developing support networks, increasing independence and helping them make use of support in their communities.

The **Health and Wellbeing Board** has received continued commitment from a range of partner organisations, including all Somerset's district councils, the Clinical Commissioning Group and Healthwatch to the **Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2013-18**. It is now beginning work on a new 10-year strategy. The Board has focused on the development of a **Prevention Charter** for Somerset, which was adopted by the Council in 2017 and has driven the work to reduce the hidden harm to children as a result of parental circumstances, and to reduce loneliness

The **Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)** and the **Somerset Intelligence** website give an overview of the strategic health, wellbeing and social needs of Somerset people, and steers the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board. This year has a particular focus on **ageing well**. It is accompanied by a report recording the experiences and views of local people on what helps them age well and what doesn't.

2.2 Children and Families

In 2014 our Children's Services were rated inadequate by **Ofsted**. As a result of hard work across the authority, a focus on seven agreed improvement programmes in the **Children and Young People's Plan 2016-19** and the support of our improvement partners Essex County Council, Ofsted's Single Inspection in November 2017 rated our services as 'requires improvement' citing "significant investment in creating an environment that enables good

practice to flourish.” An incredibly important milestone – but just the first step in the improvement journey, as we are determined to reach ‘Good’ and then ‘Outstanding’ status.

Through our **Children’s Workforce Development Strategy** we are working with staff so they recognise and embody our values and behaviours, and have the skills and knowledge to identify issues in families early-on and address them quickly and effectively. In November 2017 we refreshed the strategy to include the recruitment and retention of social worker colleagues, as a core part of the development of the Somerset workforce.

A Gloucestershire led Peer Review into our SEND service was held in May 2017. As a result, we have created a multi-agency **SEND Priority Action Plan** to address key issues and capitalise on our strength.

There has been a focus on **improving transition** to adult services for children with long-term conditions and disabilities, and a ‘**Think Family**’ approach across the workforce of both services.

The development of the **Family Support Service** is a significant change in Somerset. It aims to:

- Achieve better outcomes for families; engaging hard to reach families and providing services where they need them
- Provide more effective services; reducing duplication and providing more community based support and guidance
- Provide consistent and coherent services for families in order to tackle health and social inequalities
- Protect frontline services by reducing management and business support functions, and overhead costs associated with buildings
- Respond to the end of the government Troubled Families grant in 2020, and the reduction in the government grant for public health

The Council has commitment to build **14 new schools** and **improve capacity at 10 others**. This unprecedented **investment** - potentially up to £140m - is in response to increasing pressures on school places and the need for improved, more resilient infrastructure. Delivering an **additional 2,300 secondary places by 2023**.

Primrose Lane Primary opened its doors in the summer of 2017, following the completion of a £4.2m, eight-classroom project (including a nursery) built to meet Yeovil’s growing demand for school places.

Northgate Primary School opened its doors in September 2017. Part of the Clevedon Learning Trust (CLT), the £7.4 million facility will eventually cater for 420 pupils in 14 classes, and has a nursery and a 3G artificial sports pitch for school and community use.

Following the merger and relocation of the (former) St Augustine of Canterbury School with Ladymead School to the new Taunton Academy, the St Augustine’s site and buildings have been vacant. The Capital investment Programme 2017 /18 approved the provision of a new specialist secondary provision (Hazelbrook Campus) on the former St Augustine’s site as an

expansion of **Selworthy School**, Taunton in order to meet demand for additional school places for children with SEND.

Our work around **school admissions** has meant that nearly 99 per cent of children in Somerset were given one of their top three choices in **primary school places** and more than 93 per cent have secured their first-choice primary school for the next academic year – this is an increase on previous years. Over 97 per cent of Somerset’s children were offered a **Secondary School place** at one of their top three school choices, a slight increase on last year’s figure despite an increase in applications

The **Attainment 8** system for assessing GCSE's was introduced in 2016, giving pupils their average score across the 8 subjects. Data for 2017 indicates an average score of 45.7 slightly above the England average for 2017 of 44.6.

The Council continues to work alongside partners to develop a **University of Somerset** campus on the merger of Taunton’s Somerset College and Bridgwater College. We are also working closely with the other colleges with a successful collaboration at Yeovil, to provide key university level courses.

2.3 Economic and Community Infrastructure

During 2017 the Growth Plan was fully updated and extended. The purpose of the **Growth Plan 2017-2030** is to attract and guide investment, to overcome barriers and maximise sustainable growth from local opportunities, benefitting Somerset’s communities, businesses and residents. The Growth Plan will inform and be informed by the **Heart of the South West productivity plan** and the **UK Government’s Industrial Strategy** through an iterative process as these plans are developed. It will be used to prioritise strategic economic development activity in Somerset.

Our key strategies and plans draw heavily on an understanding of our area created by data, consultation and working closely with partners. For example, the new Heart of the South West Productivity Strategy was developed using extensive economic data, wide consultation and collective leadership from a wide range of partners. The Somerset Growth Plan 2017-2030 has also been used to inform the development of the forthcoming **Heart of the South West (HotSW) Productivity Strategy**. The Productivity Strategy will be an overarching strategic document for the HotSW focussing specifically on plans to boost the area’s productivity and close the so called ‘productivity gap’. The Somerset Growth Plan and its forthcoming delivery plans will continue to sit beneath the Productivity Strategy, guiding interventions and investments in Somerset.

Overseeing the delivery of the Productivity Strategy is the newly established **Joint Committee** which will be responsible for driving our **devolution** plans. Local authorities outside the Heart of the South West have recently expressed a desire to work with the Joint Committee. Somerset County Council has been appointed by the Constituent Authorities as the **Administering Authority** for the Joint Committee.

Early 2017 saw a third **Growth Deal**. This Growth Deal is the next stage of the journey to build on these previous successes, and the ten projects funded in Growth Deal 3 address local and national strategic priorities that will deliver higher value careers, better infrastructure and improved productivity. As part of the Growth Deal;

- Through the development of **iAero**, an aerospace and advanced engineering centre in Yeovil, we are working with the industry and partners to sustain and develop this sector and support innovation in the supply chain and the development of new products and processes.
- The **Connecting Devon and Somerset** (CDS) broadband programme has seen
 - Nearly 300,000 homes and businesses in rural areas now have access to superfast broadband thanks to Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS).
 - Continued roll-out of superfast broadband through the CDS. Phase 1 has been completed with 335,625 premises connected across the entire CDS area. Take-up of the service was running at 44% in December 2017. Phase 2 deployment has begun.

Plans to upgrade **Junction 25 of the M5** have moved a step closer following the decision to grant planning permission. Somerset County Council has been working with partners to develop a scheme to increase the capacity of this vital link to improve traffic flow, ease peak hour congestion and unlock land for employment. This is a significant decision for the thousands of motorists who use Junction 25 every day and begins to unlock nearby land for development.

Somerset County Council has been recognised a **Band Three authority – the highest available - by the Department for Transport for the Highways Maintenance** incentive element. This in effect means that we are amongst the best county councils across the country, and it gives us access to extra funding in certain circumstances. Our **Asset Delivery Team** has improved the way we manage the highway asset to make sure that we target capital investment where and when it is most needed.

The **highways network** witnessed some of the worst winter weather experienced in the county for years. Highways teams used snowploughs, blowers, diggers and gritters working round the clock to keep main roads clear of snow and ice. Gritting crews covered more than **14,000 miles of road** in this time using more than **1,800 tonnes of salt**. Somerset County Council's fleet of **23 gritters** targeted the principal road network, while district council partners assisted in urban areas. Contingency plans to employ farm contractors to use tractors and snowploughs to clear snow were also activated.

Construction is well under way on the **Hinkley Point C** nuclear power station generating enormous economic benefits, including:

- Approximately £50bn of direct capital investment into the region.
- On average £200m per year into Somerset's economy, and over £40m per year during operation.

- Over £4bn additional benefit to the South West and South over the lifecycle of the power station, £1.5bn during construction alone.

A Leader of the Council non-key decision was taken on Wednesday 8th November to establish a **Somerset Fund** as an innovative step in developing a One Somerset approach to supporting community activity through grants, an area identified as a key gap by last year's 'state of the voluntary sector' report. Coordinated by the Somerset Community Foundation a key priority is to now seek corporate donor pledges prior to committing to launching the Fund.

A new website has been launched to improve engagement and develop better working partnerships between the voluntary and public sectors. The site offers opportunities for improved communication, collaborative working and will support the **Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector** (VCSE) to share news stories, case studies and good practice with other key county-wide public and private sector agencies.

3. Background Papers

3.1 General

- County Vision
 - <http://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/documents/s5133/Item%205%20-%20County%20Vision%202017-2021.pdf>
- Somerset Newsroom
 - <https://somersetnewsroom.com/>
- Council Internet
 - <http://www.somerset.gov.uk/>

3.2 Adults & Health

- Somerset Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2013-18
 - <http://www.somerset.gov.uk/EasySiteWeb/GatewayLink.aspx?allid=45804>
- Somerset Health and Wellbeing Board Annual Report 2017-18 (to be published shortly)
 - <http://www.somerset.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/somerset-health-and-wellbeing-board/>
- Somerset Prevention Charter
 - <http://somersetccg.nhs.uk/EasySiteWeb/GatewayLink.aspx?allid=5872>
- Somerset Mental Wellbeing Service
 - <https://www.smws.org.uk/>

3.3 Children and Families

- Somerset Children's and Young People's Plan 2016-19
 - <http://www.somerset.gov.uk/policies-and-plans/plans/children-and-young-peoples-plan/>
- Somerset School Performance 2017
 - <http://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/documents/s6282/School%20Performance.pdf>
- Ofsted Inspection
 - <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/local-authorities/somerset>
- Children's Workforce Development Strategy
 - <http://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/documents/s5136/Item%206%20-%20Childrens%20Services%20Improvement%20Update%20-%20Workforce%20Update%20Appendix%20A.pdf>

3.4 Economic and Community Infrastructure

- Heart of the South West LEP Productivity Strategy
 - <https://heartofswlep.co.uk/about-the-lep/how-we-work/productivity-strategy/>
- Connecting Devon and Somerset
 - <https://www.connectingdevonandsomerset.co.uk/>
- Growth Deal 3
 - <https://somersetnewsroom.com/2017/02/23/a-25m-high-five-for-economic-growth/>
 - https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/594137/SW_HotSW_Fact_Sheet.pdf
- Somerset Growth Plan
 - <http://www.somerset.gov.uk/policies-and-plans/plans/somerset-growth-plan/>
- VCSE website
 - <https://www.somersetvcse.org.uk/>
- Joint Committee papers
 - <http://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/documents/s5138/Item%208%20-%20Heart%20of%20the%20South%20West%20Joint%20Committee.pdf>
 - <http://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=357>
- M5 Junction 25 Highway Improvements
 - <http://www.somerset.gov.uk/policies-and-plans/schemes-and-initiatives/m5-junction-25/>