

COUNTY COUNCIL

Wednesday 24 November 2021

**10.00 am The McMillan Theatre,
Bridgwater, TA6 4PZ**



To: The members of the County Council

Cllr M Best, Cllr N Bloomfield, Cllr A Bown, Cllr A Broom, Cllr M Caswell, Cllr M Chilcott, Cllr J Clarke, Cllr P Clayton, Cllr S Coles, Cllr A Dance, Cllr H Davies, Cllr M Dimery, Cllr B Filmer, Cllr D Fothergill, Cllr G Fraschini, Cllr A Govier, Cllr A Groskop, Cllr D Hall, Cllr P Ham, Cllr M Healey, Cllr N Hewitt-Cooper, Cllr J Hunt, Cllr James Hunt, Cllr D Huxtable, Cllr D Johnson, Cllr M Keating (Vice-Chair), Cllr A Kendall, Cllr C Lawrence, Cllr M Lewis, Cllr L Leyshon, Cllr J Lock, Cllr T Lock, Cllr D Loveridge, Cllr T Munt, Cllr T Napper, Cllr F Nicholson, Cllr G Noel, Cllr L Oliver, Cllr J Parham, Cllr C Paul, Cllr H Prior-Sankey, Cllr M Pullin, Cllr F Purbrick, Cllr L Redman, Cllr B Revans, Cllr M Rigby, Cllr D Ruddle, Cllr N Taylor (Chair), Cllr J Thorne, Cllr G Verdon, Cllr L Vijeh, Cllr W Wallace, Cllr J Williams, Cllr R Williams and Cllr J Woodman

All Somerset County Council Members are invited to attend.

Issued By Scott Wooldridge, Monitoring Officer,- Governance and Democratic Services - 16 November 2021

For further information about the meeting, please contact Scott Wooldridge, Monitoring Officer on 01823 357628 or 07790 577336 or swouldridge@somerset.gov.uk

Guidance about procedures at the meeting follows the printed agenda and is available at [\(LINK\)](#)

This meeting will be open to the public and press, subject to the passing of any resolution under Regulation 4 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

This agenda and the attached reports and background papers are available on request prior to the meeting in large print, Braille, audio tape & disc and can be translated into different languages. They can also be accessed via the council's website on www.somerset.gov.uk/agendasandpapers

Are you considering how your conversation today and the actions you propose to take contribute towards making Somerset Carbon Neutral by 2030?



RNID typetalk

AGENDA

Item County Council - 10.00 am Wednesday 24 November 2021

Full Council Guidance notes

1 **Apologies for Absence**

2 **Declarations of Interest**

Details of all Members' interests in District, Town and Parish Councils can be viewed on the Council Website at [County Councillors membership of Town, City, Parish or District Councils](#) and this will be displayed in the meeting room (Where relevant).

The Statutory Register of Member's Interests can be inspected via request to the Democratic Service Team.

3 **Minutes from the meeting held on 21 July 2021** (Pages 7 - 16)

Council is asked to confirm the minutes are accurate.

4 **Chairs Announcements** (Pages 17 - 18)

5 **Public Question Time**

(see explanatory notes attached to agenda)

This item includes the presentation of petitions. Details of any public questions / petitions submitted will be included in the Chair's Schedule which will be made available to the members and to the public at the meeting.

For Decision

6 **Report of the Leader and Cabinet** - (Pages 19 - 20)

To consider a report with recommendations from the Leader of the Council, arising from the Cabinet meetings.

The recommendations relate to 2021/22 mid-year treasury management report.

7 **Report of the Monitoring Officer** (Pages 21 - 34)

To agree the recommendations and decisions.

For Information

8 **Report of the Leader and Cabinet** (Pages 35 - 62)

Item County Council - 10.00 am Wednesday 24 November 2021

To consider the report.

9 **Annual Report of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport** (Pages 63 - 82)

To consider the report.

10 **Annual Report of the Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Planning and Community Infrastructure** (Pages 83 - 102)

To consider the report.

11 **Report of the Scrutiny for Policies, Adults and Health Committee** (Pages 103 - 106)

To consider the report.

12 **Report of the Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee** (Pages 107 - 112)

To consider the report.

13 **Report of the Scrutiny for Policies and Place Committee** (Pages 113 - 120)

To consider the report.

14 **Annual Report of the Somerset Armed Forces Covenant Partnership** (Pages 121 - 128)

To consider the report.

Agenda Annexe

SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL – FULL COUNCIL MEETINGS

GUIDANCE FOR PRESS AND PUBLIC

Inspection of Papers

Any person wishing to inspect minutes, reports, or the background papers for any item on the agenda should contact Democratic Services at democraticservices@somerset.gov.uk or telephone 07790577336/ 07811 313837/ 07790577232. They can also be accessed via the council's website on www.somerset.gov.uk/agendasandpapers
Printed copies will not be available for inspection at the Council's offices and this requirement was removed by the Regulations.

Members' Code of Conduct requirements

When considering the declaration of interests and their actions as a councillor, Members are reminded of the requirements of the Members' Code of Conduct and the underpinning Principles of Public Life: Honesty; Integrity; Selflessness; Objectivity; Accountability; Openness; Leadership. The Code of Conduct can be viewed at:

<http://www.somerset.gov.uk/organisation/key-documents/the-councils-constitution/>

Minutes of the Meeting

Details of the issues discussed, and recommendations made at the meeting will be set out in the minutes, which the Council will be asked to approve as a correct record at its next meeting.

Questions/Statements/Petitions by the Public

General

Members of the public may ask questions at ordinary meetings of the Council or may make a statement or present a petition – by giving advance notice.

Notice of questions/statements/petitions

Prior submission of questions/statements/petitions is required in writing or by e-mail to the Monitoring Officer – Scott Wooldridge (email: swooldridge@somerset.gov.uk) by **5.00pm on Thursday 18th November 2021**. The Monitoring Officer may edit any question or statement in consultation with the author, before it is circulated, to bring it into an appropriate form for the Council. In exceptional circumstances the Chairman has discretion at meetings to accept questions/ statements/ petitions without any prior notice.

Scope of questions/statements/petitions

Questions/statements/petitions must:

- (a) relate to a matter for which the County Council has a responsibility, or which affects the County;
- (b) not be defamatory, frivolous or offensive;
- (c) not be substantially the same as a question/statement/petition which has been put at a meeting of the Council in the past six months; and
- (d) not require the disclosure of confidential or exempt information.

The Monitoring Officer has discretion to reject any question that is not in accord with (a) to (d) above. The Monitoring Officer may also reject a statement or petition on similar grounds.

Record of questions/statement/petitions

Copies of all representations from the public received prior to the meeting will be circulated to all members and will be made available to the public attending the meeting in the Chairman's

Schedule, which will be distributed at the meeting. Full copies of representations and answers given will be set out in the minutes of the meeting.

Response to Petitions

Normally the Council will refer any petition to an appropriate decision maker for response – see the Council’s Petition Scheme for more details. The organiser will also be allowed 2 minutes at the meeting to introduce the petition and will receive a response from a relevant member (normally a Cabinet member).

If a petition organiser is not satisfied with the council’s response to the petition and the petition contains more than 5000 signatures (approximately 1% of Somerset’s population) the petition organiser can request a debate at a meeting of the County Council itself. The Chairman will decide when that debate will take place.

Exclusion of Press & Public

If when considering an item on the agenda, the Committee may consider it appropriate to pass a resolution under Section 100A (4) Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 that the press and public be excluded from the meeting on the basis that if they were present during the business to be transacted there would be a likelihood of disclosure of exempt information, as defined under the terms of the Act.

If there are members of the public and press listening to the open part of the meeting, then the Democratic Services Officer will, at the appropriate time, remove the participant from the meeting.

Access and Attendance

This County Council meeting will be held at The McMillan Theatre in Bridgwater.

The meeting is open to the public but there is limited capacity for health and safety reasons.

If you do wish to attend this meeting, please contact Democratic Services on (01823) 357628 or email us at democraticservices@somerset.gov.uk

Seating for members of the public will be in the First Circle of the theatre which is accessible via a lift as this is located on the first floor of the building. There are designated spaces available for wheelchairs

COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the County Council held in the McMillian Theatre, Bridgwater on Wednesday 21 July 2021 at 10.00am.

Present: Cllr M Best, Cllr A Bown, Cllr M Caswell, Cllr M Chilcott, Cllr P Clayton, Cllr S Coles, Cllr A Dance, Cllr H Davies, Cllr M Dimery, Cllr B Filmer, Cllr D Fothergill, Cllr G Frascini, Cllr A Govier, Cllr A Groskop, Cllr D Hall, Cllr P Ham, Cllr M Healey, Cllr N Hewitt-Cooper, Cllr James Hunt, Cllr D Huxtable, Cllr M Keating (Vice Chair), Cllr A Kendall, Cllr C Lawrence, Cllr M Lewis, Cllr L Leyshon, Cllr J Lock, Cllr T Lock, Cllr D Loveridge, Cllr T Munt, Cllr T Napper, Cllr F Nicholson, Cllr G Noel, Cllr L Oliver, Cllr J Parham, Cllr C Paul, Cllr H Prior-Sankey, Cllr M Pullin, Cllr F Purbrick, Cllr L Redman, Cllr B Revans, Cllr M Rigby, Cllr J Thorne, Cllr W Wallace, Cllr J Williams, Cllr R Williams and Cllr J Woodman.

256 **Apologies for absence** – agenda item 1

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr N Bloomfield, Cllr A Broom, Cllr J Clarke, Cllr N Hewitt-Cooper, Cllr J Hunt, Cllr D Ruddle, Cllr N Taylor, Cllr G Verdon and Cllr L Vjeh.

257 **Declarations of Interest** – agenda item 2

The Vice Chair reminded the meeting that details of all Members' interests in District, Town and Parish Councils could be viewed on the Council's Website and there was no need for members to individually declare these personal interests in those other councils at the meeting.

Cllr Caswell, Cllr Groskop, Cllr Huxtable, Cllr Kendall, Cllr Leyshon, Cllr Lewis, Cllr J Lock, Cllr H Prior-Sankey, Cllr W Wallace and Cllr J Williams all declared a personal interest in respect of agenda item 9 as members of the local government pension scheme.

258 **Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 5 May 2021** - Agenda Item 3

The Minutes of the meeting held on 5 May 2021, after some minor amendments, were accepted as a true and accurate record and were signed by the Vice Chair of Council.

259 **Chair of Council's Announcements** - Agenda Item 4a

The Vice Chair of Council paid tribute to serving County Councillor Alan Wedderkopp who had recently died. Cllr Wedderkopp had been elected to the County Council in 2013 to represent the Comeytrove and Trull division. Cllr Coles, Cllr Fothergill and the Chief Executive also paid tribute. The Vice Chair asked Council to stand in silence as a mark of respect.

The Vice Chair then made a statement and a presentation on behalf of the Council to Mr Mike Prior who had recently retired as Superintendent from Avon and Somerset Constabulary after 27 years' service.

The Vice Chair then referred to events he had attended since the last meeting.

260 **Public Question Time** - Agenda Item 4b

Notice was received of Public Questions/Statements/Petitions (under 5000 signatures) and Elected Member Questions regarding:

Closure of St Andrews Ward in Wells

1. From: Eva Bryczkowski

Response from Cllr David Huxtable, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care

Closure of St Andrews Ward in Wells

2. From: Emma King

Response from Cllr David Huxtable, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care

Scrutiny of the Council Pension Scheme

3. From Sigurd Reimers

Response from Mr Jason Vaughan, Council Section 151 Officer and Director of Finance

Possible Outcome/Shape of the Local Government reorganisation process in Somerset

4. From Nigel Behan who was not present, so a summary of the submission was read aloud by the Monitoring Officer

Response from Cllr Faye Purbrick Cabinet Member for Transformation and Local Government Reform

Rural travel for cyclists and pedestrians in Somerset

5. From: Susannah Clemence

Response from Cllr John Woodman, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

Clearing multi-use paths in Glastonbury

6. From: Brian and Laura Sorensen who were not present, so a summary of the submission was read aloud by the Monitoring Officer. Cllr Munt, by leave,

directed the Council to read the submission from the Sorensen's as it was critical of actions and inactions by the Council. The Monitoring Officer highlighted to the Council that all the questions/statements received from members of the public had been published on the Council's website the day before the meeting and published in the Chair's schedule for all elected members to enable everyone to read them.

Response from Cllr John Woodman, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

(Full details of the questions and responses given at the meeting and/or in writing following the meeting are set out in Appendix A to these Minutes).

261 **Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Board** - Agenda Item 5

The Council considered a report from the Corporate Parenting Board and Cllr Mandy Chilcott provided a summary of the Board's report and recommendations on behalf of its independent Chair, Mrs Jill Johnson, OBE. A video, made by young members of Somerset in Care Council (SiCC) and Somerset Leaving Care Council (SLCC), was shown and Cllr Leigh Redman, Chair of the Policies for Children and Families Scrutiny Committee and Cllr Frances Nicholson Cabinet Member for Children and Families spoke in support of the work of the Board.

The Director of Children's Services thanked the Council for the commitment, support and challenge provided by elected members, and he noted the Board was seen nationally as an example of good practice, particularly its engagement with children and young people. Cllr Revans hoped that changes announced recently by the Government to 'Virtual Schools' would not dilute the focus and support of that service for children looked after. Cllr Jane Lock thought the Council needed more ambition for its children and young people, particularly those care leavers not in education, training or employment and she encouraged all elected members to undertake corporate parent training.

Cllr Mandy Chilcott, seconded by Cllr Leigh Redman, moved and the Council

RESOLVED to:

- Recommend a focus on the inconsistency of Council Tax exemption across the county and the impact of this on Care Leavers.
- Support and promote a whole Council approach to create practical and specific offers to Care Leavers through our Local Offer and the Care Leaver Covenant.
- Support and promote a Care Leavers Guaranteed Interview Scheme for all care leavers of any age, where the essential criteria of the job are met.
- Extend its thanks to the Somerset Care Council's young people for all the hard work that they undertake.

(Following a motion by the Vice Chair of the Council, the meeting was adjourned between 11.35pm and 11.45am)

262 **Report of the Leader and Cabinet** – Agenda item 6

The Council considered a report by the Leader and Cabinet setting out recommendations arising from the Cabinet meeting held on 12 July 2021 regarding the Business Plan for the Council 2021- 2023 and the Treasury Management Outturn report 2021-2021.

Somerset County Council Business Plan 2021-2023

Cllr David Fothergill, Leader of the Council, made a speech introducing a refresh of the Council's Business Plan, to provide a greater focus to the Council's ambitions and vision and he noted that it had been considered by all 3 Scrutiny Committees and approved by the Cabinet.

The Plan would be publicly available and had been refreshed to make it more accessible to members of the public and he thanked all those who had contributed to its production, including the all-member event.

The Business Plan would set the direction of the Council for the next 18 months and subject to local government reform any new administration would produce a new Business Plan for a new Council.

The Leader of Council invited the Director for Corporate Affairs to speak to the report and he reflected on the work to create it and thanked all those who had contributed. Cllr Rod Williams spoke in support of the Business Plan, and drew the Council's attention to its strategic context and how it provided an overarching and coordinated direction to the many strategies and programmes that sat below it.

Cllr David Fothergill, seconded by Cllr Mandy Chilcott, moved the recommendation relating to the Somerset County Council Business Plan 2021-2023 (Paper A).

The Council **RESOLVED** to:

- Adopt the Business Plan for Somerset County Council until 2023.
- Note that the business plan was flexible enough to continue as the strategic direction for authority until April 2023, conscious of, but not dependent upon any potential vesting day because of a Local Government Reorganisation decision being made.

Treasury Management Outturn report 2020-2021

The Vice Chair invited the Cabinet Member for Resources to introduce the report and she began by noting it had been approved by the Cabinet at its last meeting. The report provided a full-year review of the Council's treasury functions for 2020-2021 and had been prepared in accordance with the CiPFA Treasury Management Code and the Prudential Code.

The Cabinet Member for Resources noted the report provided details on the outturn treasury management transactions in 2020-2021, and it contained details of capital financing, borrowing and investment activity and the risk implications of treasury decisions and transactions. She also confirmed that during 2020-2021, there had been no external borrowing.

A positive cashflow had enabled an increase to investments and the pooled fund investments had a yearly net income return of 3.5%. The policy of no new debt and increased investment in pooled funds had resulted in a favourable budget variance of more than £800K for 2020-2021.

Cllr Leyshon thanked Officers for their work in supporting elected members to understand often very complex issues and using plain English in finance reports. She would be interested in the future to monitor pooled funds, internal borrowing and how long that might continue, as well as the amount of cash held by the Council.

Cllr Mandy Chilcott, seconded by Cllr Liz Leyshon, moved the recommendation relating to the Treasury Management Outturn report 2020-2021 (Paper B).

The Council **RESOLVED** to:

receive and endorse the Treasury Management outturn report for 2020-2021.

263 **Report of the Leader and Cabinet** – Agenda item 7

The Council received a report by the Leader and Cabinet summarising key decisions which the Leader, other Cabinet Members and Officers had taken since the last Council meeting, including items of business discussed at Cabinet meetings on the 21st June and 12th July 2021.

Cllr David Fothergill and Cabinet Members responded to questions from members as set out below:

Cllr John Woodman agreed to provide a written response to a question from Cllr John Thorne about the setting of fares regarding a Park and Ride contract.

Cllr John Woodman agreed to provide a written response to a question from Cllr Mike Rigby about school transport assistance for parents, were changes to costs due to ensuring PSVAR compliance for some vehicles.

Cllr John Woodman agreed to provide a written response to a question from Cllr Mike Rigby about when the Taunton area would have a Highways Superintendent.

Cllr John Woodman agreed to provide a written response to a question from Cllr Leigh Redman about existing Council highway projects in the pipeline for multiple funding and how would any additional funds be used for the benefit of highways users in Somerset.

Cllr David Fothergill responded to a question from Cllr Hugh Davies and he confirmed there was provision in the Council's budget for a new round of small improvement schemes for elected members to make bids, most likely next Spring.

At Cllr David Fothergill's invitation, Cllr David Huxtable, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, presented his annual report that reflected on achievements and progress made during 2020/21 and he stated that despite it being an unprecedented and challenging time for all it had demonstrated why adult social care work was so vital and valuable. He welcomed the achievements and progress made on the collaborative work in the integrated health and care system, highlighted examples in his report of how service users had been supported and thanked all staff in the organisation for their hard work.

Cllr David Huxtable responded to a question from Cllr Tessa Munt about what would happen to people whose care package was handed back by commercial providers and care could not be provided. Cllr Huxtable thought there were only a small number of such cases and he stated he would be willing to discuss individual cases outside of the meeting.

Cllr David Huxtable responded to a question from Cllr Tessa Munt about the different amounts paid to carers in Somerset and although the care issue was a national problem couldn't the Council intervene to address the problem. Cllr Huxtable explained that he was not aware of and did not recognise the amounts of pay referred to and he stated he would be willing to discuss any individual cases outside of the meeting.

Cllr Clare Paul responded to a question from the Vice Chair about the elected member Improving Lives Grant and she would consider a new round for submissions.

Full details of the submitted questions and responses given at the meeting and/or in writing following the meeting are set out in Appendix A to these Minutes.

The Council received and noted this report.

264 **Annual Report of the Audit Committee** - Agenda item 8

The Council received and noted the report of the Audit Committee, which was presented by Cllr Mike Lewis, Chair of the Committee.

The report covered the Committee's work including providing details of the 9 meetings it had held since it last reported to Council, and he highlighted how it provided an independent and high level to support good governance and strong financial management. The Committee's work focused on its responsibilities for corporate governance, internal audit, external audit, risk management, anti-fraud and corruption, Treasury Management and consideration and approval of the annual Statement of Accounts for the Council and Pension Fund. He noted that the Committee was reporting that most governance functions and processes remain well-controlled and delivered, based on the improvement in the value for money rating from the external auditors, the unqualified opinion of the Statement of Accounts, the internal audit opinion, and the Annual Governance Statement. The Cabinet Member for Resources thanked the Chair and other members of the Audit Committee for their hard work as it was much valued.

265 **Annual Report of the Pensions Committee** - Agenda item 9

The Council received and noted the report of the Pensions Committee, which was presented by Cllr John Thorn, Chair of the Committee and contained details of the policies adopted by the Committee to set a framework for running the Fund, along with activity during and performance of the Fund for the year.

Cllr Thorn paid tribute to Cllr Graham Noel for his hard work as the Chair of the Pension Committee since 2013, which included the initial pooling of investments as part of the Brunel Pension Partnership. There was a question about the composition and frequency of meetings, and the Director of Finance explained that the Pensions Board had not met due to some positions remaining vacant, and the Pensions Committee had met regularly. Cllr Healey, by leave, explained in his capacity as Chair of the Pensions Board that he hoped a recent recruitment for Board members would allow meetings to be held. Cllr Noel, by leave, explained that the Pensions Committee had a diverse membership to ensure Fund members and employees were represented. Cllr Fothergill, by leave, thanked both Cllr Noel and Cllr Thorne for their work.

266 **Annual Report of the Scrutiny for Policies, Adults and Health Committee**
- Agenda Item 10

The Council received and noted a report by Scrutiny for Adults and Health Committee, which was presented by Cllr Hazel Prior-Sankey, Chair of the Committee.

The report covered the work of the Committee since May and Cllr Prior-Sankey thanked her Vice Chair, Cllr Healey, and other members of the Committee and all those who continued to work across the care sector and NHS on behalf of Somerset residents. Cllr Huxtable, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, stated his appreciation to Cllr Prior-Sankey and her Committee for all their work.

267 Annual Report of the Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee – Agenda Item 11

The Council received and noted a report by Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee, which was presented by Cllr Leigh Redman, Chair of the Committee.

The report covered the work of the Committee since May, and he thanked his fellow Committee members and Officers for their support. He noted that the Committee was carrying some vacancies for co-opted Members and encouraged people to join the Committee. Cllr Nicholson, Cabinet Member for Children and Families, stated her thanks to all Officers that supported the Committee, the Vice-Chair and members of the Committee and noted the dedication of the Chair of the Committee.

268 Report of the Scrutiny Committee for Policies and Place Committee
Agenda Item 12

The Council received and noted a report by the Scrutiny for Policies and Place Committee, which was presented by Cllr Anna Groskop, Chair of the Committee.

The report covered the work of the Committee and its meeting since September 2020 to July 2021 and she encouraged greater interest and input from elected members into the Scrutiny function as this would be important in the coming years and she thanked everyone that had helped with the work of the Committee. Cllr Lewis, by leave, noted there was an issue with several closed foot bridges on national trails and he requested the Council to consider the impact of the closure of such bridges. Cllr Chilcott, Cabinet Member for Resources, stated her thanks to Cllr Groskop and her Committee for their scrutiny, particularly of the Council's financial reports, as their work was much valued.

269 Exclusion of the Press and Public – Agenda Item 13

The Council **RESOLVED** to pass a resolution under Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the press and public from the meeting, on the basis that if they were present during the business to be transacted there would be a likelihood of disclosure of exempt information, within the meaning of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

270 **Report of the Special Members Panel – Senior Leadership Team
Restructure** – Agenda Item 14

The Council **RESOLVED** to agree the recommendations in the report.

(The meeting ended at 1.40pm)

Chair of the Council

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Information for County Councillors



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| From: | Cllr Nigel Taylor, Chair of Somerset County Council |
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| Date: | 21/07/2021– 23/11/2021 |
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| To: | All County Councillors |
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Chairman's Report – 21/07/2021- 23/11/2021

July 2021

- 21 July The Vice Chair attended as a guest the Cocktail Party held at 40 Commando Norton Manor Camp.
- 28 July The Vice Chair hosted the Somerset Medal Awards at Taunton Rugby Club.

August 2021

- 1 August The Vice Chair and Mrs Keating were guests of the Chard Mayor at the Thanksgiving Service held at St Marys Church, Chard.

September 2021

- 09 September The Chair held a flag raising ceremony at County Hall for 999 Emergency Services Day.
- 14 September The Vice Chair and Mrs Keating attended the High Sheriff of Somerset's Garden Party as guests.
- 15 September The Chair hosted the Somerset Medal Awards at Taunton Rugby Club.
- 23 September The Chair attended as a guest at the Army Engagement Board Reception evening held at The Canalside, Bridgwater.
- 26 September The Acting Chair attended the Scouts AGM held at Compton Dundon Village Hall on line.
- 29 September The Acting Chair attended the online AGM for Somerset NHS Foundation Trust.

October 2021

- 3 October The Acting Chair and Mrs Keating attended as guest at the Somerset Young Farmers Harvest Thanksgiving Service and Supper.
- 22 October The Acting Chair attended a Royal Visit at the opening of the new building at Fairmead School, Yeovil.

November 2021

- 8 November The Acting Chair attended the opening of the new Digital Innovation Centre at Firepool, Taunton.
- 11 November The Acting Chair attended the Dedication of the Field of Remembrance and the town centre parade, followed by 2 minutes silence as a guest of the Mayor of Taunton.
- The Acting Chair, Leader of Council and Chief Executive laid a wreath in A Block Reception area at the Commemorative Plaque.
- The Acting Chair along with the leader of council, lay a wreath at the commemorative stone in the Somerset Wood.
- 12 November The Acting Chair attended the Court Leet Day held at the Municipal Buildings in Taunton.
- 14 November The Acting Chair attended as a guest of the Mayor of Ilminster the Remembrance Service held at The Minster Church, Ilminster.
- The Acting Chair and Mrs Keating attended the service of Remembrance at St Johns Church, Yeovil as guests of the Mayor of Yeovil.

Somerset County Council

County Council

– 24 November 2021

Report of the Leader and Cabinet – Items for Decision

Cabinet Member: Cllr D Fothergill – Leader of the Council

Division and Local Member: All

Lead Officer: Patrick Flaherty, Chief Executive

Author: Mike Bryant – Service Manager, Democratic Services

Contact Details: 01823 357628

1. Summary

- 1.1** This report sets out the Leader’s and Cabinet’s recommendations to Council arising from their consideration of reports at the Cabinet meeting on 15 November 2021.

Note: The references in this report to Paper A relates to the relevant report considered by the Cabinet containing specific recommendations for the County Council to consider and are appended to this report for reference.

- 1.2** **Paper A (Treasury Management Mid-Year Report 2021/22)** was considered at the Cabinet meeting on 15 November 2021 . The Cabinet endorsed Paper A and agreed for this to be reported to the County Council to consider and endorse.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1** **Treasury Management Mid-Year Report 2021/22** – see Paper A and its appendices that Cabinet considered and endorsed at its meeting in November 2021.

The Council is recommended to endorse the Treasury Management mid-year outturn report for 2021-22.

3. Options considered and consultation undertaken

- 3.1** Options considered and details of consultation undertaken in respect of the recommendations set out above are set out in the reports and appendices within Paper A.

4. Implications

- 4.1** Financial, legal, Human Resources, equalities, human rights and risk implications in respect of the recommendations set out in this report are detailed within Papers A.

It is essential that consideration is given to the legal obligations and in particular to the need to exercise the equality duty under the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to the impacts based on sufficient evidence appropriately analysed.

The duties placed on public bodies do not prevent difficult decisions being made such as, reorganisations and service reductions, nor does it stop decisions which may affect one group more than another. What the duties do is require consideration of all of the information, including the potential impacts and mitigations, to ensure a fully informed decision is made.

5. Background Papers

- 5.1 These are set out within Papers A and its appendices.

Report of the Monitoring Officer – Proposed Local Government Reorganisation Joint Scrutiny Committee

Lead Officer and author: Scott Wooldridge - Monitoring Officer and Strategic Manager- Governance and Democratic Services

Contact Details: 01823 357628

1. Summary

- 1.1** This report sets out proposals for the Council to consider regarding the potential formation of a Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Joint Scrutiny Committee comprising elected representatives from Mendip District Council, Sedgemoor District Council, Somerset County Council, Somerset West and Taunton Council and South Somerset District Council (collectively known as the Constituent Councils for the Joint Committee). Each individual council is considering the proposed formation of the Joint Scrutiny Committee (JSC) and delegating appropriate functions to it.
- 1.2** On 21 July 2021 the Secretary of State announced his decision to implement, subject to parliamentary approval, a proposal submitted by Somerset County Council for a single unitary council covering the whole of the administrative county of Somerset.
- 1.3** Following the Secretary of State's decision, the Cabinet of this Council together with the Cabinet/Executives of Mendip District Council, Sedgemoor District Council, South Somerset District Council and Somerset West and Taunton Council ("the Constituent Councils") agreed the need for a LGR Joint Committee to be established to provide collaborative democratic oversight for the implementation of the new Unitary Council and the first meeting of that Committee took place on 5 November 2021.
- 1.4** The Terms of Reference for the LGR Joint Committee provided for the setting up of a Joint Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise the work of the LGR Joint Committee. This report therefore outlines the proposals for the Joint Scrutiny Committee and attaches at Appendix 1 the proposed Terms of Reference for members consideration.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** That the Council approves the establishment of a LGR Joint Scrutiny Committee together with the four District Councils in Somerset constituted in accordance with and having the roles and responsibilities set out in the Terms of Reference attached at Appendix 1 ("Terms of Reference").

- 2.2 That the Council nominates eight Members from its overview and scrutiny committees onto the Joint Scrutiny Committee, such nominations to be politically proportionate and based upon the political makeup of this council.
- 2.3 That the Council nominates one of its nominated eight Members to the Joint Scrutiny Committee as the proposed Vice Chair.

3. Background

- 3.1. Following the Secretary of State’s decision, extensive collaborative work has been undertaken by the five councils to support the implementation of the single unitary council in April 2023. Through partnership the programme governance arrangements have been jointly established with oversight and direction from the Somerset leaders and chief executives. The Executives have agreed the Terms of Reference for the LGR Joint Committee and included provision for the creation of a JSC in those Terms of Reference.
- 3.2. The Monitoring Officers of the Constituent Councils have together prepared the draft Terms of Reference at Appendix 1 for Members’ consideration and approval. These Terms of Reference set out the various functions that the JSC will exercise on behalf of the Constituent Councils, together with the proposed membership of the JSC and its meeting and voting arrangements.
- 3.3. The establishment of the JSC will create a collaborative democratic mechanism which will establish a countywide scrutiny framework allowing the Constituent Councils to scrutinise the LGR Joint Committee in an effective and timely manner in relation to the preparation for the establishment of the unitary council in Somerset.
- 3.4. The proposals set out in this report will also positively respond to DLUHC’s expectations for collaborative arrangements to be established as early as possible in the implementation programme.
- 3.5. Joint scrutiny committee arrangements are already well established by the five councils such as the Heart of the South West Joint Committee and the Somerset Waste Board.
- 3.6. The Terms of Reference propose a JSC of sixteen members drawn from the relevant overview and scrutiny committees of the Constituent Councils, eight from the County Council and two from each of the District Councils (eight in total) with the Chair being appointed from the District membership and the Vice Chair from the County membership. The JSC to be politically proportionate as follows:-

| Council | Conservative | Green | Independent | Labour | Liberal Democrat | Other | TOTALS |
|---------|--------------|-------|-------------|--------|------------------|-------|--------|
| | | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| Somerset County Council | 33 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 14 | 1 | 55 |
| Seat allocation | 5 | | | 1 | 2 | | 8 |
| Mendip District Council | 12 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 23 | 1 | 47 |
| Seat allocation | 1 | | | | 1 | | 2 |
| Sedgemoor District Council | 29 | 0 | 1 | 11 | 7 | 0 | 48 |
| Seat allocation | 2 | | | | | | 2 |
| Somerset West & Taunton | 10 | 2 | 13 | 3 | 31 | 0 | 59 |
| Seat allocation | | | 1 | | 1 | | 2 |
| South Somerset District Council | 14 | 1 | 5 | 0 | 40 | 0 | 60 |
| Seat allocation | | | | | 2 | | 2 |
| TOTAL SEATS | 8 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 6 | 0 | 16 |

- 3.7.** Allocation of the above seats has been based on individual councils. This ensures the political make up of each constituent council is represented and is reflective of the fact that the Constituent Councils are currently individual sovereign councils.
- 3.8.** S15 and S16 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 impose a duty to allocate seats on committees in accordance with political balance requirements. S17 allows an exception to be made to the political balance requirements but only where no member of the authority votes against such a proposal.
- 3.9.** Any 5 members of the Constituent Councils, to include members from at least 3 of the Constituent Councils, may request a call-in of a decision of the LGR Joint Committee. The Chair and the Vice Chair of the JSC will consider call-in requests and will reach a conclusion as to whether to accept or reject the call-in in accordance with the criteria set out in the Terms of Reference and after taking advice from the Scrutiny Officer and Monitoring Officer of Somerset County Council.
- 3.10.** The establishment of the JSC will both promote the timely and effective overview and scrutiny of the implementation process and ensure that all Councils can play an important role in helping shape the direction of the implementation process but without leading to duplication and delay.
- 3.11.** The JSC will also be consulted and have an opportunity to make representations to the LGR Joint Committee in relation to budget setting for the new Unitary and any medium-term financial plans.
- 3.12.** The JSC meetings will be open to all elected members of the five councils, the public, partners and press to attend in venues around the county. Agendas, reports and minutes of the Committee will be published on the County Council's website along with details of meeting locations and times. The District Councils will publish a link to agendas on their website.
- 3.13.** A joint scrutiny committee may only be established following each of the Constituent Council's considering that decision at their full council meetings in November/December. Subject to approval, the first meeting of the JSC would

take place during January 2022.

- 3.14.** The establishment of the JSC will assist in promoting the timely and effective implementation of the proposal approved by the Government and in ensuring that the work of the LGR Joint Committee is appropriately scrutinised.
- 3.15.** The JSC will act as a Joint Committee under s 101 and s 102 Local Government Act 1972 and as an overview and scrutiny committee under s 21 Local Government Act 2000 (as amended). This will be to the exclusion of the Constituent Councils own overview and scrutiny arrangements as far as the work of the LGR Joint Committee is concerned.
- 3.16.** Each of the partners' legal teams and Monitoring Officers have been involved in the development of the Terms of Reference. The Terms of Reference set out the membership, role, duties and responsibilities of the JSC and the requirements upon the Constituent Councils in supporting it.

4. Options considered and consultation undertaken

- 4.1.** To approve the proposed formation of the LGR Joint Scrutiny Committee.
- 4.2.** Not to approve the proposed formation of the LGR Joint Scrutiny Committee
This would mean that individual councils would scrutinise the LGR Joint Committee individually. Such an approach would create additional work, duplication and inevitably slow progress.

5. Implications

- 5.1** Under the Terms of Reference Somerset County Council will act as the Administering Authority for the JSC during the months between its establishment and the creation of the Implementation Executive under the SCO. The District Council Scrutiny Officers will work closely with the County Scrutiny Officer in developing the work programme and supporting the JSC. The associated costs of supporting the JSC will be met from approved budgets made available for implementation of the unitary council business case.

There are no direct equalities implications arising from any of the proposals in this report.

6. Background papers

- 6.1** Appendix 1 – Proposed JSC Terms of Reference

Appendix 1

Local Government Reorganisation

Joint Scrutiny Committee

Draft Terms of Reference

1. Purpose

- 1.1 Mendip District Council, Sedgemoor District Council, Somerset County Council, Somerset West and Taunton Council and South Somerset District Council (“the Constituent Councils”) have formed a Joint Committee, known as the Local Government Reorganisation Joint Committee (“LGR Joint Committee”) in relation to the implementation of the Secretary of State’s decision to implement a single tier of local government in Somerset (“LGR”).
- 1.2 Paragraph 18 of the LGR Joint Committee Terms of Reference state that “The Councils will separately constitute a joint scrutiny committee or panel, the purpose of which will be to scrutinise the work of the LGR Joint Committee”. The Constituent Councils have therefore agreed to form the Local Government Reorganisation Joint Scrutiny Committee (“JSC”) which will provide overview and scrutiny of the LGR Implementation Plan and the activities of the LGR Joint Committee.

2. Governance

- 2.1 The JSC will act as a Joint Committee under s 101 and s 102 Local Government Act 1972 and as an overview and scrutiny committee under s 21 Local Government Act 2000 (as amended).

3. Scrutiny Function

- 3.1 The JSC will provide the joint overview and scrutiny function for LGR and the Constituent Councils will be asked to delegate the overview of the LGR Joint Committee functions to the JSC. This will be to the exclusion of the Constituent Councils own overview and scrutiny arrangements.

4. Roles, Duties and Responsibilities

4.1 The role of the JSC will be to exercise the overview of the LGR Joint Committee functions on behalf of the Constituent Councils in accordance with the powers outlined in S21 Local Government Act 2000 to include:-

- Developing a forward work programme of activities.
- Reviewing or scrutinising decisions made, or other action taken by the LGR Joint Committee.
- Seeking reassurance and considering whether the LGR Joint Committee is operating in accordance with the implementation plan for LGR and is being managed effectively.
- Holding the LGR Joint Committee to account by providing critical challenge to ensure that it provides the high-level strategic direction for the implementation of the new unitary Council.
- Reviewing progress in relation to the implementation plan and identifying to the LGR Joint Committee barriers to progress, best practice and possible improvements.
- Scrutinising the level of requests to be made to each Constituent Council for allocation from their revenue and capital allocations to support delivery of the implementation plan.
- Scrutinising the form, function, and constitution of local community networks.
- Scrutinising the development of the constitution and schemes of delegation for the new unitary Council.
- Scrutinising the plans to align existing change activities cross the Councils.
- Scrutinising the development of the unitary council's annual budget 2023/24 and the associated medium term financial plan.
- Scrutinising the development of policies and protocols for the unitary Council and across the Constituent Councils for use during the transition period.

5. Membership / Substitute Members

5.1 The JSC will be made up of 16 members drawn from the overview and scrutiny members of the Constituent Councils as follows:

- Somerset County Council (8 members)
- Somerset West and Taunton Council (2 members)

- South Somerset District Council (2 members)
- Sedgemoor District Council (2 members)
- Mendip District Council (2 members)

It is proposed that the relevant overview and scrutiny committee of each Constituent Council nominates members from their membership to the JSC. Any subsequent appointments or nomination of substitutes is a matter for the Chair of the respective overview and scrutiny committee of each Constituent Council.

- 5.2 Political proportionality will apply to those appointments (and to that of any substitute) and the political representation should represent the political make up of each of the Constituent Councils.
- 5.3 Each member will have one vote.
- 5.4 Members of the LGR Joint Committee or executive members of the Constituent Councils are precluded from sitting as members of the JSC.
- 5.5 The Chair of the relevant overview and scrutiny committee of each Constituent Council may appoint an overview and scrutiny member to act as a substitute where one of their members is unable to attend a meeting of the JSC. Substitutions may only be made on a meeting by meeting basis and if the appointed member(s) is unable to attend a meeting of the JSC. Any substitutions must be notified to the Scrutiny Officer of the Administering Council (as defined in Paragraph 9.1. below) ("the Scrutiny Officer") by 9.00am on the day of the relevant meeting.
- 5.6 Reflecting the importance of engaging with stakeholders across Somerset, the JSC will be able to invite representatives to meetings where it considers that they will contribute to the delivery of an effective scrutiny function.

6. Term

- 6.1 The Term of the JSC shall be co-terminus with the duration of the LGR Joint Committee or earlier in the event of a decision of the five Constituent Councils to end the joint scrutiny arrangements.

7. Work Programme

- 7.1 The JSC will maintain a work programme of activities. Constituent Council scrutiny committees may ask the JSC to consider matters for inclusion in the work programme. The final decision will be a matter for the JSC.

8. Reporting Arrangements

- 8.1 The work and recommendations of the JSC will be regularly reported to the LGR Joint Committee. Members of the JSC may make reports to their own Constituent Councils in accordance with their own governance procedures.

9. Meetings, agendas, reports and minutes

- 9.1 The administering Constituent Council shall be Somerset County Council (“the Administering Council”).
- 9.2 The Administering Council shall appoint a statutory scrutiny officer (“the Statutory Scrutiny Officer”) as defined in S9FB Local Government Act 2000. The scrutiny officers from the other Constituent Councils shall work with the Statutory Scrutiny Officer in supporting the JSC.
- 9.2 The overview and scrutiny process will be open and transparent in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 and meetings will be held in public and accessible online to ensure increased transparency.
- 9.3 The agenda and supporting papers will be published by the Administering Council and circulated at least five clear working days in advance of meetings.

9.4 The minutes of any meetings will be published on the Administering Council's website and circulated to the other Constituent Councils as soon as practicable. The JSC will operate in accordance with the constitution of the Administering Council. The Constituent Councils (with the exception of the Administering Council) will each provide a link to the agendas and minutes of the JSC on its website.

10. Frequency of meetings

10.1 The date, time and venue of meetings will be fixed in advance by the JSC, and a schedule of meetings agreed at its inaugural and/or subsequent meetings. The JSC will meet every 8 weeks. Dates will be published on the website of the Administering Council. Additional meetings may be convened at the request of the Chair or Vice Chair.

11. Venue

11.1 Meetings of the JSC will take place in a number of locations across the County of Somerset and will be rotated around the Constituent Councils.

12. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

12.1 The Chair and Vice Chair will be elected at the first meeting of the Committee by members of the JSC. The Chair will be appointed from the District Council membership and the Vice Chair shall be a County Council member. In the absence of the Chair and Vice Chair, the meeting will elect a chair for that meeting.

13. Quorum

13.1 The quorum of the JSC shall be 9, including members from at least four of the five Constituent Councils.

14. Declarations of interest

- 14.1 JSC members are subject to the Code of Conduct for elected members adopted by the Constituent Council that nominated them including the requirement to declare relevant interests at formal meetings of the JSC.

15. Voting

- 15.1 Recommendations will generally be reached by consensus, but if a vote is required it will be by a simple majority of all members present. Where there are equal votes the Chair of the meeting will have a second or casting vote.

16. Duty to attend, cooperate and respond

- 16.1 The JSC may require by invitation the Chair of the LGR Joint Committee and/or the Chief Executive Chair of the Implementation Team to appear before it to explain (in relation to all aspects of the JSC's work) any particular decision or series of decisions. The Chair and Chief Executive have agreed to attend if so required, unless they have a legitimate reason for not doing so.
- 16.2 Following each meeting of the JSC, the JSC's recommendations (if any) will be submitted to the LGR Joint Committee for consideration. The LGR Joint Committee will be required to consider those recommendations at its next meeting and respond to the JSC indicating what (if any) action the LGR Joint Committee proposes to take. The response should be made within 7 days of the LGR Joint Committee meeting and will be published on the website of the Administering Council.

17. Call-in

- 17.1 Any 5 members of the Constituent Councils, to include members from at least 3 of the Constituent Councils, may request a call-in of a decision of the LGR Joint Committee. The call-in must be submitted in writing or by email to the Statutory Scrutiny Officer, indicating its support by all relevant parties along with the reasons for the call-in and proposed outcome(s). The

Statutory Scrutiny Officer must notify the Monitoring Officer that administer's the LGR Joint Committee of the call-in request.

- 17.2 "Call-in" is a facility which members can use to challenge Key Decisions where the JSC has not been involved prior to the decision being taken or where a member believes a decision has been taken without the proper process having been followed.

A key decision is defined as:

- (a) Resulting in the local authority incurring expenditure** which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the local authority's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates; and / or
- (b) Significant in terms of their effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards or electoral divisions in the area of the local authority.

**There is no definition in the legislation of the word 'significant' in (a) above. Therefore, for the purposes of LGR key decisions the financial threshold at or above which a financial decision is significant (and a Key Decision) will be a total value of £500,000 for capital / revenue expenditure or savings.

Call-in of Key Decisions is subject to the following rules:

(a) General provisions:

- (i) Call-in should be used on an exception basis and not to unnecessarily delay delivery of the Structural Changes Order and / or the implementation plan for the unitary council;
- (ii) An individual Key Decision should normally only be subject to scrutiny once, whether pre or post decision;
- (iii) Key Decisions cannot be called in where the decision requires urgent implementation. Urgent implementation requires the approval of the Chair of the LGR Joint Committee and the Chair of the JSC and their approval shall be recorded in the relevant report;

(iv) Call-in only applies to decisions. Recommendations (for example, made by the LGR Joint Committee to any of the Constituent Councils) cannot be called-in.

(b) Scrutiny of Key Decisions before they are taken:

This should focus on ensuring that the decision-maker has all the necessary information, to take a fully informed decision and that any procedures have been properly followed. Any scrutiny review at this stage should not pre-empt the decision. The decision-maker must take the views of the JSC into account before taking the decision.

(c) Scrutiny of Key Decisions after they are taken but before they are implemented:

(i) Key Decisions are published to all members and the public (via the website) within 2 working days of the decision date;

(ii) Key Decisions (unless urgency is agreed) must be called-in (following the process outlined in 17.1 above) within 5 working days of publication or the decision will be implemented automatically.

(iii) The Chair and the Vice Chair of the JSC will consider call-in requests against the principles of good decision-making and will either agree the request or detail their reasons for rejecting the request in a report to the next available meeting of the JSC. In reaching their conclusion they will take advice from the Statutory Scrutiny Officer and the Monitoring Officer and a summary of that advice will be included in the report to the JSC;

(iv) A call-in must specify the subject matter, the reason(s) for it, information required to enable full consideration and the preferred outcome;

(v) Each call-in will be considered at the next meeting of the JSC unless an alternative is agreed with the decision-maker;

(vi) The JSC having considered a call-in will report to the decision-maker;

(vii) Where an item has been subject to pre-decision scrutiny of the process, post decision call-in should normally only relate to the decision itself;

(viii) If there is no pre-decision scrutiny of an item then the process and/or the decision may be the subject of call-in.

(d) Scrutiny of Key Decisions after implementation:

This should only occur where the decision-maker was required to make a decision that was time critical or at a later stage to gauge the effect of the decision. Scrutiny in these circumstances is not part of the call-in process.

18. Code of Conduct

18.1 Members of the JSC are expected to observe the “Seven Principles of Public Life” (the ‘Nolan’ principles) and shall be bound by their Constituent Council’s Code of Conduct in their work on the JSC. Members are expected to act in the interests of the JSC, except where this would result in a breach of a statutory or other duty to their Constituent Authority or would be in breach of their Constituent Council’s Code of Conduct.

19. Access to information

19.1 JSC meetings are regarded as a council committee for the purposes of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985. Meetings will be open to the press and public unless it is necessary to exclude the public in accordance with Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972. All agendas, reports, and minutes of the JSC will be made publicly available, unless deemed exempt or confidential in accordance with the above Act. The Freedom of Information Act 2000 provisions shall apply to all business of the JSC.

20. Rules of Procedure

20.1 Save as outlined in this Terms of Reference the procedures followed at the JSC meetings shall be in accordance with the overview and scrutiny procedure rules of the Administering Council. In the event of any conflict between this Terms of Reference and the relevant overview and scrutiny procedure rules, the provisions of these Terms of Reference shall prevail.

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Somerset County Council

County Council

– 24 November 2021

Report of the Leader and Cabinet – Items for Information

Cabinet Member: Cllr David Fothergill – Leader of the Council

Division and Local Member: All

Lead Officer: Scott Wooldridge - Strategic Manager – Governance & Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer

Author: Mike Bryant – Service Manager – Democratic Services and Michelle Brooks – Senior Democratic Services Officer

Contact Details: 01823 357628

1. Summary

- 1.1. This report covers key decisions taken by the Leader, Cabinet Members and officers between 13 July 2021 and 12 November 2021, together with the items of business discussed at the Cabinet meetings on 15 September 2021, 20 October 2021 and 15 November 2021.

The Leader and Cabinet Members may also wish to raise other issues at the County Council meeting.

2. Details of decisions

- 2.1. Agenda and papers for the Cabinet meetings held on 15 September 2021, 20 October 2021 and 15 November 2021 are published within the Cabinet webpages on the Council's website. Individual Leader, Cabinet Member and Officer key decision records and related reports are also published within the Cabinet webpages on the Council's website.

| LEADER OF COUNCIL – Cllr David Fothergill | | |
|--|--|---|
| Item | Date of Meeting | Summary of Decision |
| Digital Innovation Centre – Delivery Agreement Award and European Regional Development Funding | 23 August 2021 by Leader of the Council | <p>SUMMARY OF DECISION: The Digital Innovation Centre scheme has been developed by Somerset County Council, in collaboration with Somerset West and Taunton Council. It will deliver a new-build innovation centre on the Firepool site in Taunton providing high-quality business accommodation as well as specialist innovation and collaboration support services targeted at digital economy businesses.</p> <p>This report specifically sought approval for Somerset County Council to accept the envisaged award of £1.7m of European Regional Development Funding (ERDF) for the Digital Innovation Centre scheme; enter into an agreement for lease, and eventual lease agreement, with Somerset West and Taunton Council for a plot on the Firepool site in Taunton to accommodate the Digital Innovation Centre; and enter into a construction contract for the Digital Innovation Centre scheme.</p> <p>ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report.</p> <p>REASONS FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report.</p> |
| Contract Award Decision for the Appointed of a Strategic Partner to Deliver Children’s Homes, High Needs Fostering and Therapeutic Education | 14 October 2021 by Leader of the Council | <p>SUMMARY OF DECISION: This report outlined a compliant tender exercise that had been conducted following the Cabinet Decision taken on 21 June 2021 to secure a strategic partner(s) to develop homes for Somerset children who are looked after.</p> <p>A competitive dialogue procurement process took place in order to identify the supplier who demonstrated the most advantageous tender in terms of their ability to work in partnership to deliver improved outcomes for complex children and young people who are looked after by the local authority. Following the evaluation of the bid submissions a preferred supplier was identified.</p> |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | | <p>This decision specifically saw the Leader of the Council approve the award of a 10-year contract for the appointment of a Strategic Partner to deliver children's homes, high needs fostering and therapeutic education, based on the most advantageous tender, to the proposed supplier.</p> <p>ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report.</p> <p>REASONS FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report.</p> |
|--|--|--|

| RESOURCES – Cllr Mandy Chilcott | | |
|--|---|---|
| Item | Date of Meeting | Summary of Decision |
| Electricity and Gas Professional buying Organisation | 8 September 2021 by Cabinet Member for Resources | <p>SUMMARY OF DECISION: This report sought approval to appoint Crown Commercial Services (CCS) to trade and purchase gas and electricity on the Council’s behalf and for SCC to enter into supply agreements with the suppliers appointed by CCS for the supply of energy and ancillary services. The contracting opportunity was publicised Nationally via the Find a Tender Service in compliance with Public Procurement Regulations.</p> <p>The report highlighted that the Council would spend approximately £40,000 per annum on the procurement service and spend approximately £4.5 million per annum on Electricity and Gas. This level of expenditure is targeted to reduce during the term of the contract as the Authority enacts its Climate Emergency Strategy moving to be more self-sufficient in terms of energy provision and transitioning to Net Zero.</p> <p>The decision ensured maximum flexibility and will not tie the Council into a multiyear agreement. While there is uncertainty in terms of the total future requirements for electricity and gas this approach was evaluated as the lowest risk option.</p> <p>Note – Special Urgency procedures were used to progress this decision.</p> <p>ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report.</p> <p>REASONS FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report.</p> |
| Disposal of a Surplus asset in Ash | 14 September 2021 by Cabinet Member for Resources | <p>SUMMARY OF DECISION: This decision authorised the disposal of SCC’s interest in parts of the surplus asset known as Land at Ash.</p> <p>The Council is committed to the reduction of its property and land portfolio where practicable to reduce costs and to achieve capital receipts. The asset set out in this</p> |

RESOURCES – Cllr Mandy Chilcott

| Item | Date of Meeting | Summary of Decision |
|------|-----------------|--|
| | | <p>report is not required to support statutory operations and is not considered to have particular strategic value.</p> <p>The capital receipts from this sale will contribute towards the financing of the Council's 2021/22 -2022/23 capital budgets as anticipated in the Medium-Term Financial Plan, with any surplus being held in reserve for future potential investment.</p> <p>ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report.</p> <p>REASONS FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report.</p> |

| RESOURCES – Cllr Mandy Chilcott | | |
|--|---|--|
| Item | Date of Meeting | Summary of Decision |
| Supplemental Budget Approval for Public Sector Decarbonisation Schemes | 22 September 2021 by Cabinet Member for Resources | <p>SUMMARY OF DECISION: This report summarised the Officer Key Decision taken on 18 February 2021 to accept Section 31 grant funding, awarded to the County Council under the Government’s Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS), being coordinated by the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) department. The decision also authorised officers to enter into contracts and expenditure commitments for the delivery of projects to significantly reduce the carbon emissions from two of our largest sites at B Block, County Hall and Taunton Library, by significantly reducing the use of gas for heating.</p> <p>Following the detailed design work, and in the light of inflationary pressures in the construction sector, the original cost plan for the scheme had been revised and exceeded the scheme budget approved in February. This decision sought approval for additional funds, financed using available capital receipts, to enable the scheme to progress and to further support the County Council’s Climate Emergency Strategy, specifically the goal to reduce carbon emissions from the council’s operations.</p> <p>The report specifically saw the Cabinet Member: approve the updated gross project costs as set out in confidential Appendix to the report and approve the financing of additional project costs through the utilisation of surplus capital receipts.</p> <p>Note – Special Urgency procedures were used to progress this decision.</p> <p>ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report.</p> <p>REASONS FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report.</p> |
| Disposal of Surplus Asset at Nether | 29 September 2021 by Cabinet Member | <p>SUMMARY OF DECISION: This decision was required to enable the disposal of SCC’s interest in parts of the surplus asset, namely the farmhouse, adjacent barns, and circa 6</p> |

| RESOURCES – Cllr Mandy Chilcott | | |
|--|------------------------|---|
| Item | Date of Meeting | Summary of Decision |
| Stowey | for Resources | <p>acres of land known as New Stowey Farm.</p> <p>The Council is committed to the reduction of its property and land portfolio where practicable to reduce costs and to achieve capital receipts. The asset set out in this report is not required to support statutory operations and is not considered to have particular strategic value.</p> <p>The capital receipts from this sale will contribute towards the financing of the Council’s 2021/22 -2022/23 capital budgets as anticipated in the Medium Term Financial Plan, with any surplus being held in reserve for future potential investment.</p> <p>ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report.</p> <p>REASONS FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report.</p> |

| Item | Date of Meeting | Summary of Decision |
|--|--|---|
| Digital Innovation Centre – Acceptance of Getting Building Funding | 20 July 2021 by the Director of Economic and Community Infrastructure Commissioning, in consultation with the Director of Finance. | <p>SUMMARY OF DECISION: This report detailed the Digital Innovation Centre scheme developed by Somerset County Council, in collaboration with Somerset West and Taunton Council, to support innovation, collaboration and growth in the local digital economy and, thereby, to contribute to improving economic productivity and prosperity in Somerset. The scheme seeks to deliver a new-build innovation centre facility on the Firepool site in Taunton providing high-quality business accommodation as well as specialist innovation and collaboration support services targeted at digital economy businesses.</p> <p>The decision enabled Somerset County Council to secure £5.5 million of Getting Building Funding for the Digital Innovation Centre scheme a key component of the funding package necessary to enable delivery of the Digital Innovation Centre scheme to proceed and respond to evidenced need for high quality business accommodation and support services to foster innovation, collaboration and growth in the local digital economy and, thereby, will contribute to improving economic productivity and prosperity in Somerset.</p> <p>The Director for Economic and Community Infrastructure Commissioning, in consultation with the Director of Finance, authorised Somerset County Council accepting, and entering into a funding agreement with the Heart of the Southwest Local Enterprise Partnership for, £5.5 million of Getting Building Funding for the Digital Innovation Centre scheme, subject to confirmation of legal and financial acceptability of any scheme-specific terms and conditions.</p> <p>Note – Special Urgency procedures were used to progress this decision.</p> <p>ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report.</p> <p>REASONS FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report.</p> |
| Suspension of Garden Waste Collection Service | 29 July 2021 by Somerset Waste Partnership | <p>SUMMARY OF DECISION: The national driver shortage, various local factors and now the significant increase in the number of collection staff self-isolating (the ‘pingdemic’) all contributed to waste collection services being put under severe strain.</p> |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Managing Director | <p>Despite significant work on recruitment, retention and retraining this resource shortfall is forecast to continue in the near future.</p> <p>This decision specifically saw the Waste Partnership Managing Director agree to suspend the garden waste collection service for 6 weeks from Monday 2nd August, in order to release this resource to support refuse and recycling collections.</p> <p>Note – Special Urgency procedures were used to progress this decision.</p> <p>ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report.</p> <p>REASONS FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report.</p> |
| Decision to award contracts to deliver DfE-funded Technical Skills Bootcamps across the Southwest | 5 August 2021 by the Deputy Chief Executive, Director for Economic and Community Infrastructure Commissioning and Director of Finance | <p>SUMMARY OF DECISION: Following a successful Digital and Technical Bootcamp (Train4Tomorrow) pilot in the Heart of the Southwest LEP area during 2020/21, a bid for £1.9m was submitted to the Department for Education to deliver a further 24 Technical Bootcamps. Bootcamps have been developed by Government as part of the Lifetime Skills Guarantee in partnership with employers, provides and local authorities to help people develop the skills that are in demand in their local area and secure better employment.</p> <p>The funding secured will provide 22 bootcamps, for 719 people with 10 providers across the area. Providers will be required to enter into a subcontract with SCC. All appropriate contractual clauses and risks, within the DfE/SCC contract, will be passported into these sub-contracts.</p> <p>This decision specifically saw the Director for Economic and Community Infrastructure Commissioning and Director of Finance approve the issue of sub-contracts to the named training providers.</p> <p>Note – Special Urgency procedures were used to progress this decision.</p> |

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| | | <p>ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report.</p> <p>REASONS FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report.</p> |
| Approval to accept ERDF Grant Funding for the Chard Enterprise Park | 9 August 2021 by Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Planning and Community Infrastructure | <p>SUMMARY OF DECISION: This decision authorised the acceptance of ERDF funding and the signing the grant funding agreement for funding the design and build of Phase 1 of the Chard Enterprise Park.</p> <p>The Chard Enterprise Park (CEP) project phase 1 will deliver 591m² of enterprise centre space including office and light industrial accommodation for SMEs/ start-up businesses. The £1.75m ERDF investment secured by SCC will boost the economy with an estimated 58 full time jobs over a period of 10 years for the local economy. The works completed in the initial phases will unlock the site for further development in the future.</p> <p>Note – Special Urgency procedures were used to progress this decision.</p> <p>ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report.</p> <p>REASONS FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report.</p> |
| Appointment of Contractor for the Delivery of the Chard Enterprise Park | 19 August 2021 by Cabinet member for Economic Development and Planning and Community Infrastructure | <p>SUMMARY OF DECISION: The Chard Enterprise Park Phase 1 is a scheme to create around 58 full time jobs, boost office and light industrial space and counter the impacts of losing a major employer in the Chard area. The town is an important centre in the county for economic activity which has a need to diversify the economy by growing and adding productivity to smaller companies - the decision supports the delivery of the Chard Enterprise Park in accordance with the current SCC business plan.</p> <p>The decision specifically saw the Cabinet Member authorise SCC entering into a call-off contract with the contractor identified in the confidential appendix for the design and build of the Chard Enterprise Park (CEP) Phase 1 in accordance with the call-off procedure in the National Major Works Framework Agreement between Scape System</p> |

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| | | <p>Build Limited and the preferred contractor for a sum of up to £3,308,100 (this sum includes pre-construction fees of £407,646 which have already been committed), and delegated to the Director for Economic and Community Infrastructure Commissioning the authority to finalise the terms of the contract in consultation with advice from the SCC legal and SCC Property services teams.</p> <p>ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report.</p> <p>REASONS FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report.</p> |
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| ADULT SOCIAL CARE – Cllr David Huxtable | | |
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| Item | Date of Meeting | Summary of Decision |
| Appointment of a Managed Service to Undertake ASC Statutory Reviews | 8 November 2021 by the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care | <p>SUMMARY OF DECISION: This decision The County Council has a statutory duty to conduct regular reviews of the support to individuals where social care needs have been assessed and are funded by the local authority. Somerset County Council is experiencing high demand volumes into the Adult Social Care (ASC) locality teams. This is reflective of the position and pressure on Adult Social Care across the country.</p> <p>The locality teams are having to prioritise new contacts and assessment work, and therefore, it is important that the ASC assessment process is prioritised to ensure consistency with the model of working and adherence to the Promoting Independence Strategy. The SCC are therefore looking at outsourcing the Adult Social Care review work to enable the locality teams to focus on providing quality assessments in a timely way and looked to outsourcing review work, with the contract going live early November 2021.</p> <p>That the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care specifically endorsed the procurement process and approved the contract award and recommendations detailed in the report for the provision of a managed service for Adult Social Care statutory reviews.</p> <p>Note – Special Urgency procedures were used to progress this decision.</p> <p>ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report.</p> <p>REASONS FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report.</p> |

| CUSTOMERS AND COMMUNITIES – Cllr Christine Lawrence | | |
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| Item | Date of Meeting | Summary of Decision |
| No individual | n/a | n/a |

decisions

EDUCATION AND PUBLIC HEALTH – Cllr Clare Paul

| Item | Date of Meeting | Summary of Decision |
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| Mental Health Promotion and Support | 10 August 2021 by Deputy Director Public Health | <p>SUMMARY OF DECISION: The Contain Outbreak Management Funding (COMF) is funding allocated by the Department for Health and Social Care to Somerset to support public health activities directly related to the Covid-19 response, including reducing transmission of the virus, surge testing, non-financial support for self-isolation, support to particular groups who have been disproportionately impacted</p> <p>On the 2 June 2021 as part of a Leader of the Council decision, it was agreed for £1.2 million pound investment to be made for mental health promotion and support in recognition of the challenges to mental health and wellbeing presented by the pandemic. This decision paper relates to £810k of the £1.2 million investment.</p> <p>The decision specifically saw funding approved for three areas of support: community focused positive mental health; targeted interventions; and a five ways to wellbeing community grants programme.</p> <p>ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report.</p> <p>REASONS FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report.</p> |
| Building Works to Facilitate the Transition of School Organisation in Crewkerne and Ilminster | 31 August 2021 by Cabinet Member for Education and Public Health | <p>SUMMARY OF DECISION: On 17th March 2021 Cabinet approved a key decision which sought to move schools into Crewkerne and Ilminster from the current three tier structure to two tiers. This decision relates to the next stage of the plan to revamp education in the area, starting with key appointments and tendering of planned works. It will see £3.5m spent on a number of schools which require remodelling of space in order to welcome pupils from September 2022.</p> <p>The report specifically saw approval granted for the Council to proceed to tender for all transitions works within Crewkerne and Ilminster area, including the tender of furniture and ICT, to a total value of £3.5m.</p> |

| EDUCATION AND PUBLIC HEALTH – Cllr Clare Paul | | |
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| Item | Date of Meeting | Summary of Decision |
| | | <p>ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report.</p> <p>REASONS FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report.</p> |

| CHILDREN AND FAMILIES – Cllr Frances Nicholson | | |
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| Item | Date of Meeting | Summary of Decision |
| Free School Meal Vouchers – Summer 2021 | 30 July 2021 by Cabinet Member for Children and Families | <p>SUMMARY OF DECISION: This decision saw the Cabinet Member agree to the allocation of £1,324,242 of the government issued grant funding to schools and colleges to fund vouchers to meet the needs of children and young people on free school meals for the 6-week summer holiday. This allocation included a 15% discretionary allowance to enable schools to provide vouchers to other children who they consider would benefit from this support. The decision further agreed the allocation of the remaining £134,151 of funding ensure individuals and families are able to meet the cost of household essentials such as energy, and to ensure direct provision of food to those who will not be supported through the provision of food vouchers through schools. It was agreed that this would be completed via the network of voluntary and community groups which work with a range of local projects, and will be overseen by and reported via the Community Resilience Partnership.</p> <p>Note – Special Urgency procedures were used to progress this decision.</p> <p>ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report.</p> <p>REASONS FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report.</p> |
| Approval to increase registered places at Fairmead and | 4 August 2021 by Cabinet Member for Children and | SUMMARY OF DECISION: The Local Authority has a statutory duty to provide children with good quality school places - this decision authorised arrangements to expand the two community special schools in Yeovil – namely, Fairmead School at Victoria Road |

| <i>CHILDREN AND FAMILIES – Cllr Frances Nicholson</i> | | |
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| Item | Date of Meeting | Summary of Decision |
| Fiveways Schools – Statutory Consolutions | Families | <p>and Fiveways at Mudford Road - in order to meet the increasing demands for specialist school places in the locality.</p> <p>The report specifically saw the Cabinet Member: accept the report on the statutory consultation process; and instruct officers to proceed in line with the stated proposals - Fairmead School to increase its registration from 80 places to 140 places and for Fiveways School to increase its registration from 70 places to 100 places.</p> <p>ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report.</p> <p>REASONS FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report.</p> |

| <i>COUNCIL TRANSFORMATION – Cllr Faye Purbrick</i> | | |
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| Item | Date of Meeting | Summary of Decision |

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| <p>To consider a proposal for a Local Government Reorganisation Joint Committee</p> | <p>20 October 2021 by Cabinet</p> | <p>SUMMARY OF DECISION: This report sought approval for the establishment of a Local Government Reorganisation Joint Committee (LGR Joint Committee) with Mendip District Council, Sedgemoor District Council, South Somerset District Council and Somerset West and Taunton District Council (collectively, with the addition of Somerset County Council, the Constituent Councils).</p> <p>On 21 July 2021 the Secretary of State announced his decision to implement, subject to parliamentary approval, a proposal submitted by Somerset County Council for a single unitary council covering the whole of the administrative county of Somerset. It is anticipated that the main enabling legislation (the Structural Changes Order) will be laid before Parliament to consider from January 2022 and will take effect in March 2022. The Structural Change Order (SCO) will establish an Implementation Executive (an executive committee) which will be responsible for preparing for and facilitating the transfer of each of the Somerset councils' ("Constituent Councils") functions, property, assets, rights, liabilities and investments to the unitary council as well as various other transitional functions pending the establishment of the unitary council in April 2023</p> <p>There are a number of actions and decisions that will need to be taken by the Constituent Councils before the establishment of the Implementation Executive in order to provide collaborative oversight of the implementation and to deal with ancillary matters arising where liaison with the new Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) is needed (the DLUHC has replaced the former Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government). The leaders of each of the Constituent Councils endorse the need for a joint committee to be established to provide collaborative democratic oversight and transparency for these actions and decisions. The proposed formation of a Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Joint Committee is being considered by each of the five councils' Cabinets during October with the aim that the first meeting is held on 5 November 2021.</p> |
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| | | <p>The decision specifically saw the Cabinet agree to the establishment of Joint Committee as per the functions in the terms of reference appended to the report.</p> <p>ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report.</p> <p>REASONS FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report.</p> |
| <p>Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Somerset: Decision to Award Contract for an Independent Expert Advice and Quality Assurance (QA) Partner</p> | <p>5 November 2021 by Chief Executive</p> | <p>SUMMARY OF DECISION: This report outlined the requirements of a robust implementation plan and delivery of a single unitary council for Somerset and the need for sufficient quality to deliver the financial and non-financial benefits outlined in the Business Case. Specifically a need was identified for independent quality assurance capacity to provide critical friend challenge and advice to the Programme Team during the implementation phase.</p> <p>This decision specifically saw the Chief Executive agree to award a contract to PwC to act as consultants to provide professional quality assurance to support delivery of a single unitary council for Somerset, for a fixed term from October 2021 to 1 July 2023, and as defined in the appendix to the report.</p> <p>Note – Special Urgency procedures were used to progress this decision.</p> <p>ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report.</p> <p>REASONS FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report.</p> |

| HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT – Cllr John Woodman | | |
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| Item | Date of Meeting | Summary of Decision |
| Supply of new vehicles for transporting Somerset | 29 July 2021 by Economic and Community Infrastructure Operations Director | <p>SUMMARY OF DECISION: This report detailed that each year Transporting Somerset submit bids through the Capital Investment Programme to replace life expired vehicles for the County Fleet as a whole including Transporting Somerset's in-house Passenger Transport Fleet. Remaining in the current approved Capital Investment Programme up to the end of 2020/21 is the sum of £1,154,900. This decision sought to authorise the purchase of 9 large minibuses and 9 small minibuses. This decision also sought to vary the procurement approach to enable the service to go out to tender for the purchase of two EV vehicles in light of the council's Climate Emergency Strategy.</p> <p>The decision specifically the Director of Economic and Community Infrastructure Operations authorise the award of call-off contracts for the supply of 9 Large 16 seat Minibuses, 9 Small 7 to 12 seat Minibuses/People Carriers under a Framework Agreement. The decision further authorised the commencement of the procurement of 2 Small 7 to 12 seat EV Minibuses/People Carriers. Full financial details were explained in the confidential appendix to the report.</p> <p>ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report.</p> <p>REASONS FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report.</p> |
| Allocation of Additional Highways Grant 21-22 | 10 August 2021 by Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport | <p>SUMMARY OF DECISION: The report detailed that the Council had received a 2021/22 highways grant allocation of £30.338m from the Department for Transport which is £6.657m higher than the prudent planning assumptions used in agreeing the current capital programme in February 2021. This decision allocated the additional grant into specific highways programme areas and schemes in order to accommodate a range of highways capital pressures.</p> <p>The proposed allocation of the additional funding included contributions to the highways basic needs maintenance programme; major highways scheme</p> |

HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT – *Cllr John Woodman*

| Item | Date of Meeting | Summary of Decision |
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| | | <p>improvements; emergency works in the Chard area; the decarbonisation innovation project; and highways asset management plan support.</p> <p>ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report.</p> <p>REASONS FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report.</p> |

| HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT – Cllr John Woodman | | |
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| Item | Date of Meeting | Summary of Decision |
| Somerset Enabling Growth – Adoption of Charter and Associated Policy Documents | 24 September 2021 by Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport | <p>SUMMARY OF DECISION: The report detailed the five Somerset Council’s joint work on an ‘end-to end’ review of the development planning process in Somerset, the ‘Enabling Growth’ programme. This is a joint and wide-ranging improvement programme aimed at streamlining the planning process across the whole system that focuses on the framework of highways and transport policies and guidance that supports the role of the Highway.</p> <p>This decision saw the Cabinet Member approve the adoption of several policy and guidance documents as Council policy in support of the Somerset Future Transport Plan 2011-2026, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Somerset Growth Charter January 2021. • Streets in Residential Developments Design Guidance Notes, May 2021 ‘The Red Book’. • Transport Assessment, Transport Statements and Travel Plan Scoping Guidance – SHIP 26/21. • Standing Advice for Planning Applications – STAN 26/20. <p>Furthermore, the Cabinet Member delegated authority to the Strategic Commissioning Manager for Highways and Transport to finalise the detail of the technical guidance and to update the guidance to ensure consistency with national advice.</p> <p>ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report.</p> <p>REASONS FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report.</p> |

HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT – Cllr John Woodman

| Item | Date of Meeting | Summary of Decision |
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| Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) | 20 October 2021 by Cabinet | <p>SUMMARY OF DECISION: In March 2021, the government launched the new National Bus Strategy – ‘Bus Back Better’ with the overall aim of transforming local bus services. Under this new strategy the expectation is that Local Transport Authority’s will enter agreements with local bus operators to develop and deliver improvements across local bus services. Transport Authorities are to work in partnership with local bus operators to create and publish a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) by the end of October 2021. The BSIP needs to set out the high-level ambition for public transport in Somerset, summarising the current offer, the gaps in provision and the action required to bridge the gaps.</p> <p>This decision saw the Cabinet approve the content of the Initial Somerset Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), along with appropriate delegation to officers to ensure work on the plan can progress, along with agreement to establish a Bus Advisory Board and associated user forum.</p> <p>ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report.</p> <p>REASONS FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report.</p> |

| CROSS CUTTING – All | | |
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| Item | Date of Meeting | Summary of Decision |
| Social Care Accommodation – acquisition of homes for children’s services | 13 July 2021 by Cabinet Member for Resources and Cabinet Member for Children and Families | <p>SUMMARY OF DECISION: As part of a programme of investment by the Council in residential properties, capital funding of £3m has been secured in the 21/22 financial year to purchase a number of homes for use by Children's Services to increase the Council's own capacity and ability to respond more effectively for residential accommodation needs. This report detailed that the Council is seeking to purchase properties from the domestic property market as the most effective way to meet the need identified, and requested the delegation of authority to enable the Head of Property to proceed to completion on properties meeting the Council’s requirements, using the capital funding allocated for that purpose.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member for Resources and the Cabinet Member for Children and Families authorised searches, purchases, investments, and developments with relevant permissions to secure suitable properties across the county for children looked after, up to a confirmed funded value of £3.0m, delegating responsibility for property acquisitions, investments and works contracts up to the budgeted value to the Head of Corporate Property in conjunction with the Strategic Manager – Estates.</p> <p>ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report.</p> <p>REASONS FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report.</p> |
| 2021/22 Budget Monitoring | 13 August 2021 | SUMMARY OF DECISION: This report outlined the forecast year-end position of |

| CROSS CUTTING – All | | |
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| Item | Date of Meeting | Summary of Decision |
| Report – Month 3 – End of June | Cabinet Member for Resources | <p>services against the current 2021/22 budget of £366.5m (the current budget included carry forwards and reserve movements) as at the end of June 2021. In addition, the Executive Summary of the report provided an overview of the Council's financial position from the Director of Finance as the Councils' S151 Officer with detail from each service and commentary from the responsible Directors, highlighting the continuing significant uncertainties due to the Covid-19 pandemic.</p> <p>Specifically, the Cabinet Member: noted the forecast underspend of £3.8m. Made up of service overspends of £4.4m, offset by £6m of unallocated Corporate Contingency and £2m of unallocated Covid-19 Emergency Fund; noted the current estimated position and funding of the Capital Programme; approved the allocation of £0.2m of the Covid-19 Emergency Fund to support free travel from the Park and Ride sites for the remainder of 2021/22, the remaining costs will come from ECI budgets and reserves; approved the allocation of £0.08m from the Workforce Reserve to support the implementation of hybrid home/office working; and noted the estimated reserves position, key risks, future issues and opportunities detailed in the report, which will be closely monitored throughout the year with forecasts updated as appropriate.</p> <p>ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report.</p> <p>REASONS FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report.</p> |
| Revenue Budget Monitoring Report – Month 4 | 15 September 2021 by Cabinet | <p>SUMMARY OF DECISION: This report outlined the forecast year-end position of services against the current 2021/22 budget as at the end of July 2021.</p> <p>Following consideration of the officer report, appendices and discussion, the Cabinet noted the overall forecast overspend of £0.7m and the key risks, future issues and opportunities detailed in the report which will be closely monitored and updated throughout the year, and approved the request to use £1.167m from Funding</p> |

| CROSS CUTTING – All | | |
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| Item | Date of Meeting | Summary of Decision |
| | | <p>Volatility Reserve to support additional maintenance activities on the County Highways network in 2021/22.</p> <p>ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report.</p> <p>REASONS FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report.</p> |
| Corporate Performance Report Q1+1 | 15 September 2021 by Cabinet | <p>SUMMARY OF DECISION: This report provided members with the high-level information they need to lead and manage the performance of the outcomes set out in the Council’s Vision and reflected the Council’s ongoing progress towards the outcomes laid out in the Council’s Business Plan. This report consists of 30 performance indicators from across the organisation and provided the latest information available in the period up until 31st July 2021.</p> <p>The report highlighted that the period had seen particularly high demand on services, noting areas of success including: outcomes for vulnerable learners; the wellbeing framework for schools; new placements in residential and nursing care; the covid vaccination programme; and the use of digital technologies. The report further noted areas of concern including Connecting Devon and Somerset phase 2; and the resolution of adults contacts.</p> <p>ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report.</p> <p>REASONS FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report.</p> |

| CROSS CUTTING – All | | |
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| Item | Date of Meeting | Summary of Decision |
| West Somerset Opportunity Area – Year 5 | 15 October 2021 by Cabinet Member for Children and Families and Cabinet Member for Education and Public Health | <p>SUMMARY OF DECISION: The West Somerset Opportunity Area has been set up to drive cultural change across West Somerset. The County Council is the accountable body and is receiving the funds on behalf of the West Somerset Opportunity Area Partnership.</p> <p>The Secretary of State has now agreed further funding of £869.7K for a Year 5 of the Programme. The 5th year is conditional on an agreed delivery plan and West Somerset sharing its lessons with other areas that are experiencing similar levels of deprivation and social immobility.</p> <p>The allocation of funding, will allow a continued focus on early years and quality first teaching, encouraging good teachers to the area. The funding is part of the governments endeavours to tackle low social mobility and improve opportunities for young people across the country.</p> <p>This decision specifically saw the Cabinet Members agree that funding secured from the DfE to deliver Year 5 of the plan through section 31 grant is allocated to the West Somerset Opportunity Area, and that unspent funds at the end of the financial year are carried forward to the next financial year to ensure the delivery of the West Somerset Opportunity Area Plan.</p> <p>ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report.</p> <p>REASONS FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report.</p> |
| Revenue Budget Monitoring Report – Month 5 | 20 October 2021 by Cabinet | <p>SUMMARY OF DECISION: This report outlined the forecast year-end position of services against the current 2021/22 budget of £358.8m (the current budget included carry forwards and reserve movements) as at the end of August 2021.</p> |

| CROSS CUTTING – All | | |
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| Item | Date of Meeting | Summary of Decision |
| | | <p>Following consideration of the officer report, appendices and discussion, the Cabinet noted the overall forecast overspend of £0.4m and the key risks, future issues and opportunities detailed in the report which will be closely monitored and updated throughout the year.</p> <p>ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report.</p> <p>REASONS FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report.</p> |
| Medium Term Financial Plan and Strategy 2022/23 – 2024/25 | 20 October 2021 by Cabinet | <p>SUMMARY OF DECISION: This report outlined the overall financial strategy for the next three years, including the financial planning for the initial two years of the new Unitary Council and provided an update on the progress of developing the budget proposals for producing a balanced revenue budget and an extended capital programme for the 2022/23 financial year.</p> <p>Following consideration of the officer report, appendices and discussion, the Cabinet approved:</p> <p>a) the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and Plan and noted the current progress towards producing a balanced revenue budget for 2022/23 and capital programme.</p> <p>b) Approved the additional financial controls outlined in Appendix A of the report</p> <p>ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report.</p> <p>REASONS FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report.</p> |
| Revenue Monitoring Budget Report - Month 6 | 15 November 2021 by Cabinet | <p>SUMMARY OF DECISION: This report is the second quarterly report (month six). The report outlined the current position and, estimated the outturn position for revenue (including overall delivery on savings, transformation and additional income plans), capital, treasury management, and reserves. This ensures that the Council reflects</p> |

| CROSS CUTTING – All | | |
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| Item | Date of Meeting | Summary of Decision |
| | | <p>national best practice and meets the requirements of the CIPFA Financial Management Code.</p> <p>The Executive Summary of the report provided an overview of the Council's financial position from the Director of Finance and Governance as the Councils' S151 Officer with detail from each service and commentary from the responsible Director.</p> <p>Following consideration of the officer report, appendices and discussion, the Cabinet noted the forecast underspend of £3m.</p> <p>ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report.</p> <p>REASONS FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report.</p> |
| Treasury Management Mid-Year Report 2021/22 | 15 November 2021 by Cabinet | <p>SUMMARY OF DECISION: This report was for information. In compliance with the requirements of the CIPFA Code of Practice this report provided Councillors with a summary report of the treasury management activity during the first six months of 2021-22. As indicated in this report all treasury activity was conducted within the benchmarks set as Prudential limits for prudent and sustainable capital plans, financing, and investment.</p> <p>Following consideration of the officer report, appendices and discussion, the Cabinet endorsed the Treasury Management Mid-Year Report for 2021-22 and recommended that it be received and endorsed by Full Council at the next sitting of Full Council 24 November 2021.</p> <p>ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report.</p> <p>REASONS FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report.</p> |

| CROSS CUTTING – All | | |
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| Item | Date of Meeting | Summary of Decision |
| Corporate Performance Report Q2 2021 | 15 November 2021 by Cabinet | <p>SUMMARY OF DECISION: This report provided members with the high-level information they need to lead and manage the performance of the outcomes set out in the Council’s Vision and reflects the Council’s ongoing progress towards the outcomes laid out in the Council’s Business Plan. The measures used to support this report came from across the Council’s services and are a subset of the measures monitored regularly by the Senior Leadership Team. This report consisted of 31 performance indicators from across the organisation and provided the latest information available in the period up until 30th September 2021</p> <p>This report highlighted the latest performance information for all indicator areas of success for the quarter; Improve the Outcomes for Children Looked After Placement stability, the Domestic Abuse Service, the Vaccination Programme Progress, the Driving More Effective Customer Interactions through the use of digital technologies digital services and concerns for the quarter: Connecting Devon and Somerset Phase 2. In addition, the new measure of Business Continuity highlighted the high levels of demand and staff shortages currently being experienced.</p> <p>ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report.</p> <p>REASONS FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report.</p> |

Somerset County Council

County Council

– 24th November 2021



Annual Report of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

Cabinet Member: Cllr John Woodman - Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport Division and Local Member: N/A

Lead Officer: Paula Hewitt – Deputy Chief Executive, Lead Director for Economic and Community Infrastructure & Director of Commissioning

Author: Alyn Jones, Director of Economic & Community Infrastructure Operations

Contact Details: agjones@somerset.gov.uk

1. Summary / Background

- 1.1.** As Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport I intend to use this report to highlight the key activities and achievements of the past year. In addition, this report also highlights the work that these services have undertaken to support the Council's ongoing response to Covid-19 pandemic.

2. Highways and Transport Commissioning

- 2.1.** Over the last year several key areas of transport policy and investment have been progressed including;
- Continuing to promote the need for investment in the A303 and A358 and, working with National Highways as they develop the detail of their dual carriageway schemes for consultation.
 - Securing additional Government funds for our 'Peninsula Transport' partnership with Cornwall, Devon, Plymouth and Torbay and working with strategic transport providers such as National Highways and Network Rail to develop a new regional transport strategy which will lead to increased investment in Somerset.
 - Securing additional funds for 'Active Travel' walking and cycling schemes which is enabling us to provide better alternatives to car travel, particularly for shorter trips as part of our climate emergency strategy. We have also started to comprehensively review the design of our planned transport improvement schemes to make sure they are compliant with new Government cycling guidance which was issued this year where this is possible. We have finalised local cycling and walking infrastructure plans for our three main towns which have informed a bid for more capital funding for cycling; and started to roll-out more cycle network planning activity across other towns in Somerset.
 - Committing to forming an Enhanced Partnership (EP) with our local bus

operators from April 2022 as part of the National Bus Strategy: Bus Back Better. This was agreed by Cabinet on 21 June 2021 followed by approval of an ambitious Bus Service Improvement Plan in October 2021 which sets out comprehensively what could be achieved in transforming our bus system if our £165m funding bid to Government is successful. This Plan will play an important role in our post-pandemic economic recovery and growth for instance by enabling people to access training and employment more easily as well as providing more opportunities to travel by bus rather than private car as part of our climate emergency strategy. The Plan includes proposals for decarbonisation of transport, providing a more extensive and frequent network of services, reducing the cost of travel, improving co-ordination between buses and other modes of transport, improving reliability and information, as well as providing a network with safe and comfortable waiting facilities. The Plan can only be delivered if additional funding from government is secured and will then form part of the Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme(s) to be delivered from April 2022.

- 'Levelling Up' our economy by securing additional funding through the Government's 'Getting Building Fund' and 'Levelling Up Fund'. Important economic growth schemes such as access to the Firepool development area and Rail Station in Taunton, and the Bridgwater A38 Northern Corridor have benefitted from our successful multi-million pound funding bids.
- Securing additional Government funding for upgrading our existing traffic signals stock as part of our traffic signals recovery programme.
- Working with Devon County Council, District Councils, Network Rail, Rail operators and DfT to help secure £5m in development funding for the reopening of rail stations at Wellington and Cullompton. We have also worked closely with Langport Transport Group, the rail industry, and other partners, to commission a feasibility study into opening a new rail station in the Somerton/Langport area using Department for Transport and community sourced funds.
- Working closely with the District Planning Authorities on streamlining and improving the development planning process in Somerset through the 'Enabling Growth' project. We have completely reviewed our processes and working methods to enable planning applications to be considered more effectively. As part of this work, we have agreed a new Enabling Growth Charter with the Somerset Planning Authorities and the development industry; and published a range of new guidance to support more effective planning applications aiming for a 'right first time' approach.
- Progressing an implementation plan to make it easier for people to charge electric vehicles. We have also commissioned feasibility studies

into e-bike rental and the infrastructure needed to support electrification or alternative fuels for bus operations in Somerset.

3. Major Scheme Delivery

3.1 The M5 Junction 25 scheme was completed earlier this year to programme and within budget. The scheme involved full signalisation and enlarging of the roundabout, widening of the eastern exit, a new roundabout to access the proposed Nexus 25 employment site, and improved pedestrian and cycling facilities. The scheme won first place at the South West Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation (CIHT) awards in both the "Transportation Project of the Year" and "Collaboration" categories. Innovative solutions to engineering and environmental challenges, included;

- 21,000m³ of surcharge material to overburden and settle weak ground near the Blackbrook watercourse. To reduce the environmental impact the material was recycled from the creation of replacement flood plain storage.
- 2,010m³ of attenuation tanks to serve the impermeable surface area.
- State-of-the-art linked smart signals.
- Precast concrete bridge beams over the Blackbrook Bridge and a new culvert.
- Working with Natural England, 17 water voles were temporarily re-homed before being returned to their natural river habitat which had been re-aligned.

3.2 Covid-19 brought additional challenges, but a collaborative approach with National Highways, which included creative working methods to take advantage of lighter traffic, allowed the project to progress ahead of programme. Collaboration was key to delivering on time and on budget with NH, but also with the Environment Agency, local Parish Councils, and Somerset Chamber of Commerce, who were pivotal in maintaining good relations with local businesses and providing valuable insight throughout construction.

3.3 The Creech Castle/Toneway project was postponed last year due to the pandemic, though advanced works were undertaken to enable early delivery of the walking/ cycling path and toucan crossing in Bathpool. The main scheme commenced in August and will be in place until summer 2022. The scheme seeks to reduce congestion and improve access to Taunton by increasing the capacity of the junction. The upgrade includes enhanced facilities for pedestrians and cyclists and is critical to allow continued development at Monkton Heathfield. The scheme won first place in the "Innovation" category at the South West Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation (CIHT) awards for the use of ground-breaking traffic modelling techniques and new technology to assess the best traffic management options to minimise disruption while the works are undertaken.

3.4 The A38 Dunball Junction improvement scheme on the A38 north of Bridgwater is a scheme to implement traffic signalisation and a 'through-about' design to provide additional highway capacity at this location. The existing junction is a long-standing capacity constraint to the growth of Bridgwater and

implementing the improvement will unlock considerable planned growth of housing and employment in the area. Our successful 'levelling up fund' bid provides the final part of the funding package for this important scheme. SCC is using the SCAPE Civil Engineering Framework to undertake the feasibility stages of the scheme with a view to awarding the construction through the same framework in due course. The feasibility report has recently been received and is being reviewed prior to moving towards the detailed design phase.

- 3.5** Junction 25 upgrade involved full signalisation and enlarging of the roundabout, widening of the eastern exit, a new roundabout to access the proposed Nexus 25 employment site, and improved pedestrian and cycling facilities. On-site working methods to comply with Covid-19 Social Distancing guidelines have adapted well and the project took the opportunity to undertake key activities on the live carriageway whilst traffic was lighter. I am pleased to report that the scheme is on programme and within budget.
- 3.6** The M5 Junction 26/Chelston Link is a major highway maintenance scheme to remove the failing concrete carriageway, and reconstruct/ resurface the carriageway, kerb lines and drainage on the local highway network roundabout sections at Junction 26. The feasibility design stage of this project will determine the detailed scope and extent of the works that can be delivered within the available budget following early contractor involvement. As a maintenance scheme this project does not seek to amend the layout of the roads at this location and should have a neutral effect on highway capacity once constructed. SCC is using the SCAPE Civil Engineering Framework to undertake the feasibility stages with a view to awarding the construction through the same framework in due course.
- 3.7** It is necessary to construct a new junction on Trenchard Way, Taunton to provide access to the Firepool development area and Taunton Rail Station as part of redevelopment proposals. There are also residual drainage and surfacing works needed to complete the County Council's Trenchard Way major scheme which need to be implemented as part of the overall scheme. A redesign of the junction is reaching a conclusion to accommodate current Government cycling requirements and coordinate with the significantly revised Firepool development plans. A new planning application to enable these changes has been submitted to Somerset West and Taunton Council.
- 3.8** Somerset County Council and North Somerset Council are working in partnership on a number of proposed schemes on the A38 between Burnham-on-Sea and Bristol. The scheme seeks to improve journey reliability times, road safety and better connect local communities – whether by car, public transport, or active travel. In addition, they would support traffic flow for the benefit of local businesses and help reduce the road's environmental impact by providing a range of positive green enhancements. This package includes improvements

at the following locations in Somerset: Edithmead Roundabout; Rooksbridge; Cross junction; Strawberry Line Crossing of A38. Stakeholder consultation undertaken earlier this year was positive and the outline business case will be submitted this autumn. Somerset County Council allocated an additional £1.5m towards the project this financial year to ensure that the local funding contribution requirement from Government is met.

- 3.9** Work is being undertaken to develop a Strategic Outline Business Case for Walton/Ashcott Large Local Major Scheme ready for an autumn submission which sets out the strategic case for a bypass based on potential route options. No further decisions will be taken on routes until DfT approval is received to proceed to the next stage.
- 3.10** The A38 Canon/ Cross-Rifles Junction Bridgwater scheme has been included in the Levelling Up Fund bid and will be progressed shortly following recent notification of the successful funding award. In the meanwhile, the scheme design is currently being tested and validated.

4. Minor Schemes (Small Improvement Schemes)

- 4.1.** Over the last year, despite the inevitable increased challenges presented, the team has continued the delivery of our successful 'Small Improvement Schemes' (SIS) programme. This programme enables local communities (through their local County Councillor) to request proposals for small highway improvements and, to date, the schemes have generally focussed on improving road safety and accessibility. The SIS Team continue to work hard, along with our contractors and their supply chains, to support the delivery of the current Member led programme, as far as is reasonably practicable by Spring 22. Since the start of the SIS programme we have implemented over 265 schemes with a further 42 Member led and Road Safety schemes being progressed through design and construction phases.

5. Development Engineering

- 5.1.** We continue to provide technical/design support services to developers and supporting our role as a statutory consultee in the planning process, reacting to an ever-increasing volume of planning applications. The team are managing an ever-increasing workload which, in part, is a product of the industry recovery from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. Other activities have included;
- Managing the delivery of the highway elements of the following major urban expansions at Monkton Heathfield and Comeytrove in Taunton and Brimsmore and Lufton in Yeovil.
 - Overseeing the delivery of the main access roads serving the Gravity Smart Campus (Huntspill Energy Park) in Puriton, Bridgwater.
 - Project managing the highway authority's engagement on the delivery of the highway infrastructure associated with the Hinkley Point C New Nuclear Build, National Grid Connections and A303/ A358 Nationally

Significant Infrastructure Projects.

- Currently administering 1137 road adoption agreements pursuant to new and improved highway infrastructure assets which have been collectively valued at approximately £308 Million. Of these agreements, over 635 relate to infrastructure that is currently under construction at a collective estimated value of over £187 Million.
- Over the past 12 months, October 2020 to September 2021 inclusive, completed 615 technical and road safety audits of designs for new or improved highway infrastructure proposals within the county, an average of 12 per week.
- Continued to support the Somerset Rivers Authority in the assessment of selected Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems installed within the County.
- Completed 28 road safety audits post completion of Somerset County Council Major and Small Improvement highway infrastructure schemes.
- Completed a further 13 Walked Route Assessments to support Education and Children's Services.

6. Highway Maintenance

- 6.1.** The County Council's statutory duty as Highway Authority to manage and maintain the highway network is fulfilled by the Highway Maintenance team located in ECI Operations. The highway infrastructure in Somerset is the County Council's largest and most valuable asset, upon which other services depend on a daily basis. The highway network in Somerset is currently valued at approximately £6.8bn and includes around 6,700km of carriageway, 6184km public rights of way, over 2,500 bridges and structures, 50,000 streetlights and many other highway assets. Provision of a safe, well maintained highway network for residents and visitors to Somerset defined by a hierarchy of usage and strategic importance through a planned and risk-based approach.
- 6.2.** The Highways Service is managed through the following strategic functions:
- Asset Management (including Structural Maintenance, Asset Data and Performance)
 - Routine and Environmental Maintenance
 - Safety Inspections, Legal and Enforcement
 - Winter and Emergency Service
 - Bridges and Structures
 - Rights of Way
 - Highway Lighting
 - Contract Management
- 6.3.** The revenue investment in highways through 2020/21 amounted to £11.0m and capital investment was £24.4m. The table in appendix 1 of this report summarises the investment and innovation in highways service during the last year.

- 6.4.** DFT Local Highways Incentive Fund - SCC retained its Band 3 status and an overall score of 62 as measured against 22 areas of assessment: reflecting the authority's' sound application of asset management principles and ensuring the maximum award of capital funds from the government. This is the same score as in 2019/20, which was down from a score of 63 in 2018/19. The reason for the 1 point reduction in the overall score was due to a reassessment of Q.18 on collaboration with operational service provider and supply chain.
- 6.5.** The COVID pandemic has impacted on service delivery across the highway maintenance sector in the UK. However, whilst some Highway Authorities ceased all works in the initial COVID infection period, Somerset County Council was one of the few authorities to continue its full programme of safety inspections and safety defect repairs. This was achieved through collaborative working with the highways contractor to prioritise resources and work through risk-based contingency planning.
- 6.6.** The management of all other highway maintenance services utilised a similar risk-based approach and whilst some delays in programme were experienced, these were resolved over the remaining year. The pandemic also required the service to innovate due to the new ways of working. An example of this includes the digitisation of highway maintenance task orders. Traditionally, task orders were paper-based and required a significant amount of administration. The remote working in response to COVID necessitated an alternate technical solution. As such, the service area quickly reviewed and adapted systems to manage works digitally – this has resulted in efficiencies and greater programme tracking, accountability and cost monitoring.

7. Traffic Management, Street Works, Road Safety and Parking Services

- 7.1.** Street works co-ordination continues to present a huge challenge for the service and demand to occupy the highway network continues to increase especially for the provision of fast fibre internet connections and this currently forms the bulk of permit applications. Over the last 12 months the team has dealt with 38,305 work requests. Over 8,038 of these for temporary signal requests and 4540 road closures requests. 1,985 Fixed Penalty Notices have so far been issued for incorrectly noticed works. We continue to undertake enforcement for poor performance or dangerous non compliances and have again over the last year successfully prosecuted Statutory Undertakers for various offences under the Street works legislation and have prosecution cases pending.
- 7.2.** The first annual review of the Somerset Permit Scheme has been completed and has been a success. A permit scheme allows us to charge Statutory Undertakers fixed fees for undertaking works on the highway. The objectives and benefits of the Somerset Permit Scheme are to reduce disruption on the road network though better control of works to help improve overall network management, reductions in costs to businesses by reducing delays and improving the

reliability & accuracy of works information. The projected cost saving in disruption is estimated to be £51.5m per annum and is made up of travel time impacts for business users and other motorists, the additional cost of accidents within the road works and the additional cost of fuel.

- 7.3.** The demand on the Traffic Engineering service continues to increase and service requests for both traffic engineering services and Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO)'s, including road closures is very high. In the last 12 months over 2400 Temporary TRO's were processed, an increase of approximately 25% compared to the previous year.
- 7.4.** Work is ongoing to deliver the school advisory 20mph 'when lights show' project. Since April this year, 28 sites have been installed and the remaining 86 sites are due to be installed by the end of March 2022.
- 7.5.** The pandemic year has been challenging with on street activity suspended for much of the year. During the period of lockdown NSL have been able to assist with the County Council's response to Covid by supporting:-
- The Covid testing centre at Taunton to ensure vehicle movements were managed safely.
 - The reopening of the household waste recycling centres to manage vehicle queues.
 - The re-opening of the high street in a number of towns including, Street, Yeovil, Bridgwater and Taunton.
- 7.6.** Requests for permit schemes continues to be received along with the progression of others as detailed below:-
- All Saints Terrace, Bridgwater – Scheme being developed for advertising.
 - Ashwell Lane, Glastonbury – Potential scheme in view of Stonedown clearway.
 - Barclay Street, Bridgwater – Fully implemented.
 - Clarkes Row and Clarkes Close, Chard – Abandoned due to lack of support.
 - Cornishway Trading Estate, Taunton - To be implemented.
 - Dunstan Road, Burnham On Sea – Scheme being developed for advertising.
 - Kingston Road, Taunton – East and West areas to be consulted.
 - Lynton Road, Burnham On Sea – Consultation underway following petition,
 - Malvern Terrace, Taunton – Fully implemented
 - Merriman & Silver Street, Street – Petition received for consideration.
 - Mill Street, Wincanton – Scheme being developed for advertising.
 - Monmouth Street, Bridgwater – Petition received for consideration.
 - Musgrove & Galmington Roads, Taunton – Consultation to be undertaken.
 - Nerrols Farm School, Taunton – Implementation underway.

- Quantock Court, South Esplanade, Burnham-On-Sea – Fully implemented.
- Quay West, Minehead – Review regarding motorhomes and uncontrolled areas.
- Richard Huish College Area, Taunton – Scheme being developed for advertising.
- Richmond Park, Taunton – Implemented by way of experimental order.
- Roseberry Avenue, Bridgwater – Petition received for consideration.
- Rowbarton Area, Taunton – Implementation underway.
- School Keep Clear across the County to support 20MPH initiative.
- St John Street, Bridgwater – Petition received for consideration.
- Stoberry Park Area, Wells – Fully implemented.
- Stonedown Lane, Glastonbury – Experimental clearway introduced.
- The Triangle, Taunton - Implemented by way of experimental order.
- Tor Street & St Andrews Street, Wells – Petition received for consideration.
- Wells Road (part), Glastonbury – To be implemented.
- Weymouth Road, Frome - To be implemented.

7.7. The Road Safety Team has continued its vital work to reduce the number of people killed and injured on Somerset’s roads. In 2020, sadly 12 people died in fatal collisions; whilst 74 were seriously injured and 731 people suffered more minor injuries. The number of people killed and seriously injured decreased by 12 over the previous year’s figures, overall collision numbers by 560 and reductions in casualties by over 40% were recorded. However, this is likely to be due to the successive long term and varied restrictions to public movement and associated reductions in traffic levels throughout the year, caused by the Covid pandemic, so these figures do not reflect ongoing issues occurring under normal traffic conditions. Data showed that traffic levels fell throughout the year, and in the most severe lockdowns reduced by 60% when compared to pre-lockdown levels. With this in mind, and to manage the impact of the reduction in collision numbers the Road Safety team has been reviewing appropriate use of rolling averages, in place of actual 2020 figures in programs of analysis. The 2020 data would also have been used to assess the ten year progress of our road safety targets, of which 2020 was to be the final year. The team will therefore use the data ending in 2019, which shows that all the target reductions were met. New road safety indicators for the next ten-year period are now being developed.

7.8. Key road safety achievements for the year were:

- Providing support to the vaccination centres at North Petherton and College Way medical centre in Taunton, this followed some of the same staff supporting the PPE distribution centre helping the Covid 19 management efforts
- Continued focus on child road safety, through our Stay Safe sessions which is a bespoke workshop called Stay Safe – aimed primarily at KS2

age children to create a greater awareness of road safety for younger road users

- Engagement with and delivery of talks and training to over 12,613 people, this was only from May 2021 when we were allowed back into schools and commenced other face to face engagements.
- Launched our motorcycle initiative Raise Your Ride, this programme is run for motorcyclists by motorcyclists, and works in partnership with Avon and Somerset Police for delivery across the west of England, due to the high number of cross border local authority motorcycle casualties that occur in the region. The aim is to raise awareness and demonstrate the value of advanced riding techniques. These courses have been very popular. We have also tackled motorcycle safety by focusing on key routes in the County through introducing pop-up road safety signs using the national Shiny Side Up campaign. The team were also instrumental in a new sign being developed to give warnings about the risks of overtaking tractors which was a national first, but was based on a local issue
- Developed pop up road safety message signs around Taunton to promote cycling safety through reminding drivers to give them space using the close pass messaging
- Another pop-up campaign 'Check Your Speed' signs were used to promote the fact that enforcement would be taking place while we supported the Avon and Somerset Police speeding campaign which was carried out alongside other forces as part of a national effort. The signs are also used to support Community Speed Watch Operations
- 1439 pupils were trained in 'Bikeability' cycle safety training, this number is lower than on previous years due to Covid restrictions
- Our social media presence was reduced by having to focus on Covid messaging, however the impressions and reach comes to 459,010, and we continue to increase our number of followers
- Launched the new Drive Start package for colleges which will help develop safe behaviours in young drivers.
- The programme of road safety engineering schemes continues to be developed with some major improvement scheme planned to be implemented over the next six months

7.9. Partnership working, which is a cornerstone of our road safety work, is being further enhanced with ever closer links of road safety delivery through our relationships with Avon and Somerset Police and Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue service. We are also working closer with the Police, Bristol City, South Gloucester, Bath and North East Somerset, and North Somerset Councils and the Fire and Rescue services to assess the benefits of formalising a road safety partnership. The aim being to use best practice approaches and coordinated social media across the region.

7.10. Work has now started on the £11m Traffic Signals recovery programme. The

upgrade of the pedestrian crossing in Elizabeth Way, Chard pedestrian crossing is now complete and along with the scheme to upgrade four sites at Rowbarton, Taunton. The team has been successful in bidding for additional funding from DfT and have been awarded £500K to support the recovery programme.

8. Transporting Somerset

- 8.1.** Over the last year Transporting Somerset provided transport for approximately 7,900 Mainstream and Special Educational Needs pupils each day, as well as over 34,863 trips enabling individual service users to reach their care placements and 94,585 trips for health patients attending clinics and hospitals.
- 8.2.** Financial support continues to be provided annually for 69 public transport contracts (which include College Transport routes and Slinky Demand Responsive bus services) which are not able to operate commercially. This financial support is provided to ensure a statutory need is met, or where on a discretionary basis the Council considers it appropriate to ensure a service is provided. We provided 41 additional vehicles to support social distancing measures on School and College Transport during the 2020/21 academic year, with funding provided by The Department for Education, helping to ensure students could access education safely within Government covid guidelines on passenger transport.
- 8.3.** Earlier in the year we supported the vaccination process by arranging two special bus services to mass vaccination centres at the Bath & West Showground and Taunton Racecourse. We also relaxed Concessionary Fare conditions to allow free transport before 0930 and provided free transport on Community Transport for those people who could not access their own transport or Public Transport to attend a vaccination centre.
- 8.4.** Our Public Transport Team issued 16,878 Concessionary Bus passes, both new applications and renewals during the last year.
- 8.5.** Transporting Somerset took back responsibility for funding the Taunton Park & Ride service in April 2021. In July, following a tender process a new contract was awarded to Buses of Somerset and in August we restored the Saturday service and introduced free fares, which has resulted in average passenger journeys more than doubling from 2701 to 5724 per week within the first six weeks.
- 8.6.** Our in house fleet operation continues to provide increasing amounts of transport provision for a varied range of client groups across the County. This provision includes Mainstream and SEND School Transport, Public Transport, Slinky Demand Responsive Transport, Community Transport, Social Care Transport and a significantly increased amount of Health Transport, including the continued operation of nine ambulance vehicles on behalf of the NHS. In

April 2021 we opened a new purpose built depot at Saltlands in Bridgwater.

- 8.7.** Transporting Somerset continue to support the NHS with increased pressures through the crisis. In addition to the journeys Transporting Somerset are contracted to provide we have provided extra capacity, both through our in house fleet and our contractors to cover journeys normally provided by the NHS Patient Transport Service, as well as covering journeys normally provided by Red Cross volunteers, In September we re-introduced 32 volunteer drivers back into the service with work currently underway to increase this number to over 50 by the end of November 2021.
- 8.8.** Since the return of Schools and Colleges in September we have seen a large reduction in PCV and Taxi drivers in the market, which has created significant pressures for the team and our contractors. Transporting Somerset are working closely with contractors to address the driver shortage issues by doubling journeys on some school contracts and working with operators to look at planned reductions in frequency on public bus services, where reliability is being significantly impacted to try to ensure reliable services (albeit) at a lower frequency are maintained. We have also worked with schools to keep them updated on the national issue of driver shortages and written to parents of students with revised journey time information, where changes to school routes are likely to be long term. We are also supporting our Bus/Coach contractors with a recruitment campaign and exploring other ways in which we can help them through the current staff shortages they are experiencing.

9. Travel Somerset and Engagement

- 9.1.** The job of Travel Somerset, which combines the Council's Highways communication platforms, is keeping the public and media informed when it comes to live traffic updates, major projects, important transport developments and encouraging and influencing more people to use active travel as part of the climate change agenda. The brand incorporates a website and social media platforms, and keeps going from strength to strength, enjoying consistent growth in engagement with the public. In the last six months Travel Somerset tweets registered over 1.6 million impressions, that's 97 per cent up on the same period last year. Some of this growth can be attributed to emerging out of lockdown of course, but nevertheless this encouraging growth in the use of the platform. Since June we've seen nearly 35,000 separate engagements or interactions with the public on key travel and roadworks information.
- 9.2.** Our Travelsomerset.co.uk website offers in-depth information on all our major network schemes, travel information, including traffic and roadworks updates and helpful resources if you're cycling or walking around our key towns.
- 9.3.** Its audience has also grown. In the last six months the site registered over 310,000 page views, nearly 70 per cent up for the same period last year. That's people getting information on roadworks, travel, community transport, cycling,

walking information and major projects.

- 9.4. This year the service includes a new Facebook page – set up in April – which is closing in on its growth target of 2,000 followers by November and proving extremely popular with the public, enabling us to reach local community groups with key highways information. Last month we reached nearly 50,000 people, that’s a 492% rise on the previous month. All of this enables the service to ease the pressure on our busy contact centre by ensuring many more enquiries are dealt with without the need for a phone call or email.
- 9.5. Travel Somerset will continue to explore new ways to communicate the service’s key information and messages and to support efforts to encourage and influence transport mode change as an integral part of Somerset’s Climate Emergency Strategy.
- 9.6. As part of our ongoing work to improve the accessibility of our services and adapt to new ways of working, my officers have worked with our customer contact centre to utilise the data and intelligence from public engagement to improve how we engage. Our online ‘report it’ function has been designed with using public feedback to enable self-service 24/7 and reduce the need for unnecessary telephone calls. There is still a great deal more to do to improve engagement with our communities however, it is encouraging to see how we are embracing new technology and data analysis is reducing the number of general enquires we receive.

10. Looking forward

- 10.1. As we move closer towards a unitary council for Somerset there will be significant opportunities to align all local government services in Somerset, remove duplication and develop new working relationships with our communities. As has been stated creating a new authority presents a major opportunity to establish a greater level of effective community engagement. Just one aspect of this will be the creation of new local community networks (LCN) which will promote active community decision making, scrutiny, ensure local influence over council and wider public service activity, and to inspire more responsibility for local place-shaping. I am clear that highways and transport services will have a major role in the development of LCNs and, I am delighted that we will have the opportunity to pilot and develop new ways of working over the coming year so that we can co-design with our communities how services are delivered in the future.

Appendix 1 - investment and innovation in both highways and rights of way

| Work type | Overall value | Output | Innovation and initiatives |
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| Rights of Way | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vegetation clearance | £86,000 (2021 total) | 443km of rights of way cleared each season | Volunteer schemes - Strimmer scheme, Adopt-a-Path - providing added benefit and empowerment to local community self-help. Exploring use of electric strimmers. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Routine and reactive inspections and issue resolution through works and diversion orders | £114,700 rev £219,000 cap (so far) £333,700 total | c.80% of the 6184km long network reported as 'easy to use'. 4739 service requests resolved in 2021. Capital bridge projects increasing due to additional staff. | 100% of routine path inspections undertaken by trained volunteers. All volunteer schemes have increased in numbers, with over 600 roles filled. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land Charges searches | £54,577 income | Over 8000 searches received and processed | ICT has started exploring different systems to receive, record and transmit information more efficiently. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determining applications | N/A (staff time) | 8 modification applications determined in 2021. | New processes in place to increase determination rate and recruitment of additional officers to address historic backlog of applications. |
| Highway Lighting £1,626,500.00 | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compulsory Cyclical | £845,320.60 | Designated | To maintain the |

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| Maintenance/Electrical Testing and General Maintenance | | against approximately 20,000 assets per year for cyclical also approximately 11,000 streetlights fault per year | illuminated assets across the county. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asset Replacement - Routine | £551,500.00 | Replacement of approximately 315 illuminated assets across the county. | Replace ageing stock and install new LED energy saving equipment as well as reduce SCC's carbon footprint. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-Routine Asset Replacements. | £229,679.40 | Replacement of assets: Reported by Term Maintenance Contractor via Cyclical Maintenance, Electrical Testing, RTC's and General Maintenance. | Replace ageing stock and install new LED energy saving equipment as this will reduce SCC's carbon footprint. |
| Bridges and Structures | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capital Improvement Schemes | £412,000.00 | Various general refurbishment and improvement schemes including parapet. | To maintain and improve the integrity/safety of our structures |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bridge Strengthening Schemes | £512,000.00 | Structural strengthening schemes including re-decking and retaining wall replacement schemes | To enable the structures to safely carry unrestricted highway loadings |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flood alleviation Schemes | £204,000.00 | Desilting of bridges and culverts to | SRA funded desilting schemes to |

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| | | restore capacity of structure to reduce potential flooding risk | reduce likelihood of flooding events. |
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| Highway Maintenance Strategic Functions | | | |
| Winter and Emergency Service | £1,868,900 | Delivery of winter gritting and associated functions (e.g. grit bin filling) and all responses to adverse weather (e.g. storms, road traffic collisions, and so on) | 3-year process to update all weather reporting stations to a more reliable system is nearly complete with the final station on A38 at Pleamore Cross due to be installed this month. Twenty new snow ploughs will be delivered over the winter to replace the existing end-of-life assets. Three new snow blowers have been added to the fleet for this winter replacing old equipment. |
| Safety Inspections | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety inspections | £1,303,398 | Repair of highway safety defects and provides SCC with a Section 58 statutory defence (Highways Act 1980) | Highway safety inspections undertaken to ensure the safe passage of all highway users. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potholes | £3,016,039 | 19,282 potholes repaired | Cold lay asphalt is now being used in appropriate situations such as water filled potholes. Spray applied potholes repairs are currently being trialled on the repair of potholes with a mix of chippings and bitumen delivered |

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| | | | under pressure. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tree Maintenance | £199,912 | Management, maintenance and, if necessary, removal of highway tree stock. | Works undertaken to ensure the safe passage of highway users |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ash Dieback | £486,000 | Removal of diseased, damaged and dead highway tree stock infected with this tree disease. | Works undertaken to ensure the safe passage of highway users |
| Routine and Environmental | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verge Maintenance (Planned) | £216,000 | <p>An annual, countywide programme. A' and 'B' network cut 2x per year (inclusive of visibility splays). 'C' and Unclassified network cut 1x per year (inclusive of visibility splays). Sensitive Sites cut x per year at the end of the season.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11,195.30km of verge cut • 1,475 visibility splays cut | All environmental works seek to protect wildlife on roadside verges, while maintaining road safety, consistent with the Somerset Highways Biodiversity Manual and the Somerset Pollinator Action Plan. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noxious and Invasive Weeds | £21,600 | An annual programme of weed control. Noxious Weeds (Common Ragwort) and Invasive Weeds, (Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam and Giant Hogweed) are treated up to 4x per season. | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hedge Trimming (Reactive) | £107,600 | Orders raised on a reactive basis and predominantly driven by service request. | The project team is looking to migrate a significant part of the programme from reactive to planned which should provide operational efficiencies and service improvements. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gully Cleansing (Planned) | £453,000 | An annual, county-wide, programme of cyclical gully cleansing. All known highway gullies are | |

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| | | cleansed on a risk- based approach. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Typically 70,000 gullies countywide. | |
| • Gully Cleansing (Reactive) | £90,800 | Orders raised on a reactive basis and predominantly driven by service request. | |
| • Ditches and Grips | £39,500 | Orders raised on a reactive basis and predominantly driven by service requests. | |
| • Drain Jetting | £180,000 | Orders raised on a reactive basis and predominantly driven by service request. | |
| • Ploughing (Siding) | £43,200 | Orders raised on a reactive basis and predominantly driven by service request. | |
| • Cattle Grids | £600 | Orders raised on a reactive basis and predominantly driven by service request. (Inspections, cleansing and minor repairs). | |

| | | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------|--|--|
| Somerset Rivers Authority | | | |
| • Enhanced Gully Emptying | £150,000 | Countywide programme of works issued. The highest priority gullies are cleansed annually by SCC. The SRA funding supported an additional clean of the high-risk gullies. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approx. 20,000 gullies c/wide. | |
| • Enhanced Drain Jetting (Proactive) | £100,000 | Targeting known flooding locations. Orders raised on a proactive basis and predominantly driven by service request. | |

Structural Maintenance

A number of innovation and improvements projects are being promoted by the SM function. Through the Asset Delivery Team (ADT) (collaborative design resource with Milestone infrastructure) value engineering and promotion of more sustainable engineering solutions including road recycling, foam base recycled (tar) base, recycled fill materials and warm mix asphalts.

| | | |
|--|---------------|---|
| | | |
| • Carriageway resurfacing (A and B road network) | £2,077,000.00 | 14 Schemes |
| • Carriageway resurfacing (C and unclassified network) | £2,778,800.00 | 41 Schemes |
| • Surface dressing | £6,947,000.00 | 1,066,817 m ² |
| • Other surface treatments; Retexturing, Crack Sealing, Paco-patch, Spray applied patching | £550,000.00 | Various Locations, including an expanded Dragon Patcher trial, largely focused on the Sedgemoor area. |
| • Highway surface water drainage improvements | £1,060,400.00 | 41 Schemes |
| • Footway resurfacing | £1,629,400.00 | 44 Schemes |
| • Earthworks and embankments | £324,000.00 | 19 Schemes |
| • SRA schemes | £684,000.00 | 5 Schemes |

Somerset County Council

County Council
– November 2021



Annual Report of the Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Planning and Community Infrastructure

Cabinet Member(s): Cllr David Hall - Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Planning and Community Infrastructure

Local Member(s) and Division: N/A

Lead Officer: Paula Hewitt – Lead Director for Economic and Community Infrastructure & Director of Commissioning

Author: Michele Cusack - Director - Economic and Community Infrastructure

Commissioning and Lisa Portman – Senior Business Support Officer

Contact Details: mcusack@somerset.gov.uk

1. Summary/link to the County Plan

- 1.1.** I will use this report to set out progress and achievements from the last year in the services that fall under my Cabinet responsibilities for Economic Development, Planning and Community Infrastructure as well as looking forward to what the next year has in store.
- 1.2.** This report focuses on the key highlights from this service area from the past year. Beyond this it is also important to recognise the importance of on-going service activity and the tremendous contributions our staff make to businesses and communities.

2. Key Activities and Achievements

2.1. Economic Development

Somerset's future economic prosperity is a key priority for SCC. We are committed to securing this prosperity by creating the conditions for clean and inclusive growth in the county and by prioritising activities that sustainably raise the productivity of Somerset's economy. SCC plays a key role in establishing the future economic strategy for Somerset and influencing regional and national strategies to Somerset's advantage, not least so that funds from Government and other sources can be leveraged into the county to realise our economic ambitions. SCC is commissioning a range of activities that deliver on our strategic priorities including innovation centres linked to Somerset's key clean growth sectors, the rollout of superfast broadband and digital infrastructure and small business support including our programme of investment in enterprise centres in market

towns in the county. In addition, we are commissioning and co-ordinating a range of activities to ensure that the Somerset workforce is equipped with skills for the future and to assist employment opportunities for young people and less advantaged individuals.

2.1.1 Somerset Recovery and Growth Plan

Over the past year SCC has worked with the 4 Somerset District Councils, the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (HotSW LEP) and other partners to develop an economic recovery and growth plan to respond to the economic impacts of Covid-19 and our approach to longer term growth. All Somerset local authorities have endorsed the plan, with SCC's Cabinet providing approval in January 2021. The plan is a framework for collaborative action to support individual businesses, hard hit sectors and individuals directly affected by the economic downturn. Examples have included the re-focusing of Business Rates Retention Pilot funds for business support, recovery of the visitor economy and assistance for unemployed people. The plan also focuses upon longer term opportunities that are important to Somerset's future economic prosperity. These include the delivery of the Gravity site where SCC is working closely with the developer, Government, Sedgemoor District Council and the LEP to attract investment to this unique and economically significant site.

2.1.2 Understanding the Economic Impacts of Covid-19

Since April 2020 SCC has led local analysis of the economic impacts of Covid-19. Data is available on [Somerset Trends](#). It has been used to inform response and recovery activities by SCC and partners. This intelligence has been presented regularly, both internally and externally, raising the profile of SCC's economic research and intelligence work. A survey of the economic impacts of Covid-19 (as well as the UK's exit from the EU) was carried out in Spring 2021, receiving 1,300 responses from Somerset businesses. The findings have been used to inform response work (including support work around redundancies, recruitment and skills) as well as recovery planning, most notably the [Somerset Recovery and Growth Plan](#). Another survey will be undertaken within the next 12 months.

2.1.3 Employment and Skills

Funding was allocated from the Business Rates Retention Pilot to provide a set of interventions in response to the adverse labour market impacts of Covid-19. Interventions include:

- [Step-Up Somerset](#) - a one-stop-shop for individuals seeking information on employment and skills support across Somerset.
- Skill-Up Somerset – An Apprenticeship and Skills Advisory Service supporting people and businesses of Somerset. Since its creation in 2019, the service has supported over 400 individuals, 500 businesses and enabled 300+ skill-starts
- A Response to Redundancy Framework from which taskforces were stood up to respond to significant redundancy announcements such

as Oscar Mayer and Debenhams.

2.1.3.1 Employment and Skills Hubs in Somerset West and Taunton, Sedgemoor and South Somerset. These are complimented by a number of Youth Hubs, supporting young people who are Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET). We are working with a range of employers and sector representatives to support businesses with recruitment and supply challenges. Activities include a Somerset Needs You campaign for the Tourism and Hospitality sector, a virtual Apprenticeship and Jobs Fair in June 2021 and an extension to the annual Somerset Careers Fair to advertise current vacancies virtually. SCC, on behalf of training providers across the South West, has secured £1.8m of funding from the DfE to deliver Technical Skills Bootcamps. These give people the opportunity to build specific-sector skills and fast track to an interview with a local employer.

2.1.3.2 During the pandemic the [Education Business Partnership](#) (EBP) has led on the young people's response for employment issues and directly supported people through Covid-19 impacts. The EBP has delivered a virtual work experience programme which will extend into the autumn through live broadcasts; and talent academies continue to be delivered virtually.

2.1.3.3 Two European Social Fund applications by SCC have been approved and moved into delivery during the past year:

- [SomersetWorks](#) is a £1.126m programme providing opportunities for those Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) and young people still in school years 11 to 13. It supports young people back into education or employment. SomersetWorks has received 800 referrals in the past year and 200 young people have been enrolled onto the project.
- Somerset 'Skills for Growth' was approved in February 2021. The £3.060m project is focused on up-skilling employee's working across Somerset, both in SCC and other organisations
- SCC has been acting as a Gateway for the creation and filling of public sector vacancies via the DWP Kickstart Scheme which provides funded work experience for young people on Universal Credit. We have coordinated and encouraged take up of this programme across Somerset public sector organisations and its supply chain and offer placements as an employer. During the first year SCC has made 28 appointments and we currently have a further 17 vacant placements.

2.1.3.4 SCC co-ordinated Somerset's bid to the Government for support through the Community Renewal Fund (CRF). CRF is a UK wide competitive funding process designed to support skills development, employability, business support and cultural initiatives. A locally prioritized list of schemes, consistent with the priorities in the Somerset recovery and growth plan,

was submitted to Government in June 2021 and in November 2021 confirmation was received that eight projects amounting to £3.6 million of CRF funding have been approved. All project activity is to be delivered by 30 June 2022.

2.1.4 Aerospace/iAero Centre

The iAero centre in Yeovil is a project led by SCC with funds secured from the LEP and European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). It will support the growth of the aerospace sector and associated high-value design supply chains in Somerset by offering high-quality office, light industrial and collaboration space as well as innovation support services. Construction of the centre completed in February 2021 with fit-out due to complete in November 2021. Recruitment of a Centre Manager is underway, and plans are in place for the procurement of an innovation support service, which will commence delivery March 2022.

2.1.5 Supporting Businesses and the Local Economy

Our network of [Enterprise Centres continues to grow and](#) support new-start and growing small businesses across rural Somerset. Demand and occupancy rates have remained high despite the impacts of Covid-19 on small businesses. In addition to the existing centres, SCC has made significant progress extending the network. Construction of a new centre at Bruton funded via the Getting Building Fund and ERDF was completed in summer 2021. ERDF funding for an enterprise centre on SCC owned land in Chard was confirmed in August 2021 and a planning application has been submitted. Funds have also been secured via the Glastonbury Town Deal to adapt the Beckery Day Centre into an enterprise hub.

2.1.5.1 In June 2021 SCC's Cabinet approved a £6 million Somerset economic recovery fund. This fund is assisting businesses and individuals who have not been able to benefit from the Government's Covid-19 financial support measures and supports longer-term recovery of the local economy post the pandemic. Initial schemes include a restart and recovery fund to provide support to 'anchor' businesses and organisations including those in the visitor economy, a grants scheme for rural services businesses, a care sector business support programme, financial support for self-employed people and a grant fund to assist young people and those from less advantaged communities return to work.

2.1.6 A303/A358

In terms of other wider activities to support the growth of our economy we continue to give active support for the improvement of the A303 and A358 to create a second strategic route to the Southwest which will benefit the national and local economy and reduce the distance travelled for thousands of vehicles a day compared to the alternative M4/M5 corridor.

2.1.6.1 A303 Sparkford to Ilchester: Following granting of the Development Consent Order by the Secretary of State for Transport this year for the

three-mile section of the A303 between Sparkford and Ilchester, National Highways has now completed the detailed design and recently commenced construction. The project will take around two years to complete.

2.1.6.2 A358 Taunton to Southfields: Following announcement of the preferred route in 2019 and allocation of funding by the Department for Transport, National Highways has entered a £328 million contract with Taylor Woodrow Plus to design and build the scheme which involves upgrading the 8.5-mile section of the A358 between Southfields Roundabout on the A303 and the M5 at Taunton to a high-quality dual carriageway. Statutory consultation on the scheme this autumn will inform the final scheme that is developed for submission to the Planning Inspectorate for a Development Consent Order in 2022.

2.1.6.3 Further Improvements to the A303: As a member of the Peninsula Transport Sub-National Transport Body, we have urged the Government to confirm funding allocations and construction programme to improve the remaining sections of the route to dual carriageway standard to help realise the full economic potential of the South West.

2.1.7 Superfast Broadband - Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS)
The CDS programme delivers Superfast Broadband to households and businesses in hard-to-reach areas where commercial operators' planned rollout does not reach. The CDS programme has delivered superfast broadband to over 300,000 premises. During 2020 CDS conducted a procurement exercise to extend further superfast broadband delivery to premises across the County with speeds under 30 Mbps which were not in commercial plans. During 2021 suppliers have been mobilising and securing resources to design and build the infrastructure over the coming years. Initial design work has been undertaken and some areas are now commencing build. Build is due to continue through until December 2024.

2.1.7.1 Within the National Parks, infrastructure built by Airband Community Internet Ltd (AB) is providing access to a 30 Mbps service to approximately 5,000 hard to reach properties in Exmoor and Dartmoor. CDS secured £1 million of funding from the Heart of the Southwest LEP Digital Extension Fund. This will support the Mobile Boost Project providing vouchers for a signal booster to help businesses and residents with poor 4G coverage. The project aims to support up to 1,250 beneficiaries over the next 2 years with around 65% of these expected to be businesses.

2.1.8 Somerset Digital Innovation Centre
SCC is leading the development of the Somerset Digital Innovation Centre at Firepool in Taunton which will provide high-quality business accommodation and specialist innovation services for digital economy businesses. The centre will build on local strengths in the digital economy, and the presence of the UK Hydrographic Office in Taunton. In February

2021 planning approval was given for the centre. Funding has been secured from the LEP and ERDF, with works on site due to commence this autumn.

2.2 Hinkley Point C (HPC) and Securing the Legacy

The HPC project has continued to achieve its construction targets despite the challenges imposed by Covid-19 - the project is regarded as a national exemplar of maintaining construction activity during the pandemic. It has not been without impact, however, with the operational date for Unit 1 being moved to 2026, and Unit 2 to 2027.

2.2.1 Workforce Uplift

Over the last year, the Joint Local Authorities have been working closely together to understand the impact of a required increase in the HPC workforce. During the year, there have been Member briefings and EDF ran public engagement activity and utilised the three HPC Fora run by EDF in their engagement efforts. The Joint Councils resurrected the Somerset Nuclear Energy Group whose membership is across the four Local Authorities as an opportunity to keep lead Members and Leaders up to date on the changes, and potential decisions that will need to be made. The discussions continue, though it is hoped to conclude the process over the next few months.

2.2.1.2 The workforce on site as of August 2021 stood at 6300 with a peak of 8600 expected in late 2022/early 2023. There are two major work groups on site at present - the remaining civils workforce, and the incoming Mechanical, Engineering and Heating/Ventilation workforce, resulting in the need for additional workers.

2.2.2 Mitigation

Corridor improvements, travel behaviour (The Bridgwater Way) and road safety activities have continued during the year. Hinkley Tourism Action Partnership (HTAP) has been active in continuing to support the recovery plan for the leisure and tourism industry, and the Quantock Hills AONB Service is delivering a part Lottery/ HPC funded Landscape Character Action Plan in areas affected by the HPC project. Public Rights of Way activity has incorporated the improvement of infrastructure including new easy to use gates. Monitoring of the archaeological post excavation programme is nearing completion with specialist input being integrated into the main report, and the public realm programme is focussed on a project to enable interpretation of the landscape around Bridgwater and how it links back to the Brick kiln site and the industrial heritage of the town.

2.2.3 Economic Benefit

Direct spend within the region continues to increase and by July 2021 had

exceeded the target of £1.5 billion over the construction period and stood at £3.5 billion. 22,000 people in Britain are working on the project, 800 apprentices have trained and £123million of community investment has been delivered to date.

2.2.4 National Grid Hinkley Point C Connection Project

The project has had significant progress in the stages affecting Somerset during the year. Notable and visible changes can now be observed with traditional lattice towers beginning to be removed in favour of underground cabling or new T-Pylons.

2.3 Planning

We have made significant steps forward in re-establishing SCC's planning service in the past year, with all planning officer roles within the service area filled, as well as supporting the future of the team through the employment of a Graduate Planner and Planning Degree Apprentice. The arrangements that we have in place with Hampshire County Councils for support with planning casework and policy support are continuing in the interim whilst the new team is mobilised and the backlog resolved.

2.3.1 Planning Policy

With regard to our plan-making work, we are reviewing the Somerset Waste Plan by updating our Waste Needs Assessment, and by producing our Local Aggregates Assessment and Authority Monitoring Report (to cover 2017-2019) with the support of consultants, as these will be essential to assist with the plan review process.

2.3.2 Planning Development Management

Within the last year SCC has supported Somerset Waste Partnership and its operators with revised ways of working, to ensure that household waste collections were not compromised during the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic. We have processed planning permissions and enabled the delivery of several primary and Special Educational Needs schools as well as minerals extraction schemes. SCC has also granted consents for waste matters to enable various golf courses to physically change their landscape and improve their offer. All this was done in the face of changing technologies, as we adapted our ways of working and decision making to overcome the Covid-19 challenge.

2.3.3 Ecology

The Somerset Ecological Service (traded arm of the SCC's ecological advice function) has faced significant challenges, following changes to advice from Natural England in August 2020 following the release of European case law. Nutrient (phosphate) loading on watercourses that feed into the Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) sites that make up the Somerset Levels and Moors RAMSAR site, is now a consideration for new development proposals, and generated significant extra workload. We are

actively working with all of the local authorities across Somerset to draft a strategy to support the delivery of development and the level of collaboration in this work has been exceptional.

2.4 Waste (The Somerset Waste Partnership)

Despite an incredibly challenging year – changing collection contractor whilst coping with the ongoing impacts of Covid and a national Driver shortage, in 2020/21 Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP) recycled or reused 137,146 tonnes of material. An impressive 97.8% of this stayed in the UK (99.4% of all plastic). This is the equivalent of taking 47,000 cars off the road for a year or planting 738,200 trees. SWP also rolled out the first two phases of Recycle More each phase added about 100 tonnes of recycling each week. A survey found an overwhelming public support – 84% of respondents prefer it to their previous service. As well as nearly all our recycling staying in the UK, all Somerset’s non-recyclable kerbside waste (and most non-recyclable waste from recycling centres) goes to the Viridor Resource Recovery Centre at Avonmouth where it is turned into heat and electricity. In 2021/22 we expect to pilot an electric refuse vehicle, install photovoltaic panels at our two highest energy using depots, continue to explore how we can recycle even more plastic, help schools to recycle more, continue with our successful Schools Against Waste programme, focus on increasing reuse and explore how we can enable every flat/communal property to recycle food waste.

2.4.1 **Headline Figures** - Last year Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP) recycled or reused 137,146 tonnes of material. An impressive 97.8% of this stayed in the UK (99.4% of all plastic). This is the equivalent of taking 47,000 cars off the road for a year or planting 738,200 trees. Our recycling rate of 52.4% puts us in the top fifth of authorities.

2.4.2 **Recycle More** – We successfully delivered the first phase of Recycle More to Mendip residents in 2020/21 despite the pandemic. This meant 55,000 households could recycle extra materials weekly - notably plastic pots, tubs and trays. It is delivering on average more than 100 extra tonnes of recycling each week. A survey found an overwhelming level of public support – 84% of respondents prefer it to their previous service.

2.4.3 **Decarbonising SWP Operations** - The new fleet of 140 vehicles are 30% more carbon efficient than their predecessors. SWP trialled an electric refuse vehicle and developed a business case for the installation of photovoltaic panels at two depots.

2.4.4 **Energy from Waste (EfW)** – All Somerset’s non-recyclable kerbside waste (and most non-recyclable waste from recycling centres) goes to the Viridor Resource Recovery Centre at Avonmouth where it is turned into heat and electricity. Some of the electricity and heat generated will power a new

plastics reprocessing plant on site.

2.4.5 Covid-19 Impacts – Mobilising the new collection contract was made much more challenging by the pandemic. Nearing the end of the 2020-21 financial year we saw major impacts from the national driver shortage and the reliability of services suffered as a result.

2.4.5.1 Despite recycling centres being closed during the early stages of the pandemic, when we reopened our 16 sites, we avoided the restrictive 'visit by appointment' systems introduced elsewhere. HWRC visitor numbers were understandably down in comparison to the previous year by 280,000 (18%) but we saw similar recycling performances with all sites achieving between 61% to 73%.

2.4.6 Schools Against Waste (SAW) – The programme continued to engage with the county's primary schools through the Carymoor Environmental Trust. Over 160 schools have now been visited physically or virtually reaching around 37,750 children.

2.4.7 Climate Change/influencing Strategies - SWP responded to four major national consultations that will shape the waste/resource landscape in the UK for decades.

2.4.7.1 SWP led the 'Waste and Resources' workstream in the joint Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy. SWP progressed an initiative to improve recycling in public sector buildings, updated our developer guidance to drive more recycling in flats, provided a compost bin offer that has helped more than 900 people to home compost, and revamped our trail-blazing work that shows the public clearly what happens to the recycling SWP collects; www.somersetwaste.gov.uk/recycling-tracker/

2.5 Trading Standards

SCC continues to be a partner in the innovative and highly successful joint Trading Standards service with partners in Devon. In January 2021 SCC's Cabinet approved the continuation of the partnership for a further 10 years and its' expansion to include Plymouth City Council as well as Somerset, Devon and Torbay. This will enable us to sustain the service over this period and enable us to cumulatively realise additional financial savings in this and the following two financial years through efficiencies as opposed to service changes. Current priority areas set out in the strategic plan for the service include: tackling scams, addressing doorstep crime and rogue trading, combatting age restricted products and addressing animal disease. In addition, intervention is being increased around used motor car sales, private letting accommodation and food allergens. Data for

2019/20 shows that over the last year the service carried out 869 interventions supporting scam victims. The estimated total detriment value for scams was £33,400,000 and the average estimated detriment value per person was £34,000. The service continues to be nationally recognised as a model of good practice. In the past year the joint service has been a winner of the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) regulatory excellence business support award and of the Chartered Trading Standards Institute award for best national trading standards project as a result of its work to address mental health in farming.

2.6 Heritage

I continue to serve as a member of the South-West Heritage Trust Board. The Trust fulfils heritage service responsibilities previously carried out by SCC (comprising the Archives and Local Studies, Museums and Historic Environment Services) and Devon County Council (comprising the Archives and Local Studies Services).

2.6.1 Somerset Museums Service

The SWHT manages the Somerset Museums service. National restrictions have had an inevitable impact on visitor numbers across all of its sites, however there was a significant increase in visits to the Trust's online resources. Despite the restrictions and periods of enforced closure, the Museums Service remained central to the creation and delivery of the Trust's public programme including the staging of a number of temporary exhibitions and events.

2.6.2 Collections Care

After over a decade of indexing work by staff and volunteers a series of online indexes to Somerset archive sources was launched. These contain 228,000 index entries, including 80,000 relating to workhouse admissions and discharges and 62,000 relating to cases dealt with by Quarter Sessions: <https://somerset-cat.swheritage.org.uk/indexes>

2.6.3 Moving Forward – a Strategy for 2021 – 2025

Learning from the impacts of Covid-19 the Trust has developed a new Strategy and 5-year business plan to ensure that the Trust is well placed to respond to the post-covid world to continue to deliver its vision and ambitions, focusing on three major outcomes:

- **Supporting People and Communities:**
- **Protecting Our Heritage:**
- **Making an Impact:** The Trust will be enterprising, innovative and influential, and stand up for the heritage of Devon and Somerset.

2.7 Somerset Libraries - Development

Pre-Covid, Libraries were focused on embedding the outcomes of the

Libraries Redesign programme, including a new library operations structure; a new Outreach service; 13 community library partnerships and an asset improvement programme to help create a sustainable libraries physical network. These themes continue to be developed but we have also identified the following areas as key priorities for the coming year:

- Health & Wellbeing (Early Years/Mental wellbeing),
- Economic Growth (Employability support) and
- Strengthening Communities (Digital and social isolation).

A wide range of projects are currently in hand with key partner services, whilst increasing programming activity aimed at maximising the use of library physical spaces and growing an online community of library users that has flourished in the past 12-18 months. Further, we are gathering feedback and data via the [Your Library Is Listening survey](#) and other engagement events to help shape longer term aspirations based on the evidence of need.

2.7.1 Covid-19 - Throughout the pandemic, the Library service has provided a vital resource to those most vulnerable in our communities. Since 12th April 2021 all libraries started to reopen for browsing including those managed through Community Library Partnerships. During lockdown the Home Library Service offered a doorstep service and the mobile library provided a limited service. Library staff contacted over 7000 vulnerable library users as part of a 'Stay in Touch' campaign.

2.7.1.1 Working with Good Things Foundation and Taunton YMCA smartphones, data plans and digital skills training have been provided to 40 people in temporary homeless accommodation in November 2020. Also following a successful pilot in 2020, ipads are being made available at all libraries to borrow with priority being given to users looking for employment.

2.7.2 Post Lockdown - Since reopening in April 2021 physical loans have increased by 110% and e-audio loans have increased 221%. A new e-book platform was introduced combining e-book and e-audio collections offering 40% more content.

2.7.3 The Summer Reading Challenge - In 2020 the Challenge was delivered online and engaged just over 1,000 children. 2021 saw a return to the more usual delivery from libraries with a nature themed Wild World Heroes range of activities. 4343 children signed up for these activities

2.7.4 We have also been busy with a number of Building Projects – Street Community Library and Shepton Mallet library were fully refurbished during 2020/21 and work on Minehead library redevelopment has started with a view to early summer 2022. Other property work has included decarbonisation improvements at Yeovil Library.

2.8 Flood and Water Management – Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA)

The Somerset County Council Flood and Water Management Team is the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) as defined by the Flood and Water Management Act (2010) and the Flood Risk Regulations (2009). As the LLFA, the team is required to develop strategies to tackle local flood risks involving flooding from surface water and 'ordinary watercourses', for example ditches, rhynes, and streams, groundwater, canals, lakes and small reservoirs. The team also undertakes a statutory consultee role providing technical advice on surface water drainage to local planning authorities on major developments (10 dwellings or more) and also investigate significant local flooding incidents and publish the results of such investigations.

2.8.1 Increase in Volumes

The Lead Local Flood Authority is a statutory consultee for 'Major' planning applications on flood risk and drainage matters. The team has dealt with around 800 planning consultations in the last 12 months compared to just 100 when the duty was established in 2015.

2.8.2 Section 19 Investigations

On 28th June 2021, South Somerset experienced an extreme weather event resulting in many areas of Chard and the surrounding villages and communities being severely impacted. As a result the LLFA launched a flood investigation, in accordance with Section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act (2010). The Section 19 investigation will identify the relevant risk management authorities and determine if they have exercised or plan to exercise their functions appropriately and will also outline potential options for flood mitigation, alleviation, and resilience activities.

2.9 Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA)

I have continued to serve as Chair of Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA). The SRA gives Somerset extra flood protection and greater resilience. Partners in the SRA are Somerset County Council, the four district councils of Mendip, Sedgemoor, Somerset West & Taunton, and South Somerset, the Axe Brue and Parrett Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs), the Environment Agency, Natural England and the Wessex Regional Flood & Coastal Committee. Numerous other organisations are involved with the SRA at different levels and in different ways.

The SRA has five workstreams, reflecting the priorities of Somerset's 20 Year Flood Action Plan. Information on all workstreams is available on the [SRA](#) website, particularly in the Annual Report 2020-21.

Schemes are led by the SRA partners. Funding comes from either the SRA's Local Partner Funding (council tax and Internal Drainage Board contributions) or the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise

Partnership's Growth Deal Fund, or sometimes both.

2.9.1 Dredging and River Management

Over the last year, SRA funded activities have included dredging 1.37 miles of the River Parrett, making dozens of improvements to water level control structures in the Westmoor Raised Water Level Area near Kingsbury Episcopi, designing a new flow station for the Parrett in Langport, and raising banks and creating new environmental features as part of the River Sowey-King's Sedgemoor Drain Enhancements Scheme (Phase One).

2.9.1.1 Other initiatives have helped to slow the flow of water down from upper and mid catchments to vulnerable areas. Recent activities have included pond restorations and the creation of swales and leaky woody dams, and land management measures such as grassland slitting and subsoiling and the planting of post-maize cover crops. A new Trees for Water Action Fund led to trees and hedges being planted at 23 sites. The SRA has continued to part-fund the Adapting the Levels project on the Somerset Levels and Moors, and elements of the Riverlands project in Porlock Vale. Both are concerned with the water-related impacts of climate change, flooding and drought.

2.9.2 Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)

The SRA has been funding the production of Somerset-specific guidance for Sustainable Drainage Systems or SUDS, and major drainage improvement works have been carried out along the A39 in Carhampton and wide-ranging flood risk reduction projects continued in Beckington and Rode near Frome.

2.9.3 Priorities for the Next 12 Months

- The SRA is currently funding approximately £9m of projects across Somerset. As SRA Chair I will ensure SRA partners maintain momentum in delivering these projects on behalf of the residents of Somerset.
- In the next 12 months the SRA will complete a review of Somerset's 20 Year Flood action Plan and publish a new plan in September 2022.
- I will also continue to press local MPs and government ministers to see the necessary provisions made so that the SRA can become established in law with the powers to raise its own funding.

2.10 Registration Services

The service operates under strict legal governance in partnership with the General Register Office and Home Office. In an average year it will facilitate registrations for around 8,000 deaths, 7,000 births and 3,500 marriage or civil partnership ceremonies across Somerset and North Somerset (as well as Bristol based births). The service is also responsible for conducting citizenship ceremonies for new British citizens and issuing

historical certificates for all life events. Disruption as a result of the pandemic has been enormous, however recovery is now well under way. In addition to reacting to forthcoming changes in legislation which is hoped will modernise the way services can be provided, a key focus for the coming year will be to work with partners to rebuild the local ceremony industry and ensure Somerset continues to be an attractive location for wedding tourism.

2.10.1 Legislative Changes

Legislation to modernise marriage registrations came into effect in May 2021. This made way for the electronic registration of all marriages including the addition of the couples' mothers' (or other parent) details. This was a significant change for the service, implemented quickly at a challenging time. In addition to internal training and introduction of new processes, virtual training courses were provided to all clergy.

2.10.1.1 Other emergency changes in legislation have afforded us the opportunity to offer marriage and civil partnership ceremonies outdoors within the grounds of licensed venues.

2.10.1.2 The Coronavirus Act continues to facilitate opportunity to complete death registrations over the telephone rather than face to face.

2.10.2 Website

The Somerset Wedding Service website has greatly increased its focus as a portal for customer self-service and essential information. There were 47,039 active users from Oct 20 to Sept 21, an average 3900 per month - up from 29,473 (monthly average 2450) in previous 12 months

2.11 Civil Contingencies

The purpose of the Somerset Local Authorities Civil Contingencies Partnership (SLACCP) is to promote resilience and preparedness across the five Somerset Local Authorities and in the wider community. The Civil Contingencies Unit (CCU) works on behalf of all five authorities to develop and maintain emergency plans and procedures, create and deliver emergency training and exercises and to support robust business continuity planning so that essential services are maintained in any environment or extreme event. During emergencies, the CCU provides strategic and tactical advice to the Gold officers, coordinates provision of situational awareness and maintains the link with the multi-agency emergency responders.

2.11.1 Partnership Plans

Recently refreshed SLACCP plans include the Generic response and recovery plan; Heat Health Watch Plan; Operation London Bridge

framework and Evacuation and Shelter plan.

2.11.2 Business Continuity

The SCC Business Continuity Management Group operated between Autumn 2020 and April 2021 and restarted in July due to increasing pressures. SCC business continuity plans held up well during the pandemic with praise from the Southwest Audit Partnership report in summer 2021.

2.11.3 Training and Exercising

Emergency preparedness training is another priority including duty officer refresher sessions, rest centre management training and nuclear awareness. The Civil Contingencies Unit (CCU) carried out a series of training and exercises for the partnership including delivery of a multi-agency concurrent events exercise in November 2020, a strategic exercise for the Local Outbreak Management Plan (LOMP) in autumn 2020 and a test of the revised LOMP in June 2021. We've also carried out a statutory test of the Hinkley Point Off-Site Plan involving four modules and over 250 participants.

2.11.4 Community Resilience

The Somerset Prepared partnership promotes and supports community resilience for Parish and Town Councils and community groups via advice, guidance, grants, the Somerset Prepared website and the annual community resilience conference. This year's event was held on-line as a series of webinars, videos and training throughout October.

2.11.5 Incidents and Covid-19

The CCU supports SCC business continuity, engages with the multi-agency response via the Avon and Somerset Local Resilience Forum and supports Public Health by sourcing Covid test sites and chairing the Somerset Death Management Group.

2.12 Scientific Services

Somerset Scientific Services (SSS) supply first class UKAS (UK Accreditation Service) accredited water and air quality (traffic monitoring) analytical testing services to Somerset County Council and on an income generating basis to other County and local District enforcement authorities, Government Agencies, National and local companies and the general public throughout the South West. SSS had a very successful 2020-21 trading year despite all the major disruptions associated with the pandemic. It' client base and income streams has grown (including a contract to monitor air quality in Ulster) and the reputation of the service within the industry to offer first-class analytical testing services and

sought-after scientific advice remains extremely high. During the pandemic, SSS continued to monitor air quality for District Councils, giving an insight into the effects of lockdown on pollution levels.

2.13 Climate Emergency

2.13.1 Climate Emergency Strategy

Following SCC's Full Council's declaration of a 'Climate Emergency' in recognition of the scale and urgency of the global challenge from Climate Change, it was agreed to work with the four Somerset District Councils to develop a shared Strategy to identify ways towards making the county of Somerset 'carbon neutral' by 2030.

The focus of the developed Strategy is not only to decarbonise the county, but also to have a Somerset which is prepared for, and resilient to, the impacts of Climate Change.

As we approach a year since the Climate Emergency Strategy's adoption, we are now in the process of reviewing our progress towards the outcomes detailed in the Strategy. This exercise will capture which actions have been undertaken, what progress has been made and where greater action or urgency is required in order to meet the Strategy Goals.

2.13.2 Electric Vehicle Strategy

During Autumn 2020, the 5 Somerset Councils agreed to jointly fund the development of an Electric Vehicle (EV) Strategy for Somerset.

2.13.2.1 The EV Strategy describes how the use of conventional fuelled petrol and diesel vehicles must transition to 'Zero Emission' electric vehicles, in line with national policy, as well as setting out the opportunities and challenges that this will bring as we look to decarbonise transport across Somerset to help tackle the climate emergency. We are now working through the recommendations to implement the aims of the strategy including enabling residents to charge their EV's in residential areas.

2.13.3 Climate Emergency Community Fund

In February 2020, the Leader of the Council, announced a £1m fund available for city, town and parish councils to support climate change initiatives within Somerset. Councils were encouraged to apply for funding to support work in their communities to deliver projects that reduced carbon emissions, reduced consumption, raised community awareness of climate change issues or increased resilience to the impacts of climate change.

2.13.3.1 The Climate Emergency Community Fund launched in September 2020 received 137 applications from 123 city, town & parish councils with bids

totalling over £3.5m. Due to this very high demand, an additional £0.5m was announced by the Leader in May 2021 to support the Fund. These monies have so far enabled a total of 44 projects to be awarded funding to date, amounting to £980,354.49.

2.13.4 Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund

Somerset County Council has been awarded £4,053,211 through the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund that will fund projects across a number of Council owned buildings. The work will include the installation of heat pumps, replacing windows with double glazing, upgrading building insulation, improving building ventilation systems and installing solar panels.

2.13.5 Defra Treescapes Fund £187K

Over the Summer of 2021, SCC led a bid to the Defra Local Authority Treescapes Fund (LATF) which aims to increase tree planting and natural regeneration in local communities. The bid, with support from the 4 Somerset District councils was successful in securing £187k.

This funding will allow the planting of over 1,800 trees across a variety of settings across Somerset including 160 school sites, 400 trees planted in urban areas around Sedgemoor and over 1,000 trees planted on farmland, hedgerows and other settings to replace some of the trees lost to ash die back.

2.13.6 Climate Emergency Website

Information about the Climate Emergency Strategy for Somerset and many of the exciting projects and programmes that are underway or planned can be found on our website. I would urge everyone to familiarise yourselves with the strategy to understand the part you can play in delivering our ambitious goals and see the exciting range of projects that are already taking place across Somerset [Climate Emergency \(somerset.gov.uk\)](https://www.somerset.gov.uk/climate-emergency)

2.14 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is a designated exceptional landscape the distinctive character and natural beauty of which are precious enough to be safeguarded in the national interest. AONBs are protected and enhanced for nature, people, business and culture.

AONB teams are responsible for the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the respective protected landscapes and encouraging the quiet enjoyment of the countryside whilst having regard for the interests of those who live and work there.

There are four AONBs that fall within the administrative boundary of Somerset; Cranborne Chase AONB, Blackdown Hills AONB, Mendip Hills AONB and Quantock Hills AONB, the latter two being 'hosted' by Somerset County Council.

2.14.1 Farming in Protected Landscapes

One of the more significant initiatives for AONB services this year was the commencement of the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) scheme. It will deliver funding through the AONBs to support farmers, particularly upland farmers (75% of whom live and work in Protected Landscapes) to make improvements to the natural environment, cultural heritage and public access on their land.

2.14.2 Mendip Hills AONB

The Mendip Hills AONB comprises 198sq kms of environmentally important land from the Somerset Levels to the lakes of Chew Valley and Blagdon.

The last twelve months have been a period of extremes for the service. The coronavirus pandemic has resulted in the Mendip Hills AONB experiencing both the quietest and busiest ever periods.

Upon lifting of the national restrictions, automatic visitor counters recorded 60,000 passes between 21 May and 4 July 2021 at one site, this compares to just under 6,000 passes during the same time period 5 years ago.

2.14.3 Green Recovery Challenge Fund

The Somerset AONBs, led by the Mendip Hills AONB, have secured £248,900 from the Government's Green Recovery Challenge Fund and National Lottery Heritage Fund to deliver the 'Level Up' project. The project will work across the three AONBs, along strategically important nature recovery networks, to deliver pre-determined projects during 2021/22 that will enhance connections for wildlife and transitional habitats between the Hills and the Levels.

2.14.4 Quantock Hills AONB

Designated in 1956 the Quantock Hills became the first area in England to be confirmed as an AONB on the 1st January 1957. The hills run from the Vale of Taunton Deane in the south, for about 15 miles (24 km) to the north-west, ending at Kilve and West Quantoxhead on the coast of the Bristol Channel.

Covid-19 restrictions have had a significant impact on various elements of the Quantock Hills AONB Team's work, particularly outdoor activities with volunteers and other groups. During lockdown, the team were particularly keen to support the vulnerable people in our communities, while promoting the "stay at home" message during the time of restrictions.

2.14.4.1 The Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme

Despite the issues with national restrictions, the Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme (QLPS), the Heritage Lottery funded projects programme, has been working on a range of projects from historic

heritage assessments and small digs to rights of way enhancement, Quantock inspired murals in Priorswood and on-site information boards. They are running a photo competition until next March regarding people in the Quantocks – village life, people and working life.

For more information on the QLPS, visit the [Quantock Hills Landscape Partnership Scheme website](#)

3. Background papers

- 3.1. [Somerset Recovery and Growth Plan](#)
- 3.2. [Somerset Rivers Authority Annual Report 2020-21 - Somerset Rivers Authority](#)
- 3.3. Climate Emergency Strategy - [Climate Emergency \(somerset.gov.uk\)](#)
- 3.4. [Appendix A - Somerset EV Charging Strategy.pdf \(somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk\)](#)

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County Council
– 24 November 2021

Quarterly Report of the Scrutiny for Policies, Adults and Health Committee

Chairman: Cllr Hazel Prior-Sankey

Division and Local Member: All

Lead Officer: Scott Woodridge – Monitoring Officer

Author: Jennie Murphy – Senior Democratic Services Officer

Contact Details: 01823 355529 jzmurphy@somerset.gov.uk

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| 1. Summary | |
| 1.1 | The Scrutiny for Policies, Adults and Health Committee is required by the Constitution to provide full Council with a summary progress report and outcomes of scrutiny. This report covers meetings since July 2021. |
| 1.2 | The Committee agreed their work programme would comprise of items considered directly at meetings plus other items considered or 'commissioned', using flexible arrangements outside of the formal committee structure. |
| 1.3 | <p>Members of the Council are reminded that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all Members have been invited to attend meetings of the three Scrutiny Committees and to contribute freely on any agenda item; • any Member could propose a topic for inclusion on the Scrutiny Work Programme. • any Member can be asked by the Committee to contribute information and evidence and to participate in specific scrutiny reviews. <p>The Committee has 8 elected Members.</p> |
| 2. | Background |
| 2.1 | <p>Scrutiny Work Programme</p> <p>Each of our meetings had specific agenda items to consider the work programme and allow members and officers to suggest items we should scrutinise in more depth. We also frequently review how we monitor our suggested outcomes and/or recommended actions so we can understand the impact of our work so we can learn how to better focus our scrutiny work to ensure we have made a difference.</p> <p>Scrutiny Members have endeavoured through the Committee meetings to make suggestions and express opinions to Directors and Cabinet Members after discussion and debate. We have constructive relationships with our sister Scrutiny Committees, particularly the Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee.</p> |
| 2.2 | <p>Meeting 08 September 2021 Stroke Services - Consultation</p> <p>We had a presentation and report outlining proposed changes to Stroke Services in the North of the County. The presentation made it clear that the impact on services in Somerset would be limited to less than one person per</p> |

week. The changes proposed would centralise Stroke Services into a centre of excellence in Southmead Hospital and would ensure that those who needed immediate care would have access to the best possible support. The changes would have minimal impact on the Stroke Service being offered at Musgrove Park Hospital. The impact would be to remove one or two patients a week from Weston General Hospital to Southmead.

Adult Social Care - Performance Report

We had a report that set out the challenges the pandemic has placed on Adult Social Care over the past year. The pandemic has reminded all of the importance of collaboration, communities, and of the care, support and protection of those who need some help the most. It has served to demonstrate why adult social care work is both vital and valuable.

Despite all these challenges Somerset the report did make it clear that against the background of all these challenges Somerset has been nominated for three Achievement Awards for:

Best Workforce Transformation' for its redeployment work during the pandemic,

- 'Community Heroes' for the work of Community Council for Somerset's Village and Community Agents, and
- 'Delivering Better Outcomes' for Somerset's Micro-providers, independent care providers who have proved a lifeline for the county's more isolated and rural populations throughout the pandemic.

Supporting Unpaid Carers in Somerset

We had a report and presentation on unpaid carers in Somerset. There are 58,000 people who have identified themselves as carers, there are many more who are not known to the Council. Somerset County Council commissions a broad range of support services for carers. These services are currently commissioned by Adults & Health and Children and Young People and delivered by several different providers.

Following our Workshop in December 2019 the Carers Transformation Programme was launched. The progress of this was stalled by the pandemic but has now led to programme that aims to:

- Continue to improve internal practice and processes consistently provide good outcomes for carers as well as the cared for,
- Review Carers Voice Somerset to ensure that it is effective in carer engagement,
- Seek continuous improvement through the contract with Community Council for Somerset who deliver the adult carers service,
- Develop working agreements between adults and young carers services to ensure that young adult carers through transition get the support that they need,
- Develop new ways to support carers to ensure that services are flexible and gives the carer choice and control and
- Deliver wider promotion of carers support services so that carers know where to go for support when they need it.

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| 2.3 | <p>Workshop 6th October Neighbourhood and Communities</p> <p>We had an interesting and well attended workshop looking at the scope and proposals for Local Community Networks under the Unitary design. We heard about the current position, some of the proposed changes and some uplifting Good News stories demonstrating the fantastic work being carried out in the communities.</p> <p>We were able to look at the current models and contribute some local knowledge to help shape these moving forward to make sure they are fit for purpose now and in the future when Somerset has a Unitary role and perhaps some different boundaries for local representatives. This collaboration at this early stage will ensure all the integrated cooperation is not lost during any major changes to Community areas and their local representatives.</p> |
| 2.4 | <p>Meeting 3rd November Integrated Quality, Safety and Performance report</p> <p>We had the regular Performance and Quality report from the CCG and had asked that this time there should be a focus on primary Care and Ambulance response times. We took the opportunity to scrutinise this report and made some robust comments on the need to drive up this performance.</p> <p>SSAB (Somerset Safeguarding Adults Board)</p> <p>We had the Annual report on Safeguarding Adults. This comprehensive report is one that we have a statutory duty to discuss and support.</p> <p>Adult Social Care Reform and Assurance</p> <p>We had a presentation on the Adult Social Care Reforms and the direction of travel these are likely to take. The full details are not yet known but it was a good opportunity to understand some of the implications and possible impact these reforms will have.</p> |
| 2.5 | <p>Consultations:</p> <p>We have during the period shared and commented on a number of papers that were circulated to the Committee as we have not been able to meet as frequently as usual. These have covered: -</p> <p>Weston Hospital Annual report for Hospital and Ambulance Trusts Stroke Services</p> |
| 3 | <p>Meetings Overview for 2021-22</p> <p>We have considered a number of reports on a range of topics and these have included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fit for My Future • Access to Dental services • Waiting lists post Covid 19 • Changes to Stroke Services • Improvements to Out of Hours Service • Care Homes and Nursing Home Support Service (LARCH/CCG) • Regular clinical quality review reports from Somerset Clinical |

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|------------|--|
| | <p>Commission Group (CCG)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dementia Report • Regular updates regarding Adult Social Care Performance • Somerset Safeguarding Annual Report and strategic plan • Somerset CCG finance and performance issues • Community Hospitals • Council performance reports • Learning Disability Service Contract • NHS waiting times for Somerset patients. • Somerset suicide prevention • Mental health and wellbeing • Medium Term Financial Plan |
| 2.4 | <p>Suggestions for the Future</p> <p>We look forward to an interesting and informative year ahead.</p> <p>We have always endeavoured to approach our task as a 'critical friend' by trying to be supportive to officers and encouraging them to highlight areas of concern to us, whilst hopefully providing a suitably robust challenge to question poor performance and seek reassurance that appropriate action is taken to achieve improvement. We feel the Council would benefit from Scrutiny being asked to undertake more pre-Cabinet decision work to help the transition from policy development to implementation.</p> |
| 3. | <p>Consultations Undertaken</p> <p>The Committee invites all County councillors to attend and contribute to its meetings.</p> |
| 4. | <p>Implications</p> <p>The Committee considers carefully and often asks for further information about the implications as outlined in the reports considered at its meetings.</p> <p>For further details of the reports considered by the Committee, please contact the author of this report.</p> |
| 5. | <p>Background Papers</p> <p>Further information about the Committee including dates of meetings and agendas and reports from previous meetings, are available via the Council's website:</p> <p>www.somerset.gov.uk/agendasandpapers</p> <p>Note: For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author.</p> |

Report of the Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee

Chair: Cllr Leigh Redman

Division and Local Member: All

Lead Officer: Jamie Jackson –Scrutiny Manager

Author: Fiona Abbott – Senior Democratic Services Officer

Contact Details: 01823 357337 fabbott@somerset.gov.uk

1. Summary

- 1.1** The Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee is required by the Constitution to provide Full Council with a summary progress report and outcomes of scrutiny. This report covers the work of the Scrutiny Committee September – November 2021.
- 1.2** The Committee continues to focus on the outcomes arising from the Ofsted Inspection, including the Written Statement of Action (WSOA), which prioritises the areas work on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in the forthcoming 18 – 24 months; and on ensuring the delivery of the Children and Young Peoples Plan (CYPP).
- 1.3** Members of the Council are reminded that:
 - all Members have been invited to attend meetings of the three Scrutiny Committees and to contribute freely on any agenda item.
 - any Member could propose a topic for inclusion on the Scrutiny Work Programmes.
 - any Member can be asked by the Committee to contribute information and evidence and to participate in specific scrutiny reviews.
- 1.4** The Committee has 8 elected Members and has up to seven co-opted members and following minor changes made at the Council meeting in May 2021, the current position is - two church representatives (one vacancy), two School Governor representatives, one representative from the Somerset Schools Forum (vacant) and two parent governor representatives (both vacant). The co-opted members have voting rights on education matters only.

2. Background

2.1 Scrutiny Work Programme

Each of our meetings had specific agenda items to consider the work programme and allow members and officers to suggest items we should scrutinise in more depth. This has led to items being added to the work programme and help guide our future work.

At each meeting we review how we monitor our suggested outcomes and/or recommended actions so we can understand the impact of our work so we can learn how to better focus our scrutiny work to ensure we have made a difference.

Scrutiny Members have endeavoured through the Committee meetings to make suggestions and express opinions to Directors and Cabinet Members after discussion and debate.

2.2 Meeting on 9 September 2021

The main points from the meeting were: -

SCC response to Afghan Refugee Position – we received an update from the Council’s Corporate Affairs Director, Mr Simon Clifford and the Health Promotion Manager – Resettlement, Ms Brittney Strange.

SCC is the lead authority for co-ordinating the countywide response, with the district councils and voluntary sectors working alongside to support. There is a resettlement webpage with up-to-date information about the current plans, what the accommodation needs are, and what people can do to volunteer or donate: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/refugee-resettlement/>

The Committee asked detailed questions and made comments, which were responded to by officers and I thanked the officers for the detailed update and work being done by the County Council and partners to support refugees.

Social Care – The Experience of younger children in care – we then received a detailed presentation from the Council’s Strategic Manager CLA and Leaving Care, Ms Jayne Shelbourne-Barrow on the experience of younger children in care.

Task and Finish Group – update – I provided a brief update on the work of the Task and Finish Group on the ‘Continuity of Children’s Services through Local Government Reorganisation’. Work has re started, following the Secretary of State’s decision in July that a single unitary council for the whole of the existing administrative county of Somerset be created in 2023.

Information items circulated to the Scrutiny Committee since the last meeting – the Committee noted that the following information item had been circulated since our last meeting – briefing paper prepared by the Strategic Manager Prevention Services and the Service Manager, Operational Management on the Youth Offending Service – update on HMIP Inspection.

2.3 Meeting on Monday 4 October 2021

This meeting was Chaired by the Vice Chair as I was unable to attend the meeting. The main points from the meeting were: -

Changes to education governance arrangements – we received a presentation from the Council’s Assistant Director Education, Partnerships and Skills, Ms Amelia Walker who provided an outline of changes to the education governance arrangements in Somerset.

In the presentation, Ms Walker highlighted the background to the changes, the new Education Strategy Board and building on early help system. Ms Walker also outlined the proposed changes to the Schools Forum, including the new Constitution and membership, the relationship to other groups and that the new Schools Forum will meet formally in November 2021. The Constitution of the new Schools Forum will be shared with the Committee.

The Committee noted the intention to come to the December meeting of the Committee to outline the analysis to support the development of an education Strategy for Somerset.

On behalf of the Committee, the Vice Chair thanked Ms Walker for the detailed presentation.

ECHP – deep dive – the Council’s Assistant Director Inclusion, Dr Rob Hart provided an update on the Written Statement of Action (WSOA) by way of introduction to the item and the focus on Education, Health and Care – Assessments and Plans, which was presented by the Council’s SEND Strategic Manager Ms Claire Merchant-Jones by way of a PowerPoint presentation.

In the presentation Ms Merchant-Jones referred to the findings from Tribunal Review and that this will be available through the [SEND Improvement Board](#). She had also circulated some detailed information to the Committee on this, and following discussion, the Committee asked that the issue of Tribunals – working of the Appeals process be discussed as a possible item at a future meeting of the Committee. Following discussion, Ms Merchant-Jones also said that she would be happy to provide further information on the figures, for example totals and percentages in number of EHC plans of school age children.

Dr Hart was asked to bring an update report on the WSoA to the December meeting of the Committee.

2.4 Meeting on Monday 8 November 2021

The main points from the meeting were: -

Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews – we received information from the Council’s Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership Business Manager, Ms Caroline Dowson, on the process for rapid reviews and local child safeguarding practice reviews. We also considered the learning from the two local child safeguarding practice reviews published in August 2021.

West Somerset Opportunity Area - we received information from the Council's Strategic Manager, West Somerset Opportunity Area Lead, Ms Julia Ridge, highlighting the progress and 'the difference made' 2017 – 2021. We noted the successes and challenges still faced and how the learning can be shared / be beneficial for other Somerset communities. The programme covers 4 key areas – early years, excellence in the classroom, transition to adulthood, business and enterprise.

Trauma Informed Approach – workshop item – we then had an excellent and engaging workshop, facilitated by the Council's Joint Strategic Commissioner Children's and Health, Ms Vikki Hearn.

The workshop covered what the elements of a 'trauma informed Somerset' might look like, the emerging themes and the possible steps which may need to take, based on feedback from a professionals workshop which was held on 1 November.

Information item circulated to the Scrutiny Committee since the last meeting – the Committee noted that the following information item had been circulated since our last meeting - Tribunal summary report – this was the paper previously circulated to members of the Committee on 30 September and prior to the last meeting of the Committee held on 4 October, and recirculated on 29 October 2021.

2.5 Suggestions for the Future

We look forward to an interesting and informative year ahead. Work is continuing on 'reframing' and refocussing the work programme and outcome tracker, so that it better reflects our priorities and areas of focus (the WSoA, preventative agenda and the CYPP).

I am keen to keep the meetings current and adapt to include as much information as possible, to support members ability to participate and grow, recording circulated reports in our minutes. As such we now include on our agenda 'items for information' - these are reports or comments that are shared with members for reading in their own time and members of committee can then contact the author directly with questions. Should members feel that a deeper dive is necessary they can come back to Chair, the Vice Chair (or Clerk), to discuss inclusion in future meetings.

We have always endeavoured to approach our task as a 'critical friend' by trying to be supportive to officers and encouraging them to highlight areas of concern to us, whilst hopefully providing a suitably robust challenge to question poor performance and seek reassurance that appropriate action is taken to achieve improvement.

We still feel the Council would benefit from Scrutiny being asked to undertake

more pre-Cabinet decision work to help the transition from policy development to implementation.

3. Consultations Undertaken

The Committee invites all County Councillors to attend and contribute to its meetings. The Committee Chair and Vice Chair invite prospective report authors to attend their pre-meetings and Lead Officers are engaged in this process.

4. Implications

The Committee considers carefully and often asks for further information about the implications as outlined in the reports considered at its meetings.

For further details about the reports considered by the Committee, please contact the author of this report.

5. Background Papers

Further information about the Committee including dates of meetings and agendas and reports from previous meetings, are available via the Council's website - www.somerset.gov.uk/agendasandpapers

Note: For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author.

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Report of the Scrutiny Committee for Policies and Place

Division and Local Member: All

Lead Officer: Scott Wooldridge – Monitoring Officer, Democratic Services

Author: Jamie Jackson – Deputy Strategic Manager, Democratic Services

Contact Details: 01823 359040

1. Summary

- 1.1.** The Scrutiny Committee for Policies and Place is required by the Constitution to make an annual report to the Council and also to provide each other meeting of the Council with a summary progress report and outcomes of scrutiny. This regular report covers the work of our meetings held on 7 September, 12 October and 2 November, in addition to a Call-in meeting held on 30th September 2021.
- 1.2.** The Committee agreed their work programme would comprise items considered directly at meetings plus other items considered or “commissioned” using flexible arrangements outside of the formal committee structure.
- 1.3.** Members of the Council are reminded that:
 - all Members have been invited to attend meetings of the Scrutiny Committee and to contribute freely on any agenda item;
 - any Member could propose a topic for inclusion on the Committee’s Work Programme;
 - any Member could be asked by the Committee to contribute information and evidence, and to participate in specific scrutiny reviews.
- 1.4.** The Committee has 8 elected Members and we have meetings scheduled approximately for every month. Our next meeting will be held in the Luttrell Meeting Room, County Hall at 10.00am on 7 December 2021.

2. Background

2.1. Scrutiny Work Programme

At each meeting the Committee considers and updates its work programme, having regard to the Cabinet’s forward plan of proposed key decisions. The Committee also agreed to hold themed meetings and Members are looking forward to this approach, in particular the attendance of representatives and/or stakeholders from partner agencies.

2.2. 7 September 2021

Corporate Property Asset Management Plan and Strategy

The first item the Committee considered the report of the Corporate Property Asset Management Plan and Strategy.

The Chair welcomed the Cabinet Member for Resources, Councillor Mandy Chilcott and the Council's Head of Property, Oliver Woodhams, to the meeting for this agenda item.

Mr Woodhams gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Corporate Property Asset Management Plan & Asset Strategy and provided background information about the Council's property estate and about the disposal of assets; outlined proposed principles and objectives for the County Council's Corporate Property Asset Management Plan; the proposed approach to asset strategy and policy review during the transition to new Unitary arrangements.

The Committee asked detailed questions and commented on the following – (a) the proposed objectives and principles for the Corporate Property Asset Management Plan refresh which will be brought to the November 2021 Council meeting for adoption and will cover the period 2021 – 2023 for SCC; (b) the proposed pausing of further County Council policy updates; (c) what future property items the Committee would like to see brought forward.

The Committee noted the update on the refresh of the Corporate Property Asset Management Plan and Asset Strategy.

2021/22 Budget Monitoring Report – Month 3 – End of June

The second item considered was the 2021/22 Budget Monitoring Report – Month 3.

The Chair invited the Cabinet Member for Resources, Councillor Mandy Chilcott and the Council's Strategic Manager, Finance, Christian Evans to introduce and present the report. The report provided an overview of the Council's financial position from the Director of Finance as the Council's S151 Officer with detail from each service and commentary from the responsible Director set out in the body of the report.

The forecast outturn for service expenditure as at the end of June 2021 (month 3) was £354m against a budget of £349.7m which represented an overspend of £4.4m for the year if no further actions were taken. The significant variances were set out with further detail and actions being taken by the responsible Director outlined in the report

The Scrutiny for Policies and Place Committee then discussed the report and a number of points and questions were raised covering – Cabinet would consider the month four position at its next meeting; the funding of the pay award; the Park and Ride service in Taunton and clarification would be provided on 'paid seats'; the monitoring of savings and risks.

The Scrutiny Committee for Policy and Place Committee noted:-

- a) The forecast underspend of £3.8m. Made up of service overspends of £4.4m, offset by £6m of unallocated Corporate Contingency and £2m of unallocated Covid-19 Emergency Fund (section 12).
- b) The current estimated position and funding of the Capital Programme (section 27)
- c) The allocation of £0.2m of the Covid-19 Emergency Fund to support free travel from the Park and Ride sites for the remainder of 2021/22, the remaining costs will come from ECI budgets and reserves (section 24).
- d) The allocation of £0.08m from the Workforce Reserve to support the implementation of hybrid home/office working (section 17).
- e) The estimated reserves position, key risks, future issues and opportunities detailed in the report, which will be closely monitored throughout the year with forecasts updated as appropriate.

30 September 2021

Review of Cabinet Decision regarding disposal of Land in Ash

An extraordinary meeting was convened to consider Call-in submissions following the Call-in of a Cabinet Member Decision. Statements were presented to the Committee by Councillor Bloomfield and Councillors Munt and Rigby who also provided 37 questions for response by the Cabinet Member and Head of Property.

During the discussion the committee discussed, the criteria and terms of asset transfer for land owned by the Council and how land is valued. The option of progressing planning applications in advance of an asset disposal to increase the opportunities of the sale of a site. The details and background of the land disposal at Ash were given full consideration by the committee along with alternative options for the site and proposals discussed.

The Scrutiny for Polices and Place Committee unanimously agreed, proposed by Cllr Groskop and seconded by Cllr Filmer that in future reports, information is drafted in a more open and clear manner in the future to include information relating to policy, law, risks and opportunity. A further request was made that Councillors elected to the New Authority receive extensive training in how land and property is purchased and sold by the Council.

12 October 2021

Somerset's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)

The first item considered was the Somerset Bus Service Improvement Plan. The Chair welcomed the Cabinet Member for Public Transport and Highways, Councillor John Woodman and the Council's Strategic Manager for Highways and

Transport, Mike O'Dowd-Jones to the meeting.

In March 2021, the government launched the new National Bus Strategy – 'Bus Back Better' with the overall aim of transforming local bus services and increasing bus patronage. Under this new strategy the expectation was that Local Transport Authority's (LTA's) would enter Enhanced Partnership (EP) Agreements with local bus operators across the LTA to develop and deliver improvements across local bus services and enhance the experience for passengers.

LTAs had to publish a statutory Notice of Intent by the end of June 2021, committing to forming an EP with local bus operators. The EP will come into effect from April 2022. The BSIP would be instrumental in informing the government's future allocation of the £3 billion transformation fund for public transport.

The Committee then discussed, the opportunity for free bus passes for the over 60 age group and encouraging a pass for the under 25 age group, increased real time information at bus stops, the success of the free park and ride service in reducing traffic in Taunton and the potential for a similar service in Glastonbury, rural bus routes and maximising use in rural areas. Reliability of services and issues encountered with the shortage of drivers and the impact of the pandemic. Provision of electric buses as part of the future service and safety of passengers using the evening services to access the night-time economy.

The Scrutiny for Policies and Place Committee:-

1. Considered the emerging principles of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) as set out in the initial draft (Appendix A) and outlined in the accompanying presentation (Appendix B), which will inform the final BSIP due to be considered at Cabinet on 20th October 2021.
2. Considered on the outline Terms of Reference for a Bus Advisory Board (Appendix C).

Trading Standards Update

The second item considered was the Trading Standards Update. The Chair invited the Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Planning and Community Infrastructure, Councillor David Hall to introduce the item, praising the work of the staff in the service throughout the pandemic, the Council's Strategic Manager for the Economy and Planning Paul Hickson and the Trading Standards Service Manager Paul Thomas to introduce and provide a Powerpoint presentation setting out the service update and its achievements.

The Committee discussed monitoring social media, action fraud reporting, and work alongside the Citizens Advice in reporting fraudulent activity.

The Scrutiny for Policies and Place Committee noted the Trading Standards Update.

2021/22 Revenue Budget Monitoring Report – Month 4 – End of July

The third item considered was the 2021/22 Revenue Budget Monitoring Report – Month 4. The Chair invited the Cabinet Member for Resources, Councillor Mandy Chilcott and the Council's Strategic Manager for Finance, Christian Evans to introduce and present the report. The report provided an overview of the Council's financial position from the Director of Finance as the Council's S151 Officer with detail from each service and commentary from the responsible Director set out in the body of the report. The forecast outturn for service expenditure as at the end of July set out an underspend of £0.7m for the year if no further actions were taken.

The significant variances were set out with further detail and actions being taken by the responsible Director outlined in the report. There remained £1.9m of the Covid-19 Emergency budget unallocated but this would be fully utilised in the financial year to cover Covid-19 costs. When setting the 2021/22 budget it was clear that there were a significant number of uncertainties and to mitigate against this £6m was set aside in the Corporate Contingency. The significant variances and expectations in relation to the National pay award were set out.

The committee discussed the staff pay award, assurance was provided that the budget would be adjusted accordingly following any announcement. Costs incurred due to flooding in Chard were being claimed through the Bellwin scheme, the claim was currently being progressed with an update to be provided in due course. Further pressure and requests were expected from the ECI budget. Further details were requested in relation to costs incurred from Ash dieback treatment.

The Scrutiny for Policies and Place Committee:-

1. Noted the overall forecast underspend of £0.7m (section 12) and the key risks, future issues and opportunities detailed in the report which will be closely monitored and updated throughout the year.
2. Noted the request to use £1.167m from Funding Volatility Reserve to support additional maintenance activities on the County Highways network in 2021/22 as set in the Executive Summary of this report.

Asset Transfer Policy Update

The fourth item considered was the Asset Transfer Policy Update. The Chair welcomed the Cabinet Member for Resources and the Head of Property to introduce and provide an update in relation to the Asset Transfer Policy Update

The Head of Property provided a PowerPoint presentation relating to the Corporate Property Asset Management Plan & Asset Strategy and provided background to the asset transfer policy, setting out the purpose, qualifying criteria, and underpinning principles of Community Asset Transfers. The process of Community Asset Transfers was outlined with recent CAT Applications.

The committee discussed openness and transparency as part of future asset transactions. A full list of transactions at less than consideration since 2014 was requested. The effectiveness of the asset transfer policy was considered, which set a high bar but also allowed for the various circumstances encountered in respect of its assets.

The Scrutiny for Policies and Place Committee noted the Asset Transfer Policy Update.

2 November 2021

Phosphates Update

The first item considered was a Phosphates Update.

The Chair welcomed the Service Manager for Development and Planning who provided a PowerPoint presentation updating the Committee on work undertaken by Somerset County Council and partners in mitigating phosphate levels in watercourses across the County.

The committee discussed mitigation measures and working alongside partners such as District Councils, DEFRA and the Environment Agency. The impact on housing and land supply was considered alongside how mitigation measures compared with other Counties. Phosphate mitigation measures would be considered in the same sense as any other mitigation measures alongside developments to ensure that water quality would be improved across the Ramsar site.

The Scrutiny for Policies and Place Committee recommended that:-

1. Somerset County Council wait for the Somerset Wide Phosphate Strategy, before taking action, so that efforts are focused where they will have maximum impact.
2. Once the strategy work is concluded, it was recommended that SCC look at land holdings and assess land that could be used to assist with the offsetting of Phosphorous, possibly through the creation of credits that can be sold.

Rights of Way Update

The second item considered was a Rights of Way Update

The Chair welcomed the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport and the Rights of Way Service Manager introduced the item and provided a Powerpoint presentation on the Service. There had been an increase in appetite in applications and service requests over the pandemic. The officer resource had been increased to help enable consideration of a greater number of applications. The service had received a record number of volunteers which were welcomed due to an increase in pressures felt in the maintenance team due to elevated levels of usage and reporting of issues. There had been a 200% increase in paths being adopted by volunteers in the last two years. Two meetings had been conducted with the bridleway association which had been useful.

The Committee discussed the applicants opportunity for appeal, the average time to consider applications, the growth in the numbers of people using rights of way and walking during the pandemic and the increase in volunteers, the resourcing of the team and backlog in applications which was expected to decrease after 2026. Rights of Way officers were commended for their hard work and swift responses to Councillors queries. Further and continued work was welcomed with the Parish and Town Councils alongside a contribution from the health and wellbeing budget to recognise the benefits from rights of way access to the community.

The Scrutiny for Polices and Place Committee noted the Rights of Way Update.

2021/22 Budget Monitoring Report – Month 5

The third item considered was a 2022/22 Budget Monitoring Report – Month 5.

The Cabinet Member for Resources and Strategic Manager for Finance and Business partnering introduced the item.

The forecast outturn for the year was a reported overspend of £0.4m after taking into account the Corporate Contingency and unallocated Covid-19 funding. Although the overall position set out was broadly on budget, there were service overspends which were highlighted to the committee.

It was further reported that £2m of the Covid-19 Emergency budget remained unallocated, this would be fully utilised in the financial year to cover Covid-19 costs. When setting the 2021/22 budget it was clear that there were a significant number of uncertainties and to mitigate against this £6m was set aside in the Corporate Contingency. It would be prudent to assume use of this contingency stood at £3m given the potential need highlighted in the month four report, in relation to pay award negotiations and the Chard flooding event.

The Committee discussed pressures around Adult and Children's services and how

these services could be sustained. Further information was requested from the committee in relation to attracting business investment to Somerset. The impact of the pandemic would be felt in the budget for many years to come, adults services had been compounded by the pressures from the NHS, and mental health impacts from the pandemic continued to be experienced. It was recognised that these were unprecedented pressures and complex picture with little control over pressures from these areas.

The Scrutiny for Policies and Place Committee noted the overall forecast overspend of £0.4m (section 12) and the key risks, future issues and opportunities detailed in the report which will be closely monitored and updated throughout the year.

2.3. Consultations undertaken

- 2.4.** The Committee invites all County Councillors to attend and contribute to every one of its meetings.

3. Implications

- 3.1.** The Committee considers carefully, and often asks for further information about the implications as outlined in, the reports considered at its meetings.
- 3.2.** For further details of the reports considered by the Committee please contact the author of this report.

4. Background papers

- 4.1.** Further information about the Committee including dates of future meetings, and agendas & reports from previous meetings are available via the Council's website www.somerset.gov.uk/agendasandpapers

Note: For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author.

Somerset County Council

County Council
– 24 November 2021

Annual Report of the Somerset Armed Forces Covenant Partnership

CLLr Rod Williams – Chairman of the Somerset Armed Forces Covenant Partnership
Division and Local Member: All

Author: Jeff Brown, Service Manager – Stronger Communities

Contact Details: (01823) 358170

1. Introduction

- 1.1.** This Report updates the Council on the Somerset Armed Forces Covenant (SAFC) Partnership since the last Annual Report to Full Council in November 2020. The Report is for your information.
- 1.2.** The purpose of the SAFC Partnership is to deliver the Armed Forces Covenant in Somerset. Somerset County Council (SCC) leads the Partnership.
- 1.3.** The definition of the Armed Forces Covenant is
'The Covenant is a promise from the nation to those who serve. It says we will do all we can to ensure they are treated fairly and not disadvantaged in their day-to-day lives. This includes offering injured servicemen and women, and bereaved families, extra support where appropriate.'
- 1.4.** The Covenant is a Government initiative designed to ensure that members of the Armed Forces community are not disadvantaged compared to members of the civilian community. Delivery of the Covenant is aimed at four groups of beneficiaries: regulars; reservists; veterans; and their immediate families.

2. Background

- 2.1.** SCC pledged its support for the Covenant on 20 February 2012. SCC officer support for the SAFC Partnership is provided by Jeff Brown, Service Manager, Stronger Communities and Kirsty Conger, Stronger Communities Officer.
- 2.2.** In May 2017, Councillor Rod Williams was appointed by the Leader as Chairman of the SAFC Partnership.
- 2.3.** In Autumn 2017, the SAFC Partnership's Executive Group adopted a Partnership Plan for 2017-2021. This four-year Plan defined the purpose of the Partnership, set out how it would be governed, how it would oversee the delivery of the Covenant in Somerset and the scope of its role. This year, we

have made the small updates necessary to the Plan and have anticipated the move to a unitary council for Somerset.

3. Overview

- 3.1.** As with last year, Partnership activities have been reduced by Covid-19. But a highlight was this autumn's conference, our 2020 conference having been cancelled due to Covid. This year's conference focussed on anticipating the implications for local government, the NHS and the third sector of the Armed Forces Bill and the implications for the Armed Forces community of Local Government Reorganisation and the Somerset Integrated Care System. Feedback from attendees was exceptionally positive, a tribute to the small SCC team that organised and delivered the Conference. More information on the Conference is in Section 6.
- 3.2.** This year's activities have been underpinned by: a continuation of our year-round effort to communicate well across the Partnership; listening to, and acting on, feedback from partner organisations; and careful governance of the Partnership, exercised through our Executive Group Meetings in March and October.
- 3.3.** This year, we have further strengthened collaboration with our NHS partners by formalising the previously informal Health and Social Care Coordination Group. An update on the activities of this group is later in this report.
- 3.4.** The structure of this Report is:
- national developments;
 - the South West Armed Forces Covenant Partnership;
 - Somerset activities;
 - health;
 - other activities;
 - communications; and

 - background papers.

4. National Developments

- 4.1. Legislation - The Armed Forces Bill.** The Armed Forces Bill will change the status of the Covenant from being 'a promise from the nation' to having the force of law – a statutory duty. The Bill will require those providing public services, including local government and the NHS, to have 'due regard' to the principles of the Covenant. The Bill is making its way through Parliament and is likely to receive Royal Assent over this coming winter. We expect the Bill to come into force by mid-2022.
- 4.2.** The new status of the Armed Forces Covenant will have implications for the public sector in health, housing and education, and possibly social care later

on. SCC officers have been working in the South West regional focus group anticipating the likely impacts of this legislation. A member of the Covenant Team from MOD presented the main provisions of the Bill to our recent conference. SCC officers are convening groups with service areas that the Bill has implications for, and will be working with county and district equalities leads to ensure that the requirements of the Bill are reflected in the Equality Impact Assessment process. Once the legislation has been passed, we will continue to look across local government, the NHS and schools to ensure that policies and processes are updated to comply with the new legislation.

- 4.3. The 'Integrated Review'.** In Defence, the Integrated Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy Review, known as the 'Integrated Review' (IR), provided a joined-up strategy for how the Government will promote the security, prosperity and influence of the UK. This joined-up strategic planning at national level has been a model of best practice for many other Departments of State.
- 4.4.** The Defence Command Paper substantiated the Defence dimension of the IR. It set out big changes to how Defence will operate. As well as adding the domains of Cyber and Space to the traditional warfighting domains of Air, Land and Sea, the paper has implications for the Regulars, Reservists, Veterans and Families that we support.
- 4.5.** For our Regulars, 40 Commando Royal Marines has been a testbed for the Future Commando Force that is an integral part of the Royal Navy (RN) and our global maritime reach. The Commando has married new thinking with new technology to create new capability at sea, on land and in the air. The Future Commando Force model underpins the creation of the UK's two Littoral Response Groups (LRG) – North and South. The LRGs will be forward-deployed, mobile and sustainable maritime advance forces integrated with Defence and Agency networks. Each LRG, or both, will be able to join the Carrier Strike Group to form an Expeditionary Strike Force, with allies if required. 40 Commando RM will be the heart of LRG (South) with a role across much of the Gulf, Indian Ocean and Pacific.
- 4.6.** RNAS Yeovilton (4,500 personnel) is a Main Operating Base for RN and Army Wildcat and Merlin helicopters. The base hosts six Naval Air Squadrons and 1 Regiment Army Air Corps. The Base hosts front-line squadrons and training units. For the RN, the Wildcat provides maritime attack, armed recce and anti-submarine force protection at sea, and is embarked in frigates destroyers, the aircraft carriers and Royal Fleet Auxiliary ships. The Merlin provides anti-submarine warfare and airborne early warning capability and support helicopter lift. For the Army, the Wildcat provides aviation recce for land combat formations such as the Armoured Infantry and Strike Brigades.
- 4.7.** As Regular Army strength reduces to some 72,000, Reservists will become even more important than before. Many Reservists bring specialist skills to our Defence capability. To allow the training time required to maintain those specialist skills in the military environment we depend upon the

understanding and support of civilian employers. You can read the report at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/defence-in-a-competitive-age>

- 4.8. Veterans Question in the 2021 Census.** For the first time the 2021 census included a question giving veterans the opportunity to identify themselves as a veteran. We expect this data to become available during 2022, which should greatly improve our knowledge of the veteran demographic in Somerset.
- 4.9. 'Living in our Shoes' Report.** Last year saw the release of the 'Living in Our Shoes' report which was an independent review of the needs of UK service families. The report made 110 recommendations. The Government released a response to each of the recommendations. You can read the response at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974334/20210229-FINAL_Selous_Response_O.pdf and the original report at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/living-in-our-shoes-understanding-the-needs-of-uk-armed-forces-families>

5. The South West Armed Forces Covenant Partnership

- 5.1.** The South West Partnership Board was chaired by SCC from its inaugural meeting in November 2019 until October 2021. At October's meeting Councillor Rod Williams handed over the Chair to a Member from Wiltshire Council, with Dorset Council taking on Vice-Chair. The purpose of the Board is to consistently improve delivery of the covenant across the region. It does this by developing our shared understanding of the data, shared best practice, aligned policy and processes (where appropriate for partner organisations) and some shared resource, where it is mutually advantageous.
- 5.2.** The Partnership Board is supported by an Officers Group from partner authorities. This group works at operational level to identify where better outcomes can be achieved, to align policies and, most importantly, to measure the value the partnership adds for its constituent authorities.
- 5.3.** Covid-19 continued to affect the use of the partnership's outreach vehicle this year, but since July 2021 a new Outreach Officer has been able to increase use of the vehicle. The vehicle can be booked by County and District Councils for events throughout the South West. It attended our conference in September 2021 and has been booked for the Somerset Armed Forces Day event on 2nd July 2022 at Vivary Park, Taunton.
- 5.4.** The Partnership has an app - 'Forces Connect South West'. Somerset is on the app, which signposts members of the Armed Forces community to the support available to them both locally and nationally. Click here to download the app through [Google Play](#) or [Apple store](#).
- 5.5.** You can find out more about 'Forces Connect South West' at <https://www.forcesconnectsouthwest.org.uk/>

6. Somerset Activities

- 6.1. Raising of the Armed Forces Day Flag.** In a show of support for the Armed Forces, the Armed Forces Day flag was raised outside County Hall on Monday 21st June by SCC Vice-Chair Councillor Mark Keating. He was joined by SCC Leader Councillor David Fothergill, Councillor Rod Williams and SCC Chief Executive Pat Flaherty. In line with Covid regulations in place at the time, the event was by invitation only. Senior Somerset figures attended the flag raising, including: Admiral (Retd) Ian Moncrieff, Deputy Lieutenant of Somerset; Rear Admiral Rhett Hatcher, National Hydrographer, UK Hydrographic Office; Commodore Niall Griffin MBE, Commanding Officer, RNAS Yeovilton; Brigadier (Retd) Richard Toomey CBE, County Colonel for Somerset; Lt Col Andy Dow, Commanding Officer 40 Commando Royal Marines; and Brigadier (Retd) Steve Hodder, Chief Executive, Wessex Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association. Councillor Rod Williams made a short speech reaffirming the commitment of Somerset County Council and the SAFC Partnership to support our Armed Forces community.
- 6.2. SAFC Partnership Annual Conference.** Following the relaxation of Covid restrictions, our Annual Conference was held at RNAS Yeovilton on 15th September 2021, by kind permission of the Commanding Officer of RNAS Yeovilton, Commodore Niall Griffin MBE. The morning focussed on the implications of the Armed Forces Bill for Somerset. The afternoon focussed on Somerset's recovery from Covid and the contribution of the Armed Forces community to that recovery. The conference's workshops provided an excellent framework for action in five themes: Partnership Working; Communications; Crisis Support; Prevention; and Better Transition from the Armed Forces into civil life. We will use these themes to focus action that SCC and the wider SAFC Partnership can take to improve delivery of the Covenant and to comply with the Armed Forces Bill.
- 6.3. Partnership Updates.** A main effort of the SAFC Partnership since 2017 has been to communicate well with members of the Partnership. Since 2017, we have issued Quarterly Updates which have become comprehensive sources of useful information and links to further information. If you would like to be added to the mailing list please email: communities@somerset.gov.uk
- 6.4. Veterans Guaranteed Interview Scheme.** SCC launched the Veterans Guaranteed Interview Scheme during Armed Forces Week 2021. The scheme means that a veteran who has left the Armed Forces in the last five years – and their partner – will be guaranteed an interview with the authority if they apply and meet the essential criteria for the job.
- 6.5. Remembrance.** As well as the traditional Remembrance Day services held in parishes across Somerset, we have been told of special Remembrance Services at 40 Commando RM, in Vivary Park, Taunton and at the Somerset Wood, near Cheddon Fitzpaine and West Monkton, north east Taunton.

6.6. Remembrance Day is a tradition inaugurated in 1919 to remember the end of the First World War on 11th November 1918. We also remember members of the Armed Forces of the Commonwealth who lost their lives in the service of their country, or who were badly injured, in conflicts since 1918. There have been only two years between 1945 and 2020 in which a member of the Armed Forces has not been killed on operations - 1968 and 2016. Some of our badly injured veterans now are young men and women. We should honour their service and remember them all year round.

7. Health

7.1. The Somerset Health and Social Care Armed Forces Co-ordination Group.

The SAFC Partnership has worked closely with Somerset CCG and Somerset NHS Foundation Trust (SFT) to address the difficulty veterans and their immediate families can have in accessing healthcare, including mental healthcare. Our 2019 conference led to an informal joint SCC/NHS working group. In recognition of the growing interest in the group and its positive progress in 2021 the working group became a formal sub-group of the SAFC Partnership Executive Group. The progress made by this working group has been one of our biggest successes in 2021.

7.2. The NHS Armed Forces Forward View and The Nine Commitments.

The NHS's 'Healthcare for the Armed Forces community: a forward view' is part of the NHS Long Term Plan. The Forward View focuses on meeting the needs of regulars, reservists, veterans and their immediate families. It includes nine commitments to support the Armed Forces community. In Somerset, the co-ordination group described above has made a plan to ensure that the Somerset Integrated Care System (ICS) will meet the Nine Commitments. The Nine Commitments defines practical measures to improve access to healthcare, including mental healthcare, for the Armed Forces community. You can find the full NHS Armed Forces Forward View report at <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Healthcare-for-the-Armed-Forces-community-forward-view-March-2021.pdf>

8. Other Activities

8.1. Covenant Fund. The Covenant Fund is allocated £10m per year nationally by the Treasury. Further information on the Covenant Fund is at <https://www.covenantfund.org.uk/>

8.2. The MOD's Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (DERS). The DERS recognises employers which support Armed Forces personnel, either by helping employees to serve as reservists, by employing veterans, or by other support to the military community. In Somerset, the DERS is run by Wessex RFCA, based in Taunton. The Scheme offers Bronze, Silver and Gold levels of recognition for increasing levels of support. More information on how supporting the Armed Forces community can benefit your business is at wx-reed@rfca.mod.uk and wx-headeng@rfca.mod.uk

8.3. Army Engagement Presentation. On 23rd September, Colonel Neville Holmes MBE led a briefing by the Army Engagement Team for invited guests at The Canalside, Bridgwater. The briefing aimed to promote greater awareness and understanding of the Army, particularly among communities that have had relatively little exposure to the Army. The large audience asked a range of questions after the impressive presentation and was able to ask further questions informally to members of the Presentation Team. This annual Army Presentation is gaining a reputation in Somerset as an enjoyable and increasingly popular educational event.

9. Communications

9.1. SCC Communications and Press Team. We thank SCC's Communications and Press Team for supporting our delivery of the Covenant throughout the year with press releases and links to TV, radio and print media. For more information visit <https://somersexnewsroom.com/?s=armed+forces>

10. Background Papers

10.1. For information on the SAFC Partnership, including the SAFC Partnership Plan and its Annex A that shows the matrix of partner organisations and the six main areas of Covenant activity, visit www.somersex.gov.uk/forcescovenant

10.2. For general information on the Armed Forces Covenant, visit www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk/

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