

**SWT Community Scrutiny
Committee**

**Wednesday, 23rd February, 2022,
6.15 pm**

**Somerset West
and Taunton**

**The John Meikle Room - The Deane
House**

Members: Libby Lisgo (Chair), Dave Mansell (Vice-Chair), Simon Coles, Tom Deakin, Steve Griffiths, John Hunt, Dawn Johnson, Richard Lees, Mark Lithgow, Janet Lloyd, Andy Milne, Andy Pritchard, Vivienne Stock-Williams, Ray Tully and Sarah Wakefield

Agenda

1. Apologies

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting of the Community Scrutiny Committee

(Pages 7 - 16)

To approve the minutes of the previous meeting of the Community Scrutiny Committee held on 27th January 2022

3. Declarations of Interest

To receive and note any declarations of disclosable pecuniary or prejudicial or personal interests in respect of any matters included on the agenda for consideration at this meeting.

(The personal interests of Councillors and Clerks of Somerset County Council, Town or Parish Councils and other Local Authorities will automatically be recorded in the minutes.)

4. Public Participation

The Chair to advise the Committee of any items on which members of the public have requested to speak and advise those members of the public present of the details of the Council's public participation scheme.

For those members of the public who have submitted any questions or statements, please note, a three-minute time limit applies to each speaker and you will be asked to speak

before Councillors debate the issue.

Temporary measures during the Coronavirus pandemic

Due to the temporary legislation (within the Coronavirus Act 2020, which allowed for use of virtual meetings) coming to an end on 6 May 2021, the council's committee meetings will now take place in the office buildings at the John Meikle Room, Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton. Unfortunately due to capacity requirements the Chamber at West Somerset House is not able to be used at this current moment.

Following the Government guidance on measures to reduce the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19), the council meeting rooms will have very limited capacity. With this in mind, we will only be allowing those members of the public who have registered to speak to attend the meetings in person at the office buildings, if they wish. (We will still be offering to those members of the public that are not comfortable in attending, for their statements to be read out by a member of the Governance team). Please can we urge all members of the public who are only interested in listening to the debate to view our live webcasts from the safety of their own home to help prevent the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).

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| 5. Community Scrutiny Request/Recommendation Trackers | (Pages 17 - 20) |
| To update the Community Scrutiny Committee on the progress of resolutions and recommendations from previous meetings of the Committee. | |
| 6. Community Scrutiny Forward Plan | (Pages 21 - 22) |
| To receive items and review the Forward Plan. | |
| 7. Executive and Full Council Forward Plans | (Pages 23 - 26) |
| To review the Forward Plans of the Executive and Full Council. | |
| 8. Community Scrutiny Chair's Annual Report | (Pages 27 - 28) |
| This matter is the responsibility of the Chair of Community Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Libby Lisgo. | |
| To approve the Annual report of the Community Scrutiny Committee 2021/11 for consideration by Full Council. Article 6 of the SWT Constitution states that <i>"The Scrutiny Committees must report annually on their work"</i> . | |

<p>9. HRA Financial Performance 2021/22 Q3</p> <p>This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Fran Smith, Housing</p> <p>Report Author: Kerry Prisco (Management Accounting and Reporting Lead)</p> <p>This report provides an update on the projected outturn financial position of the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for the financial year 2021/22 (as 31 December 2021).</p>	<p>(Pages 29 - 46)</p>
<p>10. Wordsworth Drive and Coleridge Crescent Regeneration</p> <p>This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Member Councillor Francesca Smith</p> <p>Report Author: Chris Brown, Assistant Director Development & Regeneration, Ian Shoemark, Project Manager</p> <p>The Community Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider a number of recommendations as listed in 2.1 of the report, prior to progression on to the Executive Committee.</p>	<p>(Pages 47 - 62)</p>
<p>11. Sports and Leisure Management (Everyone Active) Bi-Annual Report</p> <p>This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Derek Perry</p> <p>Report Author: Stuart Noyce, Assistant Director – Commercial Services</p> <p>The Community Scrutiny Committee is requested to note the contents of the six-monthly update for the period 1 April 2021 to 30 September 2021.</p>	<p>(Pages 63 - 80)</p>
<p>12. Executive Portfolio Holder for Leisure - Cllr Derek Perry</p> <p>To consider reports from Executive Councillors on their respective portfolios: -</p> <p>Councillor Derek Perry – Deputy Leader and Sports, Parks and Leisure.</p> <p>3.2 of the Scrutiny Terms of Reference states that the Scrutiny Committee may review and scrutinise and ask questions of the Leader, lead Councillors, and the Executive in relation to their portfolios.</p>	<p>(Pages 81 - 82)</p>

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Pritchard', with a stylized flourish at the end.

ANDREW PRITCHARD
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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Members of the public are welcome to attend the meeting and listen to the discussions. There is time set aside at the beginning of most meetings to allow the public to ask questions. Speaking under "Public Question Time" is limited to 3 minutes per person in an overall period of 15 minutes. The Committee Administrator will keep a close watch on the time and the Chair will be responsible for ensuring the time permitted does not overrun. The speaker will be allowed to address the Committee once only and will not be allowed to participate further in any debate. Except at meetings of Full Council, where public participation will be restricted to Public Question Time only, if a member of the public wishes to address the Committee on any matter appearing on the agenda, the Chair will normally permit this to occur when that item is reached and before the Councillors begin to debate the item.

If an item on the agenda is contentious, with a large number of people attending the meeting, a representative should be nominated to present the views of a group. These arrangements do not apply to exempt (confidential) items on the agenda where any members of the press or public present will be asked to leave the Committee Room. Full Council, Executive, and Committee agendas, reports and minutes are available on our website: www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

The meeting room, including the Council Chamber at The Deane House are on the first floor and are fully accessible. Lift access to The John Meikle Room, is available from the main ground floor entrance at The Deane House. The Council Chamber at West Somerset House is on the ground floor and is fully accessible via a public entrance door. Toilet facilities, with wheelchair access, are available across both locations. An induction loop operates at both The Deane House and West Somerset House to enhance sound for anyone wearing a hearing aid or using a transmitter. For further information about the meeting, please contact the Governance and Democracy Team via email: governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

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SWT Community Scrutiny Committee - 27 January 2022

Present: Councillor Libby Lisgo (Chair)

Councillors Dave Mansell, Ian Aldridge (In place of Andy Pritchard), Tom Deakin, Steve Griffiths, John Hassall (In place of Richard Lees), Dawn Johnson, Mark Lithgow, Andy Milne, Vivienne Stock-Williams, Ray Tully, Sarah Wakefield and Loretta Whetlor (In place of Janet Lloyd)

Officers: James Barrah, Chris Brown, Marcus Prouse, Jonathan Stevens, Sue Tomlinson, Jessica Kemmish and Sam Murrell

Also Present: Councillors Dixie Darch and Brenda Weston

(The meeting commenced at 6.17 pm)

The Chair reflected that it was Holocaust Memorial Day and that they had been thinking on the horror of the Holocaust throughout the day.

The Chair thanked staff who were involved in achieving Somerset West and Taunton Council being ranked top nationally in the Climate Emergency Scorecard and congratulations were given for that achievement by the committee.

69. Apologies

Apologies were given by the following committee members, Cllrs S Coles who attended the meeting via Zoom, Cllr R Lees who was substituted by Cllr J Hassall, Cllr A Pritchard who attended via Zoom and was substituted by Cllr I Aldridge and Cllr J Lloyd who was substituted by Cllr Whetlor.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing, Cllr Fran Smith, also gave their apologies.

70. Minutes of the previous meeting of the Community Scrutiny Committee

The committee resolved to approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on 6th January 2022.

71. Declarations of Interest

Members present at the meeting declared the following personal interests in their capacity as a Councillor or Clerk of a County, Town or Parish Council or any other Local Authority:-

Name	Minute No.	Description of Interest	Reason	Action Taken
Cllr S Coles	All Items	SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted

Cllr T Deakin	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Johnson	All Items	SCC	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr L Lisgo	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr M Lithgow	All Items	Wellington	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Mansell	All Items	Wiveliscombe	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr A Milne	All Items	Porlock	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr V Stock-Williams	All Items	Wellington	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr R Tully	All Items	West Monkton	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr B Weston	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke
Cllr L Whetlor	All Items	Watchet	Personal	Spoke and Voted

72. **Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

73. **Community Scrutiny Request/Recommendation Trackers**

The committee noted the Request and Recommendation trackers.

74. **Community Scrutiny Forward Plan**

The Committee noted the Community Scrutiny Forward Plan.

75. **Executive and Full Council Forward Plans**

The Committee noted the forward plans.

76. **Report of the Task and Finish Group on Council Housing Zero Carbon Retrofit**

Cllr Mansell gave a presentation on the work of the Zero Carbon Retrofit Task and Finish Group:

- The Task and Finish Group was set up by the Scrutiny Committee before it was split into two separate Scrutiny Committees.
- Membership of the Task and Finish Group was Cllr David Mansell, Cllr Norman Cavill, Cllr Ian Aldridge, Cllr Alan Wedderkopp and Cllr John Hassall. The group was supported by officers.
- Eight online meetings were held. Presentations were given by officers as well as from representatives of external organisations such as Sanctuary Housing.

- The group sought to look at ways to undertake zero carbon retrofits and looked at what would be needed to achieve zero carbon and carbon neutrality.
- The group looked at whole house retrofit which involved retrofitting the whole house. This could be beneficial as only insulating one area, such as the loft, could lead to damp in certain areas of a house.
- The group considered Energiesprong which looked like a good method for retrofit. Also looked at what other councils were doing and other retrofit approaches.
- Near the end of the group's work a guide called the LETI retrofit guide was published.
- The group looked at a comparison between the cost of gas and electricity. There were levies on electricity which made it more expensive even though it was the cleaner fuel. A comparison of heat pumps and gas boilers was also undertaken.
- Announcements about government policy and funding had been made recently.
- Energiesprong used a wrapping layer around the outside of a house to insulate it. This was both more beneficial than interior insulation and was also designed to be more cost effective. There were a number of local authorities working with and using Energiesprong and Energiesprong had government support, however, the cost of Energiesprong was currently still relatively high.
- An explanation of the recommendations in the report of the Task and Finish Group were given.
- The following was highlighted from the recommendations the Task and Finish Group put forward; a need for a guide for the net zero retrofit of the council's housing stock, the potential for work to be done in stages based on a whole house approach, a target date needed for gas boilers to cease being fitted in the Council's housing stock, solar and thermal panels being provided where there was a business need for it, a report being produced on what would be needed to achieve a net zero retrofit programme and funding being sought for carbon retrofit.
- It was raised that there was greater use of electricity planned, for example to power cars and for heating. Greater energy efficiency was therefore needed, as well as more zero carbon electricity and more renewable energy production.
- The use of the LETI guide for retrofit was encouraged.

The Chair thanked Cllr Mansell for his presentation.

The Portfolio Holder for Climate Change introduced the report:

- Thanked Cllr Mansell and the others on the Task and Finish Group for all their work. The level of detail in the report was commendable.
- Raised that it was a complicated situation without an easy solution. We were in a transition period during which we would have to decide what to prioritise as part of the transition process.

The Assistant Director for Housing and Communities introduced the report:

- There was significant consensus between the Task and Finish Group and officers.
- Officers were working hard to deliver a strategy and a delivery plan. These would consider the variables such as different property types and provide fully costed options.
- It was raised that there would be a balance to be struck between speed of transition and cost.
- It was raised that the Council sought to keep people out of fuel poverty, the lower power consumption that could be achieved the better for the customer, regardless of fuel type. The strategy coming forward would consider that.
- Officers welcomed the work of the Task and Finish Group. There were still some aspects to work through in terms of costings which would be looked at as part of the strategy being produced.

During the debate the following points were raised:

- It was asked about fuel poverty and whether any work had been done elsewhere in the country to identify the fuel poverty tipping point. Officers responded that fuel poverty had been an issue in social housing for a long time. Officers would look to measure the impact of retrofit in terms of fuel poverty as part of the assessment of various options.
- It was asked what impact Unitary would have upon any decisions the Council may make in relation to this subject. Officers responded that the HRA would still face the same issues when the new authority was formed. The money in the HRA was ringfenced, there was a 30-year business plan and business would have to continue. The HRA would combine with Sedgemoor's when the new authority formed and partnership working with Sedgemoor had already begun. Financial decisions which bound the new authority would have to be made in accordance with the legislation. However, the ringfencing of the HRA funds and the 30-year business plan would enable some work to continue.
- It was asked about the kilo watt hours per year per square meter measurement and whether this was based floor area or footprint of the area. Officers responded that the measurements tended to be based on square meterage, so a volume of air that needs to be heated. There would be a need to understand the energy usage for different archetypes, for example a bungalow or a terraced house.
- It was raised that the cost of a fuel did not relate to the amount of energy in it. Even with gas prices rising, electricity was still around three times more expensive.
- It was asked if funds could be borrowed from the Public Loans Board for investment in retrofit. It was responded by officers that money could be borrowed but generally in the business plan the revenue set aside against depreciation of the housing stock was generally what funded the capital replacement programme. Ultimately action would be determined by affordability and what could be achieved alongside all the other costs the HRA faced. A range of treasury options for funding any work was always considered.
- Support was expressed for insulating homes.

- It was raised that properties in higher exposure zones, namely zones 4 and 3, were not best suited to have things such as cavity wall insulation or ground source heat pumps. Instead, retrofit solutions in these zones would be more expensive. It was asked if this had been considered. Officers responded that the comments were noted and when a strategy was brought forward these aspects would be considered.
- It was raised that there were government grants available for insulation being fitted in homes. Officers responded that there were a range of government grants available, some of which were open to the Council as a Landlord, such as subsidies for heat pumps which the Council had received, and others were not.
- It was suggested that it would be worthwhile making a commitment to when properties should be insulated by in addition to when gas boilers should cease to be installed. The Chair of the Task and Finish Group agreed that deadlines for installing insulation as well as deadlines for gas boilers ceasing to be installed would be important.
- It was asked if any research had been done into tenants' reception to improvement works for the purpose of achieving net zero. A representative of the Task and Finish Group suggested it would be best to work with tenants who were supportive first and then expand from there. There would be disruption during installation but there would be benefits in terms of reductions to energy bills.
- It was asked if the installation of electric vehicle charging points would be included in this work. The Chair of the Task and Finish Group expressed support for this being included.
- It was asked how practical converting the Council's housing stock would be, for example in relation to radiators. It was suggested that looking into central heating systems for groups of houses may be worthwhile as these could use existing radiators. The Chair of the Task and Finish Group responded that each property would have to be looked at individually for what the best solution was. Central Heating Systems and Heat Networks had been looked at by the group. They could be beneficial but could also be expensive although there was some government support.
- The Chair of the Task and Finish Group noted that gas in gas boilers and electricity in heat pumps had been compared by the group. At the current time electricity and gas were quite close to each other in terms of how clean they were as an energy source, but electricity would continue to become cleaner. A heat pump halved the carbon used compared to gas. Heat pumps were more expensive to buy and install currently but there were government grants and costs should decrease over time.
- It was raised that plans and information on retrofit should be publicised to the public and it was suggested it would be beneficial to look beyond the Council's own housing stock as the Council's own housing stock was only a small percentage of the homes in the district.
- Concerns were raised about fuel poverty.
- It was asked how much had already been done to retrofit the Council's housing stock and what was left to be done and what the costings for retrofit would be. The Chair of the Task and Finish Group responded that the group had looked at the costs of retrofit and included some examples but that no

precise costings had been done. It would however be a sizeable sum to undertake a complete retrofit of the Council's housing stock.

- The Chair of the Working Group expressed that they hoped their work had helped to inform what the Housing Directorate would bring forward in their strategy. The group intended the recommendations to act as a steer for officers.
- The Chair of the Task and Finish Group proposed that the report proceed to the Executive and then to the Full Council

The Committee resolved to approve recommendation 2.2 of the report:

2.2 To note the report of the Task and Finish Group on Council Housing Zero Carbon Retrofit.

- The Chair suggested that the Committee pass the report in its entirety to the Executive and the Leader. This would exclude the committee recommending the report to Full Council, with this decision left to the Executive.
- Officers responded that ahead of the report going to the Executive they would add further officer commentary and detail and that they would look at the wording of the recommendations to ensure it would not bind the Council to anything which would not be achievable financially.
- The Chair of the Task and Finish report agreed support for the report going to the Executive.

The Committee resolved to submit the entirety of the report of the Task and Finish Group to the Executive and the Leader of Council for review.

James Barrah and Marcus Prouse left the meeting at this point.

77. **Annual Update of CNCR Progress**

The Portfolio Holder for Climate Change introduced the report:

- The Council's CNCR Plan was approved in October 2020 and built into that plan was an annual review report to be produced to review progress.
- The report focused on the 180 immediate actions in the CNCR Plan.

The Assistant Director for Climate Change raised the following points:

- This was the first update on the CNCR plan. There were 180 actions included in the report. The main successes were highlighted.
- Work against the plan was progressing quickly and there were some updates since the report was published. Such as the fact that all the Council's fleet cars would be electric by the end of the year and extensive woodland creation projects having been progressed.
- The Council was today named highest scoring district council in the UK by Climate Emergency UK who have scored all council action plans.

- The CNCR was a live document and constantly updated. The appointment of officers to own updating the progress on actions was currently being undertaken.
- Some commitments were challenging but there were some which were easy steps. The plan was held by the Climate Team, but actions were taken by services across the Council. Some actions in the plan were reliant upon the action of external bodies but the Council would encourage those bodies to take action.
- There was difficulty in quantifying the amount to which these actions reduced the districts emissions, however, work on developing an approach to calculate this was being worked on.

During the debate the following points were raised:

- It was asked if the actions which proved the greatest challenges to complete were those where the Council did not have direct control and had to rely on external bodies. Officers responded that this interpretation was a fair assessment.

Cllr Deakin left the meeting at this point (20:14).

- It was expressed that there had been difficulty in persuading parish councils to install electric vehicle charging points even where funding was available. It was asked if more could be done to encourage parish councils to install charging points. Officers responded that the grants for electric vehicle charging points for parish councils were to be relaunched in the coming weeks and this would be communicated to parish councils.
- It was asked if grants for electric vehicle charging points were also available to the unparished area. Officers responded that they were. The Portfolio Holder for Climate Change added that those who had off road parking would likely install their own electric vehicle charging points and that those at places such as village halls would be used by those who did not have one at home.
- It was raised that some public water taps had been installed by town and parish councils and that their work should also be recognised. Officers responded that working with parish councils, community groups and other organisations would be vital to achieve net zero and agreed that their work should be recognised.
- It was raised that there was some reluctance on take up of waterless urinals.
- Thanks were expressed for the report.
- It was raised that electric vehicle charging points had been a success with usage increasing.
- Congratulations were given for coming first nationally in Climate Emergency UK's rankings and for the work of officers and the Portfolio Holder on Climate Change.
- It was suggested that some of the higher impact areas for reducing emissions should be given greater focus.
- The marking of some items on the CNCR list as complete was questioned as the actions had not been fully achieved and more could be done to ensure those actions were completed. Officers responded that the plan to appoint

certain officers to monitor particular actions would hopefully resolve these issues with actions having been signed off as complete when not fully completed.

- The importance of achieving carbon neutrality as soon as possible was emphasised.
- It was asked if the Council was keeping up with the rise in electric car vehicle sales in terms of the installation of electric vehicle charging points.
- Acknowledging partner organisations in the report was encouraged. Officers responded that they would make changes to ensure partners were included and acknowledged for their efforts in the report.
- Suggestions were made as to ways in which the layout of the document could be improved.
- The portfolio holder thanked the committee for their comments and raised that partnership working was crucial. Showcasing examples of good work and engaging with communities on climate change was also important.
- The Chair thanked the portfolio holder and staff for all their hard work and for acknowledging and taking on board the comments of the committee.

78. **To Consider Reports from Executive Councillors - Councillor D Darch**

- The Portfolio Holder asked the Assistant Director for Climate Change to update on an application for funding for trees to DEFRA. The Assistant Director for Climate Change informed the committee that the Council was a partner in a bid that was submitted to DEFRA. The bid was for an exciting multi-year project and would be similar to the Forrest of Cornwall project. The project would span the whole of Somerset and all the other district councils in Somerset and Somerset County Council had been some of the partners involved as was Somerset Wildlife Trust in addition to other organisations.
- It was asked if the funding would provide money for the purchase of land for planting trees. Officers responded that some of the grant funding could be used to purchase land and that a full plan for the project would be put together if the bid was successful and grant funding received.
- It was asked whether there had been any accidents involving e-scooters and whether the Council could be held liable for any injury from accidents from e-scooter use. Officers responded that the operator's insurance covered any accidents, and that the Council did not have any liability. Statistic on incidents and accidents were not yet available but would be shared once they were available.
- The Chair raised that a report on e-scooters would be coming as an item to a future meeting of the Community Scrutiny Committee. Officers responded that this would be coming to the Community Scrutiny Committee meeting in March.

(The Meeting ended at 8.54 pm)

SOMERSET WEST AND TAUNTON COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WRITTEN ANSWERS TRACKER 2021/22

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Date of Cttee	Scrutiny Cttee Request for information	Decision Maker /Directorate Responsible	Response to request for information	Date of response	Scrutiny Officer Comments/Update
30/06/21	<i>Q) to Cllr Perry PFH - Why are the fountains not on in SWT Parks?</i>	Cllr Perry – Parks and OS	The fountains are not working as the pump has an issue with the bearings. They have under gone various repairs and all was working really well for a few weeks, then the bearings went, we have ordered a new pump as they don't make the bearings anymore for this pump.	23/09/21	Cllr Lloyd – more information on Wellington
6/01/22	<p><i>Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Revenue and Capital Budget Setting 2022-23 including Dwelling Rent Setting 22-23, MTFP Update and 30-Year Business Plan Review</i></p> <p>Q) It was asked whether all new build properties the Council were building would be to a zero-carbon standard. Officers responded that they would provide a response to this after the meeting.</p>	Housing Directorate / Response from Chris Brown (Assistant Director of Development and Regeneration)	Paragraph 10.12.4: Of the 347 affordable homes in the development pipeline 115 homes will be zero carbon in occupation on the first letting and all other homes will be zero carbon if customers use green tariffs or when the grid decarbonises. All homes will provide significantly lower fuel bills to customers than other similar sized Council homes.	09/01/2022	Please see footnote below for fuller response and points of clarification.

Agenda Item 5

The Council is progressing two alternative building specifications to deliver the zero carbon affordable homes standard in the district. The two specifications are very similar but have a few variations which affects how swiftly they can be considered as zero carbon homes in occupation. The approach taken by the Council has been strongly influenced by the London energy Transformation initiatives (LETI) guidance prioritising a fabric first approach and minimising power usage and then considering the use of non-fossil fuel to heat and power the homes. The key variations between the councils two specifications are presented below:

- Both standards prioritise the fabric of the building by delivering a high specification of insulation which in turn reduces the power required to heat the homes.
- The higher standard which is applied to Seaward Way, Oxford Inn and Zero Carbon Pilots includes a very high specification for air tightness which further reduces the power required to heat the property.
- The NTWP (North Taunton Woolaway Project) homes have a more standard air tightness target which means although they will require significantly less power to heat than a new build property built to the required building regulations they will not be as efficient as those homes with very high standards of air tightness.
- Both specifications have on site power and heat generation through Air Source Heat Pumps supported by photovoltaic panels and battery storage.
- All homes are powered by electricity and there is no gas supply. Therefore, the only fossil fuel used to heat or power the homes is delivered through the national grid which is not currently fully decarbonised.
- The higher specification of airtightness combined with its onsite power generation allows the properties to consume on average no more power than it generates and is therefore zero carbon on the first letting and from then onwards. Each property will mainly use the energy it has generated and any energy it uses when it cannot generate sufficient power (night-time/winter months) will be drawn from the national grid. However, the power drawn from the grid will be offset by the property's sale of excess non fossil electricity to the national grid when it generates more energy than it requires (daytime/summer).
- The second specification does require slightly more power than it can generate onsite and therefore does not have sufficient energy to offset all the power it uses. It therefore draws on the national grid to supplement its power needs. This specification achieves 80% of the gap between standard building regulations new build homes and zero carbon in first occupation homes. The gap is small and will close overtime as the grid decarbonises.
- The government is committed to decarbonising the national grid by 2050. As the grid is decarbonised all homes will benefit from the fossil free power. Customers houses in the slightly lower specification could voluntarily sign up to green energy tariffs and by doing so they could claim their home is carbon neutral in occupation from that date.
- For social landlords both specifications achieve the 2050 zero carbon standard but one requires higher investment and greater skills in construction. Currently the councils zero carbon specification has been published in a Good Homes Alliance best practice guide and SWTs second specification will be published in the next edition of best practice (subject to funding being available to the Good Homs Alliance)
- As the council considers the retrofit of its homes and its emerging strategy it faces similar considerations such as: How well can we insulate existing dwellings to minimise power consumption? What is the optimum level of air tightness an existing dwelling can achieve? What is the cost benefit of providing onsite renewable heat and power compared to decarbonised power through the national grid? What is considered a reasonable fuel cost to a household to avoid fuel poverty?

SOMERSET WEST AND TAUNTON COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION TRACKER 2021/22

Date of Cttee	Scrutiny Recommendation	Decision Maker /Directorate Responsible	Final Decision/ Response to recommendation/	Date of response	Implemented?	Officer Comments/Update
27 Jan 22	<p>To note the report of the Task and Finish Group on Council Housing Zero Carbon Retrofit.</p> <p>The Committee resolved to submit the entirety of the report of the Task and Finish Group to the Executive and the Leader of Council for review.</p>	Leader / Executive				Officers responded that ahead of the report going to the Executive they would add further officer commentary and detail and that they would look at the wording of the recommendations to ensure it would not bind the Council to anything which would not be achievable financially

Total Recommendations for 21/22:

Agreed: 0

Agreed in Part: 0

Not Agreed: 0

TBD:

	COMMUNITY SCRUTINY	
Meeting	Draft Agenda Items	Lead PFH/ Lead Officer
23rd February 2022	Community Scrutiny Chair's Annual Report	Chair of the Committee
SRD = 11 February	HRA Financial Performance 2021/22 Q3	Cllr F Smith/K Prisco
Exec RD = 4 March	Wordsworth Drive and Coleridge Crescent Regeneration	Chris Brown / James Barrah / Cllr F Smith
Informal Exec RD = 1 Feb	Sports and Leisure Management (Everyone Active) Bi-Annual Report	Cllr D. Perry & S Noyce
SMT RD = 19 January	Executive Cllr PFH Session - Cllr D Perry	Cllr D Perry
31st March 2022	E-Scooter Review	Sue Tomlinson/Cllr D Darch
SRD = 21 March		
Exec RD = 6 April		
Informal Exec RD = 8 March		
SMT RD = 23 February		
27th April 2022		
SRD = 15 April		
Exec RD - 6 May		
Informal Exec RD - 5 April		
SMT RD - 23 March		
25 May 2022	CCTV Review	Cllr C Booth/ S. Weetch
SRD - 13 May	Executive Cllr PFH Session - Cllr A Sully	
Exec RD - 3 June	HRA Financial Performance 2021/22 Q4	Kerry Prisco
Informal Exec RD - 4 May	Ecological Emergency Action Plan	Katherine Church/Cllr D Darch
SMT - RD - 20 April		
29 June 2022	Executive Cllr PFH Session -	
SRD = 17 June		
Exec RD - 8 July		
Informal Exec RD - 7 June		
SMT RD - 25 May		
27 July 2022		
SRD = 15 July		
Exec RD - 5 August		
Informal Exec RD - 5 July		
SMT RD - 22 June		

EXECUTIVE

Executive Meeting	Draft Agenda Items	Lead Officer
16 March 2022	GF Financial Performance 2021/22 Q3	Emily Collacott
venue =	HRA Financial Performance 2021/22 Q3	Kerry Prisco
Exec RD = 4 March	Capital, Investment and Treasury Strategy 2022/23	John Dyson
Informal Exec RD = 1 February	Corporate Performance Report Q3	Malcolm Riches
SMT RD = 19 January	SWT Pay Policy	Nicky Rendell
	Wellington and Cullompton Stations - project governance arrangements	Sarah Povall
	Wordsworth Drive and Coleridge Crescent Regeneration	James Barra/Chris Brown
	NO MORE ITEMS	
20 April 2022	Green Space Acquisition (confidential)	Jo O'Hara
venue =		
Exec RD = 6 April		
Informal Exec RD = 8 March		
SMT RD = 23 February		
18 May 2022		
venue =		
Exec RD = 6 May		
Informal Exec RD = 5 April		
SMT RD = 23 March		
15 June 2022	GF Financial Performance 2021/22 Q4	Emily Collacott
venue =	HRA Financial Performance 2021/22 Q4	Kerry Prisco
Exec RD = 3 June	Corporate Performance Report Q4	Malcolm Riches
Informal Exec RD = 4 May	CCTV	Sally Parry/Scott Weetch
SMT RD = 20 April		

FULL COUNCIL

Meeting	Report Deadline	Draft Agenda Items	Lead Officer
24 February 2022	14 February 2022	General Fund Revenue Budget and Capital Estimates 2022/23	Paul Fitzgerald
Budget Only		Council Tax Setting 2022/23	Paul Fitzgerald
Special Meeting		Business Rates Retention Pooling 2022/23	Paul Fitzgerald
		Commercial Investment/Asset Management Strategies	Chris Hall/Joe Wharton
		NO MORE ITEMS	
3 March 2022	21 February 2022	Community Governance Review - Options	Kevin Williams
Special Meeting		NO MORE ITEMS	
29 March 2022	17 March 2022	Capital, Investment and Treasury Strategy 2022/23	John Dyson
		Wellington and Cullompton Stations - project governance arrangements	Sarah Povall
		SWT Pay Policy	Nicky Rendell
		Decision taken under the urgency rule in realltion to ARG Payments	Gordon Dwyer
		Wordsworth Drive and Coleridge Crescent Regeneration	James Barraah/Chris Brown
		Scrutiny Annual Reports x 2	
		Audit Annual Report	
		No PFH Reports - due to purdah	
		NO MORE ITEMS - Purdah (21.03.2022)	
10 May 2022	27 April 2022	Annual Council Meeting	
		Council Committees for 2021/2022 and their Terms of Reference	Amy Tregellas
		Appointment of Representatives on Outside Bodies	Amy Tregellas
		To authorise the sealing or signing of documents to give effect to any decisions taken	Amy Tregellas
		NO MORE ITEMS - Purdah (21.03.2022)	
05 July 2022	23 June 2022	CCTV	Sally Parry/Scott Weetch
		PFH Reports	
		Green Space Acquisition (confidential)	Jo O'Hara
06 September 2022	24 August 2022	PFH Reports	

Full Council Meeting 29 March 2022

Community Scrutiny Annual Report 2021/22

Foreword

I was surprised and pleased to be appointed to the position of Chair for the Somerset West and Taunton (SWT) Community Scrutiny Committee in its inaugural year. It is unfortunate that with the onset of the Unitary Council, this will become one of the briefest committees in the short history of SWT Council.

Nevertheless, we have managed to get through a sizeable chunk of work, and I am both pleased and gratified with how my colleagues have scrutinised the various reports and items that have come before us in the past twelve months.

2021/22 has been a memorable period, during which Members have worked together to tackle the myriad of conflicting pressures relating to the Coronavirus pandemic that have affected our work and the lives of our constituents in so many ways. We have also had to deal with the changing face of Somerset as we move towards a new Unitary Council, with the resultant anxieties, uncertainties, and concerns from both our own staff, colleagues and local organisations.

Clearly one of the most fundamental components of successful scrutiny lies in partnership working and about acting as much more than just a critical friend or opposition to the Executive. I am therefore grateful to the Leader of the Council for continuing to encourage transparency and involvement of Scrutiny in the decision-making process.

In this, we benefit from the collegiate way of working, which has been ably demonstrated in the various cross-party task and finish groups that have been established in the last year. Of particular mention is the Zero Carbon Retrofit led by our Vice Chair, Cllr David Mansell which came to Community Scrutiny in January 2022.

2021/22 Programme

Overall, the last year has been an extremely busy one for the Committee. We have discussed many and varied issues of community interest and concern such as:

- Review of the VCSE Community Grants
- Social Housing Developments in Taunton and Minehead
- The Climate Emergency Strategy and Climate Resilience Plan
- Single Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Accommodation Plan
- The Future of Flook House
- Council Housing Zero Carbon Retrofit
- North Taunton Woolaway Project
- Litter Strategy and Enforcement
- Electronic Parking Permits – a verbal update

We also received regular reports on the Housing Revenue Account and Housing Performance, which included updates on how the Housing Directorate was coping with the ravages of COVID-19. Despite many challenges the Housing Service continues to support tenants and vulnerable members of the community, and this has been noted on the occasions reports are brought before Scrutiny.

We also continued to include a regular slot to question Executive Councillors. Not only does this offer Committee members a greater opportunity for extended questioning than is possible in normal meetings of the Full Council but it also offers portfolio holders the chance to expand on their roles and responsibilities.

Cllr Derek Perry	Sports, Parks and Leisure
Cllr Fran Smith	Housing
Cllr Chris Booth	Communities
Cllr Dixie Darch	Climate Change

We look forward to a visit from Cllr Andy Sully on the Environment portfolio in the coming months.

Updates from Partners / External Organisations

Update on Post Office Provision

April Meeting - Richard Hall - External Affairs Manager South England and Wales / Jason Collins Network Team)

Avon & Somerset Police

September meeting – Chief Inspector Justin French – Question and Answer session.

Onion Collective

January Meeting – Directors of Onion Collective – Question and Answer session.

Conclusion

To conclude, 2021/22 has been an unusual year for many reasons, but I would like to take this opportunity to thank my Scrutiny Member colleagues for their support, flexibility and commitment over this period. This includes my fellow Corporate Scrutiny Chair, Cllr Gwil Wren and the vice chairs who have fully played their part in making sure that we got on with the business of the Council as the residents of SWT would expect.

Despite only having one year left as a sovereign Council there is still much work to be done. I look forward to working with colleagues on the evolving Unitary Council, and the emergence of a Taunton Town Council, whilst continuing to support our communities in the post pandemic world.

Cllr. Libby Lisgo
Community Scrutiny Chair

Report Number: SWT 18/22

Somerset West and Taunton Council

Community Scrutiny – 23 February 2022 Executive – 16 March 2022

2021/22 Housing Revenue Account Financial Monitoring as at Quarter 3 (31 December 2021)

This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Fran Smith, Housing

Report Author: Kerry Prisco (Management Accounting and Reporting Lead)

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the projected outturn financial position of the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for the financial year 2021/22 (as at 31 December 2021).
- 1.2 The current HRA **Revenue Budget** forecast is a projected overspend of £354k.
- 1.3 The revenue position remains under significant pressure as it continues to be affected by the ongoing impact of COVID and operating within an environment of economic recovery. The service has had a backlog of responsive and planned maintenance and compliance works to deliver. Costs have escalated in terms of materials, staffing, and servicing costs. Future financial pressures are still to be confirmed in terms of staff pay award, income collection, cost of implementing regulatory changes, and the cost of implementing a unitary authority. A thorough analysis of risks and uncertainties facing the HRA has been undertaken and careful monitoring of these will continue for early indications of further financial pressures.
- 1.4 Whilst best endeavours to forecast with as much accuracy as possible we have seen a historical change in forecasts each quarter and to year end. However, it is essential that control over spending continues to reduce the forecast overspend and maintain adequate reserves.
- 1.5 Since the Q1 report the housing senior management team have taken steps to better control expenditure, to undertake the capitalisation of some improvement works' costs and to maximise income to try to contain and reverse our overspend position. For example, voids performance is starting to improve, and an additional 50 garages have been let in recent months. Since the Q2 report there has been ongoing movements in the projections in particular some below the line treasury and corporate changes, which have had a mixture of positive and negative impacts on the forecast. The overall trend from Q1 to Q3 is a slightly improved position.

- 1.6 Members will be aware that budget setting for 2022/23 has been challenging, where some budgets required re-basing especially around repairs and maintenance, and consequently the service will be pursuing efficiency targets into next financial year and beyond. Whilst steps will continue to be taken to further control our 2021/22 forecast, it is also acknowledged that some solutions will take some time to deliver and that we are operating at a higher operating costs base particularly in the short term which has influenced our in year position.
- 1.7 There is currently sufficient capacity in general reserves to cover new in-year pressures identified to date and the current forecast outturn position.
- 1.8 The **unearmarked reserves** are projected to be £2.708m which is £708k above the recommended minimum balance of £2m.
- 1.9 The **earmarked reserves** opening balance is £1.1m. Of this £1.044m has been returned to general reserves to mitigate in-year budget pressures.
- 1.10 The HRA **Capital Programme** has a total approved budget of £118m. The profiled budgeted spend for 2021/22 is £29m and this is currently forecast to underspend in the year by £16.257m; £13.332m due to slippage of work into 2022/23 and £2.925m budget to be returned.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 This report is to be noted as the HRA's forecast financial performance and projected reserves position for 2021/22 financial year as 31 December 2022.

3 Risk Assessment

- 3.1 Financial forecasts are based on known information and projections based on assumptions and reasonable estimates. As such any forecast carries an element of risk. The current forecasts included in this report are considered reasonable given the extra element of risk around COVID and pace of economic recovery and based on experience it is feasible the year end position could change. It is common for further variances to emerge during the last quarter, reflecting an optimism bias within previous forecasting.
- 3.2 Despite the risks related to forecasting assumptions, it is essential that measures are implemented promptly to ensure the financial resilience of the Housing Revenue Account and adequate reserves are maintained. The current forecast highlights a risk that reserves may fall below acceptable levels by the end of this financial year if the projected overspend outturn position was to increase and further in year financial pressures arise.
- 3.3 Salient in year budget risks are summarised in section 9 in this report. The Council manages financial risk in several ways including setting prudent budgets, carrying out appropriate monitoring and control of spend, and operating robust financial procedures. The Council also holds both general and earmarked reserves which include contingencies to manage budget risk, though these are low for the HRA.

4 Background and Full details of the Report

- 4.1 This report provides the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) forecast end of year financial position for revenue and capital expenditure as at 31 December 2021.
- 4.2 The regular monitoring of financial information is a key element in the HRA's Performance Management Framework. Crucially it enables remedial action to be taken in response to significant budget variances, some of which may be unavoidable. It also provides the opportunity to assess any consequent impact on reserves and the HRA's Medium Term Financial Plan and 30-Year Business Plan.
- 4.3 Members will be aware from previous experience that the position can change between 'in-year' projections and the final outturn position, mainly due to demand-led service costs and income levels. The budget monitoring process involves a detailed review of the more volatile budgets and a proportionate review of low risk/low volatility budget areas. Budget Holders, with support and advice from their finance business partners, update their forecasts monthly based on currently available information and knowledge of service requirements for the remainder of the year. As with any forecast there is always a risk that some unforeseen changes could influence the position at the year-end, and several risks and uncertainties are highlighted within this report. However, the following forecast is reasonable based on current information.

5 HRA Revenue Budget 2021/22 Forecast Outturn

- 5.1 The HRA is a ring-fenced, self-financing, account used to manage the Council's housing stock of some 5,700 properties, with the Council acting as the Landlord.
- 5.2 The Council retains all rental income to meet the costs of managing and maintaining the housing stock, as well as meeting the interest payments and repayment of capital debt.
- 5.3 The current year end forecast outturn position for the Housing Revenue Account for 2021/22 is a net overspend of £354k. This is a reduction on the projected overspend of £566k reported in Q2 and £610k as reported in Q1, though the outturn position is still of significant concern.

Table 1: HRA Revenue Outturn Summary

	Current Budget £000	Forecast Outturn £000	Forecast Variance	
			£000	%
Gross Income	-27,668	-27,436	232	0.8%
Service Expenditure	15,374	15,997	623	2.3%
Other Expenditure	12,294	11,793	-501	-1.8%
Total	0	354	354	1.3%

- 5.4 The variances to budget are shown in more detail in Table 2 and following explanations.

Table 2: Summary of Forecast Variances for the Year

	Current Budget £000	Outturn Forecast £000	Q3	Q2	Q1
			Variance £000		
Gross Income:					
Dwelling Rents	-24,951	-24,526	424	291	29
Non-Dwelling Rents	-704	-758	-54	8	6
Charges for Services / Facilities	-1,623	-1,718	-95	-27	-42
Other Income	-389	-434	-44	-2	-2
Sub-Total Gross Income	-27,668	-27,436	231	269	-9
Service Expenditure:					
Development & Regeneration	219	155	-64	-265	-43
Community Resilience	154	163	9	8	14
Tenancy Management	2,901	3,230	329	54	128
Maintenance	3,429	4,512	1,083	682	354
Assets	1,277	1,045	-232	-137	-53
Compliance	2,317	1,991	-326	438	233
Performance	5,077	4,901	-175	-187	-13
Sub-Total Service Expenditure	15,374	15,997	623	590	620
Central Costs / Movement in Reserves:					
Revenue Contribution to Capital	-	-	-	-	-
Interest Payable	2,669	2,819	150	-	-
Interest Receivable	-	-358	-358	-	-
Change in Provision for Bad Debt	180	180	-	-	-
Depreciation	7,663	7,370	-293	-293	-
Capital Debt Repayment	1,821	1,821	-	-	-
Movement In Reserves	-39	-39	-	-	-
Sub-Total Central Costs / Movement in Reserves:	12,294	11,793	-501	-293	-
Net Surplus(-) / Deficit for the Year	-	354	354	566	610

Income

- 5.5 **Dwelling Rent Income:** the budgeted income for 2021/22 is £24.951m, which reflects an assumption of 2% void losses and applying a 52-week year. The overall current projections suggest that less income will be recovered than predicted when setting the budget and providing an allowance for voids. The current projection for dwelling rent income is an under recovery against budget of £424k which is largely due to stock reductions related to the North Taunton regeneration scheme and levels of voids. This also includes £62k of write offs during the year so far.
- 5.6 **Non-Dwelling Rents:** The majority of this variance relates to a projected income in garage rents due to active advertising to fill voids; an increase of c50 rentals has already been achieved.
- 5.7 **Charges for Services / Facilities:**
- 5.8 The budgeted income for 2021/22 for the **Service Charge Income for Dwellings** (after discounts have been applied to tenants such as Piper Charge to Sheltered Housing and Extra Care) less an average 2% void loss and applying a 52-week year, is £1.380m. The current projections suggest that c£200k more income will be recovered than predicted when setting the budget and providing an allowance for voids.
- 5.9 The budget income for 2021/22 for income for **Leaseholder Charges for Services** is £233k. Leaseholds are invoiced a year in arrears. The routine repairs were low due to COVID and lockdown. The major repairs were also lower and capped at £250 this year. In addition to this, following a successful tender, building insurance premiums have now dropped meaning less of a recharge to our customers. Therefore £103k less income was billed to leaseholders.
- 5.10 The budgeted income for **Meeting Halls** for 2021/22 is £10k. The current projection is that no income will be received due to COVID restrictions preventing this service to be provided. The meeting halls were re-opened at the end of September 2021 and there have been a few bookings but nowhere near the budgeted amount.

Expenditure

- 5.11 **Development & Regeneration:** The underspend relates to a few posts held vacant for the early part of the year. The delivery of new development projects has not required this resource as the service has focused on establishing a development pipeline. The development pipeline of 342 units is now established and following procurement and planning this resource in the structure will be required as the service increasingly moves into delivery from 2022/23.
- 5.12 **Tenancy Management:** This area covers lettings, supported housing, rent recovery, leaseholders and other tenancy management support activities. The total current budget is £2.901m and it is forecasting an overspend of £329k. This relates to a number of different areas including (a) an overspend related to the upgrade of the controlled entry systems to flat blocks where we are now incurring expenditure relating to contracts and

the maintenance of the systems that are higher than before, (b) an overspend due to increased levels of cleaning in supported housing settings required in light of COVID plus the cost for a range of compliance requirements, (3) an overspend related to a significant increase in activity following the implementation of annual tenancy reviews to identify and help resolve issues (for example house clearance due to hoarding), and (4) an overspend on staffing costs due to additional resource drafted in to help the team manage challenging workloads throughout COVID and backfilling long term sickness.

- 5.13 **Maintenance:** The overspend relates to the ongoing repairs and maintenance of the housing stock either tenanted or void activity undertaken to ensure our Lettable Standard is met. Whilst this is a very demand led and reactive service based on the needs of the tenants, this service is experiencing an increase in cost pressures as inflation drives up the cost of materials (as seen nationally). The assumed ongoing impact of this pressure is reflected in the rebasing of budgets for 2022/23. This year the team has also incurred additional costs to deliver the backlog of repairs following COVID restrictions.
- 5.14 **Assets:** The underspend relates to the delivery of the pre-planned maintenance external decorations programme being delayed due to COVID restricting staffing resources, and a number of staff vacancies during the year across the capital investment team.
- 5.15 **Compliance:** The service is forecasting an underspend of £326k which is due to the validation surveys recently undertaken identifying a range of compliancy areas requiring reduced funding during 2021/22 (e.g. Fire Risk Assessments needing review, rather than a full new survey), as well as reduced expenditure on staffing in the team due to vacancies. We are, however, continuing to maintain and improve on all necessary property safety compliance activities to ensure the safety of our residents.
- 5.16 **Performance:** Of the total budget of £5m, £3.9m relates to shared costs such as support services, pension deficit, governance leaving £1.1m on operating costs such as staffing, insurance, training, travel, stationery, printing and bank charges, as well as the Tenants Empowerment and Tenants Action Group. The underspend is an updated projection of shared support staff plus a combination of various small overspends offset by part year vacancy savings in the performance team and forecast underspends in both Tenants Empowerment and Tenants Action Group costs.
- 5.17 **Interest Receivable:** The updated capital spend projections (see section 6 and appendix D) forecast slippage of £13.3m and return of £2.9m. This has impacted the capital financing requirement for the HRA considerably and the update projections suggests that the HRA could receive c£358k of interest income. This is highly dependent on the final capital outturn for the year.
- 5.18 **Depreciation:** This is the current estimate for depreciation charges for the HRA. These will be finalised at the end of the financial year. Depreciation costs are credited to the Major Repairs Reserve and reinvested in the housing stock through financing of the capital programme.

6 HRA Capital Programme

- 6.1 The HRA approved Capital Programme is £118.3m. This consists of £13.8m of new schemes approved for 2021/22 plus £104.5m of previously approved schemes in prior years (see **Appendix A**).
- 6.2 The Council plans to finance this investment through the Major Repairs Reserve, Capital Receipts, Capital Grants, Revenue Funding and Borrowing (see **Appendix B**).
- 6.3 The HRA Capital Programme relates to in-year works and longer-term schemes that will be completed over the next ten years. The current planned profiled spend is summarised in **Appendix C**. The budget has been profiled to reflect the estimated timing of costs for the approved schemes, with £29.9m profiled to be spent in 2021/22 with the balance of £88.4m projected forward into future years.
- 6.4 Further information on the three distinct areas of the HRA capital programme and its financial performance to date against this financial year can be found below and in **Appendix D**. It is currently forecast that the programme will underspend against profiled budget for 2021/22 by £16.257m; £13.332m slipping into subsequent years and £2.925m being returned.
- 6.5 **Major Works:** The approved budget of £14.5m is funded by the Major Repairs Reserve and relates to spend on major works to existing dwellings. New schemes approved for 2021/22 total £8.9m with slippage from the prior year of £5.6m.
- 6.6 All internal capital programme works were placed on hold during the COVID lockdown periods, and some external works were also delayed, causing budget slippage to occur from the 2020/21 financial year. The level of overall capital programmes to be delivered in 2021/22 was therefore significantly higher to try to catch up and delivering this volume of work was always going to be very challenging. Several of the existing contracts for various programmes were ending and this placed a strain on available procurement resources, compounded by a number of procurement exercises having a lower-than-normal level of interest to tender shown by contractors, leading to delays in commencing works on site. In addition, ongoing Brexit and COVID related disruption to supply chains (shortages and delays of materials) and the labour market (lack of skilled trades) has exacerbated the difficulty of delivering a wide range of capital programmes during the year. Finally, residents self-isolating and anxieties about providing access to their homes to allow works to be undertaken have further delayed programme completions.
- 6.7 The 2021/22 capital programme includes major programmes such as:
- Kitchens
 - Bathrooms
 - Air Source Heat Pumps
 - Heating improvements
 - Insulation and ventilation
 - Door entry systems
 - External doors

- Fascias and soffits
- Roofing
- Windows

- 6.8 The current forecast projected spend is £6.184m resulting in an underspend against budget of £8.346m which will fall into subsequent years.
- 6.9 **Improvements:** The approved budget of £3.8m is funded by the Major Repairs Reserve and relates to spend on improvements to existing dwellings. New schemes approved for 2021/22 total £1.1m with slippage from the prior year of £2.7m.
- 6.10 As noted in Major Works above, some capital programme works were placed on hold during the COVID lockdown periods causing budget slippage to occur from the 2020/21 financial year and this also affected some improvement programmes. Fire safety improvement works have been prioritised (e.g. programmes of installation of replacement fire doors, and new emergency lighting to communal areas, have commenced on site). However, again the disruption to supply chains and the labour market has caused delays in the commencement of a number of improvement programmes.
- 6.11 The current forecast projected spend is £2.231m resulting in an underspend against budget of £1.160m which will fall into subsequent years.
- 6.12 **Social Housing Development Programme:** The approved budget of £100m is for the provision of new housing through schemes such as Phases A-E for North Taunton Regeneration (NTWP), Seaward Way, Oxford Inn, Zero Carbon Affordable Homes and other buybacks to increase the Council's housing stock.
- 6.13 The new build programme has entered into one contract (Phase A NTWP) and is due to enter into a second contract (Seaward Way) in 2021/22. This will obligate SWT through contract £21m of spend between 2021 and 2024 and SWT will gain 101 new low carbon council homes and a community facility. Both contracts are design and build and therefore provide the council with cost certainty with costs risk primarily borne by the contractors. The service is also bringing forward a new planning application for NTWP phases B and C.
- 6.14 The project is decanting Phase B and Ci for start on site for early next financial year. Rent loss at NTWP will increase up to 2025/26 at which time additional units, over those demolished, will generate greater income at the point of phase D delivery. Predicted void loss is reflected in the HRA Business Plan and this will continue to be updated with business plan reviews. The decant strategy will decant customers in smaller subphases and retain as many customers within the scheme area through a two-move approach in order to maximise rental income. Some NTWP dwellings will continue to be used for temporary accommodation providing an income to mitigate some rent loss.
- 6.15 The service will review the delivery timescales and budget for the 61 new build units in the zero carbon affordable homes pilot and Oxford Inn following planning permission which is subject to a requirement to mitigate against phosphates. The garage income from these sites will not be affected by the proposed development until contracts are let

for the schemes. Refurbishment schemes at Oake and NTWP Phase E will commence 2022/23 with rent loss being controlled by limiting the number of units under refurbishment to circa four per scheme at any one time.

- 6.16 Please note that there have been changes to the use of Right To Buy (RTB) receipts which are favourable to SWT and its new build programme. The new rules will increase the subsidy available for new build schemes by circa 10% and reduce the borrowing required for the schemes. All schemes are being future proofed to meet 2030 and 2050 low and zero carbon targets.
- 6.17 The current forecast projected spend is £5.2m resulting in an underspend against in-year profiled budget of £6.8m. Of this £3.8m slippage will fall into subsequent years due to some delays in schemes commencing and £2.9m will be a budget return as new build schemes are projected to meet RTB 1-4-1 spend requirements instead of purchases.

7 HRA Earmarked Reserves

- 7.1 The HRA Earmarked Reserves at the beginning of 2021/22 totalled £1.107m (see **Table 3** below). Of this £869k was approved to be returned to General Reserves by Full Council on 5 October 2021 and a further £175k by the Executive on 15 December 2021. The remaining funds have been earmarked to be spent within the next two years.

Table 3: Earmarked Reserves Balances

Description	Opening Balance 01/04/2021 £000	Return to General Reserves £000	Projected Balance 31/3/2022 £000
HRA One Teams	26	-20	6
HRA Social Housing Development Fund	849	-849	0
HRA Hinkley	57	-30	26
HRA Contribution to Change	175	-175	0
HRA Total	1,107	-1,074	32

8 HRA Unearmarked Reserves

- 8.1 The HRA general (unearmarked) reserves at the start of the year were £2.686m. This is £686k above the minimum recommended reserve level of £2m. Remaining at or above these targets provides financial resilience to in year pressures through volatility and unforeseen cost increases and income reductions.
- 8.2 General reserves have increased by £1.044m through the return of earmarked reserves that are no longer required for their original purpose (approved by Full Council on 5 October 2021 and the Executive 15 December 2021). However, there are several commitments and pressures for 2021/22 and forecast for 2022/23 that will significantly reduce general reserves if savings cannot be found during the year.
- 8.3 The current outturn position is forecast to be a net overspend of £354k. If the forecast outturn position does not improve the deficit will reduce reserve balances to £2.708, which is £708k above the recommended minimum balance of £2m. It is essential that

control on spending for the remainder of the year continues to reduce the forecast overspend and maintain adequate reserves. If reserves do fall below adequate minimum levels it will be vital that sustainable plans are implemented during 2022/23 to restore balances to acceptable level. Financial pressures this year have demonstrated the potential scale of financial risks, which will almost certainly be exacerbated during the transition to the unitary authority and in an increasingly volatile operating environment. It is vital that costs are managed within annual income totals to ensure ongoing affordability of services.

- 8.4 **Table 4** below summarises the movement on the HRA unearmarked reserves during 2021/22.

Table 4: HRA Unearmarked Reserves Balance

	Approval	£'000
Balance Brought Forward 1 April 2021		2,686
Approved - Released EMRs	Full Council – 05.10.21	869
Approved - Release further EMRs	Executive – 15.12.21	175
Approved – Share of Change	Director 16.06.21	-21
Approved - OC & Supply Chain Project Lead	Director / S151	-19
Approved - Housing Improvement Programme Manager	SMT	-89
Approved - Housing Policy Review	SMT	-20
Approved - Housing Performance Complaints CM	SMT	-19
Approved - Compliance Administrator	SMT	-19
Approved - Building Safety CM	SMT	-25
Approved - Stock Condition Surveyors x2	SMT	-59
Approved - Procurement Support	SMT	-60
Approved - 1.75% Pay Award	Executive – 15.09.21	-175
Approved - Share of Additional H&S Costs	Director	-96
Forecast Balance after current commitments		3,129
Projected Outturn - Total variance		-354
22/23 - Housing Policy Review	SMT	-30
22/23 - Housing Performance Complaints CM	SMT	-6
22/23 - Stock Condition Surveyors x2	SMT	-30
Forecast Balance 31 March 2022		2,708
Recommended Minimum Balance		2,000
Projected Balance above recommended Minimum Balance		708

9 Risk and Uncertainty

- 9.1 Budgets and forecasts are based on known information and the best estimates of the housing service's future income and expenditure activity. Income and expenditure over the financial year is controlled by budget holders and then reported through the budget monitoring process. During this process any risks and uncertainties are identified which could impact financial projections, but for which the likelihood and/or amount are uncertain.

- 9.2 There are certain items that are not determined or finalised until the financial year-end. For example, the final assessment of provisions required for bad debts, and final allocations of support service recharges. These can result in potentially significant differences to current forecasts.
- 9.3 The current areas of risk and uncertainty being reported include:
- 9.4 **Year-End Adjustments:** There are certain items that are not determined or finalised until the financial year-end. For example the final allocations of support service recharges and the final assessment of provisions required for bad debts. These can result in potentially significant differences to current forecasts.
- 9.5 With regards to bad debts, for a significant part of the year we have been unable to issue 'notice seeking possession' as part of our normal early intervention within our rent recovery process (due to eviction not being allowed during the pandemic). Although rent recovery performance is holding up well, this is likely to impact our ability to meet our year end rent recovery target.
- 9.6 **Staff Pay Award:** The budgets have been set based on 0% pay award for 2021/22 following the government's announcement in respect of public sector pay. However, pay negotiations are still being undertaken. The current forecast estimates a 1.75% pay award increasing direct staffing costs by c£175k. The Executive have agreed in principle that the final pay award will be funded from General Reserves.
- 9.7 **COVID-19:** The impact of COVID during the last financial year included delays in responsive repairs works (Revenue) and planned major and improvement works (Capital) reducing spend in these areas. The repairs non-emergency backlog is being resolved by recruitment of additional resources for the in-house trade team and by use of external contractors. However, we continue to have difficulty in recruitment of in-house skilled tradespersons for a range of work areas. We continue to carefully monitor and manage progress in this area and keep residents informed in relation to their repair requests.
- 9.8 The ongoing impact of the pandemic presents a risk to the Housing Service, particularly in terms of revenue collection as well as impact on tenant mental health and wellbeing. We have already seen a drop in inflation rates impacting our future income and expenditure, however another significant risk relates to financial hardship that will result from the impact of COVID, particularly following the ending of government support such as furlough and the current uplift in Universal Credit. The net result is unclear with respect to unemployment however inflation and UC will result in much tighter finances for many households which will impact on their ability to pay rent. Furthermore, there may be an increasing need to invest more in support services for tenant households affected by the impact of COVID. This could present across a range of service demands including increased debt and benefits advice; unemployment support, mental health support; anti-social behaviour intervention, safeguarding and domestic abuse support.
- 9.9 In addition, there has been substantial increases on a range of construction materials (and this pattern is expected to continue). Also, difficulties in recruitment of construction

professional and trades staff for both normal work levels and COVID backlog is leading to salary inflation. Both factors are putting further pressure on several revenue and capital budgets.

- 9.10 **Repairs & Maintenance:** Overall this is a very demand led and reactive service based on the needs of the tenants. There are also a number of uncontrollable variables associated with this service such as the weather (e.g. cold winters causing burst pipes, roof leaks, etc), condition of properties when returned (e.g. void refurbishments), consumer demand on minor internal / external repairs (e.g. broken door or fence) and the type of repair work required. Market pricing of materials etc can also be volatile with some unit costs increasing in recent months. As such the levels of demand do not always follow a recognisable trend. We therefore caveat the forecasts in these areas to account for fluctuations.
- 9.11 **Landlord Compliance:** A review of all compliance areas against every property for which Somerset West and Taunton Council has landlord property compliance responsibility has largely been undertaken. The compliance works required following this review are currently being planned and procured. Whilst additional budget provision has been added for 2021/22 the full extent of the financial pressure remains uncertain as more information is gathered.
- 9.12 **Electrical Compliance:** As noted above, a high number of remedial works have been identified from the electrical inspection condition reports. The majority of this is expected to fall under 'major' works and capitalised. However, an unknown proportion of this will only be 'minor' works and will need to be funded from revenue presenting a potential overspend.
- 9.13 **Welfare Reform and Universal Credit (UC):** The impacts of Welfare Reform and UC are significant with the number and value of rent accounts in arrears expected to increase considerably. Several mitigations are already in place to help support tenants affected by Welfare Reform and UC such as debt advice, access to discretionary housing payments and an arrears management team with redesigned workflow processes. Welfare Reform and UC may require the Council to revise future income projections as our experience with Welfare Reform and UC develops.
- 9.14 **Responding to increased stock quality standards:** Changes to the Regulator of Social Housing's decent home standard as well as higher thermal efficiency standards which are unsupported by additional external grant funding would place an additional burden on HRA resources available for elemental investment in homes. Once the detail is known, we will need to adapt to ensure we continue to maintain stock at the Decent Homes Standard and prepare to meet all the evolving expectations, incorporating the financial impacts into the Business Plan.
- 9.15 **Building Regulation and Fire Safety:** The Grenfell Tower fire and subsequent Review of Building Regulation and Fire Safety bring several operational and financial risks. These have been mitigated with the increases in revenue and capital budgets approved for 2021/22 for compliance related work. However, the exact costs are currently unclear. There are likely to be other impacts, such as on the repairs budget due to additional work to communal areas, more intensive management of flat blocks and further resilience

within teams to respond to the volume and breadth of enquiries. We will need to ensure continued compliance with these statutory requirements.

- 9.16 **Housing White Paper:** In November 2020 the Government published the Housing White Paper which sets out the changes to how social landlords will operate. It will require several changes to home safety, tenant satisfaction measures, complaints handling, a new inspection regime for social landlords and a strengthened role for the Regulator of Social Housing. Many of the new changes in the white paper have already been mitigated in Housing by strengthening our compliance activities, setting up the new Housing Performance Team to be responsible for communications, performance data and engagement but this will need to be kept under review and self-assessment has begun.
- 9.17 **Job Costing Charges via Open Contractor (OC):** The project lead is thoroughly reviewing and improving the efficient and accurate operational use of OC. The underlying issues around timing of information and accuracy of coding still remains and the ability of services to accurately forecast their outturn position on charges coming from OC remains low though still largely affected by the demand led nature of the service. Reporting 'work arounds' have been developed to assist budget holders with their forecasting whilst the project progresses.
- 9.18 **Right To Buy (RTB) Receipts:** This is a government policy that enables tenants to purchase their homes at a discount, subject to meeting qualifying criteria. The receipts allowed to be retained by the Council can now fund up to 40% of new social housing costs and must be used within five years of receipt, following a temporary amendment to the scheme policy from the 1 April 2021. To date, the Council has successfully fully spent all of their retained 1-4-1 receipts within the require timescales resulting in no returns being made to the Treasury/DLUHC.
- 9.19 Whilst projected spend on new build developments is currently adequate to meet 1-4-1 spend requirements this is dependent on the successful delivery of these social development schemes. There is a risk that progress on new build schemes could be delayed and purchasing houses on the open market is also hindered, both as a direct result of COVID, and may result in funds being return to DLUHC/Treasury.
- 9.20 **Unitary Authority:** The Secretary of State has announced his decision on the future of local government in Somerset and has chosen the "One Somerset" option put forward by the County Council. This means there will be one new council for Somerset replacing the existing five councils in April 2023. The costs of implementation will be significant and will bring significant additional demand on officers to support the process with potential additional capacity required.
- 9.21 It is currently unknown what the future potential HRA costs will be because of this decision, and whether these costs will need to be funded using revenue or capital budgets. From a capital perspective the business plan does provide some headroom to allow non-right to buy receipts to be used as flexible capital receipts to fund transformation costs. However, this direction ends on the 31 March 2022 and whilst a statement of intent has been issued by the Government to extend this directive for a further three years, this has not yet been confirmed. Revenue costs of implementation

are not currently budgeted and will place additional pressures on the HRA budget and reserves, thus we will need to review planned expenditure and reserves to make this affordable.

10 Links to Corporate Aims / Priorities

- 10.1 The financial performance of the Council underpins the delivery of corporate priorities and therefore all Corporate Aims.

11 Partnership Implications

- 11.1 A range of HRA services are provided through partnership arrangements such as MIND, citizen's advice, Inspire to Achieve, Taunton East Development Trust, North Taunton and Wiveliscombe Area Partnership. The cost of these services is reflected in the Council's financial outturn position for the year.

12 Scrutiny Comments / Recommendations

- 12.1 To be added following the Corporate Scrutiny meeting.

Democratic Path:

- **Community Scrutiny – 23 February 2022**
- **Executive – 16 March 2022**
- **Full Council - No**

Reporting Frequency: Quarterly

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Appendix A	Approved Capital Budget
Appendix B	Capital Financing of Total Approved Budget
Appendix C	Annual Profiling of Approved Capital Budget
Appendix D	Profiled Capital Budget for 2021/22 Vs Forecast Capital Outturn for 2021/22

Contact Officers

Name	Kerry Prisco
Direct Dial	01823 218758
Email	k.prisco@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

Name	James Barrah
Direct Dial	01823 217553
Email	j.barrah@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

Name	Paul Fitzgerald
Direct Dial	01823 217557
Email	p.fitzgerald@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

Appendix A: HRA Approved Capital Budget

SWT Capital Programme	Prior Year Slippage	Current Year Approval Feb 2021 Budget Setting for 2021/22	Current Year Approval Feb 2021 Budget Setting for 2022/23	Total Approved Budget	Current Year Supplements	Current Year Returns	Revised Current Year Approved Capital Budget
Major Works	5,646,075	8,883,710	-	14,529,785	-	-	14,529,785
Fire Safety	1,553,967	202,000	-	1,755,967	-	-	1,755,967
Related Assets	30,073	100,000	-	130,073	-	-	130,073
Exceptional & Extensive	-	293,500	-	293,500	-	-	293,500
Vehicles	347,800	121,000	-	468,800	-	-	468,800
ICT	745,598	-	-	745,598	-	-	745,598
Aids & Adaptations & DFGs	-	370,000	-	370,000	-	-	370,000
Sub-Total Majors & Improvements	8,323,513	9,970,210	-	18,293,723	-	-	18,293,723
Social Housing Development	96,203,047	3,830,000	-	100,033,047	-	-	100,033,047
Total HRA	104,526,560	13,800,210	-	118,326,770	-	-	118,326,770

Appendix B: HRA Capital Financing of Total Approved Budget

SWT Capital Programme	TOTAL CAPITAL FINANCING	Capital Grants	Right To Buy (RTB) Capital Receipts	Capital Receipts	HRA Revenue Contribution	Major Repairs Reserve	Other Earmarked Reserves	Borrowing
Major Works	14,529,785	-	-	-	-	14,529,785	-	-
Fire Safety	1,755,967	-	-	-	-	1,755,967	-	-
Related Assets	130,073	-	-	-	-	130,073	-	-
Exceptional & Extensive	293,500	-	-	-	-	293,500	-	-
Vehicles	468,800	-	-	-	-	468,800	-	-
ICT	745,598	-	-	-	-	745,598	-	-
Aids & Adaptations & DFGs	370,000	-	-	-	-	370,000	-	-
Sub-Total Majors & Improvements	18,293,723	-	-	-	-	18,293,723	-	-
Social Housing Development	100,033,047	470,000	18,524,287	-	-	-	-	81,038,760
Total HRA	118,326,770	470,000	18,524,287	-	-	18,293,723	-	81,038,760

Appendix C: HRA Annual Profiling of Approved Capital Budget

SWT Capital Programme	Total Approved Budget	Capital Spend 2021/22	Capital Spend 2022/23	Capital Spend 2023/24	Capital Spend 2024/25	Capital Spend 2025/26	Capital Spend 2026/27	Capital Spend 2027/28	Capital Spend 2028/29
Major Works	14,529,785	14,529,785	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fire Safety	1,755,967	1,755,967	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Related Assets	130,073	130,073	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Exceptional & Extensive	293,500	293,500	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Vehicles	468,800	468,800	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
ICT	745,598	372,799	372,799	-	-	-	-	-	-
Aids & Adaptations & DFGs	370,000	370,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sub-Total Majors & Improvements	18,293,723	17,920,924	372,799	-	-	-	-	-	-
Social Housing Development	100,033,047	11,933,318	30,525,739	16,635,980	11,824,610	12,846,700	10,966,880	4,522,260	777,560
Total HRA	118,326,770	29,854,242	30,898,538	16,635,980	11,824,610	12,846,700	10,966,880	4,522,260	777,560

Appendix D: HRA Profiled Capital Budget for 2021/22 Vs Forecast Capital Outturn for 2021/22

SWT Capital Programme	Profiled Capex Budget 2021/22	Expenditure YTD	Forecast Outturn 2021/22	Variance; - underspend + overspend	- Slippage c/f	In Year - Underspend + Overspend
Major Works	14,529,785	1,777,701	6,183,723	(8,346,062)	(8,346,062)	0
Fire Safety	1,755,967	(396,523)	980,000	(775,967)	(775,967)	0
Related Assets	130,073	16,389	35,999	(94,074)	(94,074)	0
Exceptional & Extensive	293,500	(52,364)	40,000	(253,500)	(253,500)	0
Vehicles	468,800	0	468,800	0	0	0
ICT	372,799	334,248	372,799	0	0	0
Aids & Adaptations & DFGs	370,000	60,460	333,044	(36,956)	(36,956)	0
Sub-Total Majors & Improvements	17,920,924	1,739,911	8,414,365	(9,506,559)	(9,506,559)	0
Social Housing Development	11,933,318	3,033,623	5,182,954	(6,750,364)	(3,825,032)	(2,925,331)
Total HRA	29,854,242	4,773,534	13,597,319	(16,256,923)	(13,331,592)	(2,925,331)

Report Number: SWT 19/22

Somerset West and Taunton Council

Report to Community Scrutiny – 23 February 2022

Wordsworth Drive and Coleridge Crescent Flats Regeneration, Taunton

**This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Member
Councillor Francesca Smith**

**Report Author: Chris Brown, Assistant Director Development & Regeneration, Ian
Shoemark, Project Manager**

1. Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 Wordsworth Drive and Coleridge Crescent Flats Regeneration (WD&CC) includes two SWT blocks of flats and an SWT owned garage site. Wordsworth Drive Flats contains a shop, 11x2 bed SWT apartments and a private leasehold apartment. Coleridge Crescent contains 4x2 bed SWT apartments. There are 13 garages on the site. A map of the regeneration can be found at Appendix A.
- 1.2 The report proposes that the WD&CC flats no longer provide the quality of accommodation, in terms of decency and thermal efficiency, which SWT tenants should expect and which the Council strive to provide.
- 1.3 SWT considered four investment options before concluding that the two blocks have reached the end of their life and costs to the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to bring the two blocks to an appropriate standard for the next sixty years does not provide reasonable value to the Council (HRA Business plan).
- 1.4 The report recommends the decanting of the Wordsworth Drive Flats should commence in April 2022 with the award of Homefinder gold band status to the ten tenants. The awarding of gold band status to tenants will maximise the rehousing opportunities available to the tenants through Homefinder and maximise the opportunities open to the tenants through SWTs Decant Policy. In addition, the negotiation and purchase of one leasehold property will progress and agreement will be reached with the shop for its closure.
- 1.5 The report recommends the decanting of Coleridge Crescent Flats commences in April 2023 with the awarding of Homefinder gold band to the four tenants.
- 1.6 The Tenants Strategic Group considered and supported this report at their meeting 24th January 2022
- 1.7 The report proposes that the properties/blocks are secured and then demolished to minimise any blight or nuisance to residents. The Housing Directorate currently believe that the garages can remain and continue to be let until an alternative use for the site is agreed.

2. Recommendations

2.1 The Community Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the following recommendations prior to the report's progression to the Executive Committee:

- (a) To approve the decanting of tenants from Wordsworth Drive Flats with the awarding of gold band status in April 2022. Gold band status will support tenants secure alternative suitable accommodation.
- (b) To approve the decanting of tenants from Coleridge Crescent Flats with the awarding of gold band status at a time to be determined by the Director of Housing and Communities in conjunction with the portfolio holder for Housing.
- (c) To approve the purchase through mutual consent one leasehold property at Wordsworth Drive flats and compensate the owner in line with statutory compensation requirements.
- (d) To note officers will agree the closure date and compensation with the shop lessee to ensure Wordsworth block is available for demolition.
- (e) To approve the demolition of Wordsworth Drive and Coleridge Crescent Flats at a time to be determined by the Director of Housing and Communities in conjunction with the portfolio holder for Housing.
- (f) Officers to return to the Council with options for the future use of the site.
- (g) To approve a supplementary budget of £1,111,700 and to delegate the funding of the scheme to the Section 151 Officer.

3. Risk Assessment

3.1 Below are the main risks relating to the proposal:

Risk	Score out of 25 based on probability x impact	Mitigation
Poor consultation may result in resistance and disconnection from tenants	10	Careful planning is required and consultation with all parties simultaneously (tenants, leaseholders, shop lessee). Keep residents and stakeholder informed
Limited alternative accommodation for tenants	10	Officers have analysed the availability of alternative accommodation to support the decanting of tenants. 2 bed properties are in high demand however there is thought to be sufficient turnover of homes to allow for decanting customers within 12 months of them being awarded gold band. Officers are conducting housing needs assessments to understand the needs of customers and to explore any preferences or opportunities for downsizing or alternative accommodation for example sheltered housing.

Risk	Score out of 25 based on probability x impact	Mitigation
The structural quality of the block deteriorates faster than anticipated.	6	An agreed monitoring regime has been agreed with specialist engineers to ensure the structure of the block is considered and any changes identified. A number of additional surveys are taking place and investment in barriers and garage access are taking place. A third-party fire safety assessment has been commissioned.
Tenants experience a substandard service (non-decent homes poor thermal efficiency) as they await to be decanted	10	Tenants' will continue to benefit from SWTs comprehensive compliance, repair and maintenance service as they await a new home. It is recognised that that the properties thermal efficiency combined with electric heating means some customers are in fuel poverty. It is proposed that the directorate introduce a winter payment for tenants to reduce the impact of heating costs as they await decanting. A contract for damp and mould cleaning will be let to help manage any problems which arise.
Loss of rent revenue for SWT	15	The decanting of the two blocks will reduce the income from rent to the HRA. The HRA business plan has calculated and reflected the loss of rent and the cost of decant and demolition within its December 2021 review. It is assumed the garages will remain let until a new purpose for the site is agreed. The decanting of the two blocks will be phased to manage rent loss. The site will provide an opportunity for income through sale or new rental income.
Inability to purchase the leasehold unit	6	The Council is experienced at negotiating the purchase of owner occupier properties in regeneration schemes. Should purchase through mutual consent not be possible officers will return to the Council with proposals requesting the commencement of a compulsory purchase order (CPO). Officers do not currently believe a CPO will be required and currently enjoy a positive dialogue with the leaseholder.
Inability to resolve the shop lease	8	SWT is in dialogue with the shop lessee and are progressing through the corporate asset management team the ending of the lease and compensation. It is assumed that the shop closure will increase the

Risk	Score out of 25 based on probability x impact	Mitigation
		vulnerability of the building and the security plan will reflect this challenge.
Site security before, during or after decanting	15	A number of mitigation measures will need to be agreed to ensure the site is secured and the community remain safe. Regular inspections of the site will need to be maintained and good communication with tenants and the community to help them report any concerns will be important. The demolition of the flats at the earliest opportunity is seen as important to reduce blight and limit any potential anti-social behaviour. Following demolition, a management regime will be put in place to maintain the space prior to sale or redevelopment.
Covid, Brexit, market uncertainty	10	There are a number of external factors which continue to create difficulties when delivering projects in a timely way. SWT and other landlords have experienced challenges in securing contractors and materials to deliver projects in the most timely and economic way. This scheme requires a significant amount of resources from within the authority and therefore is reliant on internal capacity being available.

4.0 Background and full details of the report

- 4.1 The properties have been recognised as poor quality for a number of years and this has led to a series of reports being commissioned to understand the most appropriate investment option.
- 4.2 Kendal Kingscott completed a report in March 2021 following an initial stock condition survey report from Curtin's. The report was inconclusive about the quality of the structure and unable to make a recommendation as to the best way forward.
- 4.3 The Kendal Kingscott report suggested commissioning a detailed appraisal of the condition and life expectancy of the concrete frame and associated elements, including testing the concrete condition.
- 4.4 The Curtin's concrete analysis report was received November 2021. The report has highlighted a number of concerns relating to the quality of the concrete and the condition and limited volume of steel reinforcement. As a result of the Curtin's report the building is deemed safe however as the engineers were unable to confirm a 20-year life for the building it is considered that the building is close to the end of its expected life. SWT has put in place several actions to monitor the building until demolition is undertaken.

- 4.5 Prior to receiving the most recent engineer's report officers had hoped that an investment option may be possible, and these properties were place in the Wave 1 Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) bid to attract subsidy for the investment. However, as the properties will not be retained Officers are working to prepare alternative properties to substitute in the Wave 1 programme should the council be awarded the fund.
- 4.6 Options considered for the blocks
- 4.7 Following Curtin's concrete report in November 2021 Officers carried out an option appraising which included the following alternative options:
- Do Nothing
 - Retention and investment (7 -60 years)
 - Phased decant of the blocks over two years without capital investment.
 - Phased decant of the blocks over seven years with capital investment.
- 4.8 Officers concluded that a phased decant of the blocks over two years without capital investment is the preferred option both on economic and safety grounds.
- 4.9 The phased decant of the blocks over two years will require resources to:
- Carry out a limited amount of additional surveying and remediation work plus an inspection regime.
 - Decant fifteen (15) tenants
 - Support boarding up/security, disconnections, additional cleaning regime and additional tenancy support.
 - Purchased one leasehold property.
 - Provide compensation to the shop lessee as a result of being unable to extend the shops lease
 - Support a limited winter fuel payment for SWT customers due to inadequate thermal efficiencies, electric heating systems and the lack of an investment solution to create an affordable solution.
 - Demolition costs
- 4.10 The HRA business plan has recognised the loss of rental income within its December 2021 review.
- 4.11 The housing service is working on the understanding that the garages can continue to be let until an alternative proposal for the sites use is brought forward.
- 4.12 The Tenants Strategic Group considered and approved this Report at its meeting 24th January 2022. The TSG identified benefits and value in the support approach provided to customers by SWT officers at NTWP as they decanted and were affected by regeneration. They requested the same level of support be extended to tenants affected at the WD&CC scheme. The TSG also asked if there were opportunities to use new homes at NTWP to support the decanting.
- 4.13 Officers confirm that the support to tenants and residents at NTWP will be mirrored, as closely as possible, at WD&CC. In relation to an offer of NTWP new homes to WD&CC tenants' officers do not feel a commitment is appropriate or necessary as it would add an additional layer of complication. The complication would be due to the uncertainty

of new unit completions, the speed at which WD&CC tenants would wish to move and the priority of the Council to minimise vulnerability on the WD&CC scheme as it decants. Officers are conducting housing needs assessments with residents which will identify their preferred location(s) for their forever home. The Gold Banding Status will allow a good degree of priority within the Homefinder pool of available properties and this could include new build council homes at NTWP and elsewhere depending on the timing of their bids and the completion of new build homes.

5 Links to Corporate Strategy

- 5.1 In 2019, the Council declared a climate emergency and committed to working towards achieving carbon neutrality and climate resilience by 2030.
- 5.2 WD&CC flats cannot achieve low or zero carbon standards without excessive financial pressures being placed on the HRA Business Plan. The additional investment in the structure of the homes means that demolition is a more effective means to support the Council's strategic objective.
- 5.3 In 2023 the district will be adsorbed into one Unitary Somerset Authority. The Council and the Housing Service remains responsible for its statutory duties and therefore the decisions in response to this report's recommendations are within the responsibilities of the Council, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Director of Homes and Communities.

6 Finance / Resource Implications

- 6.1 Members are being asked to approve a supplementary capital budget of £1,111,700 to fund the WD&CC Regeneration scheme. This capital budget will be fully funded through borrowing as there is currently no subsidy identified for this scheme. The final funding for this scheme will be determined and approved by the Section 151 Officer.
- 6.2 The funding will be used to decant and demolish the site until a future use is identified for the land. The estimated spend profile for this scheme is as per the table below.

Financial Year		£
2021/22		55,300
2022/23		437,500
2023/24		132,700
2024/25		491,500
Total		1,111,700

- 6.3 Revenue Impact: This scheme will require the decanting and demolition of 15 x 2 bed apartments that are currently generating (general needs) rental income of c£69k per annum (based on 2021/22 weekly rents). The phased decant proposes that 11 properties will be decanted during early 2022/23 and 4 properties during early 2023/24. The HRA Budget Setting Report for 2022/23 currently assumes rental income from these properties during the year and therefore this scheme will create a budget pressure of c£53k. This will be offset in part by the reduced estimated cost of £1k per property for annual repairs and maintenance, and £5k per property for annual major repairs.

- 6.4 The scheme also encompasses the decant and demolition of one shop (owned by SWT) that is expected to generate rental income of £14k per annum in 2022/23. Therefore, this will create a further budget pressure of £14k in 2022/23 for the HRA.
- 6.5 There are garage units on this site generating rental income of c£6k per annum. The proposal is to create a new entrance allowing these to remain in operation and to continue generating rental income during 2022/23 and onwards.
- 6.6 This capital budget will be fully funded through borrowing as there is currently no subsidy identified for this scheme. This will increase the cost of borrowing for the HRA by c£22k (assuming 2% borrowing) per annum by the end of the scheme. This will be managed through forecasting of the capital financing requirement for the HRA as a whole and treasury management strategies.
- 6.7 A thorough investment appraisal of this project has been undertaken and the costs associated with the decanting and demolition of these two blocks as well as the ongoing reduction in rental income, reduction in estimated cost of repairs and increase in cost of borrowing has been reflected in the HRA Business Plan review December 2021.
- 6.8 The December 2021 Business Plan review has received independent professional advice to provide further assurance that the regeneration project is deliverable within the overall 30-year business plan.

7 Legal Implications

- 7.1 No legal issues to report.

8 Climate and Sustainability Implications

- 8.1 WD&CC flats cannot achieve low or zero carbon standards without excessive financial pressures being placed on the HRA Business Plan. The additional investment in the structure of the homes means that demolition is a more effective means to support the Council's strategic climate change objective.
- 8.2 The properties were assessed as EPC E and therefore in the 10% worst performing SWT council homes as measured against SAP/EPC criteria.

9. Safeguarding and/or Community Safety Implications (if any)

- 9.1 There are no safeguarding or community implications.

10. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 10.1 An Equality Impact Assessment can be found at appendix B (To Follow).

11 Social Value Implications

- 11.1 The procurement process will consider the benefit contractors can contribute in terms of social value in particular local labour, use of local contractors and supply chain.

12. Partnership Implications

- 12.1 No partnership implications identified.

13. Health and Wellbeing Implications

- 13.1 Very low carbon homes which are well insulated, have good levels of airtightness and use ventilation systems are considered healthy homes. The properties at WD&CC do not possess low carbon qualities and the construction techniques continue to encourage cold bridging which is a significant contributory factor for damp and mould in homes.

14. Asset Management Implications

- 14.1 The regeneration through the demolition of the flats is seen as the best value for the Council's assets. The creation of a development site provides the Council with an opportunity to improve its assets or receive a capital receipt.

15. Data Protection Implications (if any)

- 15.1 No data protection considerations.

16. Consultation Implications (if any)

- 16.1 Consultation has begun with the tenants, leaseholder, shop lessee and the Ward Members. There has been some support and very little concern raised from tenants to the loss of their current accommodation and tenants have welcomed the chance to consider alternative affordable housing through Homefinder. Currently the Council enjoy a good relationship with the leaseholder and both parties are keen to pursue purchase by mutual consent. The shop lessee has been surprised by the Council's position and discussions continue to take place over the date and timing of the lease end.
- 16.2 Communication with tenants and all other parties will continue to be critical as the regeneration proposals are progressed.
- 16.3 The Tenants Strategic Group has requested that the support for tenants and residents mirrors that of the NTWP and the service will work hard to provide this level of support at WD&CC.

17. Scrutiny/Executive Comments / Recommendation(s) (if any)

- 17.1 *To be completed following meeting 23rd February 2022*

Democratic Path:

- Tenants Strategic Group – 24th January 2022
- Scrutiny / Corporate Governance or Audit Committees – 23rd February 2022
- Cabinet/Executive – 16th March 2022
- Full Council – 29th March 2022

Reporting Frequency: ☐ Once only ☐ Ad-hoc ☐ Quarterly
☐ Twice-yearly ☐ Annually

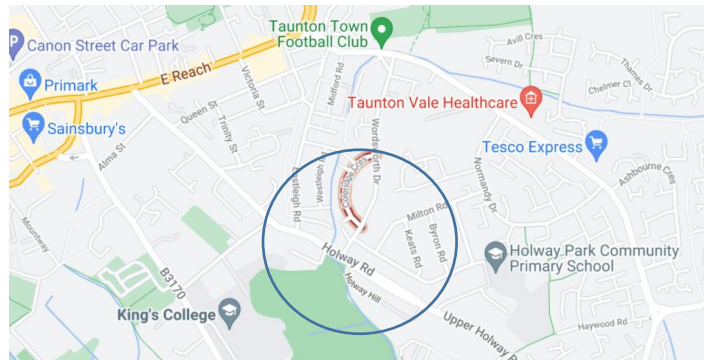
List of Appendices

Appendix A	Map of the Regeneration Area
Appendix B	Equality Impact Assessment (To follow)

Contact Officers

Name	Christopher Brown	Ian Shoemark
Direct Dial	01823 219764	
Email	c.brown@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk	i.shoemark@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

Map of the Wordsworth Drive and Coleridge Crescent Flats Regeneration Area, Taunton.





Somerset Equality Impact Assessment

The [EIA guidance notes](#) will help you complete this assessment.
If you need help or advice please contact Paul Harding. P.harding@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

Organisation prepared for	Somerset West and Taunton Council		
Version	1	Date Completed	11 th February 2021
Description of what proposed change or policy is being impact assessed			
Wordsworth Drive and Coleridge Crescent Flat Regeneration			
Evidence			
What data/information have you used to assess how this policy/service might impact on protected groups? Sources such as the Office of National Statistics , Somerset Intelligence Partnership , Somerset's Joint Strategic Needs Analysis (JSNA) , Staff and/ or area profiles , should be detailed here			
Committee on Fuel Poverty Annual Report October 2021 2015 Fuel Poverty Strategy Annual Fuel Poverty Statistic in England 2021, Low Income Low Energy efficiency (LILEE statistics) Project Initiation Document (PID) Wordsworth Drive and Coleridge Crescent Regeneration Low Carbon Standards and Fuel Poverty Decent Homes Standard Stock condition Data surveys x 3 Low carbon and fuel analysis of the building via specialist energy assessors VOR Group			

Who have you consulted with to assess possible impact on protected groups? If you have not consulted other people, please explain why?

SWT Housing Management
SWT One team
SWT NTWP

Customers – Tenants of Wordsworth Drive and Coleridge Tenants via door knocking and Housing Needs Assessments.
Homefinder Somerset

An assessment of these sources of information illustrate that there are a range of customer with different levels of vulnerability and some tenants who are not vulnerable in relation to housing conditions and housing circumstances. For example (the following list is not exhaustive):

- Age: for the elderly - trips and falls, dementia, cold homes, lack of accessible/adapted properties, incidence of Fuel poverty.
- Disability: lack of accessible/adapted properties for physical and mental disabilities.

Analysis of impact on protected groups

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires us to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations with protected groups. Consider how this policy/service will achieve these aims. In the table below, using the evidence outlined above and your own understanding, detail what considerations and potential impacts against each of the three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty. Based on this information, make an assessment of the likely outcome, before you have implemented any mitigation.

Protected group	Summary of impact	Negative outcome	Neutral outcome	Positive outcome
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenants will be provided Gold Band Status which will allow priority within the Homefinder Somerset system. Housing Needs Assessments will be carried out to help inform officers of customers' needs and advise tenants of accommodation options which may better suit their circumstances. Tenants will have control of which properties they bid for on a like for like basis. However, if customer felt a smaller property would benefit their 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

	<p>circumstances this option would be available to them. Likewise, if customers felt a sheltered property more suitable then this would be available to them. SWTs decant policy and disturbance arrangements recognises additional support for vulnerable customers.</p>			
Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tenants will be provided Gold Band Status which will allow priority within the Homefinder Somerset system. Housing Needs Assessments will be carried out to help inform officers of customers' needs and advise tenants of accommodation options which may better suit their circumstances. As part of the Housing Needs Assessment tenant's health needs will be recorded as well as any adaptations they currently have or require. SWT will ensure the customers new home have the adaptations they require. SWTs decant policy and disturbance arrangements recognises additional support for vulnerable customers. If customer felt a smaller property would benefit their circumstances this option would be available to them. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Gender reassignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No specific additional outcomes identified. However, SWTs decant policy seeks to support all affected tenants in moving to a new home. The policy aims to maximise options available to tenants regardless of gender and gender choices. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Marriage and civil partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No specific additional outcomes identified. However, SWTs decant policy seeks to support all affected tenants in moving to a new home. The policy aims to maximise options available to tenants regardless of marital or civil partnership status. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pregnancy and maternity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No specific additional outcomes identified. However, SWTs decant policy seeks to support all affected tenants and their families in moving to a new home. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Race and ethnicity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No specific additional outcomes identified. However, SWTs decant policy seeks to support all affected tenants in moving to a new home. The policy aims to maximise options available to tenants regardless of their Race or Ethnicity. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Religion or belief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No specific additional outcomes identified. However, SWTs decant policy seeks to support all affected tenants in moving to a new home. The policy aims to maximise options available to tenants regardless of their Religion or belief. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No specific additional outcomes identified. However, SWTs decant policy seeks to support all affected tenants in moving to a new home. The policy aims to maximise options available to tenants regardless of their sex. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sexual orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No specific additional outcomes identified. However, SWTs decant policy seeks to support all affected tenants in moving to a new home. The policy aims to maximise options available to tenants regardless of their sexual orientation. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other, e.g. carers, veterans, homeless, low income, rurality/isolation, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customers who are on low incomes will be able to benefit by moving to a home with improved thermal efficiency and could chose to bid for a property which has a cheaper source of fuel than the electric systems currently at Wordsworth Drive and Coleridge Crescent Flats. If a customer moves to an EPC rated property with gas heating they would currently save in the region of £15 per week during the winter months. Please note that customers use their heating differently and may have different tariffs which affect their fuel costs. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Negative outcomes action plan

Where you have ascertained that there will potentially be negative outcomes, you are required to mitigate the impact of these. Please detail below the actions that you intend to take.

Action taken/to be taken	Date	Person responsible	How will it be monitored?	Action complete
Tenants at Wordsworth Drive and Coleridge Crescent Flats will receive a winter fuel payment of £18 pw during for up to 16 weeks during the winter period December – March until they decant to a new home. This payment will compensate customers for unreasonable fuel costs prior to moving to a new home. The properties are EPC E with direct electric heating and the thermal efficiency of the flats will not improve until the tenant moves to a new home.	01/12/2021	Assistant Director Development & Regeneration	Customers have been informed by letter of the offer. The housing service will monitor the payments made under the fund	<input type="checkbox"/>
Housing Needs Surveys will be completed for all tenants and reviewed every 18 months until the tenant is decanted	21/02/2022	Assistant Director Development & Regeneration	HSMT, Housing Programme Board	<input type="checkbox"/>
SWT Housing Service will propose a Low Carbon Retrofit Strategy and Delivery plan to Full Council by April 2023. The strategy will clarify how the council's investment will reduce the likelihood of tenants experiencing fuel poverty (as per the LILEE definition). A household is considered to be fuel poor if: they are living in a home below band C and were they to spend the required amount on fuel costs for the home, they would be left with a residual income below the official poverty line.	Select date	Assistant Director Development & Regeneration	HSMT, Housing Programme Board	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>

If negative impacts remain, please provide an explanation below.

Completed by:	Chris Brown
Date	11th February 2022
Signed off by:	
Date	
Equality Lead/Manager sign off date:	
To be reviewed by: (officer name)	
Review date:	

Report Number: SWT 20/22

Somerset West and Taunton Council

Community Scrutiny Committee 23rd February 2022

Sports and Leisure Management (Everyone Active) Bi-Annual Report

This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Derek Perry

Report Author: Stuart Noyce, Assistant Director – Commercial Services

1. Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report

1.1 Everyone Active, the Councils' leisure provider, is required, under the contract, to submit a bi-annual service report, which shall contain details against the performance standards as set out in the services specification and includes the following contents:

- Service Update
- Customer Feedback Summary
- Accidents and Incidents Report
- Cleaning Summary
- Membership and Utilisation Data
- Operational Expenditure and Income
- Maintenance Programme Update
- Sports Development and Community Update
- Environmental and Energy Management Plan Progress Report
- Grounds Maintenance Update
- Event Management Progress Update

1.2 Appendix A provides the Everyone Active bi-annual service report to cover the period 1st April to 30th September 2021.

2. Recommendations

2.1 The scrutiny committee is requested to support the following recommendations: -

- a) Note the contents of the six-monthly update for the period 1 April 2021 to 30 September 2021

3. Risk Assessment

Failure to regularly monitor performance could lead to the Council partner not delivering on some of its leisure priorities or key services.

4. Background and Full details of the Report

4.1 The Authority awarded a contract for the management and associated leases for the following Leisure sites to Sports and Leisure Management (Everyone Active) for an initial 8 months and 10 years with the option of an extension for up to a further 10 years, which commenced on 1 August 2019:

- Blackbrook Leisure Centre, Swimming Pool and Spa
- Taunton Swimming Pool
- Wellington Sports Centre
- Wellsprings Leisure Centre
- Vivary Golf Course and High Ropes Centre

4.2 The Contract is a formal document, which is supported by a services specification, a set of leases and operator proposals. These arrangements provide a formal structure for both parties together with key performance indicators and defined responsibilities for repairs and maintenance.

4.3 The content of the Everyone Active Bi Annual Report is stipulated in the service specification and is attached at Appendix A for consideration.

5. Links to Corporate Strategy

5.1 The strengthened provision of the Authority's leisure operations supports point 1 and 3 of the corporate strategy of an Enterprising Council:

- Pursue commercial investment opportunities that generate additional income that can be reinvested in service delivery in order to protect or enhance services on which our communities rely. Supported by a commercial investment strategy
- Meet the challenge of Government completely withdrawing the Council's grant funding
- Ensure our land and property assets support the achievement of the council's objectives (including service delivery, regeneration projects and community initiatives)

6. Finance / Resource Implications

6.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

6.2 Since the commencement of the contract, Covid-19 has resulted in the closure of the leisure facilities for prolonged periods. This has created pressures, but no further financial support has been required to be provided by the Council outside that stated in the original tender sums during the reporting period 1st April and 30th September 2021 as SLM trade out of the pandemic.

7. Legal Implications

7.1 The leisure provision contract is one of the Authority's largest contracts. Reviewing performance and future plans is an important part of the management of the contract.

8. Climate and Sustainability Implications

- 8.1 SLM by managing the Councils Leisure Centres with improvements and ongoing decarbonisation of its operation will help achieve the Councils Climate Emergency Strategy. As assets and equipment are due to be replaced consideration will be given to reducing its impact in consultation with the Climate Change team.

9. Safeguarding and/or Community Safety Implications

- 9.1 This update has no new safeguarding or community safety implications.

10. Asset Management Implications

- 10.1 The contract allows the Council to retain ownership of the property assets involved in service delivery, namely Blackbrook Leisure Centre and Spa, Wellington Sports Centre, Taunton Pool, Vivary Golf Course and the long leasehold of Wellsprings Sports Centre, whilst passing more liabilities and investment requirements onto an operator. Obligations of the operator/tenant have been clearly defined and clauses relating to repairs, maintenance and alterations have improved the Council's position.

Democratic Path:

- Scrutiny – 23rd February 2022
- Cabinet/Executive – No
- Full Council – No

Reporting Frequency: Twice-yearly

List of Appendices (background papers to the report) (delete if not applicable)

Appendix A	Biannual Service Report -1 st April -30 th September 2021
Appendix B	
Appendix C	

Contact Officers

Name	Stuart Noyce
Direct Dial	01823 218712
Email	s.noyce@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

BIANNUAL SERVICE REPORT

1st April - 30th September 2021

Prepared by Mark Washington

Somerset West
and Taunton

everyone
ACTIVE



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1. SERVICE UPDATE

This report covers the period for 1st April - 30th September 2021 – the full annual report for 2021/22 will be submitted in May 2022.

Clearly, Covid-19 has had a massive and detrimental impact on our business. Like others within the leisure industry, the clear focus is to trade ourselves out of this global pandemic as quickly and safely as possible.

The primary areas of focus for this period and the remainder of 2021 will see the following strategies applied:

- Return 'Health & Fitness' memberships to pre-Covid levels (February 2020);
- Return swimming lessons to pre-Covid levels (February 2020);

All of the tasks above form part of the strategic direction taken by the Everyone Active West region. The progress of these primary outcomes will regularly be monitored and measured, with the relevant action taken on a monthly, quarterly, and six-monthly basis.

Whilst not losing focus on other critical areas of the business, a phased approach will be adopted for other activities based on the relevant stages of the government roadmap.

Vivary Golf Course was the first facility to resume business, with the golf course reopening for the first time on 29th March 2021. Golf has been the number one sport to have benefited from Covid-19; with a significant increase in participation, this coupled with customers on furlough, the country on 'staycation' mode, and the relatively dry weather, has seen this national trend flourish.

The focus was then on the reopening of the three gyms and swimming pools on 12th April 2021, along with relaunching spa treatments at Blackbrook Leisure Centre & Spa. Following this phased return, planning quickly moved on to the next step of the planned government roadmap which saw the return of the group exercise classes on 19th May 2021. The final stage of the unlocking was a welcome return to contact sports, clubs, and thermal/health suite facilities which reopened on 19th July 2021.

Our competitive pricing structure for 'Health & Fitness' memberships has seen a significant uptake, with both new and existing members returning to our facilities. April and May witnessed membership levels exceeding what would normally be expected during our busiest period of the calendar year, which in pre-Covid times would always be January - March.

During the pandemic we have seen a significant culture shift in the way in which customers pay for products and activities. Our cashless approach was one that offered a safe, secure payment option. This has enabled the majority of centres to remain cashless with the exception of Taunton Swimming Pool, where we have reintroduced cash as a payment option whilst a full review is completed in partnership with SWT.

'Digit Tickets' is an online platform that enables customers to book the High Ropes and mini golf activities at Vivary Golf & Adventure Centre. This technology is very easy to use and is therefore a very positive step forwards regarding the customer experience delivery at the centre.

Overall, the centres have received very positive feedback from our customers since going through a phased reopening. Customer confidence remains high with the measures we have taken and we continue to build this confidence and retain members.

2. CUSTOMER FEEDBACK SUMMARY

Positives included:

- Covid safety measures introduced during the pandemic;
- The ability to place memberships on hold during pandemic;
- The ability and ease to book gym and swim session via the Everyone Active App;
- The presentation and course conditions at Vivary Golf Course;
- Excellent feedback from Uffclume Academy on the High Ropes team at Vivary High Ropes;
- The support and instruction provided by the fitness team at Blackbrook;
- Extra wide lanes at Taunton Swimming Pool are amazing.

Negative comments/feedback included:

- The health suite at Wellington Sports Centre not being available from 12th April due to social distancing requirements;
- A customer not wanting to pay by direct debit for her child's gymnastic session;
- A tree that needed felling at Vivary Golf Course – this was a SWT task and was resolved through working with Natalie and Jonathan;
- No air conditioning in the sports halls for group exercise classes at Blackbrook;
- Air temperature on the poolside at Wellington Sports Centre during the July heatwave.

Feedback is continually discussed with the Management Teams and is included within quality action plans to improve our services.

During this period there were 3333 enquires made via the online enquiry portal that were dealt with by our colleagues.

The table shows the number of enquiries made between April – September 2021.

	Blackbrook	Taunton Pool	Wellsprings	Wellington	Vivary
Fitness	52	2	32	20	0
Swim	315	248	1	115	0
Membership	687	154	330	290	55
Something Else	0	0	0	0	0
Parties	8	0	3	3	4
Gymnastics	4	0	0	0	0
Activities	66	2	44	28	11
I'm Not Happy	0	0	0	0	0
Bookings	32	0	0	9	0
Tennis	67	0	0	0	1
Data Protection	0	1	0	0	0
Facility	17	2	4	10	0
Golf	1	0	0	0	55
Log In	62	57	49	45	0
Service	10	4	0	5	0
Climbing	0	4	4	0	37
Spa	12	0	0	0	0
Other	135	81	53	77	25
TOTAL	1468	555	520	602	188

3. ACCIDENTS AND INCIDENTS REPORT

In the main, all the recorded accidents were the usual trips, slips, and falls.

There was a small number of incidents, ranging from unsocial behaviour by a group of youths playing football in the car park at Wellington Sports Centre to anti-social behaviour on the football pitches on the Gordon Hawkins Playing fields.

A full report is completed for all accidents and incidents. These reports are always reviewed by the Site Safety Co-Ordinator (SSC), General Manager (GM) and Regional Health & Safety Manager. Any trends are highlighted with the appropriate action and any associated training needs immediately implemented.

Accidents

As a summary between 1st April – 19th September 2021 there were 68 accidents recorded across

Name	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept (Until 19th)	Total for site
Blackbrook	4	2	8	5	8	3	30
Taunton Pool	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Vivary	1	1	0	1	2	2	7
Wellington	1	1	1	1	4	2	10
Wellsprings	3	0	2	4	3	3	15
Total for Month	10	5	12	12	18	11	Total Accidents 68

Incidents

As a summary between 1st April – 19th September 2021 there were 60 incidents recorded across the contract.

Name	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept (Until 19th)	Total for site
Blackbrook	1	3	2	2	2	0	10
Taunton Pool	0	0	0	0	1	3	4
Vivary	10	7	8	4	6	3	38
Wellington	0	1	1	0	3	2	7
Wellsprings	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Total for Month	11	11	11	7	12	8	Total Incidents 60

A high percentage of the incidents recorded at Vivary are due to stray golf balls.

In 2022 I will start comparing the accident and incident figures for each period versus the previous year.

4. CLEANING SUMMARY

It was established that all centres are adhering to their full cleaning schedule which ensures that the centres are visibly clean at all times. All checks are set and recorded on the centres' EQMS system.

Blackbrook continues to trial the No Outdoor Show policy within its communal village changing. This certainly helps with the presentation and cleanliness of this area but the real time to understand the full impact of this trial will be during the Autumn and the turn of more unsettled weather.

All cleaning tasks and operational checks are completed on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis. These checks are recorded on our company EQMS portal. This enables all managers to have quick and easy access to the content of cleaning, along with a superb reporting suite that produces a simple set of KPIs for colleagues to benchmark and monitor their own centre performance.

I am really pleased to report that member adherence to the cleaning regimes that have been introduced to our facilities has been very high, which ensures that every measure is being taken to continually ensure that our facilities are both safe and secure.

5. MEMBERSHIP AND UTILISATION DATA

The following attendances were recorded at each centre. These numbers are very encouraging due to the very fact that there has been significant disruption throughout the pandemic – with three forced closures in the past eighteen months, there were a number of facility closures to allow for the investment and refurbishment of the facilities.

Once we had reopened on 12th April 2021, we launched a series of email campaigns and push notifications to encourage our prior members to return. We have targeted individual groups based on usage, age, previous visits, and frozen or cancelled accounts. Targeting calls lists to our membership teams added the personal touches needed to reassure our members that we had been working hard whilst we were closed to ensure all our members could return safely to our centres.

There was a minor blip with our ability to sell the tennis memberships via our online platform, but once Everyone Active was made aware of this I am pleased to report that the issue was rectified in a timely manner and once again became available for new customers to use and join.

Our use of social media has played a large part in reconnecting with our members. We continue to focus on constant reassurance and establishing our safety measures by posting details on our 'new normal' cleaning routines, social distancing in classes and gyms, one-way systems, floor markers, sanitation stations, and members' testimonials.

We have been targeting different age groups to encourage and demonstrate diversity across all demographics and communities. Our postings have been driven by each site so they are bespoke to each centre.

In April, our membership pricing was set at two tiers of membership rates: the standard Health & Fitness membership, which includes unlimited gym, swim and classes, is £29.99 per month at our flagship site Blackbrook Leisure Centre & Spa, and £24.99 at both Wellsprings Leisure Centre and Wellington Sports Centre. There is a standalone swimming membership available at Taunton Swimming Pool at a very competitive price of £19.99 per month.

Overall, the feedback we have received has been very positive and supportive – our members have been exceptional regarding the ‘new normal’ and all our colleagues have said it has been a joy to return to work and to feel part of the Everyone Active family and community again.

Name	Apr 2021	May 2021	Jun 2021	Jul 2021	Aug 2021	Sept 2021
Blackbrook	24,696	31,375	32,900	32,891	31,306	34,319
Taunton Pool	7,071	7,531	7,744	8,937	10,974	9,519
Vivary	12,992	10,072	11,114	11,045	14,741	9,879
Wellington	9,102	12,142	17,722	14,023	14,556	14,004
Wellsprings	5,849	10,074	10,315	9,386	8,736	7,755
Total	59,710	71,194	79,795	76,282	80,313	75,476

6. OPERATIONAL EXPENDITURE AND INCOME

Throughout the pandemic, Everyone Active has continued to use the Government’s furlough scheme. This has enabled Everyone Active to adopt a flexible approach to the phased reopening of the leisure centres and the returning of activities.

In partnership with Somerset West & Taunton, we were successful in securing funding via the National Leisure Recovery Fund (NLRF) for the financial year ending in 2021.

7. MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME UPDATE

Since reopening in April 2021, every centre has seen a significant number of maintenance issues that needed either fixing or replacing. It is unknown as to whether these items needing to be repaired or replaced were directly linked to the fluctuating closures of our leisure centres, were simply unfortunate coincidences, or were due to the natural age of the plant and machinery.

A sample of the key and costly items is as follows:

- Chemical dosing system at Blackbrook spa;
- Teaching pool filters at Blackbrook needed new filter median and new laterals to the bottom of both filters;
- Repairs to pool ‘vac’ at Taunton Swimming Pool;
- New motor for the pool cover at Taunton Swimming Pool;
- Replacement pump and essence injector for the health suite at Wellington Sports Centre;
- Tiling works completed to the seating area of the steam room at Wellington Sports Centre;
- AHU repairs to the changing village system at Blackbrook.

The final commissioning has now been completed for the PoolView systems at Wellington Sports Centre, Taunton Swimming Pool, and Blackbrook Leisure Centre & Spa, and therefore these systems are now live.

During this period I have been working with the Open Spaces team to work on a structured tree maintenance programme that will be completed in 2021.

8. SPORT DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY UPDATE

Max Whitlock Gymnastics Programme

On the back of the success seen in the Tokyo 2020 Olympics that took place in 2021, our Max Whitlock programme has seen a positive uptake on interest with new enquiries, especially at Wellsprings Leisure Centre. This has enabled us to put on new sessions to cater for the additional demand.

On the last Sunday in September, Blackbrook Leisure Centre & Spa also hosted the annual Taunton 10K event with seven hundred runners and hundreds of spectators and well-wishers arriving at the centre to watch a very well organised event.

Health Walks

We were very pleased to receive notification that we reached the national finals of the UK Active Community Awards for our Health Walk programme, as well as to attend the virtual presentation. This achievement really recognises the dedication that our volunteer Walk Leaders put into the programme and how they go above and beyond for their local communities.

We have also run virtual Health Walk Leader training throughout the lockdown period; this is something that we will now continue as an option for those that are happy to do this in the more rural parts of our district.

Health Walks – Wellington

After a six month break due to Covid-19, our Wellington Walkers and Walk Leaders returned with great enthusiasm at the beginning of June 2021. Six of our Walk Leaders trained to become first aiders and the programme has continued to grow, with walkers gradually returning along with new people as well. We are currently providing four walks per week: two longer and two shorter walks.

In September, we held a coffee morning after the Health Walk, which was an opportunity for everyone to meet up, have coffee and cake, and meet the Wellington Sports Centre staff team.

Health Walks – Taunton

Our Taunton programme has had a slower return but we are gradually recruiting new walkers and Walk Leaders to the programme. Many of our walkers continued to walk throughout lockdown and have curated new routes which are now being enjoyed by the whole group.

One of our Walk Leaders, Rosemary, and Walk Coordinator, Ali, completed the West Deane and East Deane Way during lockdown - these are walks which cover the whole of the Taunton Deane area. Their next challenge is the Coleridge Way, exploring some of the wonderful West Somerset walk routes.

Health Walks – Creech St. Michael and Ruishton

Our Creech St. Michael walks returned in September and were joined by walkers from Taunton on a lovely canal side walk. Our Ruishton walk programme will return in the new year.

Buggy and Story Walks with Somerset Libraries

Our Health Walk programme is now working closely with Somerset Libraries, to create a range of literary walks. In September 2021 we started a new programme called Buggy Walks, which are aimed at parents with young children. This will be a walk around the North Taunton area, followed by rhymes led by the Library staff. Staff will be walking with the group to answer any questions parents may have about the Library and reading to children etc. We are also being joined by Wyvern Day Nursery staff and children.

We are also planning to offer a literary walk for our regular walk groups through the coming winter months, with library staff coming to join us.

Tennis

Our Tennis Manager, Kerry Quirk, took to the grass courts of Wimbledon this September. Kerry and her doubles partner beat the number two seeds in the semi-final to reach the final of the O40s British Grass Court Championships.

Flexercise

Everyone Active is working closely with both Somerset Public Health and Age UK to revise the Flexercise training programme and manual. This is alongside providing training that meets the needs of local care home staff across the Somerset West and Taunton area.

9. ENVIRONMENTAL AND ENERGY MANAGEMENT PLAN PROGRESS REPORT

Aim of the Energy Engagement Plan: To develop a culture of energy and environmental awareness so we can be as energy efficient and environmentally conscious in our operations as we can.

Objective: Increase awareness of the opportunities to reduce energy consumption and implement energy saving initiatives.

Somerset West and Taunton Energy Engagement Plan

This section summarises the approach for the next twelve months. Everyone Active is committed to minimising the adverse environmental impacts of our activities. Our ambition is to provide efficient and sustainable measures that:

- Reduce operating costs, energy use and carbon emissions;
- Reduce waste going to landfill;
- Improve the quality of leisure centres;
- Maintain SLM's competitiveness and enhance our reputation;
- Provide a high quality leisure experience;
- Engage and excite our Local Authority clients.

What Does Good Practice Look Like?

A leisure centre team that is trained, engaged, and committed to energy and environmental efficiency will ensure:

- Lights are switched off when areas are not in use, not just at the end of the day;
- Ventilation fans and heaters are switched off when not required (where they are not controlled by a BMS);
- BMS timings are set up to meet the requirements of the centre;
- Internal comfort conditions are maintained in an energy efficient manner and company standard settings are used;
- Consumption reporting is understood and reviewed by colleagues, with the impact key individuals can have on consumption made clear;
- All equipment is switched on only when required and off as soon as possible at the end of business;
- Pool covers are used when the pool is not in use and are put on at the earliest opportunity;
- Recycling bins are used correctly with clear bags and are not contaminated.

The transition process of switching to the preferred utility provider for Everyone Active has now been completed allowing for team members to receive quality and accurate half-hourly data. Therefore, this will become a clearer focus which will be enhanced with the appointments of Carbon Reduction Champions who will help drive down consumption.

Electric vehicle charging

The electric vehicle charging point is now fully operational at the Blackbrook Leisure Centre & Spa. The usage has seen a significant month on month increase since the unit went live in May 2021. The communication from SWT was amazing and this ensured that the install was completed with minimum disruption to our centre customers.

Site Name	Month Year	Energy (kWh)	No of Sessions	GHG Savings (kg)
Blackbrook	01/05/2021	75.02	10	69.239
Blackbrook	01/06/2021	1010.43	55	932.633
Blackbrook	01/07/2021	2844.9	177	2625.841
Blackbrook	01/08/2021	4507.91	234	4160.801

10. GROUNDS MAINTENANCE UPDATE

All areas of responsibility with grounds maintenance have been fully implemented by Everyone Active and Somerset West & Taunton Council as per the new partnership. The presentation of the grounds, boundaries, and walkways has been very impressive; centres often receive very positive feedback from customers on the external presentation of the surrounding grounds.

A structured tree maintenance programme has been agreed with SWT. Work commenced in September 2021 and will continue until the priority actions from the most recent tree audit have been completed at Vivary.

11. EVENT MANAGEMENT PROGRESS UPDATE

Due to the pandemic and the Government restrictions on mass gatherings for indoor events, our programmes have been paused in the interest of safety. However, I am pleased to report that there are a number of key events that have been scheduled for later in 2021 and into 2022, mirroring the changes in Government restrictions. This will be reported on within the full annual report.

12. CENTRE FOCUS

Blackbrook Leisure Centre & Spa

- A full review of the staffing structure to support the current operations;
- Ensure that the new General and Assistant Managers are fully inducted into Blackbrook;
- Promotion of the Spa facility and introducing a promotion for the thermal spa;
- Ensuring staff are fully compliant with the new PoolView system;
- Pool Plant training for centres and the duty manager team.

Wellsprings Leisure Centre

- Staffing structure review to ensure front of house hours meet operational requirements;
- Maximise sales opportunities with the new Health & Fitness membership package;
- Ongoing promotion of the events programme;
- Discussions with Cullen's Catering for the bistro.

Wellington Sports Centre

- Ensuring staff are fully compliant with the new PoolView system;
- Maximise sales opportunities with the new Health & Fitness product;
- Ensure changing facility operational basics are adhered to at all times.

Taunton Swimming Pool

- Ensuring staff are fully compliant with the new PoolView system;
- New Lifeguard staffing rota;
- Continue to increase swimming lesson enrolments;
- Improve retail experience.

Vivary Golf & High Ropes

- Recruit casual instructors for the 2022 season;
- Continue the development of the range of lessons and retail opportunities with the golf professional;
- Look at building an open driving range bay to maximise coaching opportunities.

APPENDIX 1: CLUB LIVE HEALTH & FITNESS APRIL - SEPTEMBER 2021

Site Name	Sep-19	Feb-20	Apr-21	May-21	Jun-21	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21
Blackbrook Leisure Centre	1783	2063	1690	1864	2000	2014	2069	2161
Wellington Sports Centre	714	947	931	983	1065	1107	1126	1201
Wellsprings Leisure Centre	1052	1220	1037	1112	1155	1203	1202	1252

September 2019 was the start of Everyone Active.

February 2020 was the last month before Covid severely impacted the business

APPENDIX 2: SWIMMING LESSONS APRIL - SEPTEMBER 2021

	Apr-21	May-21	Jun-21	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21
Blackbrook	1250	1274	1314	1379	1421	1539
Taunton Pool	330	341	363	383	409	429
Wellington	420	430	459	476	497	548

APPENDIX 3: FEEDBACK & ENQUIRIES AUGUST - DECEMBER 2020

	Blackbrook	Taunton Pool	Wellsprings	Wellington	Vivary
Fitness	35	3	27	21	0
Swim	230	165	1	128	0
Membership	655	88	290	281	55
Something else	0	0	0	0	0
Parties	3	0	1	3	4
Gymnastics	4	0	0	0	0
Activities	23	1	28	18	1
I'm not happy	0	0	0	0	0
Bookings	10	2	0	5	0
Tennis	57	0	0	0	1
Data protection	2	1	0	0	0
Facility	9	2	5	4	0
Golf	2	0	0	0	65
Log in	65	32	35	17	6
Service	7	11	0	4	1
Climbing	0	2	0	0	1
Spa	0	0	0	0	0
Other	158	36	66	99	22
Total	1260	343	453	580	156

APPENDIX 4: CONSUMPTION FIGURES JANUARY - SEPTEMBER 2021

	QTR 1 (April - June 2021)	QTR 2 (July - September 2021)
Blackbrook		
Electric	153,696	190,244
Gas	347,039	220,010
Taunton Pool		
Electric	37,175	49,613
Gas	284,689	173,929
Wellsprings		
Electric	69,698	84,652
Gas	39,758	22,568
Vivary Park		
NHH Electric	11,135	17,454
Gas	953	566
Wellington		
Electric	58,622	67,688
Gas	179,450	215,873

Consumption figures are shown in kwh and some months have been estimated.

Now we have transferred to a new energy consultant we will be able to start comparing month by month data.

Full Council Meeting – 8 February 2022

Report of Councillor Derek Perry – Deputy Leader and Sports, Parks and Leisure

Play equipment

1. All play area inspections have now been completed on schedule. The 2021 / 2022 replacement programme is now underway with some equipment already having been installed and others soon to be installed. The table below sets out an indicative timetable.

Play Area and Planned work	Parish	Planned Completion
Streamside P/A Double Flat Swings	Blackbrook & Holway	February 2022
Blenheim RD P/A Double Spring Rocker	Halcon & Lane	February 2022
Farriers Grange P/A See Saw	West Monkton & Cheddon Fitzpaine	February 2022
Wellington Rec P/A Accessible Roundabout	Wellington North	February 2022
Vivary Pk P/A Accessible Roundabout	Vivary	February 2022
Showell Park K/G Slide/Swings	Norton Fitzwarren & Staplegrove	January 2022
Showell Park P/A Slide/Swings/Chain Bridge/Climbing Unit	Norton Fitzwarren & Staplegrove	January 2022
Lyngford K/G Slide/ Multi Unit	Priorswood	January 2022
Burrough Way P/A Balance Walkway	Wellington South	February 2022
Viridor Green P/A Basket Swing Replacement	Halcon & Lane	January 2022
Hamilton Play Area Additional Inclusive Equipment.	Halcon & Lane	January 2022

Double Swings Inclusive Seats, Inclusive Rocker, Inclusive Roundabout		
Celandine Mead Slide/Roundabout/Swings/Climbing Frame	Blackbrook & Holway	January 2022

A swimming pool site for Minehead

2. By the time of publication of this report, members will have seen the release confirming the decision to set aside a parcel of land in Minehead as a site for a swimming pool. This is an early but important step on the road to the provision of a new pool which will serve the town and the wider area.

Green Flag Awards

3. Green flags were officially raised in January in the parks and open spaces which were successful in the 2021 process. Submissions for the Green Flag Awards for 2022 are being completed for Blenheim Gardens, Wellington, Vivary, Victoria and French Weir and Comeytrowe parks, as well as Swains Lane Nature Reserve.

Afterlife Benches

4. Members will hopefully be aware of the recent installation of the “Afterlife” benches in Vivary park and Blenheim Gardens. These benches were donated by Netflix to mark the third and final series of the eponymous series and were designed and commissioned in collaboration with the Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM). Netflix donated 25 of these benches nationwide and so were we are delighted that they chose to site two of them within our district.

Leisure (Everyone Active)

5. Membership numbers have continued to recover across all sites with ambitious targets for the January period looking likely to be achieved. This is obviously very good news given the level of concern that existed a month or so ago in respect of the Omicron variant.