

CHAIR'S SCHEDULE AND MEETING BUSINESS PLAN

County Council Meeting – Wednesday 29 July 2020 (10.00am)

Chair of Council, Cllr Nigel Taylor, to welcome everyone to the virtual meeting of the County Council and remind those present that:

- It is only the County Councillors present that are taking the decisions at the meeting - others in attendance are there to provide advice to the Council.
- The agenda and papers have been published on the council's website in advance of the meeting.
- The Council will be making an audio recording of the meeting and this will be published on the Council's website in due course.

Cllr Taylor to further highlight the following virtual meeting good practice:

- Please use the meeting chat function only for purposes of the meeting, primarily to indicate that you wish to speak
- Please only speak at the Chairs invitation
- Please say your name before speaking
- The importance of turning off microphones and cameras when not speaking (with the exception of the meeting chair)
- Members and Officers are invited to switch on their cameras when they speak

Invite Scott Wooldridge to clarify what defines a point of order, how members will vote on the decision items and what will happen if members experience connectivity issues during debate on decision items.

Anticipating this meeting lasting for approximately 4 hours and we will take a comfort break upon the completion of Item 6 (about 11.15) and then before Item 8 (about 1pm).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Guide Time: 10.01am

Cllr Broom, Cllr Davies

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Guide Time: 10.02am

The County Solicitor will read out any prejudicial interests that have been declared by Members.

Details of all Members' interests in District, Town and Parish Councils can be viewed on the Council Website. Because of this there is no need for members to individually declare these personal interests in those other councils at the meeting.

Members are reminded that if any business of the Council relates to or affects a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest which you have declared you should disclose it at the meeting not later than the start of the consideration of the business in which you have an interest or (if later) the item at which the interest becomes apparent to you and you should leave the meeting whilst the business is being considered.

3. MINUTES

Guide Time: 10.03am

To confirm the accuracy of the minutes together with the appendix attached of the Council meeting held on 19 February 2020 and if agreed, the Chair will sign the minutes as a correct record.

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Guide Time: 10.10am

Public Questions / Statements

Note: The questions / statements / public petitions submitted by each member of the public are detailed in **Annex A to this Schedule**.

Chair to then invite all public speakers registered to address the Council and highlight that there will be a 15 second delay before speakers address the meeting. **Each speaker reminded that they have up to 3 minutes to make any key points and to try and not repeat points made by other speakers on the same matter.**

Chair to highlight that every member has access to the statements and questions that have been submitted and therefore speakers may wish to summarise their key points and focus their available time to put their question(s) to the Council.

Members are reminded that there will be no debate on Public Questions

- Invite Public Speakers in the following order:
 - 1) Alan Debenham – One Somerset
 - 2) Eva Bryczkowski – One Somerset
 - 3) David Preece – One Somerset
 - 4) Chris Mann – One Somerset
 - 5) Nigel Behan – One Somerset
 - 6) Susan Stevens – Covid 19 transport
 - 7) Lucy Travis – Covid 19 schools transport
 - 8) David Redgewell – Covid 19 transport
 - 9) Tracey Harding – Covid 19 transport

5. **For information:**

Guide Time: 10.55am

CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair's announcements covers information regarding visits made between February and July 2020.

6. **For decision:**

Guide Time: 11.00am

REPORT OF THE LEADER AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE – FOR DECISION

Review of the Emergency Democratic and Decision-Making Arrangements for the Council

Item 6 - to be introduced by Cllr David Fothergill – Leader of the Council

Chair to invite Cllr David Fothergill, as proposer, to refer to the report (set out on pages 31-38) setting out the current arrangements with recommendations for future democratic and decision-making arrangements including a return to the constitutional arrangements that preceded the 28 March decision.

Chair to invite Patrick Flaherty, Chief Executive and then Scott Wooldridge, Monitoring Officer to add any additional points for members to consider.

Invite Cllr Jane Lock as seconder if they wish to speak or reserve the right to speak later.

Chair to invite Council Members to ask questions

Chair to invite Cllr Fothergill to respond to questions

Following debate, Chair to refer Members to the recommendations to vote upon.

Chair to invite the Monitoring Officer to read out the names for members to then advise of their vote. Following the vote, the Monitoring Officer will inform the Council as to the voting figures and whether the recommendations were carried or rejected.

The recommendations are:

Democratic and decision-making arrangements

That the Council:

- 1) Notes the comments and recommendations from the Cabinet, Scrutiny Place and Constitution and Standards Committees as set out in this report**
- 2) Commends the Council's achievements during the emergency response delivered with the benefit of the emergency democratic and decision-making arrangements**

- 3) **Agrees that all of its committees and public meetings where it is the Administering Authority continue to meet virtually in accordance with regulations.**
- 4) **Notes that a further review of the emergency powers and operation of delegated decision-making arrangements set out in this report to the Chief Executive and his authorised officers will be reviewed by the Council at its meeting in November 2020.**
- 5) **Requests that further guidance on the council's website is produced to assist the public and press in participating and observing virtual committee meetings**
- 6) **Supports further development and implementation of webcasting solutions to enable live transmission of physical and virtual committee meetings, especially as part of the refurbished committee rooms in A block**
- 7) **Agrees and requests that the Leader of the Council lobby Government for changes to regulations and guidance to enable 'hybrid' meetings to take place where necessary during and after the emergency.**
- 8) **Agrees to revise the Council's Audio Recordings Protocol to a Video and Audio Recording Protocol of committee proceedings (Full Council, Cabinet, Audit, Scrutiny Committees, Health & Well-Being Board and Regulation Committee) and for the associated recordings to be published on the council's website and retained for a period of six years. Furthermore for the recording and publication on the website of partnership committees that the Council administers such as Somerset Waste Board and Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Panel to be recommended to those bodies to approve.**
- 9) **Authorises the Monitoring Officer to take forward the implementation of recommendations 3-8 above.**

Constitution and Schemes of Delegation

That the Council agrees:

- a) **To return to the constitutional democratic and decision-making arrangements set in the Council's Constitution and Schemes of Delegation (as at 1 March 2020) that preceded the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive's decision dated 28 March 2020;**
- b) **To return the scrutiny call-in arrangements as set out in the Council's Constitution**

(as at 1 March 2020).

Chair to call for 5 minute adjournment

7. For decision:

Guide Time: 11.20am

REPORT OF THE LEADER AND CABINET – FOR DECISION

Item 7 - to be introduced by Cllr David Fothergill – Leader of the Council

Chair to invite the Leader of the Council and that there will be opportunities for members to ask questions as part of each item for decision.

Leader to outline that this report has two matters for decision:

1. One Somerset, Local Government Reform in Somerset
2. Treasury Management Outturn 2019/20

Leader to advise that each matter will be considered and voted upon separately

Paper A One Somerset, Local Government Reform in Somerset

- Invite the Leader of Council as proposer to make an introductory speech and summarise the key points from Paper A on pages 43-197 requesting that members have had due regards to the Equalities Impact Assessment
- Leader to propose amendment of additional recommendation shown in red and invite Cllr XXXX to second
- Invite debate on amendment
- Vote on amendment
- Invite Cllr XXXXX as seconder if they wish to speak or reserve the right to speak later.
- Invite Council Members to ask questions or make statements
- Cllr Fothergill and / or Patrick Flaherty to answer any questions

Following debate, Chair to refer Members to the recommendations to vote upon.

Chair to invite the Monitoring Officer to read out the names for members to then advise of their vote. Following the vote, the Monitoring Officer will inform the Council as to the voting figures and whether the recommendations were carried or rejected.

The Council is recommended to:

- a) Approve the One Somerset Business Case (Appendix A);**

- b) **Authorise the Leader of the Council to submit the Business Case to the Secretary of State, MHCLG, for a decision on the future of local government in Somerset; and**
- c) **Authorise the Leader of the Council to submit further supporting evidence arising from ongoing engagement, and future consultation; and any requests included in the pending invitation from the Secretary of State, MHCLG, supporting this One Somerset Business Case.**
- d) **Agree to support the Leader of the Council continuing to seek consensus with the district and local councils across Somerset, towards the creation of a new single-tier unitary council for Somerset**

Treasury Management Outturn Report 2019-20 (Paper B)

- Invite Cllr Mandy Chilcott to introduce the item and speak as proposer
- Invite the seconder Cllr xxxxxx to speak
- Invite Council Members to speak
- Invite Cllr Chilcott and / or Jason Vaughan to answer any questions raised.

Following debate, Chair to refer Members to the recommendation to vote upon.

Chair to invite the Monitoring Officer to read out the names for members to then advise of their vote. Following the vote, the Monitoring Officer will inform the Council as to the voting figures and whether the recommendations were carried or rejected.

Recommendation:

The Council is recommended to endorse the Treasury Management outturn report for 2019-20.

Chair to call for 5 minute adjournment

8 REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

Guide Time: 1.05pm

Appointments to Committees and empowerment of deputy statutory officer posts

- Invite the Monitoring Officer, Scott Wooldridge to introduce the item set out on pages 249 - 255
- Invite Cllr David Fothergill to speak as proposer
- Invite the seconder Cllr Jane Lock to speak

- Invite Council Members to speak
- Invite Scott Wooldridge to answer any questions raised

Following debate, Chair to refer Members to the recommendations to vote upon.

Chair to invite the Monitoring Officer to read out the names for members to then advise of their vote. Following the vote, the Monitoring Officer will inform the Council as to the voting figures and whether the recommendations were carried or rejected.

It is recommended that the Council:

Committee appointments

- 1. approves the revised committee place allocations and appointments set out in this report and the Appointments Schedule at Appendix 1 (to follow) – see section 3.2**

Appointment of additional Deputy Section 151 Officer

- 2. appoints and empowers the post and postholder of Strategic Manager Finance Corporate, currently held by Donna Parham, as an additional Deputy Section 151 Officer (see section 4 of this report) with immediate effect.**

Appointment of Deputy Directors of Adult Social Services

- 3. appoints and empowers the post and postholder of Deputy Director Adults & Health Operations, currently held by Anna Littlewood, and the Deputy Director Adults & Health Commissioning, currently held by Tim Baverstock, as Deputy Directors of Adult Social Services (see section 5 of this report) with immediate effect.**

9 SOMERSET CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

Guide Time: 1.15pm

- Invite Jill Johnson, Chair of the Somerset Corporate Parenting Board to introduce the item set out on pages 257 - 317
- Invite Cllr Frances Nicholson to speak as proposer
- Invite Cllr Leigh Redman to speak as seconder
- Invite Council Members to speak
- Jill Johnson and Cllr Nicholson to answer any questions raised

Following debate, Chair to refer Members to the recommendations to vote upon.

Chair to invite the Monitoring Officer to read out the names for members to then advise of their vote. Following the vote, the Monitoring Officer will inform the Council as to the voting figures and whether the recommendations were carried

or rejected.

The recommendations are:

The Corporate Parenting Board requests:

- **That Council recommends a focus on the inconsistency of Council Tax exemption across the county and the impact of this on Care Leavers**
- **That Council invites District Councillor representation on the Corporate Parenting Board to provide support on housing and leisure issues**
- **That Council supports the commitment by Somerset County Council to create practical and specific offers to Care Leavers through our Local Offer**
- **That Council extend its thanks to the young people of the Somerset Care Council for all the hard work that they undertake.**

**10. REPORT OF THE LEADER AND CABINET – ITEMS Guide Time: 1.30pm
FOR INFORMATION**

Item 10 – to be introduced by Cllr David Fothergill – Leader of the Council

- Chair to advise item is for noting only and this is where Member questions to Cabinet Members will be considered.
- No member questions were received in advance of the meeting.
- Invite Cllr David Fothergill to begin and invite Member questions.

To be noted.

Member Questions to the Leader and Cabinet Members will be taken under this item in the following order:

- **Cllr David Fothergill (The Chair to invite Cllr Fothergill to present his annual report).**
- Invite members to ask any questions on the Leader's annual report
- **Cllr Mandy Chilcott**
- **Cllr John Woodman**
- **Cllr Frances Nicholson**
- **Cllr Clare Paul**
- **Cllr David Hall**
- **Cllr David Huxtable**
- **Cllr Christine Lawrence**
- **Cllr Faye Purbrick**

Following debate the Council will be asked by the Chair to note the Leader and Cabinet's report for information, the Annual Report of the Leader of the Council.

11 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL Guide Time: n/a

Item 11 – to be taken under item 10

To be noted.

12 REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY FOR POLICIES AND PLACE COMMITTEE Guide Time: 1.40pm

Item 12 – to be introduced by Cllr Anna Groskop – Chair of the Scrutiny for Policies and Place

- Chair to advise item is for noting only
- Chair to invite Cllr Anna Groskop to present key points from the report
- Invite members to ask any questions

Chair to thank the Scrutiny Place Committee for their report and that it is noted by the Council.

13 REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY FOR POLICIES, ADULTS AND HEALTH COMMITTEE Guide Time: 1.45pm

Item 13 – to be introduced by Cllr Hazel Prior-Sankey – Chair of the Scrutiny for Policies, Adults and Health Committee

- Chair to advise item is for noting only
- Chair to invite Cllr Hazel Prior-Sankey to present key points from the report
- Invite members to ask any questions

Chair to thank the Scrutiny Adults and Health Committee for their report and that it is noted by the Council.

14 REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY FOR POLICIES, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMITTEE Guide Time: 1.50pm

Item 14 – to be introduced by Cllr Leigh Redman – Chair of the Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee

- Chair to advise item is for noting only
- Chair to invite Cllr Leigh Redman to present key points from the report
- Invite members to ask any questions

Chair to thank the Scrutiny Children and Families Committee for their report and that it is noted by the Council.

15 HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT Guide Time: 1.55pm

Item 15 – to be introduced by Cllr Clare Paul – Chair of the Somerset Health and Wellbeing Board.

- Chair to advise item is for noting only
- Chair to invite Cllr Clare Paul to present key points from the report
- Invite members to ask any questions

Chair to thank the Health & Well-Being Board for their report and that it is noted by the Council.

Chair to thank all attendees and advise that the next scheduled meeting of the County Council will be on Wednesday 18 November 2020

Estimated Meeting Finish: 2.00pm

Annex A - Public Questions

Public Questions

PQ	From	Topic	Question/statement
PQ1 - 3	Alan Debenham	One Somerset	<p>Regarding Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), personally I still prefer the abolition of the County Council and devolution of much more 'unitary' power to Districts (using close collaboration over major matters as necessary and as currently exists via the Somerset Waste Partnership e.g.) and for Parishes to do a lot more of District Councils' local services work.</p> <p>In other words, devolution downwards, not upwards, to get things well prepared for the REAL PANDEMIC of Climate Emergency's even bigger collapse in social and economic order brought about by severe shortage of food and other essential resources : via big sea level rise, continued resource depletion and pollution, further biodiversity degradation, increasing severe adverse weather periods, and still escalating global population with preponderance of old people. All meaning very much more democratic and social engagement with individuals and families becoming essential, from street level upwards NOT County level downwards.</p> <p>Q1. Why is the SCC not taking LGR down this pathway to deal with the real extinction dangers facing us all, rather than bringing about yet another enormous democratic deficit in the sheer number of Councillors and Staff to be got rid of yet again at the hands of Tory government ?</p> <p>Q2. Once again, but particularly with the current pandemic, we witness more finances and planning being put on Councils via more powers being exercised by central Westminster government, making local 'government' more like local 'subservience'. When are we going to see this Council truly back the Layfield Royal Commission Report of 1979 in creating local GOVERNMENT, like in many other countries, which truly 'governs' and has the taxation fund raising and overall public services powers to do it?</p> <p>Q3. As we now witness from funding arrangements for the County Council and other Councils to assist in dealing with the serious adverse effects of the present pandemic, once again compensatory funding allocated centrally to cover extra services now demanded of local Councils is welcome, but inadequate, and causing yet more financial constraints on top of the decade of</p>

austerity cuts gone before. For 2021/22 finances it is anticipated that this will become yet more problematic with the extreme amounts of unemployment expected, therefore is it now forecast that this Council will require severe cuts in services generally as in the recent past?

Cllr David Fothergill

PQ	From	Topic	Question/Statement
PQ 4 - 6	Eva Bryczkowski	One Somerset	<p>1. THE GOOD NEWS</p> <p>The idea of the unitary option is a good one. It is supposed to lead to a massive amount of money being saved. This is excellent news for Council Taxpayers.</p> <p>Apparently, it will deliver better public services, integrated services, one single pathway for service users. Only one back office, thus driving down costs.</p> <p>What's not to like?</p> <p>2. A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH</p> <p>The unitary discussion should be put to one side as soon as possible because of the Covid19 pandemic. There needs to be all hands-on deck in order to prevent further deaths. As well as people and staff in care homes and keyworkers, the rest of the population in Somerset who might potentially have the virus, need to be protected.</p> <p>There may be another spike as a consequence of the easing of lockdown and the people who are not adhering to social distancing.</p> <p>PREVENTING FURTHER DEATHS IN THE COMMUNITY MUST BE THE NUMBER ONE PRIORITY. Excuse shouty capitals.</p> <p>Continuing to focus on the unitary option, administering surveys and the like, fundamentally takes resources such as time and money, away from what should be the absolute number one priority.</p> <p>It would be the height of irresponsibility to continue with the unitary experiment at this critical time while people are still dying.</p>

3.LOCAL DEMOCRACY AT ITS BEST

Parish and town councils have existed from 1894. Some are 2 tier, (eg Chippenham), others 3 tier, (Bridgwater).

Locals can see where things are bad and need to be rectified. They can contact their local councillor about it.

For example, play areas full of litter which need cleaning up. Locals can see where the potholes are.

Local council taxpayers won't need to compete for resources like they would if under a unitary authority.

Car parks.

Local councils bear the brunt of organising and paying for car parks. Yet the money made from them will most probably go to the unitary authority.

How is this good for local council taxpayers?

In Langport, the District Council closed all the public toilets. The town council took them over, kept them open, with massive savings compared to what the District Council quoted.

4. 'LEARNING FROM MISTAKES

'Those who fail to learn from learn from history are doomed to repeat it.'

George Santayana.

This is an oft quoted phrase but is still relevant today.

There are many examples that can provide hard evidence of the streamlining of various departments into one organisation.

It didn't work at all well in Devon, Wiltshire and Cornwall, to name but a few.

As examples from local authorities, other organisations didn't fare well either.

Aster Housing, of which I have personal experience of, integrated all their different departments and services into one organisation. Many tenants I spoke to found it was almost impossible to reach the right person and department.

5. 'THE HEIGHT OF INSANITY IS DOING THE SAME THING OVER AND OVER AGAIN AND EXPECTING DIFFERENT RESULTS.'

Albert Einstein.

Many LAs seem to be unable to learn from their own previous failures and also from mistakes that other LAs have made,

e.g. privatisation, thus doing the same thing over and over again expecting different results. For example, Atkins, whose failures lead to the Council having to bring it back in-house.

Plus, the debacle of the IBM Joint Venture South West 1 losing a colossal amount of money - seventy million pounds of OUR money, Council Taxpayers money.

Can SCC learn from other LAs' experiences?

There are many examples showing how the unitary option let down Council Tax payers in a massive way. But I will concentrate on Cornwall for now.

At local town level the vast majority of paid staff were replaced by unpaid staff and volunteers. Privatisation led to Capita being given the contract and they were in control of the above and other things. The few staff remaining, (eg cleaners), suffered greatly from outsourcing, as well as the quality of other services.

The unpaid staff took on a huge workload, making key decisions such as managing the budget. They were totally inexperienced and couldn't have full time jobs to supplement their income. The County Councillors would get a generous amount of money for their expenses.

A lot of areas were cut, for example paid officers' jobs.

In my humble opinion I'm sure that many LAs would privatise everything that moves if they could, often with disastrous results, often thinking that they are making savings when often the opposite is true.

Lovely buildings in Penzance were no longer used, much to the detriment of the locals.

Simply put, Cornwall kept rearranging the deckchairs.

It is useful to compare what happened in Cornwall to what might happen in Shepton Mallet if the unitary option was adopted.

At one time Shepton Mallet went downhill, the high street was dying, as in a lot of other towns. But then things changed for the better. Mendip District Council had and still have dynamic and imaginative officers and other staff working there which add to the mix. The Art Bank came along, with arts projects, gallery and cafe.

Compare this to Penzance. The District office closed down first. Local people used to go there to pay their Council Tax, see an advisor and other things.

Now they have to go miles away to Truro to see anybody about the above things.

Alternatively, they could phone up and spend what felt like hours listening to endless music.

Or do it online, which have enormous disadvantages for the poor or those with disabilities.

Councillors, do you seriously want this to happen to the people you are duty bound to represent if the unitary option was adopted?

Are you sure you want to spend colossal amounts of money creating new logos and the like?

Frankly, if you do want to do this, I think that you will be letting down Council Tax payers a disservice, taking a huge gamble with their money - like what the SCC did regarding the fiasco of the IBM Joint Venture South West 1. I realise that most of the people who did this are no longer here except the CEO. But it still shows how an LA like SSC can lose a catastrophic amount of other people's money. It is a

huge risk to go unitary.

The above examples are one good reason, backed by hard evidence, why going down the unitary route is a bad idea.

THE UNITARY OPTION IS BAD FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND BAD FOR THE LOCAL ECONOMY.

Let's turn our attention to Bridgwater. Of the 350 staff working there, how many will be transferred to Taunton?

If some or most of them are then their commute to work will add extra miles to already congested roads because many people in Somerset have to commute to their workplaces.

Working across different districts job security is likely to become job insecurity. This is bad for local economies across Somerset. And all for what?

A possible failed experiment and gamble spending Council Tax payers' money.

7. IN CONCLUSION.

As mentioned before, if we go down the long road of surveys, preparation, transformation and other requirements for the unitary option, then resources - personpower, money and time - will be taken away from what should be the number one priority:-

- The Covid19 pandemic.
- Preventing further deaths.
- Protecting care home residents and staff, keyworkers and other people in Somerset who may be at risk.
- Dealing with the possibility of another spike in infections.

Many care workers have been laying their lives on the line. The least we owe them is putting covid19 and every spare penny at the top of the list.

To fail to deal with all the above with due diligence is frankly unforgivable.

Q4. COUNCILLORS, DO YOU WANT THE SAME THING TO HAPPEN TO SOMERSET RESIDENTS AS IT DID IN CORNWALL IF THE UNITARY OPTION IS ADOPTED?

Q5. DO YOU OR DO YOU NOT WISH TO CONTINUE SPENDING COUNCIL TAXPAYERS' MONEY ON SURVEYS, NEW LOGOS AND OTHER EXPENSES INVOLVED IF THE UNITARY OPTION IS ADOPTED?

Q6. REGARDING THE COVID19 PANDEMIC, DO YOU OR DO YOU NOT THINK THAT DEVOTING RESOURCES TOWARDS MINIMISING AND PREVENTING FURTHER DEATHS IS THE ABSOLUTE NUMBER ONE PRIORITY, OVER AND ABOVE FURTHERING THE UNITARY OPTION?

Cllr David Fothergill

PQ/MQ	From	Topic	Question/Statement
PQ 7	David Preece	One Somerset	<p>Somerset County Council's Proposals for Possibility of New Unitary Single Tier Authority</p> <p>I'M SPEAKING TODAY IN OPPOSITION TO THESE RECOMMENDATIONS GOING BEFORE SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL MEMBERS FOR APPROVAL TO IMPLEMENT A SINGLE UNITARY AUTHORITY FOR SOMERSET.</p> <p>Going through your recommendations I wish to challenge these points in your summary:</p> <p>3.8 Significant savings</p> <p>Like the South West One exercise – A Failure. Against District Council's advice this, and that of our MP Ian Liddle-Grainger, was implemented by SCC which included redundancies, TUPE of staff, significant cost to the local tax payers for its implementation. After proving to be a failure in saving the promised costs annually. Then further millions of pounds were needed to extract SCC from the long-term contract they had entered into.</p> <p>3.10</p>

A Council has the responsibility along with District Councils to ensure it provides value for money in its delivery of services. That is why District Councils balance their books annually, in most cases even have surpluses, and this despite SCC annually increasing their share of the band A – D county council tax. I believe SCC are running a deficit at present and have been for many years.

4.1 Options 1-4

I would not implement any of these without the additional option of an Option 5 which would be to abolish SCC and its associated annual running costs, which I estimate to be in the region of £3-400m per year or more. That money, with significant savings, could then be transferred to the districts to support services. The buildings and site could be sold or let for commercial or part social housing. Thus savings from the annual Government budget for Somerset, which at present is administered by SCC in their HQ at County Hall, Taunton could be split and administered by the existing District Councils who would have increased responsibilities and financial powers, taking on responsibility for Highways, Schools, Social Care, Libraries and the other services that it seems the County Council over the last 10-15 years are incapable of providing satisfactorily for the service user.

Your One Somerset vision states closer working with the districts, but your statement says to abolish the District Councils. You cannot have both to cut waste and duplication. You state in 6.1 at this stage District Council's do not support your proposals, but you are ignoring them all and pushing this through during a world pandemic. This should not be finalised and voted on for 6 months or longer, with much further input needed by all parties and the Somerset citizens you are here to serve, a fact you seem to forget here at SCC HQ in Taunton. You talk of engagement with us the public on this matter, but your biased presentation in your documents and online media favours only a single tier authority administered here in Taunton. If a single tier authority was to be voted as a conclusion, then this would be a totally new administration, not one that is governed from an existing failing authority.

8.2

You talk of "we move ahead to implementation". You are and will not be in charge of this new Unitary Authority. It will be made up of existing staff from the District and County working in co-operation and working together (your words), but in your rhetoric you talk of abolishing District Councils. You are already top heavy in staffing, so therefore would not be taking on staff from District Council's who would have to be made redundant and their pension rights contractually paid which would be far in excess of the savings you predict of being £16.5m annually, or TUPED which would cost even more.

To finish, your proposed savings would include from Central Government a £20m grant/sweetener to encourage the Councillors at County to vote in favour of this proposal for a Single Unitary Authority to be adopted. This, in my opinion, would be better split between the District Councils 4-ways or if 2 of the smaller districts decided to merge to save costs 3-ways, still maintaining District Council status, this could rise to £6.2m per District Council which would go a long way in each authority.

7.1 Financial and Risk Implications

Business Case Appendix A the recommendations in this report demonstrate that moving to a single tier Unitary Council would deliver £18.5m savings per year with a one-off investment of £16.5m. The payback period is only 2 years. This one-off cost can be funded through a mix of reserves, asset rationalisation, capitalisation directives and re-investment of savings. This I find hard to believe! South West One all over again. TURKEYS DO NOT VOTE FOR CHRISTMAS

CLlr David Fothergill

PQ/MQ	From	Topic	Question/statement
PQ 8	Chris Mann	One Somerset	<p>There are two overriding reasons in favour of a single unitary council that I have followed. They are both financial and this is how the better ways of working in the One Somerset business case can be funded to manage the demands of a rapidly ageing population while attracting younger working individuals and their families.</p> <p>1) Two tier causes misallocation of income and priorities between district and county that would not happen under a single unitary council. While your council has struggled with funding essential social and childcare, my district council seems to have more money than sense. Taunton Deane announced in 2014 that would move into County Hall to reduce waste and duplication but then spent £7m renovating their original offices. They then merged with West Somerset under a so called 'transformation' programme with Ignite which cost citizens £10m including unplanned redundancies. This year they speculated £3m on a bingo hall and bus station in considerable contrast to Sedgemoor's Gravity Park.</p> <p>2) The cumulative savings are huge. If councillors had voted for a unitary authority at Express Park in 2007, they could have saved their citizens £200m in total annual savings plus £89m by not approving the defensive Southwest One, and the unnecessary Ignite transformation and property speculation.</p> <p>Devolving some services to parish and town councils if they want it would bring new clarity, focus, democracy and authority to the area where people actually live, especially to 30,000 Taunton citizens</p>

who don't have a town council.

I have listened to two scrutiny meetings and am impressed with the knowledge of your Leader and the experienced Programme Director, particularly on how Wiltshire, Dorset, North Somerset, BANES, Cornwall and 150 other authorities became unitary. Avoiding the need for time-consuming negotiations across five authorities and reducing costs by utilising the massive improvements in communications and technology over the last 50 years, is surely now just normal business reform.

Cllr David Fothergill

PQ	From	Topic	Question/statement
PQ 9-11	Nigel Behan	One Somerset	<p>These questions relate to Item 7 A) One Somerset, Local Government Reform in Somerset</p> <p>http://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/documents/s15521/Paper%20A%20One%20Somerset%20Report.pdf (Paper A)</p> <p>http://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/documents/s15522/Paper%20A%20Appendix%20A%20One%20Somerset%20Unitary%20Business%20Case.pdf (Paper A Appendix A)</p> <p>In a Local Government Association (LGA) report (15th July) it was noted that:</p> <p>“The Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government, Simon Clarke MP, today gave a speech looking at a <u>new deal for the north and looking forward to the Devolution White Paper this September</u>.</p> <p>In his speech he strongly backs a Mayoral approach and states that the Devolution and Local Recovery White Paper will establish “the unitarisation of councils as a vital first step for negotiating these mayoral devolution deals in the future”.</p> <p>And In the report (Paper A) it is stated that:</p> <p>“1.3. The Leader of the Council and the Cabinet want to see public services improve and better</p>

outcomes for Somerset's communities and businesses. The Leader of the Council has had ongoing dialogue with the Government about improving local government in Somerset, which appears to align with government's Devolution White Paper, which is due to be released in Autumn 2020.

Somerset needs to be working to influence the Government's Devolution agenda and the anticipated Local Government Review (LGR), rather than reacting after the event."

Q9. Will SCC be required to amend the Business Case in light of these proposals?

Q10. And will citizens, residents, service users, council taxpayers and electors be consulted if "unitarisation" whether, as a condition, "mayoral devolution" is imposed – or not (a Phase 3)?

The Business Case notes that:

"In Somerset, there are 278 parish and town councils, who vary greatly in size and the council tax they raise, and hence in the range of activity they undertake. Establishing a new unitary authority would be an opportunity to devolve some services and assets in a way that benefits our communities and both the unitary and local parish or town councils.

Below is an indicative list of services and assets that could be devolved where this is appropriate to local circumstances. It is not exhaustive. Devolving assets will need to be broadly cost neutral to both the town or parish councils involved, and the unitary council, in order to not cause financial instability for either partner. So, assets with income would need to be balanced with service responsibilities and costs."

And then lists an indicative menu of devolution options to parish and town councils (p10 - p11)

Also:

"The communities are supported by 278 local councils (parish and town councils, and the city council in Wells), with a combined income raised through council tax of c.£13m - this is known

as the precept. They cover all areas of Somerset, with the exception of the unparished area of Taunton.”

However recently some parish elections have had uncontested elections whilst others e.g. Thornfalcon, the election report on the SWT website noted “No election candidates have been specified for this area.”

Q11. If parishes and towns are to have more responsibilities, assets and cash to deliver services how can it be ensured that democratic accountability will be enhanced at the parish/town council level?

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PQ	From	Topic	Question/statement
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PQ 12-13	Susan Stevens	COVID-19 Emergency	Q12. In view of the COVID-19 emergency, what negotiations are underway by SCC to improve the rural bus and train services including extra services and to reduce the growing dependency on private cars. Q13. As Somerset is predominantly a rural county and has a very poor train network, shouldn't SCC be supporting an increase in bus services and innovative ways of providing this?
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Cllr John Woodman

PQ/MQ		Topic	Question/Statement
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PQ 14-16		COVID-19 Emergency	There have been recent outbreaks of COVID-19 in Burnham-on-Sea and also a Bath First Bus driver testing positive for Coronavirus after a bus passenger who had Coronavirus contacted First Bus after travelling on one of their buses.
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As part of the Department of Transport guidance for tackling COVID-19, all high contact areas in the public transport network should be cleaned to prevent the transmission of COVID-19.

In light of the new government message on public transport to "Let's travel safely this summer". Buses are being regularly deep cleaned but can you advise what cleaning is being undertaken by Somerset County Council of the following as these are high contact points:

- Bus stations such as Wells, Taunton including Castle Street, Yeovil, Bridgewater, Wincanton and Shepton Mallet interchange?
- Bus shelters

Q14. What social distancing measures are being implemented at bus shelters in light of the expected increase in people using these over the next few months as more people return to work / students and children to places of education. ?

FYI Social distancing measures and bus shelter cleaning is being carried out in Bristol and Gloucestershire.

Transporting children to school

Parents of school children across Somerset have expressed concern over what is happening to the availability of paid seats on all school transport (including SEND) and also public transport that school and/or college children use. There have been reports that some school children will have to make their own way to school because due to COVID-19 as there won't be any provision of transport.

Q15 Will there be additional buses to get the school children to school in bubbles in age groups? Will the transport be marked out for social distancing? Will there be different times for drop off's and pick ups? Will the children be required to wear face coverings? Is Somerset County Council aware of extra finance for school buses for September from the Department of Transport to support these additional COVID -19 safe transport requirements?

May we request and update on the position.

Q16. Frome Town Centre – The closure of Frome town centre for redevelopment work has had a significant impact on bus users and buses. There appears to be no funding or support was made available / put in place by Somerset County Council to support bus companies to serve bus users.

The Faresaver Buses x34 had to stop 0.8miles from the town centre forcing people to walk up a huge hill to the bus stop. I believe a request was put in for a shuttle bus. Additionally the First Bus West of England D2 hasn't been able to serve the town centre in one direction due not the diversion being achievable within integrated timetabling of the Discover service by First Bus West of England.

Also there were no bus stops / flags or any seating put in place in Cork Street or proper sign posting to inform regular bus users to where the bus stops were now stopping.

Also there were no timetables put up to help bus users.

These are County Council responsibilities.

Q17. Several Somerset bus routes haven't seen upgrading in their bus service as part of the Department of Transport COVID-19 bus funding of the 4 July. We have had complaints from bus users where routes that were every 90 minutes now run every 3 hours which means people can't get to work, hospital appointments and the to the shops due to the reduced frequency of bus services.

First South West routes:

30 – this is a vital route between Axminster, Lime Regus

99 – Chard to Taunton

54 – Yeovil to Taunton via Somerton

77 – Yeovil to Wells – vital connections to Bath and Wells

In view of the reduction of levels of service for these buses can you possibly talk to the Department of Transport to see if more funding is available to get these bus services restored to a 90 minute frequency.

PQ	From	Topic	Question/statement
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PQ 18-19	David Redgewell	Covid 19 transport	<p>We are very concerned about the level of cleaning going on under social distancing regulations on bus shelter stops and interchanges in Somerset , especially bus stations at Wells, Wincanton, Yeovil , Bridgwater , shepton mallet interchange and Stops in Taunton centre and outside Taunton bus station in castle way.</p> <p>Frome cork street coach station. and at local railway stations such as Frome, yeovil pen mill and junction castle cary Bruton Highbridge and Burnham, Bridgwater, Taunton, Templecombe and crewkerne. And on the west Somerset railway when reopened.</p> <p>We need social distancing notices on bus stops in the main towns and city centre and the need to wear face covering. With details of disabled exemptions, especially in tourist centres such as Wells, Burnham on sea, Glastonbury, Minehead, Frome, watchet, Brean and Berrow and porlock. Frome need clear signage due to town centre bus stops being closed and Bus stops at the railway station and Frome cork street coach station temporary. Shepton mallet needs timetable replacement after a fire at the interchange at the town centre.</p> <p>Questions</p> <p>Whilst we welcome all the good work on covid 19 bus grant and the 90 minute rural bus service across the county. Could we please ask why bus routes 30 first south west service Taunton chard Axminster connection for Lyme regis Bridport to Weymouth or Dorchester south station .x51 x53 . Route 99 Taunton to chard First south west</p> <p>Route 54 Taunton to langport somerton and yeovil bus station. First south west 77 wells bus station Glastonbury street somerton and yeovil bus station. First south west. With people needing to travel to work in shops and restaurants and public houses and medical facilities ?</p> <p>There is also a need to reopen Travel centres at wells and Bath bus station s and Main tourist information centres in the county such as Burnham on sea, wells, Taunton, Minehead and Frome for example to provide public transport network information for passengers.</p> <p>Can we ask when the services will be restored back to 90mins from 3 hourly using department for transport bus operators grant?</p>
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PQ	From	Topic	Question/statement
PQ 20-22	Tracey Harding		<p>Q20. Given that WECA and Wiltshire have multi-operator bus tickets is it something Somerset can look into instigating across its bus network?</p> <p>Q21. If Somerset becomes a Unitary Authority, If Mendip mergers with BANES will that mean WECA takes over the public transport services? What arrangements will be in place to maintain cross boundaries services with the rest of Somerset?</p> <p>Q22. What is Somerset County Council doing about reopening and fitting COVID secure screens at the tourist information points at bus stations such as Wells, Yeovil and Taunton? When are the other information points in the county going to open?</p>
Cllr John Woodman			
PQ	From	Topic	Question/statement
PQ 23	Gideon Amos	Kingsmead School	<p>Has the county council, as freehold land owner and lessor, approved the proposed new development at Kingsmead school Wiveliscombe under the terms of its lease and will it take account of the groundswell of opinion in Wiveliscombe that this should be a more sustainable zero carbon project and require its lessee, the Academy, to act accordingly in reshaping the project to meet higher environmental standards? Will it particularly require the scheme to use of 100% renewable energy?</p>
Cllr Faye Purbrick			